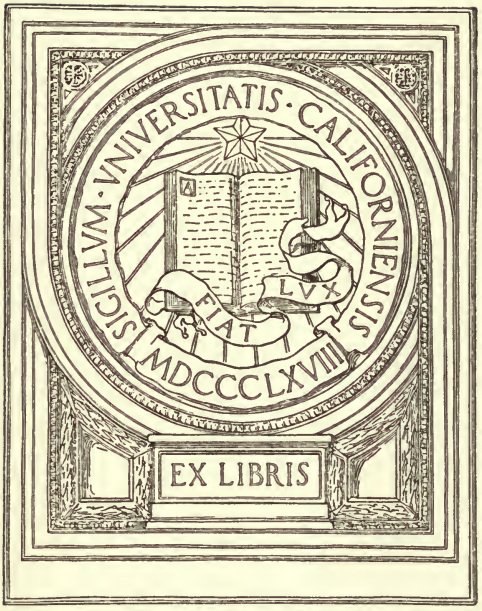
LD BUG STORY BOOK

DENNIS H. STOVALL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HE HAULED OUT A HEAVY CANVAS BAG THAT SLIPPED FROM HIS FINGERS AND FELL WITH A JINGLE.

The Gold Bug Story Book

MINING CAMP TALES BY
A WESTERN WRITER
DENNIS H. STOVALL

Author of
"Suzanne of Kerbyville," "Tales of Old, Tales of Gold," etc.

FOREWORD

THE stories here collected, and which have been published previously as individual stories in The Daily Mining Record, are designed to portray both the "inside" and the "outside" of the noble fellows of the mines and of the dauntless men of the trail. Some reader may try to locate "Gold Bug." It has a place on the map. But whether it is in California or Colorado or Nevada doesn't matter. You who have packed a burro or shoveled gravel into a sluice, who have wielded a jack, or waited at the collar of the long dark shaft for the shift to go down, have been there. You have heard the thunder of its mill and the "chug, chug," of its compressor; you have heard the yarns around the bunk house stove, and have sat down to the boiled beef and beans of the "chuck house" board. If you are a miner you need no introduction to Slivers the stage driver, to Hudson the super, or to the Old Woman of the boarding house, for you are already intimately acquainted with them.

The greatest battles ever fought are those in which America's army of miners and mining men engage; yet they are fighting them unknown to the world. It is an army of soldiers of honest toil,—an army of martyrs that does not know defeat,—that is fighting mountains and making straight the way for others to follow—that is unlocking the treasure vaults of Nature to increase the riches of the world.

To you who have mined and are a soldier in this army, and to your friend and the friends of your friend, "The Gold Bug Story Book" is dedicated. If you can get one little heart throb out of it, the author will feel that his work of writing it has not been done in vain.

DENNIS H. STOVALL.

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MILLIE AND THE THOROUGHBRED

THREE great events have occurred in Gold Bug: One was the discovery of the Irish Girl lode; the second was the arrival of Millie; and the third—but that should come at the end of the story.

The news of Millie's coming reached camp on a Sunday afternoon, when all the night shift diggers were in the Dew-drop imbibing gooseberry champagne. The mucker, who was the happy and exclusive possessor of the news, was unable to catch the ears of the crowd because of the liquor-fevered bedlam.

Both the weather and the liquor being hot, a squabble was a very natural proceeding; and after the fifth line-up, an impromptu ring was formed with Hudson, the super, and Jim Nason, "the Thoroughbred," in the center. Jim was an Easterner, and because of his genteel manners and general good behavior was dubbed "the Thoroughbred."

Jim never courted trouble, and the grievance this time, as usual, was all with Hudson. The nature of it was not clear to anyone, and to Hudson least of all. As a matter of truth he did not like The Thoroughbred. Just why this was so none could understand, but all knew that there would some day be a settlement.

On this occasion Hudson went just a little farther than customary with his tirade, and called Jim a something-or-other liar. Of course, Jim couldn't take that sort of talk without resorting to an immediate exercise of the index finger of his right hand.

Two pistols were drawn, but as the crowd had strong objections to indiscriminate shooting, there was a quick and general scamper for the safe side of whiskey barrels. No one was unsportsmanlike enough to wish the fight stopped, nevertheless, the persistent manner effected an immediate

suspension of hostilities by taking advantage of the lull and yelling:

"I say, there's a woman comin' to camp."

"A woman? What! Comin' to Gold Bug?" chorused a score of voices from behind the barricades.

"Yes, a woman, a real female woman," the mucker assured with supreme confidence. "She's a darter of the boss. I was jest now down to the office, where the bookkeep' was 'phonin' to Boulder. From his talk into the 'phone funnel, I take 'er to be a gal from 'Frisco. She's comin' on this afternoon's stage."

Every man stood up and began to tidy himself. Hudson forgot his grievance, and returned his revolver to his pocket. By the rules of the game this called off the bout, and the two candidates for the graveyard joined the crowd in slapping dust from their clothes with hats and gloves.

A rush was made for the camp store, for all thought of the blacking brush at the same moment. There was only one in stock. Ike Blumberg, the storekeeper, with a keen eye to business, put it up at auction. It was knocked down to Jim Nason for a dollar-fifty. The Thoroughbred also had the distinction and the advantage of owning the only biled shirt within 40 miles of Gold Bug.

In the bunkhouse the activity of preparation bordered on a panic. The wardrobe of the miners was stocked more with a view to utility rather than ornamentation, and the disadvantage to which the diggers were put in an attempt to beautify themselves was almost pitiable. Every man in camp needed a hair-cut and a shave, and nearly everyone endured untold agony trying to get them. There was two pairs of shears in the bunkhouse, and both had served all purposes from trimming the lamp wicks to cutting sheet iron. The razors would scarcely whittle a stick, and most of them had been used for that purpose. To remove a month's growth of whiskers with such instruments of torture put the nerves of the bravest of them to the test.

To most of the diggers of Gold Bug it seemed ages since they last saw a "real female woman," as the mucker styled this one. True, there was Aunt Mollie, otherwise known as

EACH DIGGER BELIEVED THE SMILE WAS FOR HIM.

"The Old Woman," who kept the camp boarding house. But she did not count. As Jake Simpson, the foreman, once declared, "she had a shape like a side o' bacon, and put on 'er clothes with a pitchfork."

And so now that a prim, young woman (as all knew the daughter of the boss must be) was coming to camp, the men, with the natural instinct of males of every species, set most industriously to trimming their plumage.

Hard and fast as they worked, there were still three men waiting for the blacking brush when the stage was heard rattling up the road. On Sunday it reached the camp an hour early, as briefer stops were made at the stations.

Silvers, the red-haired driver, puffed with importance, cracked his long whip over the leaders and brought the old Concord up and around the curve on two wheels. He did not see the group of waiting men at the store; and instead of pulling up the stage to toss the mail bags down, he swung across the camp and drew rein in front of the boarding house.

The newly-washed crew moved silently across the white tailings pile to where the coach stood. At first there was a scramble for the honor of helping the lady out, but at the crucial moment, the nerves of all failed, and all withdrew except Hudson and The Thoroughbred. After a parry or two, Nason backed out and left the honors to the big super, who, hat in hand, and dressed in his best suit of corduroy, was bobbing his head in and out of the stage door in an attempt to bow.

Then out stepped the lady, her small, gloved hand in Hudson's big paw. She wore a long traveling coat and veil. Just as her dainty feet touched the ground she lifted her eyes to the crowd and smiled. Each digger of the camp believed the smile was for him.

"Is this Mr. Hudson?" she asked.

"I am Hudson," the super replied, with another bob of his head. "The boarding house is right here. Aunt Mollie will get your room ready. As super of Gold Bug, I heartily welcome you. The boys here are a rough gang, but their hearts are in the right place."

"Oh, thank you, thank you," said she, prettily. "I am

sure I will enjoy my stay out here very much. But I am tired and dusty after my long ride, and will go to my room. I hope to get better acquainted with all of you."

She threw another bewitching smile at the crowd and retreated toward the house.

Silvers made an extraordinary attempt to bow, and indiscreetly backed against the near wheel horse. The animal resented the undue familiar, and put out his hoof with a suddenness that shot Silvers across the yard.

This broke the strained tension of formality under which the crowd had been held and all enjoyed a hearty laugh at Silvers' expense.

When the girl disapepared into the boarding house, the crowd returned to the Dewdrop.

"She's four-ace high, and no mistake," declared Hank Fetterly, who was known down in Reno as "Faro Fett."

"Say, did you see them eyes?" asked Sid Barlow. "A gaze from 'em gives a feller a feelin' like havin' warm milk spilt down the back of his neck."

"An' hoofs," chirped in Shorty Sanders, the camp roustabout. "Why, her two feet ain't as big as my thumb."

"Well, boys," said Hudson, "whatever you have to say about Millie, which is her name, remember she's a lady, a lady clean through, from hatpin to slipper. Why, I used to know that girl when she was a little thing—carried 'er on my shoulder—trotted 'er on my knee. That was before 'er pap made his pile, and when him and me were plugging ore out in the Yellow Poppy on the Mother Lode."

The big super paused, that the startling information might be thoroughly imbibed. Then he tapped himself boastfully and continued: "I'm a little old to be in the game, but from this time on I'm Mr. Rufus B. Hudson, and my cap's set for the girl we all call Millie. Every digger come up and wish me luck. Mr. Barkeep, take your hammer to that." He dropped a twenty on the bar, and the men filled their glasses to the rim.

Promptly on Monday the stage began bringing in trinkets for Millie. Hudson was become of the idea that he was a lady's man, and he piled Millie's room with everything

MILLIE HELPED BANDAGE THE WOUNDS WITH THE SKILL AND DEFTNESS OF A TRAINED HOSPITAL NURSE.

a girl ever wanted, together with a lot of useless duffle no girl could find use for.

Aunt Mollie was pleased. Hudson, the big buffalo of a super, was a great man in her eyes, and she shoved Millie forward to everything he brought her.

But Hudson was far from winning the girl's favor. She took his presents just because he was "papa's friend." As a matter of truth she cared but little for him. He tried to believe he was winning her, and boasted of it around the mine, but it was a dream that would not last.

He took to brooding when the girl refused to see him. One day she walked up the trail to the shafthouse with The Thoroughbred and pinned a mountain daisy to his canvas coat when he mounted the cage to go down.

Hudson was badly broken up by the new turn of things. He realized he had a poor chance when matched against Jim Nason, whom he styled the "dude miner." When Millie refused the last load of trinkets, the super moped around the camp with his head down, like a mad Indian.

When Hudson and The Thoroughbred met on the trail, both kept a finger on the trigger, and neither said a word.

Hudson ceased his useless attentions to Millie and set about devising a means to rid the camp of The Thoroughbred. He could easily dismiss him. But Hudson never dismissed a good miner. Though Jim Nason was tall and handsome, and always wore a necktie, he was just four holes better, on his shift, than any other man of the crew. There was not another man on the Irish Girl lode who could swing a jack like Jim Nason.

One evening Hudson had the day shift lined up in the Dewdrop. The super had been brooding all afternoon, and was drinking whiskey like water because of some slight Millie had shown him. The Thoroughbred entered the saloon just as Hudson opened a tirade against dude miners in general and Jim Nason in particular.

"Why in thunder didn't you ring the door bell?" Hudson asked loudly, when Nason came in. "You give us a flirtation of the heart, sneakin' in here like a bob-cat."

The Thoroughbred paid no heed, and was deaf to the

laughing jeer that followed. He gave the crowd no look, but sauntered to the back end of the place and idly toyed with the poker chips on a battered table.

"Must be deaf," one man suggested.

"Little's the difference anyhow," Hudson continued. "A dude will never answer you; but a man will."

The Thoroughbred dropped the chips, and turning on his heel, came back to the group at the bar. Quietness at once fell on the crowd. There was a strange glare in his eye. Never had he seemed so tall and powerful. Hudson shuddered when the "dude miner" stood over him, putting a long finger close by his nose.

"Yes, sir," said Nason. "I have heard every word that has been spoken since I came in here, and let me tell you that I have no fear of you. I would like to know your trouble. I think I can just about guess it when I tell you it's whiskey. When you're a little more sober, come around and we'll talk it over. If there's a difference between us, I want it settled, and the quicker it is done the better it will suit me."

Hudson's dark face turned pale. He liked pluck. Deep down in his heart he knew he ought to like Nason. He finished his drink, and was making ready to answer when a miner poked his head through the door and yelled: "The foreman wants you up at the mine, Hudson. There's a bad slip on the 800."

Instantly the super forgot his row. The Gold Bug was above everything to him. "Are they catching up with 'er?" he asked.

"Catch up, the devil!" the miner replied. "Nothin' can hold 'er! All the boys are out!"

"The lazy cowards!" Hudson roared. He dashed through the door and up the trail. "We've got to hold 'er! If that stope comes in the shaft and lower level will be choked for a month."

All of the night shift was huddled around the collar of the shaft; driven from the mine by the sinking wall below. Not one would return.

Simpson, the foreman, was desperately trying to find two men to go below with him and drive the slip back.

"There's no use. We can't catch up with 'er," said one of the crew, hopelessly.

Hudson and the foreman stepped on the cage. "We want another man!" they cried.

The crew drew back.

"Quick!" yelled Hudson, as he reached for the bell wire.

"Hold a second!" said a voice from down the trail, and a man charged up and leaped aboard the platform.

"Ding! Ding!" sounded the engineer's bell, and the cage dropped down the shaft.

Hudson lighted his candle on the way down, and held it aloft.

"Damme, if it ain't the dude!" he exclaimed, when his candle revealed the white, smooth-shaven face of The Thoroughbred. "I like your stuff anyhow."

"Here we are," Simpson announced as the cage stopped with a jerk on the 800-foot level. "And it's hell we're in, or I'm a fiddler."

With candles lighted, the three stepped into the dark tunnel. It was like stepping into a black, intensely black thunder cloud. All around and above them the mountain's heart throbbed and palpitated, loosening the earth and dropping quartz shale like leaves in a windstorm.

The noise was deafening. Timbers cried and groaned, as in the agony of despair under their mighty load of sinking ground. Now and then a smaller pine stull broke with a snap and a report like a rifle shot. The great, gaping stope, opening deep into the bowels of the underworld, spilled quartz from its yawning maw like water.

It was a deal to test the nerve of brave men. Hudson and the foreman turned sick. The Thoroughbred was the first to step forward.

"Hold a minute," said Hudson. "I'll ring for timbers." He pulled the bell wire and the cage shot upward.

Then he ran under the sinking mountain, jabbing the beak of his candlestick into the hanging wall. "She ain't cracked yet," he yelled. "But she's comin' down fast, and will soon choke 'er up unless held back. We must drive the timbers under her."

The Thoroughbred ran up the slippery ladder into the grinding, snapping maw of the stope—into the very jaws of death. "Pass up the timber!" he cried.

The cage dropped down with stulls, jacks and wedges. The foreman lifted a load and passed it up. The Thoroughbred seized a pine and drove the timber home with a single blow.

Hudson's eyes opened wide in admiration. He had never seen stulls handled by such a man-machine. He backed out to give the swinging jack room, and stood at the head of the ladder to hand up the braces.

The shrieking, grinding din increased in fury. The mountain kicked and plunged. It was as if all the demons of the lower world were holding high carnival in the Gold Bug's labyrinths.

The cage flew between the surface and the 800. Timber after timber was passed up and driven home. It was three men against an avalanche—three men propping up a toppling mountain.

Little by little the men gained ground. Slowly the creaking and grinding ceased, and the hanging wall settled firm on its new foundation. Heavier timbers were piled at the base. With a final groan the mountain quieted.,

At the last moment a slip occurred near the stope's mouth, threatening to bury Hudson under two tons of loose shale. The Thoroughbred saw it coming, and whirling around, drove a stull beneath it. The super was saved, but the slip parted in the middle and caught Nason across the chest, throwing him flat and pinning him to the floor.

They dug him out and tottered weakly to the cage, carrying him between them. He was limp and drenched with perspiration. Blood flowed from a bad cut on his head.

They doubled him up on the cage platform and rang the bell. They shot up through the long black shaft, past stations now still as sepulchres, where spent candles were spluttering in their stocks. A moment later they were out in the cool night air.

"Here boys," said Hudson, kindly, "take the dude to the boarding house and call the doc. He's got a bad scratch on

the head, and is gone of breath. See that he's cared for proper."

The camp doctor worked for an hour over The Thoroughbred, while the diggers of the two shifts moved about on tiptoe, their hats in their hands and their hearts in their boots.

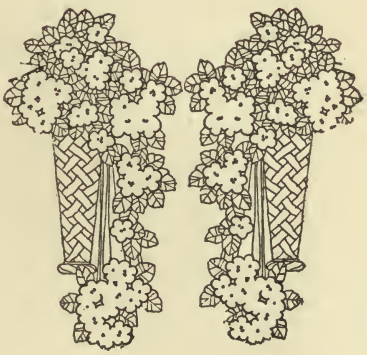
Millie helped bandage the wounds with the deftness and skill of a hospital nurse. It was her pretty blue eyes that beamed first into the face of Jim Nason when he came back to consciousness.

"He's got one chance in a thousand," said the doctor, turning to the door.

Millie took that one chance and staked her life upon it. And she won, though it was a long, hard struggle.

Hudson kept The Thoroughbred on regular pay all the while he was down. When he donned his boots again, it was to become foreman of the day shift.

And when that third great event occurred in the Gold Bug the super sent to Boulder for a swallow-tail coat. This was a time when corduroy wouldn't do—for he was best man.



BECAUSE *of* FANNIE

WHEN Andy Morris and Fannie came to Gold Bug, business in camp took a decided turn for the better. Not that business was ever really bad there, but because Andy was wise in the way of business men, and—well, Fannie was his business partner.

He bought the camp store and turned in broadside to the tailings-piked road, otherwise known as "Grand avenue." He built a long shady porch in front, and made two entrances to the store instead of one. A partition, with bearskin portieres, divided the two departments. On one side Fannie sat perched on a stool behind the counter, to hand out the mail. She was also within reach of the plug tobacco, fine cut, cheroots and cigarettes. In a little while every digger in camp bought his smoke weed of Fannie.

On his side of the partition Andy Morris carried a wonderful and miscellaneous assortment of goods. Some were sold wrapped up, some in boxes, but the greater part went out in bottles. The counter was hard and smooth, much like a bar, and, while the goods in sight were principally miners' boots, overalls and canvas coats, the commodity of greatest profit in which Andy dealt could be drank there and then at the time of purchase. The little irregularity of Andy's only having a government or "gallon house" license was a matter for Andy alone to worry over.

It is doubtful if Andy ever worried over anything, or found pleasure in anything. He waited on every customer with gravity, and in absolute silence. It was whispered around camp that Andy had "a past," but as he never alluded to it, none questioned him about it. He seldom smiled, and seldom joked.

Mart Quinlan was the only man in camp who professed to know much about Andy's past. When it was rumored

around that the old man had in early days been the proprietor of a bucket-of-blood den in Leadville, the report was very naturally traced to Quinlan. No denial was made, and the matter would have remained thus had not Quinlan one day received an odd epistle through the mails. It came in a rough manila envelope, and was a black-bordered sheet, bearing a crudely-sketched skull-and-cross-bones and the warning:

"CLOsE yOuR CLaMs oR YOU wILL Be a COLd FRItTeR."

The letter bore the Gold Bug postmark, and Quinlan knew it had come from someone in camp. He received it during the distribution of the afternoon's mail; that evening, when the crew was at mess and while no others were around, Quinlan sauntered into Fannie's end of the store, bought a pack of cigarettes, joked awhile with the girl, and then went around through the other door to Andy's side.

The keeper was busy arranging a new shipment of rubber ponches on the upper shelf. When he climbed down, the mysterious letter, with its black-bordered warning, was spread on the counter, and Quinlan was holding a revolver within three inches of his nose. Andy Morris instinctively raised his hands. Both men eyed each other in silence, but between them flashed a glance of mutual understanding.

Just then Fannie called from the other room: "Daddy, your coffee is ready and waiting. Do you want it brought in?"

The keeper did not answer, and the girl was heard to jump from her stool and come toward the door. When she parted the bearskin portieres and poked her round face through, Quinlan had tossed the revolver to an inner pocket of his coat and was studiously engaged with Andy, examining the peculiar texture of the manila envelope.

"Why didn't you answer me, daddy?" she asked, impatiently. "Do you want your coffee brought in?"

"No; I'll come for it, little one," her father answered.

Fannie tarried in the door, and a mischievous smile lighted her face. "Can't he read his letter, daddy?" she said, impudently. "If you can't make it out for him, send him around to me?"

She darted from the door and disappeared. The two men again faced each other. Quinlan whipped out his revolver and the old keeper raised his hands.

"Well," said Quinlan, finally, "what you got to say about it?"

"To say about what?" the keeper replied, as if unable to understand.

"About this," Quinlan informed, indicating the letter with a slight dip of his revolver. "You sent it. I want to know what in thunder you mean by it?"

"You're blabbing around camp that I kept the Tivoli in Leadville during the——"

"Well, ain't it so? Ain't it a fact that you were there when Red McTurk killed——"

"Shut up, man," said the old keeper, in a hoarse whisper, turning strangely pale. "Fannie will hear you."

"You don't want her to know it?"

"My God, no. It's not for her to know. She is all I have since Maggie went."

"Well, keep your boots on; I'm not going to tell her," Quinlan assured. "And I will say nothing more. I'm sorry I've said what I have, though a lot of this talk don't come from me. But I don't like this black-hand, skull-and-cross-bones way of telling me to keep still. If I'm too noisy, come right up in daylight and close my muffler. I will tell you that I know all about it. I was only a kid, but I was there when it happened; however, I've got sense enough to keep still. So far as I know, you never done anything that wasn't legitimate, and I've got no kick to make."

They shook hands, and a little later two glasses clinked on the bar. Quinlan's revolver went back to his pocket, and the keeper reached under the counter. His fingers first touched the barrel of a six-shooter, and lingered momentarily, while Andy did some thinking; then they passed on to the long-necked bottle kept for special purposes. The cork popped, and the foaming liquid gurgled into the glasses.

The mischievous face of Fannie again appeared at the door. "Don't let him drink his whole gallon in here, daddy," she said, with a wink; "he has a shift to work yet tonight."

The portieres dropped and the girl's face disappeared. Quinlan and Morris drank their liquor, and the compact of friendship was sealed.

During the month that followed Quinlan's visits to the camp store became more frequent, especially to that end of it presided over by the winsome Fannie. Among the miners of Gold Bug the pretty girl had many admirers, but Quinlan proved the most persistent of them all. He had decided, just before the arrival of the girl and her father, that he would leave Gold Bug and try some other camp; but when Fannie came he changed his mind. He was a rover, a soldier of fortune, a seeker after pleasure and mischief, and, while the Gold Bug supplied these for a time, it had, just previous to Fannie's arrival, become monotonously dull.

But now, at the close of his shift and when his day's work was done, he would saunter down to the store after mess to buy a new pack of cigarettes and spend a half hour with Fannie. Perched on her high stool, with her cheeks in her palms and her dimpled elbows on the counter, the girl would stare dreamily through the open door while Quinlan talked in his quiet, careless way of a world the girl knew only in books. He had circled the globe, and seen service in every mining camp from Alaska to Australia. Fannie had a pretty trick, when he had finished a good story, of withdrawing her gaze from the mountains and lifting her black eyes directly into his own. It was this, and Fannie's beauty and Fannie's fairness, that drove Quinlan to believe he had found, after all his roving, the one girl who would make him happy.

A month later he was brought out of the mine with a broken leg, as the result of a fall from a slippery stope ladder. During the three weeks he lay in his bunk, one-half his body rigid as a poker in its splints and plaster, Fannie was constantly by him. No doubt things would have been settled permanently between them, and at once, had not Andy interposed an objection. He couldn't let Fannie go just yet. Fannie was all he had, and Fannie was young. He had no particular objections to Quinlan, but he could not bear to have Fannie leave him.

While the old keeper's objections sounded plausible

QUINLAN WAS HOLDING A REVOLVER WITHIN THREE INCHES OF HIS NOSE.

enough, Quinlan knew that Andy's plea for a stay of proceedings was based on a desire to have the girl ultimately marry someone better than he. Andy's sole ambition was to have Fannie gain a place of prominence in the world, and, since she possessed neither wealth nor learning, this could only be accomplished by her marrying a man who would lead her up fame's ladder.

When he was able to walk, Quinlan went out on a short trip to Boulder. He returned on the stage in company with a well-groomed fellow whom the miner learned was a government official. And, though the official settled back in a corner of the coach and tried to sleep, Quinlan forced him to answer a few tactful questions, put for a purpose.

When they reached Placer, Quinlan called Slivers, the driver, aside and asked: "How long do we stop here?"

"Just about ten rounds of the second hand. We'll hit the alkali just as soon as we can hook on a fresh team."

"I want a half hour here, and I want it bad," Quinlan declared.

"We're a half hour late now, and the mail must be got through on time."

"No matter; I must have a half hour. There's a government hawk on board, and he expects to swoop down on Andy unawares and catch him with a row of glasses on the bar. You know how it is—Andy is giving us a square deal out at camp, and, though the Dewdrop owners are sore and have evidently given this government hawk the tip, Andy has forced them to quit the prune brandy and tobacco juice business. I must catch Andy on the 'phone, so he will have ample time to clear his bar and set out his barrels."

No further pleading was necessary. Slivers understood and fully appreciated the situation. Though he was never known to give the physical condition of the stage serious attention, and had frequently dragged it in on three wheels, he nevertheless inspected it critically that day and found it badly in need of grease; also, he found three nuts loose, two bolts gone, and the boot straps broken. To repair and adjust all this required a full half hour, and while the government official paced the hot road near the stable and cursed

the stage company for sending out a coach that was ready for the junk pile, Quinlan waited for his "party" in the nearest telephone booth. In thirty minutes he had Andy on the line, and in thirty seconds he sounded the alarm that caused the old man to drop the receiver and move from the mine office to his store with a faster pace than he had ever before been known to use.

When the stage and the official arrived, the inspector made directly for Andy's place. There was not a glass in sight, and the polished bar was covered with "Bull-dog" overalls, miners' boots and slickers. The place was pronounced O. K.

Nearly a month went by, and things moved along as per usual. Then something happened.

In a steel safe, behind Andy's counter, many of the diggers kept their savings. Not caring to open an account with the Boulder bank, and being possessed of a desire to have a "nest egg" on hand, this arrangement proved a convenience. In a little while the keeper had, in addition to his own money, some $4,000 in the safe.

Quinlan's visits became more frequent, and he was allowed liberties around the store that no other enjoyed. He went behind the counter, either on Andy or Fannie's end of the establishment, at will, and assisted the keeper at replacing goods on the shelves. Once or twice he helped the old man count the money at the close of the day's business, and, as a recognition of his supreme confidence in him, the keeper gave him the combination to the safe.

One morning, when Andy opened up, he found the money missing. The several smaller bags, containing the miners' savings, and the keeper's coin, gold and silver, was all placed in a larger canvas bag; and all was gone. The safe door was partly open. There were no marks or scratches on the lock, and it was clearly evident that the combination had been worked. The old man knew that, besides himself and Fannie, only one other knew the combination.

The theft was reported to Hudson, the superintendent, and before the noon shift went on the news of it had spread to every corner of camp. There was no clue, and Hudson

was making ready to 'phone to Boulder for the sheriff, when Quinlan left his post on the 600, came up the shaft and went over to the camp store. He called out the "investigating committee' and confessed to having committed the theft.

"I took it," he said, calmly. "Go tell Hudson to send for the sheriff. I am ready to take my medicine."

The "committee" went out and left Quinlan and Andy alone. The old man leaned over with both hands on the counter and gazed at the miner in a stupefied way. Half dazed, he went out and followed the "committee" to the office. But Hudson sent no word to the sheriff.

Andy returned presently and found Quinlan still standing by the counter, gazing curiously at the looted safe.

"No need of the sheriff making the trip up here," Andy said. "Court meets next month, and I'll guarantee that you'll be there when the gong sounds. There's something about this business I can't understand, but I'm certain you've taken the money only for a little while. Ain't I right?"

"Yes; you're right," Quinlan assured.

"I thought so. That's why I know you'll be handy when you're needed. I'm your surety, but Hudson declares that if it takes half the metal of the Gold Bug's pay streak to cover your bond he will see that it is stacked to keep you out of jail. Now, out yonder is California, and over there toward the east somewhere is Maine; the Gulf of Mexico is down south of Texas, and the Canadian line is up north here —that's the border line of your pasture till court meets."

The old man took Quinlan's hand and clinched it warmly. He then led him through the bearskin portieres to Fannie's end of the store. In a little while Fannie knew. She put her face in her hands and her elbows on the counter, and listened to him as if he was telling one of his best tales of Australia. But there was no happy smile at the close of this one; instead, she lifted her eyes to his, and in their warm depths, glowing with tears, Quinlan read the story of a woman's confidence and a woman's devotion. She raised her hand, and, while the old man turned to view the pine-whiskered summit of Cowhorn mountain, Quinlan pressed the soft white fingers to his lips.

Quinlan's confession failed to clear the mystery of the theft. Why the money had been taken, and how it had been used, remained unanswered and unsolved questions. He spent but little for drink, and took no part in the game over the little green table in the Dewdrop.

Three weeks passed, and only two days remained till court convened at Boulder. Andy had hoped, and believed, Quinlan would return the money before court time, and so waited patiently. But when the time for trial drew near, and Quinlan still showed no inclination to explain the mystery, the old keeper began to lose courage. He feared that, after all, something was wrong. He grew less talkative; more silent. His hard and never-ending work also told on him, and the combination of causes was bringing a serious change in the old man's condition. Frequently Fannie found him walking around the store in his sleep, and was finally obliged to lock the doors and hide the key after he had gone to bed.

The day before his going to trial, Quinlan called on Andy for a final talk. "I must go down tomorrow," said he. "I'm not afraid, and won't back down, but I'd like just a word from you about it before I go. It would make me feel better."

"A word about what?" bluntly asked the keeper.

"Why, about the robbery. You know what I mean. I can't make it any plainer."

"Well, one of us must be daffy as a French fiddler," Andy replied, nonplussed by Quinlan's words. "All I know about it is what you have told me, and that is damned little."

Unsatisfied, Quinlan turned and walked out, leaving Andy mumbling over the counter.

That night the old keeper was seized with another attack of sleep-walking. He donned his clothes, crawled through the window, and was wandering around the house before Fannie missed him. She hurried out, and followed him. He crossed the porch, followed the path to the back yard, and was digging under a pile of dry goods boxes behind the store. Just as the girl came up, he hauled out a heavy canvas bag that slipped from his fingers and fell with a jingle.

"How in thunder did that get out here?" Andy asked alound, when Fannie reached him, for he was now wide awake, and, with Fannie, stared stupidly at the bag of coin.

They carried it into the store, lighted a lamp and counted it. The money was all there; no part of it was missing.

Before Hudson or Simpson were told of it, next morning, Quinlan was interrupted in his work of packing his few best duds into a canvas telescope, and told he was wanted at the store. Believing it was Fannie who wanted him, he went immediately.

Andy met him at the door and led him around to the safe. All of the long-lost money reposed snugly in the vault.

"There will be no need of your going down to stand trial," Andy said. "And now, only one thing remains unsolved—why in thunder did you confess a crime you took no part in?"

Quinlan dropped his head, like a chided boy, and after a little while explained: "I saw you creep out the window that night with the bag in your hand. I was going to my bunk at the close of a short shift. I saw you sneak around the store with it, but did not follow you. I never knew where you put it. I didn't know you were asleep. I thought you were taking it for her—you had said you needed more money to send her East to school."

"That settles it," said Andy, taking Quinlan's hand. "I understand it all now. But Fannie won't go East to school. She might get fool notions in her head. I owe you a lot Mart, but the best I can do is to give you Fannie. She is all I have, and, though the sacrifice is great, I gladly make it for you. Go in and meet her; she is waiting for you."

ON AND OFF THE WATER WAGON

THE rocking Concord rolled into Gold Bug, leaving a long trail of dust in its wake. Most of the diggers of the night shift had crawled out of the bunkhouse and were stretching their limbs and killing time around the camp store. Some where down at the Dewdrop imbibing gooseberry champagne and prune wine.

Slivers did not bring the coach up to the store first, to throw the mail bags down, as was his usual custom, but cut across the tailings pile toward the boarding house. Neither did Slivers deign to notice the group in front of the store. He held the ribbons with the style of a band-wagon driver. He kept his eye on the leaders, and wore his hat tilted well back toward the southeast.

Though in matters generally Slivers was an enigma, as difficult to solve as a Chinese puzzle, he was easily understood when he arrived each day with the stage. Hat well down over his eyes and lines loose on the tongue meant empty stage and a dry trip. Swinging his hat, yelling "carahoo-oo" and cracking his blacksnake over the leaders just as he came up the hill meant a drummer on board with samples of Kentucky hardware for the Dewdrop.

But when Slivers failed to stop first at the store, failed to throw down the mail bags which the contract between the stage company and Uncle Sam explicitly stipulated must be unloaded first of all—when he failed to give the group in front of the store a single glance of recognition, it was, as Tony Bill expressed it, "A dollar agin a birdcage that Slivers brought somethin' done up in calico inside the coach."

And so, while the coach rocked across the white tailings pile to the boarding house, the diggers off duty begun hurried preparations to beautify themselves, absolutely certain that something feminine was coming into camp. They

slapped the quartz dust from their clothes with slouched hats. They combed their hair with their fingers, and all made a lively scramble for the one blacking-brush in camp.

Some finished their toilet in time to cross the camp and see Slivers jump down from the box, take his hat in his left hand, make a courtly bow, and poke his long right arm into the open door of the stage.

In a moment, something tall and pretty, and clad in a smart dust coat, stepped out. It had brown hair, an oval face, and big blue eyes. It cast a half-frightened look at the rough-and-ready men who surrounded the stage. Trowing a timid glance from one to the other, the pretty creature turned quickly and retreated into the boarding house. Slivers followed as far as the door with a load of grips and bundles.

The diggers assembled at once in the Dewdrop to discuss the new arrival. She had come unheralded. Whence and why, were questions of intense interest and immediate speculation.

"She's no hash slinger, I'll gamble my wad on that," Bensen, one of the night bosses declared. Her's ain't the style that throws soup plates and mush bowls. Did you see them big peepers of hers? Why, say, a square look from 'em would melt the base end of a Swiss glacier. She's a lady, I'm tellin' you, a tip-top lady, and I've got an argument for the one who says she ain't."

"She must be a first niece or a second cousin of the general manager," said Jackson, the pump man. "She's got tired o' smellin' gasoline and has come out to breathe pine ozone a while. Did you see them glad clothes she wore? Every thread of 'em made to measure."

"Just another bunch of calico, and another bundle of trouble for Gold Bug, that's all," Simpson, the foreman, declared with evident disgust.

"Shut up, you crabbed old bach," shrieked Tony Bill. "Get back in your shell and stay there."

Thus the discussion ended. When the diggers filed in to supper that night, searching glances were thrown from corner to corner, but the timid creature was nowhere in sight. The Old Woman was provokingly silent. Her stoical face

was as expressionless as the Sphinx. Those who ventured a question were curtly told that they would know in plenty o' time."

Next morning the diggers of Gold Bug were startled by seeing a little tin sign hanging outside the door of the boarding house "parlor." The words of the placard were painted in yellow, on a red background, and said:

"Miss Lola Langhorn, Dentist. Teeth Extracted Without Pain."

The "parlor" was the one room of the boarding house that the Old Woman held in absolute reserve. Its rag carpet was spared the merciless trample of miners' boots. Its sofa had not been sat on enough to take the squeak from the springs. It was kept in order for "company," the missionary who came out at long intervals, and the general manager who visited the Gold Bug regularly on the 15th to pay off the crew.

But the "parlor" was put to a different use this time. The big armchair was hauled to the center. The stand was drawn alongside, and piled with an array of forceps, pliers and tongs sufficient to chill the blood of an army surgeon.

The diggers paused to read the sign as they went in to breakfast, and each halted curiously in the door. Each one saw the big chair, and the instruments of torture on the stand. But it was the creature sitting at the window, studiously reading a novel, and apparently oblivious to their curious gaze, that held each digger overtime in the door. She was daintily dressed in a gown that was all lace and ruffles and tucks; her shapely white arms were bare to the elbow, and her hair was piled in a mass of brown on her head.

When breakfast was nearly over Miss Langhorn came into the dining-room and was seated at a little table that the Old Woman had arranged for her. She threw a pretty smile around the rough board. As each digger believed the smile was for him, the momentary embarrassment caused an upset of three cups of coffee, and Tony Bill dropped a hotcake into Simpson's mush.

The inhabitants of Gold Bug had never realized that a dentist, or "dentistess," as Slivers called this one, was so badly needed in the camp. Before Miss Lola Langhorn's

sign had been out six hours every digger of the day and night shift, with the exception of Simpson, was either taken with a severe toothache or discovered they had a molar or two they really didn't need.

Since his official position gave him greater license on his time, or at least on the manner of using it, Hudson, the super, had a decided advantage over the others, and was the first to call on the lady. He had a "jaw tooth" that had troubled him since he had left the Silver Bell, ten years before—must have been the arsenic in the water over at that camp.

The super indicated the side where the fractious tooth was located, and the young lady, with dainty care, made an examination. But she found the teeth on that side as sound as the Gold Bug's bullion, and Hudson was obliged to admit his mistake—the bad tooth was on the other side. Finally a tooth was found that needed a crown, and still another that needed filling. Much to the super's joy, he made an appointment for one hour with the fair dentist every morning till his teeth were put in order.

After supper that evening a half-dozen diggers were waiting their turn in the "parlor." To make their affliction more genuine, some of them wore bandages around their "swollen" cheeks. Before the day was done, the lady had made appointments enough to cover the next two weeks; truly, she filled a "long-felt-want" in Gold Bug.

But Miss Langhorn carried her work beyond that of extracting teeth and building crowns. While she worked, she talked. It was principally this talk that made the operation painless, for there was music in her words, and every digger gave ear. Whenever she caught the scent of liquor (and she caught it every time a patient came in) she used the odor as fit excuse for a temperance talk. She hated liquor, and intimated that she could not like a man who drank.

As a consequence, various forms and kinds of "breath killers" were tried, but the lady could smell the whiskey through all of them. Thus only one thing remained—that was to quit—get on the water wagon. So there was a decided falling-off in business at the Dewdrop. Each after-

noon the barkeeper found time to come out in front, tilt his chair against the wall, and take a nap in the sunshine. This was a thing before unheard of in Gold Bug. Even the devotees to the little green table lost interest in the game.

The fair dentist admitted that it was difficult for men accustomed to a regular toddy every day, to drop the bracing liquor altogether, or, at least, to let go suddenly. Such a shock might work permanent injury to the strongest man nerve, as well as to his nerves. She said the man accustomed to his night's nightly or his morning's morning could soon overcome the habit entirely by taking that one glass between four and five a. m. After the diggers of Gold Bug had given this a few trials and hammered the Dewdrop door down in a frantic effort to wake up the barkeeper, they concluded that the lady was quite right—such treatment would cure any man of the drink habit.

Never was a woman's humanizing influence more deeply felt. Gold Bug became strangely quiet and calm. Slivers declared it was like disturbing a camp-meeting to drive his four-wheelers into camp faster than a walk. Sunday became a different day from that the diggers had known. On this day the shifts changed, and the whole crew had five hours off. Previously these five hours was a time for the biggest drinking bout of the week. If any shooting was done, it usually occurred on Sunday, as all disputes of the past six days were reserved for settlement on the seventh.

But the coming of the fair dentist changed all this. The barkeeper snoozed undisturbed in his chair all of Sunday. Miss Langhorn received no patients that day, but gave a talk —half lecture, half sermon—from the boarding house porch.

It was during the course of these lectures that the "Be Better Society" was organized. Its roll of membership included all except Simpson, Slivers and the barkeeper.

The perfecting of this organization practically put an end to business at the Dewdrop. Those who went there did so infrequently. Fault was found with "goods" that were pronounced "bunkum" before. Jackson dropped a glass, half emptied, and loudly declared that it would give a Mexican burro a fit of jim-jams. His accusation that a plug of

tobacco had been dropped in the whiskey barrel and water poured in made the barkeeper reach under the shelf for his six-gun. A hasty remonstrance on the part of bystanders prevented possible bloodshed.

This was an unfortunate move on the part of the barkeeper, as it slid the Dewdrop to the ragged edge of failure. "This is no place for an honest man," Jackson said, chestily. "I'm going to quit you. Since it is no place for an honest man, it is likewise no place for an honest man's money, so open the safe and give me my wad. I'll cache it sommers else."

"That's right, Jackson," voiced another. "You're on the right lead. I'll move my pouch, too.'

"So will I," cried a third.

"Give me mine," chorused the crowd.

So the bags were drawn. It was a veritable "run" on the camp bank. The news of it reached the lady dentist. She was muched pleased, and suggested that the safe be brought to her room—nothing would disturb it there—and such a change might result in an increase of savings.

Miss Langhorn's proposal was adopted without a dissenting voice. The safe was the property of the diggers, and was removed with considerable pomp and ceremony from a dusty corner of the Dewdrop to the fair lady's shrine.

Nearly half the summer went by—the driest summer Gold Bug ever knew. The "Be Better Society" grew and prospered, and Miss Langhorn became little short of an angel to the miners of the camp. Though they all liked her and showered their attentions upon her, and even suffered the loss of teeth that were in most cases badly needed, she treated all the same and kept them at a sisterly distance. A few were so fortunate as to be intimate enough to call her "Miss Lola." Hudson, with his usual gusto, declared that she was the lady for him. But the super had said things very similar to that before.

The going of Miss Langhorn was as sensational as her coming. It was not so much her going, as the manner of it, that took the diggers of Goul Bug by surprise.

It was on Sunday morning. Both shifts were off duty.

The men had made a change of flannel, trimmed their whiskers, and were gathering in front of the boarding house to hear the regular sermon. One by one the miners came, throwing themselves at ease on the sod. The hour for the lady to appear arrived, but no lady was in evidence. They waited ten, twenty, thirty minutes, but still the door to her room remained closed. The conclusion was reached that she was asleep. Hudson and Simpson strode up and down the porch a few times, their heavy boots thumping as loudly as hoofs on a stable floor. Even this failed to bring a sound from within.

Then Tony Bill, who seemed to have the lady's welfare more at heart, surmised that she was ill.

The crowd agreed with Tony in this belief. Hudson and Simpson promptly apologized for their disturbance, and suggested that a committee of two be appointed to wait on the sick lady and ascertain what could be done for her. The delicate nature of the task required men of especial tact to carry it out on strict lines of etiquette. Tony Bill and Perry Mason were deemed best fitted to serve on the committee, and were appointed.

While the crowd breathlessly waited, the committee tiptoed to the door. Tony tapped lightly on the rough panel. There was no response, and he tapped again, louder than before, but with no better results.

"Try the lock," said a voice.

The lock was tried, and yilded. The door opened and the committee, with its hands over its eyes, ventured in. After a moment of suspense, Tone returned to the door and with ghastly face announced:

"She's gone!"

The crowd stood up. The same thought came at once to every digger's mind, and found expression from a score of lips:

"Look in the safe."

The combination had been worked, and the heavy door opened readily. All the bags were inside, each with its little tag and the name of the owner. But they had lost their plumpness, likewise their weight.

Following this startling disclosure, a long, long silence fell over the crowd. At last Hudson spoke, but what he said, though a matter of Gould Bug history and entirely apropriate, would not look well in type.

It was a cruel blow, cruelly dealt. Not such a blow as the footpad deals with his sandbag to rob the unsuspecting. She who took the hard-earned savings of the Goul Bug diggers was no common thief.

A horseman was dispatched with all haste on the trail now eight hours old. All the others with one accord moved, a heart-broken, sullen crowd to the Dewdrop, jerked the sleeping barkeeper from his chair, and stood him at his post.

Nobody found fault with the "goods" that day.

The TIN HORN OF GOLD BUG

DID you ever try to tell a stage driver anything? Well, if you did you vented valuable oxygen for nothing, because a stage driver cannot be told.

And thus it happened that much kinly meant advice was lost to the winds when the Gold Bug stage was pulled up suddenly on the brink of Roaring Creek, with the lead horses on their haunches. The bottom had ripped out of a great black cloud up in Little Annie gulch, and the murky water rolled into Roaring Creek in heaving swells.

There were two passengers aboard. One was a black eyed damsel, with cheeks like a peach blossom, and a gaze in them would melt the heart of a tyro. She was on her way to Gould Bug to spend the summer, and incidentally help the Old Woman of the boarding house sling hash.

So much for the girl. Now he of the black moustache, who sat with Slivers on the box, though possessing every required feature of a first class villain in a "meller-drammer," was far more "drammer" than "meller;" in truth, he and Slivers drammed two bottles before they were within seven miles of Roaring Creek. Then they drammed no more, because there was no more to dram. And with nothing better to do, Slivers, during the easy roll down the long grade, began a systematic course of questions, calculating to bring out the stranger's entire family history from a to izzard.

But the third or fourth quizz from Slivers was so lacking in tact, and came so direct, that the stranger was obliged to answer in kind. He told the driver, that if it would do him any good he would tell him his name was Thompson—front name, Jerry—was a sky-lighter, born in a balloon—was first rocked to sleep by a cyclone—first learned to walk, talk and shoot in Texas—learned the alphabet

backwards, because it came easier that way for him than frontwards—was the inventor of the sleeveless vest, the bottomless pail, and noiseless cheese—also had some dealings with cowless milk—and was the first man to ascertain that a feather, dropped from a height of 7,777 feet on a windless day would, if it struck squarely, break a two-dollar bill.

A while ago we left the lead horses on their hind feet, at the brin kof Roaring Creek. They kept that attitude but a short time, while Slivers told Mr. Jerry Thompson what he knew of stage driving in general, and Roaring Creek in particular. This was done because Jerry had volunteered to guess that the creek was too high, and the ford a reckless chance. He didn't care himself, would just as soon swim the creek as ride across it on a stage, but it was the girl he was thinking about.

But Slivers stood erect on the box and measured the murky current with practiced eye.

Yes, he could cross'er. Of course he could cross 'er. Hadn't he crossed 'er many times when she was a damsite higher? No man, born in a balloon, or reared in a cyclone could tell him anything about Roaring Creek. Didn't he know every foot of the road from Boulder to Gold Bug? And couldn't he drive over it in the dark, blindfolded? Well, I guess yes. Tell him something about Roaring Creek, will you; and while you are in the telling business, just tell him "who in hell is driving this stage anyhow."

Before Mr. Jerry Thompson, or the girl in the coach could enter serious protest, Slivers cracked his whip over the leaders and the stage splashed into the stream. The driver kept his eye on the burned pine stump and the clump of chapparral on the opposite shore. The crunching of the wheels on the gravel told him his course was right.

And Slivers would have made it cleanly, despite the swimming of the leaders and the rush of water into the coach, had it not been for the untimely arrival of a four-foot wave, which rolled suddenly out of Little Annie gulch into Roaring Creek, catching the outfit broadside.

Everything was off its feet in a wink. The coach rolled over on its side, and the driver leaped astride a wheeler.

Feminine shrieks of terror came from inside the overturned stage. The coach broke loose from the running gear, and was tossed about like a cork on the black water. The strager poked a long arm through the door, and found the girl, bringing her out, half strangled. Then another wave rolled down on them, and tossed them clear of the stage, pulled them under, and threw them well out toward shore. The man struggled in the mighty grasp of the avalanche, and by a supreme effort and the favorable buffeting of the waves was lifted high and thrown shoreward. He finally found footing, and clambered up the bank, with the girl clinging to him. Just below, Slivers and his four horses were threshing the willows on the border of the creek. A short time later, the whole outfit, minus the coach, was again ready for the road.

The girl and the stranger entered Gold Bug on the backs of the wheelers. Slivers follow dejectedly behind, his reputation badly damaged, and his sonscience all but mortally wounded.

When a man saves a girl's life, the girl naturally presumes that the man will fall in love with her at once, unless he can satisfactorily prove that he already has a wife or two, and is unable to make agreeable terms with them. And this was the way, beyond doubt, that Nettie, the black eyed damsel, looked at the Roaring creek affair. It was quite evident that in Mr. Jerry Thompson she had found the man whose picture she had carried in her mind's eye since she was sweet sixteen, and that was possibly—well, six years ago. Jerry was tall and handsome, polite, graceful as a dancing master. He wore a moustache and crimson tie. To Nettie Jerry was a real man. To the diggers of Gold Bug, Mr. Jerry Thompson was a tin horn.

There had been tin horns before in Gold Bug, but none like Jerry. He was not of the sort that snoozes in the bunkhouse all day, and roll out with the night shift to go on duty—over a little green table in the Dewdrop. Jerry hit the cage, and dropped down the shaft with the rest of the crew. He handled a jack like a Trojan, and Hudson, the super, declared that if he had twenty men like Jerry, he

would shut down the machine drills and save the cost of making steam.

Jerry dealt the cards, but it was always after the shift was done. And luck, the golden winged goddess, never failed to touch him with her wing. What Jerry earned as a three-fifty stoper was small interest on the wad he carried from the Dewdrop every night.

Always when a young girl came to Gold Bug, Hudson, the big buffalo of a super, made a fool of himself. He never failed to become of the notion, when a new damsel arrived in camp, that he was a ladies' man. Time and again the sweet things turned him down, but old Hudson always bobbed up serenely when a new one appeared. The Old Woman of the boarding house was largely to blame, as the super was a great man in her eyes, and she was determined to get him married. After the third failure, Simpson, the foreman, who was the one man in camp that could talk to Hudson and give it to him straight, advised him to get a mop-squeezeer and let the fairies be.

Nettie was the fourth. And the big super went down on his knees before her, just as he had done with the others. He bought her trinklets by the wagon load, and though the girl took them prettily, she reserved her best smiles for Jerry.

Hudson grew sullen, and moped around the camp like a mad Indian. He hated Jerry, but he couldn't fire him, because he was too good a man. Jerry took it all as a mere matter of course, and gave the super's bad talk no heed. It was Nettie who did the courting, and Jerry was gentleman enough to treat her fair.

But this oft-repeated condition of things made Simpson sore. It was little Simpson knew of women, and still less he cared to know. He thought Nettie ought to be given a return pass to Boulder, with an additional bonus on condition that she remain away from Gould Bug. "Every time a new bunch of calico comes in over the trail, the devil is turned loose in camp," Simpson declared while he and a line of the boys leaned over the bar in the Dewdrop. "Every time a new woman comes to camp, some good man gets killed," he continued, hammering his fist emphatically. "There's the one

at the boarding house now; while she's making a sucker of Hud by taking all his junk, she's also arching her neck and prancing around Jerry. She likes Jud's trinkets, but she cares no more for him than the devil does for holy water. And to make things worse, the Old Woman is mad because the girl is all for Jerry, and in her madness is setting out hash that would give a bulldog the cramps. Why, say, there was salt enough in the beans today to have pickled a sawlog, and I couldn't detect any difference between the taste of the pie and the spuds. Just watch what I'm telling you—hell will be popping in Gold Bug before the girl business is done

Smipson brought his fist down on the bar with a jolt, that made the cocktail glasses dance on their stems. The boys finished their drinks and went out. Shortly after, Jerry came in, smiling and jovial, and broke two bucks on the bar to treat the crowd. Then he settled to the little green table and started the ball rolling.

Just before the third play. Hudson dropped in. He had been drinking red eye all afternoon, and was full to the muzzle. He walked over to the table, and blinkingly sized up the situation. "Hold on there, Mr. Dealer," said he, "I've got a few plunks left. It's me that calls that turn." He leaned over the table and examined the cards more closely. "That looks like king, queen, jack. By the general laws of health, and according to nature that means king-queen, or queen-jack. To me it's queen-jack."

"I've got it called different," said Jerry, with his customary confident tone. The cards were turned. "You lose your money, boss," remarked Jerry, scooping the pile.

"And there's more here yet," said Hudson, as he dropped a five-piece on the cloth. "That may go, and still I'll eat and sleep. Now what's the turn?"

The game went merrily on, with Jerry always in the lead. Before a great while, the super had drawn up a chair, dug up his buckskin, and shook out a hatful of twenties. It was too blooded for the average digger, and all backed out and left it with Jerry and Hudson. Three hours later, the super was all in, and made a loan on the barkeeper to stand treat.

Just as the game broke up, Simpson came in, and said there was a bad slip on the 400. He needed another man at once, to catch up with her. A hint was enough for Jerry. He stuffed his wad in his canvas coat, and was off with the foreman up the trail. A half dozen of those who remained, were trying to get Hudson to his bunk, when someone was heard stamping his feet outside. The door was pushed open, and a man stood on the steps, holding the reins of a hard ridden broncho.

"Hello," said he. "I'm the deputy sheriff; just in from Placer, a little dry, thank you, and I don't care if I do." He dropped the rains and sauntered in. "You're Hudson, the superintendent," he remarked, taking the super's hand, "and I'm glad to know you. Excuse my presumption, but I'm looking for a man. Johnson is his name, but he's changed it to Thompson—Jerry Thompson. He killed a greaser over on the Brazo last month, and we just got track of him here two days ago. I must take him at once. Is he in his bunk?"

"He's down in the mine," some man volunteered rather tardily.

"Then I'll have to go down. Will you go with me?"

"Sure," replied Hudson, as he led the way to the hoist. The cage had just come up, bringing a mucker with a hurry call for timbers.

"She's coming in on the 400 bad," said the mucker, as he lifted the gate and rolled a car of timbers on the lower deck of the cage. "Jerry and Simpson are driving her back, but the whole upper wall may settle on 'em."

"Mebbe we'd better wait," remarked the deputy, as he hesitated near the shaft collar.

"Wait, the devil," roared the super. If you want your man, come down and get him fair. I'm going down anyhow, as the boys need help most likely."

The deputy stepped on the platform with Hudson, and the cage dropped down, stopping with an abrupt jerk on the 400. The super pulled a candle stick from a station post, and the two started down the drift. A hundred yards back a ladder ran aloft near an ore chute, and up this the two men clambered into a wide stope. A dozen diggers were jamming

in the timbers, working madly in the candle-light. Back under the maw of the break, were Simpson and Jerry. The whole mountain trembled, and the great stulls groaned and cracked.

Hudson left the deputy abruptly, and rushed to the assistance of the two men in the maw. Impending disaster sobered him, and his whole thought now was in keeping the Gold Bug in operation. Should the 400 come down nearly the whole ore reserve of the mine would be locked up.

"Gimme a jack, quick," he yelled. "Ike, run to the station and ring for bigger timbers."

The deputy stood trembling on the lower edge of the stope. Discretion implored him to retreat, but manliness and duty bade him remain. He climbed up higher, and joined the crew of madly working men. Twice he was brushed aside by the tall and powerful Jerry. Up in the maw, loose shale rattled down in a stream, or dropped by the bucketfull from the hanging wall. Then came a dull rumble, as of distant thunder, and an underground whirlwind fluttered the candles. Half the crew retreated in wild haste for the shaft, for all knew the meaning of it.

Bearing a stull as big as a sawlog, Jerry ran under the bulging wall. The slip split in twain, just as he drove her home. Then followed a mighty crash, as if earth was torn apart. Black darkness filled the stope, and the maw was choked up with tons of crumbled shale. But the big stull held her up, and the stope remained open. Hudson, Simpson and the deputy were locked in the vault, and somewhere under the mass Jerry was pinned to the floor.

The super found a match and lighted his candle. Grabbing a pick, he began digging into the loose rock. "Dig for God's sake, dig," he yelled. "Jerry is somewhere under here. If he hadn't stuck that timber under her, we'd all been squashed like a spider under a boot.

At last they found him, and pulled him from under the mass of broken quartz. They bore his long and apparently lifeless body out between them, carrying him to the station where the cage waited. Up on the surface they stretched him out on the cool grass, and mopped his cut and bruised

face. When his eyes opened, the first thing his gaze fell upon was the deputy's star.

"I'm your prisoner, pardner," said he feebly, "I knew you, the minute I saw you, down in the stope, but I was too busy to talk to you. I know why you are here, and I'm ready to go. I killed La Monte, but not till after he'd starved his old wife and almost beat the life out of Manzita. I caught him beating her, and told him to quit. He kept at it, and I warned him that if he wanted to live he'd have to drop the gad. A fourth time I caught him using a club on her, and my blood boiled hot in a jiffy. I shot him while he stood over Manzita with his stick. Manzita is here in camp. They call her Nettie. She'll tell you that what I say is straight. I wouldn't have run away, but I coundn't pound the truth into those greasers, and the lost no time spreading the yarn that I had murdered the old man for his money. But I can make money without killing men to get it."

"I don't need to be told that," the deputy replied. "We'll go down to the bunk house and wait till morning. You're in no condition to travel tonight."

They laid him on a cot, and the deputy sat by his side all through the night. Now and then a miner crept in to learn how he was getting along. The officer arose every little while, and walked the floor, thinking it all over. It was nearly daylight, when he lay down for an hour's sleep. When he arose, he came over to Jerry's bunk, and the bruised miner opened his eyes.

"Say, Jerry," said the deputy, "do you think you'll be able to ride today?"

"Yes, easy," Jerry replied.

"Well, we'll hit the road for Placer this morning, but I'm going to lose you on the way, understand? I'm an officer, sworn to do my duty, but I'm white. You saved three lives last night, and already had one to your credit when you put old La Monte out of the way. I'm going to 'phone in my resignation as soon as I reach Boulder, as I want to get at something a little more decent. You can leave a note and explain it all to the girl. It's only twenty miles to the Arizona line, and you can both be on the other side by tomorrow

morning. Get up, if you can, and crawl into your clothes."

Jerry reached under his pillow, and pulled out a heavy buckskin.

"No, none of that," said the officer, lifting his hand. "It isn't money, it's justice and fair play that I want, that's all, and you can't get either down there with all those greasers against you. I'll leave you, for a while now, and you you can get ready to go. I'll have the boss send over the girl to see you."

Two hours later the men all lined up on the boarding house porch, and gave Jerry the brawny hand as he passed along. Nettie came out, looking her prettiest, and the diggers turned round to admire the pine-whiskered muntains, while he put something on her cheek that made the rosebud more rosy.

Just before climbing into the saddle, Jerry gave Hudson a heavy bundle, with the remark that it was a little token he wanted to leave the boys, that they might not think too hard of him.

When the two horsemen were out of sight, the super opened the package.

"Well, I'll be—"

Inside were forty little bags. Each bag held the money, and bore the name of each digger who had lost over the green table in the Dewdrop, when Jerry dealt the cards.

The big bag in the center of the heap bore Hudson's name.

The super lifted it out and passed it over to Nettie. "This one belongs to the widow," said he.

WHEN THE PLUNGER QUIT

ALL three of them arrived at Gold Bug on the same stage. Slivers pronounced them the queerest trinity he ever pulled over the road. One was a woman—a young woman, with a sort of sad, sweet face, set well back under the protecting shades of an old-fashioned bonnet. She sat on the box with Slivers the whole distance from Boulder, but according to the driver's most careful calculations she spoke only three and one-half words the whole trip.

One of the two men inside was the woman's brother. The red-faced fellow who sat with him called him Dick, and referred to the woman as "Miss Lucy."

Though he addressed him thus familiarly, the red-faced man had, as a matter of truth, never met either of them before he boarded the coach at Placer. But he belonged to that world-wide, giant-hearted class who receive the universe in open arms, regardless of class, color or creed. He later apllied for work, and when Hudson signed him, he put down his name as Mark Blevins. To the diggers of Gold Bug, and more especially to those who tarried to win or lose over the little green table in the Dewdrop, he became known as "The Plunger."

"Miss Lucy," as all the diggers learned to call her, was the first real angel that ever entered Gold Bug. Being of the type feminine, she was held, for a time, with no little suspicion by the inhabitants of the camp. This was done with full remembrance of past experiences.

But Miss Lucy was one in whom even the woman-hater, Simpson, could find no fault. In due time every miner of Gold Bug was convinced that she was sincere. It became evident that her one aim and purpose was to do good in the camp.

There was an empty cabin not far from the boarding

house. Miss Lucy tidied it up and kept house for her brother. She came over each evening just before the shifts changed, to read her Bible and sing to the diggers. The songs were new, and yet not new. There was nothing of the music hall flavor about them; they were nearly all old-fashioned ditties. She would begin with "Rock of Ages," "Lead Kindly Light," and "Nearer my God to Thee;" and when the miners called for more, she sang them of "Barbara Allen," and "Sally in Our Alley."

Miss Lucy carried sushine everywhere she went. She became a sort of guardian angel to every whiskered digger; and they liked her, because they knew she was sincere. She was everywhere that a humanizing word or a gentle hand was needed. When a miner took sick, or was brought up the long, dark shaft with an arm gone and his limp body shot full of quartz, she was the first to reach his side.

Though she did not pound temperance into them, the miners, out of the real bigness of their hearts, met one evening in the Dewdrop to "put and carry" several motions and adopt resolutions that would give Miss Lucy a better understanding of the conditions; also, it would raise the moral level of the camp. It was proposed and unanimously carried, that "On and after this date, any man caught drunk, except on the two days immediately following pay day, would be shot on sight, provided he wandered outside, where he was in danger of being seen by Miss Lucy." It was also decided that all disputes, where guns were used, unless proven of a very pressing nature, must be settled outside camp, or out of earshot of Miss Lucy's house. And while the assembly was heated with the passion of reform, a more sweeping measure was proposed; this was to establish regular closing hours for the Dewdrop. This evoked general discussion, and no little argument. After three black eyes were registered and a volley or two of artillery fired, the question was brought to a vote. It failed to carry, as it was justly felt that such a measure would destroy the freedom and love of liberty so much cherished by every digger of Gold Bug.

In the work of reform Miss Lucy accomplished less on her brother Dick than on any other digger in the camp. Per-

THEY HAD OTHER TALKS, LONG AND QUIET, IN THE SHADE OF THE BIG LAUREL BY THE CABIN.

haps this was because she had given him up as lost, and no longer cared to waste good time upon him. Anyway he could hang longer over the bar and faro table, in proportion to his pay, than any other man of the day or night shift. While other of the men, under Lucy's benign influence, were turned from the broad road into the narrow trail, Dick jogged along the broad highway with absolute unconcern. His sister's tears and pleadings had no effect upon him.

Regularly each pay day Dick brought his "wad" into the Dewdrop, and after breaking the crust on the bar, loosened the sack on the green table. The Plunger had become regular dealer since coming to camp, and it was The Plunger who got Dick's money; also, it was The Plunger who got a big part of all the pay day money of Gold Bug; at least, he got the first shot at it.

One night, after the men had lined up at the office for their pay, Dick came in and stood over the table where Hudson and Jackson were making a desperate effort to break the bank. Twice they came near putting The Plunger ashore. It was a blooded game, but none were too blooded for Dick, as long as his money held out.

"Here's my chance," Dick remarked, after he had watched the game for a while. He dug his hand into the buckskin and pulled up four twenties. "What's your limit?" he asked.

"The roof's off," replied The Plunger.

"All right, here's a double eagle on the bullet," Dick answered, dropping a twenty and sliding into a chair.

"A double eagle goes, and there's more at the mint," chimed in Hudson, covering the bet.

The cards were turned. Dick lost.

He repeated the bet and lost again.

Then he dug his hand into the sack, circled once around the chair, and tried again. He won next time. Won again, then went three times to the bad. Planked up the fourth time and won; the fifth time and won. Then he got careless, let his whole wad on the copper, and dropped it all in the sink.

After each of these experiences, which happened regularly every month, Dick went home blue. Unlike the average man of the green cloth, he was a hard loser, and he would go to his work the next day as suddenly as a criminal getting in line to do the lockstep.

So it happened that Miss Lucy met The Plunger, and the two had a long talk. The gamler had always managed to keep a safe distance from her. He was seldom one of the group who heard her sing. But after she had talked to him that day, and walked with him up the trail to the collar of the shaft, The Plunger was become of a different turn of mind.

He worked like a Trojan over his drill that afternoon, and had his full set of holes ready for the powder an hour before shot time. He worked in silence, and madly, that his muscles might keep pace with his brain, for he was thinking, thinking. A new vigor and a new life had entered into him.

Though his arms could swing the jack, his fingers lost their deftness, and he dealt the cards that night in a half-hearted way. He lost on every turn. He seemed to court each loss, and passed it up with a smile. By 10 o'clock he was all in. The bank was empty. He arose and smiled happily, as if a great load had been shifted from his shoulders. He offered his hand to Hudson, for it was Hudson who had driven him ashore.

"You certainly die game," said the super, "I like your pluck. Come have one or two with me."

"No thanks; cut me out," The Plunger answered. "I've quit."

"You're pipe-dreaming," Hudson replied amazed.

"No, I'm giving it to you straight. My bank's closed for good, and I'm on the seat with the water wagon driver."

The laugh that followed brought no smile from The Plunger's resolute face. He strode out of the saloon, leaving the crowd gazing at the door in mute astonishment.

From that time on The Plunger was always one of the crowd who tarried on the boarding house porch to hear Miss Lucy sing. They had other talks, long and quiet, in the

shade of the big laurel by the cabin. Nearly every day she walked with him up the trail to the shaft house. Sometimes she pinned a mountain daisy to his jacket just before he went down.

Though The Plunger had quit his old tricks, he still called in at the Dewdrop every evening to meet the boys, for he was the same jovial digger he was before suffering a change of heart. Another pay day rolled around, and on the evening following, as The Plunger entered the saloon, he met Miss Lucy near the door. There were tears in her eyes, and a tremor in her tone. She begged him to watch her brother Dick, who had just entered. She tried to get him to stay away, to leave his money at the cabin, but he had obstinately refused. She knew he would gamble and drink it all away in one night, just as he had done before.

"He won't listen to me," she said, "but I think he will listen to you. Don't let him lose his money, please don't, for my sake."

The Plunger would have waded through fire, had Miss Lucy commanded him. She had said enough to drive him to immediate action. "I'll get his money, and return it to you," he declared, turning into the saloon.

He found Dick and drew him aside. Dick insisted on investing a portion of his pile in blue and red chips, but The Plunger interfered. Then Dick demanded that they have a little game of their own, just to pass the time.

"No, I can't gamble, even with you, Dick," said The Plunger.

"H, gambling, your Aunt Peggy! This won't be gambling—just a quiet round of poker, that's all, at two-bits a corner.

Believing it a chance to hold Dick from the green table, The Plunger agreed to the game. They found a table well back in the corner of the saloon, away from the noise and hub-dub of the faro circle and the drinking crowds at the bar. They cut, and Dick won the deal. The cards were shuffled, and after a round or two, Dick grew impatient. He shoved back his chair in disgust, and exclaimed:

"Bring us lemonade and filtered water. This is too

tame. It's just like playing casino in a hayloft. Let's make the ante worth while. Why not call it four-bits a turn?"

The Plunger hesitated. He also carried his month's pay, and if luck went wrong, he could lose it all during the night, even at the rate Dick suggested. But the touch of the cards, the clink of the chips and the spirit of the game brought the old desire back again. The boisterous laughter, the oaths and curses, was as music to his ears. His blood tingled in his veins, and the old craving drove him on.

"All right," he agreed, "Toss out the deal; four-bits goes."

When the ante was small, Dick was a sure winer, but with a lifted pot, he went to the bad every turn. Three times The Plunger won the small bet. Then he forgot himself and dug his hand into his sack. He dropped a fiver on the table and remarked: "I'll go you one better, and lay that on the turn."

"Good, good!" cried Dick with delight. "This is taking us out of the committee meeting. It looks to me very much like ace, queen, jack. In grammar it is queen-jack or jack-queen."

"I see it through a different glass," The Plunger returned, now fully imbued with the gambling spirit.

"You see it right," said Dick, shoving over the pile. "Here's a twenty on the next.

This turn Dick lost again, but remained game. Again the cards were dealt. Both men pulled their sacks. This is getting interesting, blamed if it ain't," said Dick. "But just to show you how I stand, I'll set my wad on ace heart, ace club, ace diamond and ace spade. The laws of health would call it four aces."

"My wad don't call it that way," said the Plunger, setting his pouch on the table.

By this time every digger in the saloon know of the "quiet little game" in the corner, and all were gathered around the table.

For a little while there was silence, then The Plunger said, so low Dick could hardly hear him: "I call you."

HE THREW WIDE THE DOOR AND THERE—THE LIFELESS BODY.

Dick turned his cards. He held aces! The crowd lost its breath, but no word was spoken, for the end was not yet. But four aces! Say, that's a mighty hard hand to beat.

The silence grew more intense while The Plunger turned his cards. He held a straight flush! The crowd hammered its boots on the floor. Digger slapped digger with slouched hats and labor-hardened palms. Yell after yell went up, till the Dewdrop threatened to lose its roof.

Dick's chin dropped, and his face turned pale. He pushed his cards, the chips and the money across the table, shoved back his chair, and abruptly left the saloon, amid the laughing jeers of the crowd.

It was yet early, and the Plunger went first to the bunkhouse to spruce up a bit, before making a short call on Miss Lucy. He would give the money to her, he decided. He had won it fair, but he would not keep it.

Just as he left the bunkhouse, and started across the camp toward the cabin, he met Lucy. The dim light through the bunkhouse window fell upon her face and revealed eyes that had been weeping.

"Don't cry," said The Plunger, "don't cry, Miss Lucy. Dick did gamble, but it was I who won his money. I had no intention of keeping it. Here it is."

She lifted her hand in refusal. "It isn't that," she cried; "no, no, it isn't that. I was out when he returned home. I came to the cabin, opened the door, and there"—

She said no more, The Plunger understodd. He leaped before her and ran madly across the camp to the cabin. He threw wide the door, and there—

The darkness was to dense, but a lighted candle revealed it all—the lifeless body, the smoking revolver, the wound in the temple.

Miss Lucy came in a little later and found The Plunger wailing over her brother's body.

"Dick! Dick!" the gambler cried. "Poor Dick, what have you done! God have mercy on me; it was my fault!"

The Plunger arose and took the weeping girl's hand. "This is my crime, Miss Lucy," he confessed. "I led him into it, and won his money. I broke the promise I made you.

Here, over poor Dick's body, I swear I shall never do it again. I will keep my word."

He gripped her slender fingers in a grasp like that of steel. There was naught to give witness save the sputtering candle on the wall, but the vow remained unbroken—The Plunger kept his word.

Nearly six months later the super got out his swallow-tail coat, and the diggers built a wedding bell of wood fern to hang on the boarding house porch. Slivers brought a preacher in from Boulder, and—

But that is another story.

The GOLD BUG KID

"A KID around a mine is just about as useless as a hole in a doughnut," Simpson, the foreman, declared, when he learned that Hudson had signed The Kid as a sort of general roustabout for the night shift.

"There are two things I have no use for," Simpson went on, pounding his sledge fists emphatically, while he and a line of the diggers were in front of the Dewdrop bar, enjoying the full measure of the pause between the last swallow and the cherry on the bottom. "One is women, and the other is kids."

"And that's me, too," echoed Jackson, the night pump man, from his end of the line.

Nevertheless, The Kid went on duty, and was not long in proving himself vastly unlike any boy the diggers of Gold Bug had ever known. He was a big-boned, broad-shouldered youth. He was heavy, but not of the fat and dumpy sort. His was a round jovial face, with lips set firm, eyes intensely black, and from which snapped the alertness and intelligence of youth.

The Kid was just a wanderer when he came to Gold Bug. He had given Slivers his last dollar, and made up the remainder of his fare by lending a hand at changing the horses at the stage stations, on the trip up from Placer.

He looked up Hudson; found him at the office, and applied for work. The super told him at once that a mine was no place for kids. "A mine is just a big hole in the ground," said Hudson, "and it takes men to burrow it out."

The Kid paid no heed to the super's objections, but went on telling his story. And it came so direct from the boy's heart that the big man was forced to give ear.

The Kid said his father had been boss over on the Silver Bell—his father never missed an hour from his shift—never drank while on duty, and never bet a penny over the

little green table—held back a slip once on the 600, when all of the men were out—swam the lower level when it was flooded, reached the pump and cleared the mine—went into a drift to clean a "missed hole," caught the powder, and was buried under five tons of rock and shale—they brought him out in a hand bucket, and buried him under the white oak up the gulch from the mill—couldn't remember his mother, she died down at Boulder, when The Kid was a baby.

His father's name? Oh, The Kid almost forgot. It was Jimpson—Sam Jimpson.

That name decided the boy's case. Did Hudson know Jimp? Well, I recon he did. The two had fingered flapjacks out of the same frying pan in early Idaho days. They had bunked together while swinging a jack on the same shift at the Little Daisy, Sarah Jane and Minnie E. Hudson knew Jimp to have the biggest heart, the clearest eye and the hardest muscle of any man that ever hit a trail.

For a while the diggers tolerated The Kid much as they did the boarding house cat—because they had to. But in time the wide gulf of indifference between the blue-shirted men and the boy grew narrower. They found in him a real boy of the mines. He was neither dull or "smart."

The house of learning from which The Kid received his education was vast and big. He had attended both the day and night sessions. He knew the difference between bull quartz and pay rock, and could tell at a glance whether a ledge was free milling or base. He knew more about foot and hanging walls, contacts, country rock, diorite and porphyry than a professor of mineralogy. He could tell by the roar, whether the whole stamp battery was in action, and if it was not, would know just how many stamps were tied up. He knew by the hum of the steel drums in the hoist room whether the cages were coming up loaded or empty. He could read every clanging signal of the big gong over the engineer's head, and knew how to give them.

In due time The Kid forced himself up the line of promotion from mucker to drill carrier, from drill carrier to cage tender, and from cage tender to pump man's assistant.

As The Kid went on the night shift, his duty made him

assistant to Jackson, and Jackson was the one man on the crew who failed to give the boy due recognition. He failed to find anything useful in the youth, and made the heat of the steaming pump station all the more unbearable with his curses and uncontrolable temper.

One night, when the big pump was hammering like a battering ram, and threatening to blow out a cylinder head, The Kid took a wrench and attempted to loosen the tension on the suction. Jackson was out at the time, but came in roaring mad, just in time to catch the boy at work over the pump.

"What in hell are you doin'?" the big man yelled, grabbing The Kid by the scruff of the neck, and hauling him off. "You'll have the pump buckin' all over the lower level if you ain't careful."

To protect himself the boy struggled desperately. This increased Jackson's fury, and in a fit of anger he tossed The Kid over the curb into the black water of the sump. The underground reservoir was full to the brim, and more than 20 feet deep. Only his being a good swimmer saved The Kid from drowning. He clambered out and shivered through the rest of the shift in dripping clothes. But his round face never lost its smile.

His first two weeks as pump assistant was a season of unbroken misery to The Kid. Jackson finally ceased his cursing and cuffing, but still gave the boy no heed. He ignored the lad completely. When the boy anticipated the big man's wants, and handed him the wrench or the oil can, Jackson took them from The Kid just as he would have lifted them from a stump, or from the shelf of the wall.

A thing that added materially to Jackson's meanness of temper was his habit of imbiding strange mixtures of red and straw-colored liquids from long-stemmed glasses over the Dewdrop bar, just before going on duty. Sometimes Jackson poured so much of this stuff through his cavernous maw that it made him tangle-footed, and he walked with peculiar, zig-zagged course across the pump station floor. When he started for the tool box he frequetly came up with a sharp thump against the wall over by the oil barrel, and said

things that even the oil barrel would not dare repeat.

One night The Kid donned his rubber coat, pulled a candle stick from the head-frame post, and waited at the collar of the shaft for Jackson. It was past time to go down. All the night shift men were at work in the stopes and drifts.

The cage shot up, with both decks loaded. A mucker rolled off the loaded cars, and rolled on empty ones. The cage hesitated a minute, waiting for the head pump man, but as he still failed to appear, dropped down the dark shaft into the bowels of the earth.

Presently Hudson, the super, came up the trail from the office, and finding The Kid sitting by the gate, gathered material for the immediate inquiry: "Where's Jackson?"

"Don't know," the boy replied, but his answer was in the manner of one who does know, yet who prefers to hide the truth.

Hudson pulled his watch. "He's eight minutes late now, and the pump station is unmanned: this is a helluva note. Don't you know where he is?"

"I think I can guess," The Kid replied, tardily.

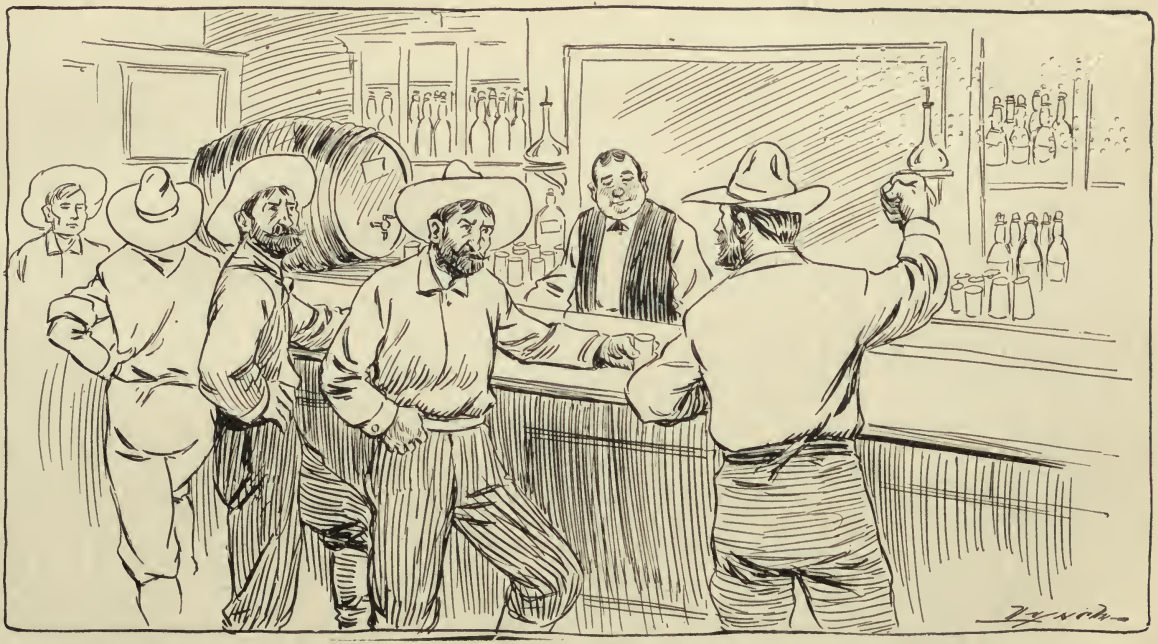
"Where is he?"

"Bustin' bucks over the Dewdrop bar."

"Then hike down and yank 'im out. Bring 'im up, if he isn't too drunk. Take the wrench to 'im if you need to. The pump station must be manned at once."

The Kid darted down the trail to comply. He hesitated a moment when near the door, fearful of results. He knew that the pump man would be in ugly mood; would possibly refuse to return with him, or eve to take any notice of him. The boy was almost on the point of returning to the mine without trying to bring Jackson out, when the meaning of Hudson's command came to him in its full force. "Yes, Hudson said I must get him, and I will," the boy declared.

The Kid pushed open the swinging door and entered the saloon. The Dewdrop swarmed with flannel-shirted, heavy-booted men. As the boy expected, Jackson was emptying the glasses as fast as the barkeeper could fill them, and had lined the crowd up for the fifth round. "Here's another double-eagle in over the trail," sang out the big man lustily,



"THERE ARE TWO THINGS I HAVE NO USE FOR—ONE IS WOMEN, AND THE OTHER IS KIDS!"

slapping a twenty on the bar. "Take your hammer to that, Mr. Bartender, and give us a drink, because we love you so."

The Kid walked boldly up and touched the drinking man gently on the arm. "Jackson," said he, "it's past time to go down. The station is unmanned. Hudson sent me after—"

"Git out of this, you little brown-topped chipmunk," the pump man yelled, turning suddenly upon the youth. "Go bark at the gray squirrels, I ain't got time to crack nuts with you."

A boisterous laugh followed, but it was unheard and unheeded by The Kid.

"Hudson wants you, Jackson," the youth repeated, taking a firmer hold on the big man's arm.

"What does Hud want with me? He ain't got no strings on—"

"We're late, Jackson. The shift went on fifteen minutes ago. There's no one at the pump, and she will hammer herself to death."

"Let 'er die," roared Jackson, "The Gold Bug needs a new pump, anyhow. Git away from me, you cub, before I blow you away. He pushed out his long arm, and threw The Kid across the bar room.

While the boy gathered himself together, and made ready for a second attack, a mucker ran in, half gone of breath, and yelled: "Where's Jackson and The Kid?"

"Right here," The Kid answered prompty, "What's the trouble?"

"Fire's broke out in the pump station. She's burning hotter than hammered purpagtory, and smokin' like a tar barrel. All the men are out of the upper levels. Hud wants you two to go down with him. If it ain't put out at once, the whole mine will burn."

"Come quick, Jackson!" The Kid urged, tugging at the pump man's sleeve.

Impeding disaster sobered the stalwart miner. The daze of whiskey left him suddenly, and his eyes shone clear as steel. "What's that?" he cried, grasping the full import of the alarm. "Fire on the pump station? The men all out?"

He left an unemptied glass on the bar, dashed out the Dewdrop and up the trail with The Kid pattering nimbly at his heels.

All the night shift men were huddled aroung the collar of the shaft, some with their candles still flickering in the sticks. Some were hanging up their coats in the change room. Hudson was charging back and forth like a mad bull, vainly trying to get two men to go down with him. Simpson had gone of duty for the day and knew nothing of the trouble.

Smoke was pouring from the shaft in great black rolls, sucked up by the long draft from below. It was evident that fire was already well under way.

"Come on, two of you," Hudson roared, "I want two men at once."

But the men held back. It was too much like courting death. "What's the use," they murmured, "an avalanche couldn't put out that fire now."

"It must be put out," the super yelled. "Quick, you cowards!"

The super seized the hose coil from the rack and threw it on the cage deck. Then he rang the bell to down cage. He was going down alone! The Gold Bug was above everything to Hudson, even above his own life.

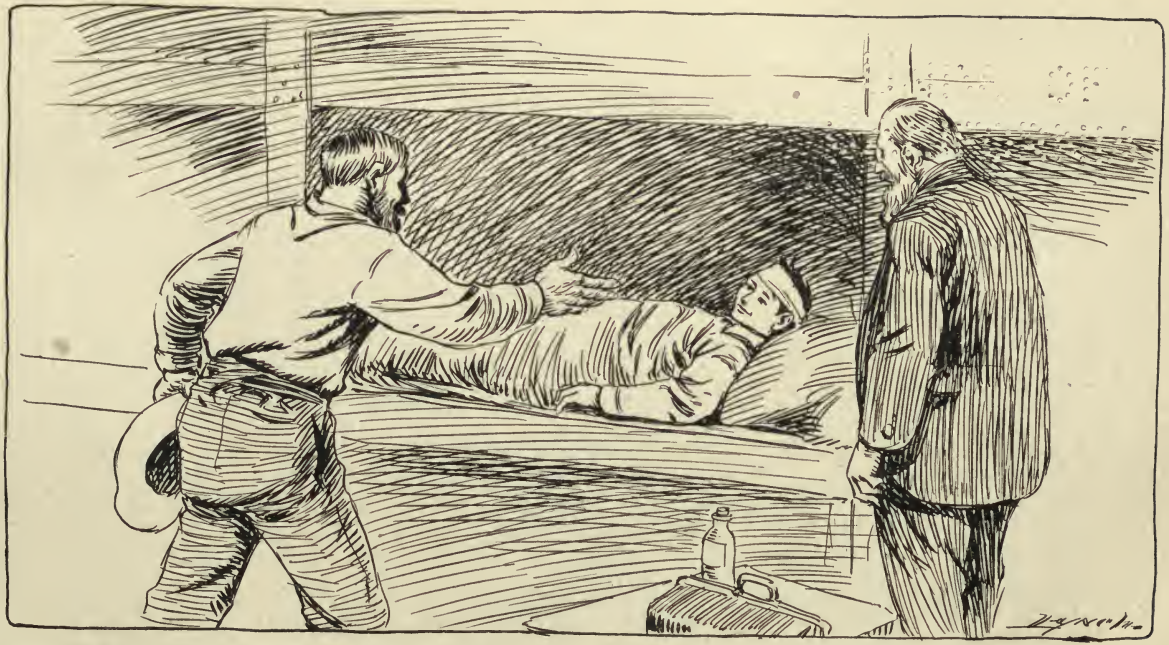
"Hold on," yelled the Kid from outside the circle of men. The cage hesitated, and the boy and Jackson leaped aboard, the latter staggering from what remained in him of the liquor daze.

"Don't let that man go down, he's drunk," the crowd protested.

"But he's no coward," Hudson yelled back, as the cage shot down, cutting a hole through the dense smoke.

On the 600 they stopped with ajerk on a level with the burning station. The fire was roaring like a smelter furnace. The heat stung like vitriol. All three fell flat and pressed their faces close to the damp floor of the tunnel, gasping for breath.

Hudson pulled the hose from the cage and dragged the end out to the hydrant. Connections were made, and the stream hissed from the nozzle upon the flames. The fire ate



"I WISH I HAD YOUR PLUCK," SAID THE MAN. "I DIDN'T KNOW TILL JUST NOW THAT YOU WERE SAM JIMPSON'S BOY."

greedily of the oil-soaked floor, and the long shaft gave the draft of a tall chimney.

The three took turns holding the nozzle to the flames, singing their hair and eyebrows by the scorching heat. Despite thei rheroic work, the fire grew.

Jackson was completely sober now. When his turn came for a hand at the nozzle he would remain overtime, and force Hudson to pull him away by the heels. Once his slouched hat, pulled over his face, caught fire. He slapped it out and put it on again. A second time it blazed, and he threw it to the flames, letting his hair singe.

Still the fire grew. It ate its way across the floor, and a hundred tongues of flame were twisting fantastically around the pump. But the big machine, unconscious of impending disaster, continued its "chug! chug! chug!"

"There's just one way to put 'er out," Jackson yelled. Some one must crawl through and release the water of the upper tank."

"Crawl through, the devil!" Hudson returned. "It would be wadin' through fire up to your eyes."

But the super's protestations were not heard by the pump man. He dropped flatter and crept into the station door, now a veritable furnace of fire. The walls were of sheet steel, and between these and the rock wall of the underground cavern was a narrow space. Though the steel wall was red with heat, Jackson crawled into the crevice and started across. He turned once to look back, feeling something touch his heels. It was The Kid.

"Run back, you cub!" he cried. But The Kid paid no heed.

They reached the opposite side with their faces blistered, their hair gone and their jumpers aflame. They climbed aloft hastily to the upper tank, and leaped into the cool water of the sump. Then Jackson pulled the lower plug. With wild hisses the water poured down the sides and through the ceiling of the buring station.

For a little while the steel walls of the station sputtered like a monster frying pan. With long drawn shrieks of despair, the fire demon left the timbers, and burned wood fell

in chunks from the roof. Before the upper tank was empty, the fire was well extinguished, and the station was filled with scalding steam.

Then the pent-up energy of disaster was exhausted, and Jackson's eye lost its clearness. He reeled across the station, and would have fell headlong into the lower sump, from around which the railings were now burned, had the kid not caught and swung his huge body safely to the floor. At the same moment a charred and burned-put timber dropped from the roof and struck The Kid on the head, laying him low and pinning him to the edge of the sump.

One again Jackson's eye and brain were clear, and his old strength returned. He found the lad unconscious at his feet, and he understood. He stooped and gathered up the boy as lightly as he would have picked up a babe.

"Wake up, Kid, wake up!" he cried hoarsely.

Hudson ventured in a little later, and found Jackson ducking the boy in the could water of the sump. "He's just about gone," the pump man declared. "He caught a timber big enough to have knocked out an ox—a timber that would have killed me, had it not been for him.

"Let's get 'im up and out of here," said the super.

They took The Kid between them and tottered across the smoking wreckage. Blackened and burned, with their clothes hanging to them in scorched shreds, they looked strangely inhuman when they gained the cage and pulled the bell wire. In the burned station the monster pump hammered away unceasingly, "chug! chug! chug!" sweet music to the super's ear.

In a moment they were up on the surface, up into the air—the cool night air, that soaked their parched lungs like nectar.

Willing and ready hands took the unconscious boy to the bunk house, and the camp doctor was soon patching his wounds, while an anxious crowd waited breathlessly for the verdict. "He is all right," the doctor declared. Has a pretty bad scratch on the head, and has a lot of new hair to grow, but he will come out all right."

And beneath every flannel shirt a warm heart beat exultantly, when the verdict was rendered.

Jackson came down from the mine, just as The Kid opened his eyes. He offered a blistered hand to the boy, and the boy took it eagerly. "I wish I had your pluck," said the man. "I didn't know till just now that you were Sam Jimpson's boy—Hud told me while we were in the change room. I could have guessed it, though, while you were fighting fire down in the station. You're a real chip off the original chunk, and I want to be your partner. Forgive me, anyhow, lad, what I have said and done. I thought you were only an ordinary boy when I spoke."

"You were drunk," said The Kid, through his bandages, and with a genuine feeling of pity.

"Yes, I know, I know," the stalwart man replied. "It's my weakness, lad. We've all got 'em, of one kind or other. But no more booze for me at shiftchanging time. I'm on the water wagon, when it comes to gettin' drunk, and I beg that you forgive me."

"Of course I will, if there is anything to forgive," said The Kid, lifting his hand to Jackson's face, and something that glittered and was warm with a big man's devotion and sincerity, fell from Jackson's face upon the Kid's cheek.

AN ILL WIND

CHUCK was over; the night shift had gone down, and the day men were assembled in the bunk house "parlor." The mill was thundering like a hundred hoofs on a stable floor, and the hoist engines puffed, wheezed and snorted as they drew the loaded cages up the shaft. Night had dropped her black mantle over the mountains, and tucked the corners in close and snug around Gold Bug. Stars blinked down through the pines, and the handle of the Big Dipper stuck in the shoulder of Old Baldy.

In the bunk house "parlor" the diggers lounged, smoked and gabbed. A bright fire crackled from the big box stove, and a dozen candles, stuck in miners' sticks, on the walk, or anchored by their own grease to the table, lighted the whiskered faces of the men. Tony Bill, Eucher Buck and Johnnie Campbell were quarreling over a game of draw poker. Two decks had got mixed during the day, and the final round-up located six jacks, five aces and only two kings in the stack. Tony held three of the aces, and made a hard fight for the pot, which at two bits a corner would add materially to two-twenty-five as a day's pay for mucking. Hank Tyson was writing a letter that he was very careful none could read by a sly glance over his shoulder. Slivers was studiously conning a horse book that he had lately become in possession of, and the rest of the crowd filled the corner near the door, where the Spanish Fly and the Old-Timer were telling tales of gold.

By his own testimony the Spanish Fly had been a millionaire three times, and had mined all the way from the Arctic circle to the equator. He prospected Alaska when the Indians up there were using nuggets for fishline sinkers, and was in South Africa when diamonds were still used by the natives to gravel the floors of their huts.

The Spanish Fly concluded his version of the Golconda diamond discovery, and the diggers turned instinctively to the Old-Timer, who was filling his corncob for the third time and poking a splinter through a crack in the stove to get a light.

"I never was mixed up in any diamond discovery, never have traveled except to hike the trail across Uncle Sam's territory," confessed the Old-Timer, "but I did meet with an experience out in Californy durin' the early days, that was most peculiar. Me and my pardner, Jimmy Ladd, had been booting the trail for nigh on two months, and we hadn't found colors enough to paint a flea. It was summer time, an' hotter than hammered purgatory. Our beans and bacon were gittin' mightly low, an' there was just about flour enough for two more good rounds o' flapjacks. We knew that strike or no strike, we'd have to get out o' there purdy soon. Accordin' to Jimmy's most careful calculations we were twenty miles off the Funeral mountains, an' two hundred miles from a keg o' beer, by the shortest route.

One afternoon we struck camp in a long, straight and deep canyon, unpacked the ponies, and while I hobbled the cayuses, Jimmy fried the bacon, made coffee and fought the smoke with his hat, the while sayin' most unpretty things about the wood I had dragged up for the fire.

"When we were eatin' supper, and just as Jimmy reached over the fire to fork his third flapjack from the sputtering frying pan, we both sat up straight and took notice of the same peculiar condition. It struck us both all of a sudden, like a boy gettin' butted by a billy-goat, that there was somethin' unnatural about that canyon. We gabbed about it a little while and finally figured it out. We discovered that the wind was blowin' down the canyon just as steady as a gust from a blacksmith's bellows. There was nothin' jerky or irregular about it. It was as smooth as a summer zephyr, yet considerable stronger. And what was more, that wind was greasy! Color my whiskers red if it wasn't a fact. It had the most unnatural, greasy taste you ever put a tongue to. Jimmy and I thought but little of it then, however, but finished our supper and rolled in early, for we had covered

AND THE REST OF THE CROWD FILLED THE CORNER NEAR THE DOOR, WHERE THE SPANISH FLY AND THE OLD-TIMER WERE TELLING TALES OF GOLD.

forty miles that day and were tired enough to have slept on a stack of needles.

"Next mornin' when we awoke the sun had arisen and was shinin' the long way of the canyon. Nothin' remarkable about the sun doin' that, except that it made somethin' glitter and glisten in the wool of the blankets, an' in the hair of the hosses. It was fine, powdery stuff, and the blankets of the cayuses were thickly dusted with it. Jimmy and me thought it was passin' strange that the dust should have settled on us that way during the night, and the wind hadn't blown very hard.

"We brushed some of it out, and Jimmy examined it critically from the bottom of his palm. He gave a yell that awoke all the spooks on the funeral range. Color my whiskers red if that dust wasn't gold! It was the pure metal; the genuine quill.

"What caused it, did you ask? Why, the wind—that dad-burned greasy wind. It was full of gold dust blowin' down that canyon from somewhere; and the funny thing of it was that it only settled on wool or hair, such as our blankets, the ponies and our own shag tops. We combed three ounces out of the cayuses, four from the blankets, and an ounce out of each of our heads."

"Did you get any more of it while you were there?" asked Colorado Ned.

"No," the Old-Timer continued. "Jimmy and me camped in that canyon till we had only six beans left, and spread our blankets separately over the ground every night, so as to offer as much resistance as possible, and waited for that greasy wind to blow again, but I'll be gad-switched if it ever breathed another zephyr, an' we had to hike."

As usual, the Old-Timer held high cards, and the Spanish Fly had nothing more to say. It was time to "douse the glim—smother the flicker."

THE "DARE DEVIL"

SLIVERS popped his long whip over the leaders, and the stage was lifted up the steep bank out of Roaring Creek ford. Another crack of the whip, and the four horses bounded into a trot. The coach careened and rolled and tossed, bouncing from one rut to another, from one stone to another, lurching drunkenly from side to side of the road.

The alkali dust followed in thick rolls, pouring through the open flaps of the coach, sifting down the sides, piling on the seats, and powdering the hair, eyebrows and clothing of the two passengers.

With his slouched hat dropped down over his face, his dust coat buttoned high, and one foot lightly on the brake, Slivers kept the horses at a brisk trot, following the winding road up Anna Creek gulch. After an hour, the mountains that had spread distantly in purple slopes, closed in, revealing a detail of bronzed boulders, straggling pines and scarred juniper.

The two men in the coach had long since ceased to talk, and were occupied solely at accommodating themselves to the pitching and swaying of the stage. Both were half asleep, which is as nearly asleep as anyone can get on board a tossing Concord.

Suddenly the stage stopped. Slivers was heard to mutter an oath, as he firmly set the brake. Instinctively, the younger of the two passengers aroused and quickly kicked the grip that he had held between his feet, back under the seat.

A man behind a black mask, fringed with a mass of unkempt red hair, poked a long-barreled revolver through the door and remarked:

"Sorry that I must trouble you, but must insist that you

hand over such trifles as purses, watches, rings and loose cash. To expedite matters, the big man in the corner had best come out."

"But I am unarmed," the man in the corner assured. "I'm only a traveling man—camp store supplies—bacon, beans, condensed milk—"

"Come out!" commanded the robber, gruffly. The drummer lifted his bulky avordupois from the corner, and dropped out with a thump.

"Stand over there and hold up your hands," further commanded the highwayman, after he had relieved the salesman of his watch and purse. He then returned to the stage door, and resumed operations on the young fellow inside. "I beg your pardon, but you have overlooked your watch."

Without protest, the young fellow removed the timepiece from his fob and passed it over.

"Many thanks," said the voice behind the mask, in a tone that was feigned to coarseness. "I hate to trouble you further, but if I am not mistaken, there is a satchel in here that ought to go with the rest of this stuff."

He fumbled under the seat, but in the confused pile of blankets, robes and halters, failed to locate the object of his search.

The young fellow noticed, while the robber was stooped, that the red wig neglected to conceal all of the black hair beneath.

The robber carried his search to the other side. Among other things discovered was a case of muriatic acid on its way to the Gold Bug assay office. It looked like choice soda or mineral water, and the highwayman grinningly jerked a bottle from the case. The glass stopper was broken off, and the fuming liquid boiled instantly across the robber's hand. He dropped the bottle with an oath, and stepping back from the door, turned toward a horse that stood in the shade of a boulder near the road.

He thrust the revolver into its holster, that he might nurse his burned hand. The young fellow saw his opportunity, and leaped out the opposite side of the stage, climbed to the box, and grabbed the Winchester that idly rested by

Slivers' feet. When he jumped down, his toe caught on the wheel, and he fell headlong across the road, his one shot going wild. The robber vaulted into the saddle and dashed up the bank, his horse madly threshing the chaparral.

"It was Red Head again," Slivers informed, kicking at the brake lever with his boot. "This is the third time he's stopped me the past two months."

"Why don't you use your gun on him?" asked the young fellow, as he replaced the weapon in the box.

"I place a value on my health," Slivers returned. "I'm not ready for the boneyard yet, and as Red Head never asks for the mail pouches, I leave 'im alone."

"You missed your chance with him today," the young fellow continued. "You could have made a collander of him while he was busy with us. I wouldn't have let him—"

"Looky here, sonny," Slivers retorted. "I drove stage before you could crawl. Mebbe there's somethin' about it you can tell me. If my style don't suit you, just register your kick with the road director. Get-ap, Tommy! Get out of this; we can't stand here chewin' the rag all day."

The long whip popped again, and the two passengers scrambled into the coach, which went rattling and bouncing up the road in a cloud of sifting alkali. Nothing more was said, though once Slivers poked his head down to yell below: "You're a dare devil, young feller." This evidently relieved the driver's mind, for he straightened up, shouted at the horses, and on the next five miles of road, hit a pace that fully made up for time lost by the hold-up. To Slivers the robbery was but an incident in an otherwise dull routine, and was soon forgotten.

After a long swing around Baldy, the stage dropped into a vale, filled with a jumbled litter of miners' cabins—half canvas, half boards—an unpainted bunk and boarding house, box buildings and shops. Over all loomed the big mill and the head-frame. The narrow valley echoed and reverberated with the incessant thunder of the stamp battery.

The stage drew up at the camp store, and the passengers got out, the salesman entering the store to greet the keeper. The young fellow gathered up his grips and looked

around him a little bewildered. He was approached by Hudson, superintendent of the Gold Bug.

"I take you to be Harry Fields, son of the general manager, who has—"

"He's a little dare devil," broke in Slivers, from the box. "He tried to wing Red Head on the way up."

"Fields is my name," said the young fellow, giving Slivers' remark no heed. "Here's the month's pay," he added, handing over the satchel. "The old gent couldn't come this trip, so he sent it up by me. I brought it in coin, and came near losing it, as I had no gun to stand off Red Head, or whoever it was that held us up this afternoon."

"Well, you are a dare devil, sure 'nough!" the super declared, when he took the weighty satchel and eyed the diminutive youth. "Your father wrote me you were coming out to wear off the sharp corners. You won't be long getting rid of 'em at this rate."

Though he was the son of the general manager, the "dare devil" took a bunk with the men, and shed his finer raiment for an appropriate suit of brown khaki. By night he had covered pretty much all of the mine, from the lower level pump station to the hoist lookout. He filed in that evening, and ate beans and boiled beef with the crew, ignoring the special table that the Old Woman thoughtfully set for him.

After supper he wandered over to the camp store, and while buying a pair of hoghide gloves, came face to face with Katy Worden, daughter of the keeper. She was chatting with Buck Tyson when Fields came in, something she could always be found doing when Buck was off duty. Rumor had it that the black-eyed daughter of the keeper was engaged to Buck, and the knowledge of this around camp kept all others at a cousinly distance.

Fields would not have interrupted them, but the keeper was out, and the hoghide gloves were badly wanted. Perhaps it was a desire to get the best pair in stock, perhaps it was the girl's eyes, anyway, the "dare devil" lingered long over the counter till Buck grew tired of waiting, and restlessly paced the floor. When the young fellow finally closed

THE "DARE DEVIL" STOOD BY AND WAITED FOR BUCK TO RISE.

the bargain, he handed over two silver dollars and told the girl to keep the change, mischievously returning the smile she threw at him.

When he turned from the counter, Buck stood nearby, scowling wickedly. It struck Fields instantly that there was something strikingly familiar in Buck's face. He struggled momentarily to recall when and where he had seen him before, and could soon have remembered had his eye not passed up and down Buck's huge form and found that the miner carried a newly bandaged hand. The discovery changed the course of his thoughts altogether. As he held his gaze upon it uncomfortably long, Tyson put the injured hand in the pocket of his coat.

Outside the store Fields remembered that this Buck Tyson was a duplicate of the Mike Stickney of his college days—the big bully who was known around the "dorm" as "Stick," and whose underhand wickedness led to his expulsion from school, not so much upon the order of the faculty, as upon the urgent request of the students.

So, when the two met later on the trail near the Dewdrop, Fields held out his hand and greeted: "Shake Stick, I didn't recognize you at first sight down at the store."

"I'll shake," returned Buck, bluntly, extending his uninjured hand, which happened to be his left, "but I guess you're calling up the wrong number."

"I thought you were Stick—Mike Stickney," ventured the "dare devil."

"My name's Tyson, Buck Tyson," the big miner assured.

"Then I guess I'm wrong. Well, no harm done, anyhow. Glad to know you. What's the matter with your hand—looks like a burn—or is it a bruise—caught it under a jack, I suppose."

"Nope, I've been off for two days. Rode a frisky horse in from Placer today, and got the top of my hand bit off tryin' to bridle 'im."

Just then a coyote's yapping cry chimed down from the slopes of Baldy. "Hear that?" said Fields. "Don't that sound natural? Don't that sound mightily like the ki-yi of the Sewer Gang?"

"I don't know what you're talkin' about," declared Buck, ignorantly. "It's just a plain coyote yelp to me."

Later on that evening, as Fields came down the trail from the shaft house, a bullet nipped the edge of his hat brim. It came from the direction of the Dewdrop. The "dare devil" believed it to be a stray missile from the bar or the card room, where it had undoubtedly served as an argument to settle a dispute.

The next night another bullet passed his way and made a neat rip in his coat sleeve. This time it came from the shadow of the cyanide plant, and was evidently fired by some one standing under the dripping sump tanks. He went on down to the bunk house, entering the front door just as Buck Tyson came in from the side. The "dare devil's" eyes were open, and saw that Buck's boots were covered with the blue slime of the cyanide sands.

The following day Fields invested a greenback in one of the best revolvers Peto Worden had in stock. Buck was surprised that night by having the weapon poked in his face, when he came into the full light of the Dewdrop window. He was more greatly surprised to see the "dare devil" standing behind the gun.

"This is no hold-up," informed Fields. "I wanted you to know that I am on, that's all. If you've got a crow to pick with me, bring it out in the open, and we'll pull feathers in daylight."

"You insinuated that I was Mike—"

"I don't care who you are. But I object to being shot at in the dark, and from behind. What does it matter if you are Stick?"

"I don't want—"

"You don't want her to know it? Well, I'm not going to squeal. I'll promise you that."

"Then I'll be good. Shake!"

Fields lowered his gun, and took Tyson's hand. They parted, feeling better.

The incident was only temporarily closed. Two weeks later there was a dance over at the Silver Bell. All the Gold Bug diggers, able to get leave, the "dare devil" among them,

climbed into a freight wagon, and with Slivers as driver, went over to the neighboring camp. Buck Tyson and Katy drove over in the roustabout's buckboard.

The Silver Bell's boarding house was ablaze with light, the bright beams shooting the darkness from the open doors and windows like fire through the cracks of a big box stove. When a half mile away, the Gold Bug visitors heard the merriment and clatter of revelry, which the thundering battery of the mill could not drown. When they reached the border of the camp, they caught the sound of tramping boots and ladies slippers, keeping time to the music of Peg Leg Jim, the fiddler, who, mounted on a table in one corner was doing the double turn of sawing a violin and calling a quadrille.

"The first two gents cross over," Peg Leg called, in tune to "Jump-Jim-Crow." "Honors to the right, honors to the left, swing that pretty ladee-ee, and all promenade."

The Gold Bug diggers piled out of the wagon and entered the boarding house just as a husky miner, evidently a lower level mucker, whose feet were painfully encased in a pair of dancing pumps, and who wore a red sash to indicate his official position as chairman of the "floor committee," lustily announced that the next number would be a quadrille.

There was instantly a wild scurry across the floor to make engagements. Considerable embarrassment was experienced because of the extreme scarcity of calico—there was only half enough ladies to go 'round. Katy was the only one from Gold Bug. The Old Woman of the boarding house would gladly have come, but, someway none volunteered to bring her.

Her being the prettiest, as well as the best dancer, made many demands upon Katy. That it might be known just how he "stood" with the black-eyed beauty from Gold Bug, Buck Tyson claimed every other dance with her. This was unfair, and the "dare devil," prompted principally by a spirit of fair play, decided to take a hand in the game.

At the close of the fourth dance, Buck bounded across to reach Katy and claim his regular turn. But he arrived just in time to hear her say her prettiest "Yes, Mr. Fields, I shall be pleased to assist you in the next."

"Assist the devil!" Buck hissed through his teeth, as he turned on his heel. "Assist! That's a blamed pretty way to put it. I'll show 'im what we diggers think of his standin' collar, biled shirt and fine manners. This ain't college—this is Silver Bell, by gravey, and I'm Buck Tyson."

Buck's mutterings were unheard, but he was considerably relieved after delivering himself of them. He went out and said other things to the blackness of the night. Out there he met Tony Bill, who had just been "turned down" by a Silver Bell lass, and the two found sweet consolation in an exchange of troubles.

"Are you out o' luck, Buck?" Tony inquired.

"Just two swigs left, Tony, here." He pulled a bottle and passed it over.

Inside, the music struck up, and both the fiddle and Peg Leg jumped into the wild canter of "Run, Nigger, Run," with a call of,

"S'lute yer pardners' let 'er go,
Balance all an' do-se-do,
Swing yer girls an' run away,
Right an' left an' gents sashay,
Gents to right an' swing or cheat,
On to the next gal an' repeat!"

The music and the merriment were unheard by the two aggrieved diggers from Gold Bug. Tony put the bottle to his lips, threw back his head, and gazed with half closed eyes at the Milky Way. Then Buck took the flask and studied the constellations for a while, after which a "dead soldier" was consigned to a sage bush.

A little while later, Buck shambled across the dancing room, drunkenly dodging the couples that were strenuously attempting to execute Peg Leg's call of,

"Al'man left an' balance all,
Lift yer hoofs and let 'em fall,
Swing yer op'sites, swing again,
Back to pardners, do-se-do,
All jine hands an' off you go,
Hitch an' promenade to seats!"

Buck wore his new Stetson well down over his left eye—an inevitable sign that trouble was brewing.

"We had the ball well over in their territory," Fields was telling Katy in his rattling way, when Buck approached. "We were making our yardage every down, and reached the 25-yard line, where the captain gave the signal to pass the pigskin back for a punt. I was playing quarter, and was—"

"Say, sonny, I'd like to see you outside durin' the next dance," broke in Buck, making his presense known principally by a smart slap on the "dare devil's" back.

"I had just slipped the ball to the half, when he fumbled, and let it—"

"Time!" yelled Buck, angrily. "It was a foul, anyhow."

"I said fumble," persisted Fields.

"No matter what it was, I want to see you outside."

"All right, sir. I have no engagement for the next dance, and will be pleased to see you."

Buck turned on his heel, and careened out of the room, leaving an odor of bad liquor behind him.

Fields resumed his football story, getting his college team safely in for a touchdown and a clean goal kick, much to Katy's delight. He remained with her till the next dance was called, then arose to keep his appointment with Buck.

When he reached the door something was clinging to him, and looking down, he found Katy holding to his arm. There was real terror in her eyes. She trembled, as if struck by a strange fear. "Please be careful of Buck," she said. "He's mad about something, and is a bad man at times."

"Don't worry about me, Miss Worden," Fields replied, cheerfully. "I understand Buck, and think he means well. But since you ask it, I will be careful. Go enjoy the next dance; that stoper over there is running his boots off trying to find you." With a polite bow, he turned in the door and went out into the yard.

But Katy did not enjoy the next dance, in truth, did not dance at all. She begged to be excused, something she had never done before, and slipped quietly from the room. She went out the side door, and followed the deep shadow of the boarding house wall, hiding behind a clump of sage.

A few yards away a crowd was gathered. In its center Buck Tyson fumed and swore, working himself into a rage over an imaginary grievance. "You may be the main pearl of the cluster back in Boston, sonny, but you're just plain base rock out here. You're in the Big Creek country now, did you know that?".

"I'm sorry I have offended you, Buck," Fields declared. "I have tried to be square—I have tried to be a gentleman."

"Gentleman, hell!" roared Buck. "No gentleman would monopolize a lady the way you have tonight. She's engaged to me, do you know that? And I will fight for her just the same as if she was my wife."

"That's certainly a manly spirit, Buck," the "dare devil" replied, commendably. "But I am at a loss to know your trouble. Maybe it's private; if so, we'll ask the boys to excuse us, and we'll talk it over alone."

"Naw, it ain't private," yelled Buck, savagely. "We've got several things to settle, and the only way I can see is to fight."

"Fight? I'm not particularly fond of it. I would prefer to arbitrate our little difference."

"You won't fight, eh? Then you're a damned coward."

"You'll take that back, you cur!" declared the "dare devil." His face grew white and tense. His black eyes snapped in the light from the dancing room. He threw off his coat and stood fearlessly before the bully, his fists clenched, his arms bare to the elbow. He knew he was again facing Mike Stickney of his college days, facing "Stick" of the Sewer Gang.

"Here I am," cried the "dare devil," "without knife or pistol, ready to meet you. Come on. I'm no coward, I'll promise you that."

A fist fight was not the sort of trouble Buck wanted, and far from the kind he expected. He was confident the "dare devil" would beg off or draw his gun. It was up to him to make the bluff good.

"Take off your gun, Buck," demanded the crowd, "you must meet him fair."

Buck reluctantly unstrapped his holster, and tossed aside

his Stetson. He towered head and shoulders over the diminutive figure of the "dare devil." It was much like a match between a giant and a pigmy.

The two put themselves on guard, and made ready for the opening blow. At that moment Katy jumped quickly from her hiding place and stood between them. "What is the meaning of this?" she asked, as if she knew nothing about it. "Must you two fight like curs?"

"He called me a coward," explained Fields, apologetically. He folded his arms and waited, as if anticipating a further command from her.

"He's drunk," frankly informed the girl, that the "dare devil" might have full appreciation of Buck's irresponsibility. "Stop your quarreling, both of you."

It was a command from Katy, and Fields turned to pick up his coat. The crowd gave a regretful sigh, believing the bout was called off.

"Aw, this don't go," Buck snorted. "You go in the house, Katy, an' let us settle this. It's no affair of yours." He took her by the arm and pushed her rudely toward the door.

"I'll make it an affair of mine," snapped Katy, jerking free of his grasp. Turning to Fields, she commanded, sharply: "Fight him, he has insulted you—and me."

The "dare devil" quickly peeled his coat. With a catlike bound he landed both fists on Buck, the terrible. His blows came with such rapidity that the big miner could not wink between them. Upper cuts, swings, straight arms, sweeps, all figured in the "dare devil's" manipulations. He landed anywhere he chose on Buck's fighting front. Blood spurted from the bully's pummeled nose, and his whiskey-dazed eyes were blinded. A final undercut lifted him from his feet and dropped him sprawling to his back.

The crowd yelled. It was the best exhibition of stand-up-and-take fighting that the diggers of the Big Creek country had ever seen.

The "dare devil" stood by and waited for Buck to rise. The big miner finally pulled himself together and came up

fast and furious. Reason had left him, and he was the mad brute who in other days, had led the Sewer Gang.

Fields made ready to parry the expected blow, but his blood turned suddenly cold with the gleam of a knife in Buck's upraised hand. The "dare devil" nimbly dodged the thrust and pounced upon the miner from behind, pinning his arms down and wrenching the blade from his grasp. Then he turned him round and drove a fist straight into Buck's face. Tyson fell heavily, groaning and cursing on the ground. This time he did not rise, and the crowd called time.

Fields recovered his breath, and a smile drove the palor from his face. He handed Buck's knife to one of the crowd. "Give it to him when he comes round," said he, calmly. "I'm sorry I had to take it from him."

"And here is something more to give him," said Katy. She slipped a ring from her finger and passed it over. Then she hastened to Fields, overtaking him near the door. She took his hand and looked into his face. Her eyes, as she raised them to his, were moist and glowing. In them Fields read the story of a young woman's heart, and there was disclosed to him a new and wonderful thing.

"You have done nobly," she said. "You gave him what he deserved."

"I am sorry I had to fight," he replied, regretfully. "I am sorry this happened. We will forget that it ever did happen."

She beamed upon him again with mingled forgiveness and approval. Arm in arm they entered the dance room. Peg Leg's droning fiddle became an orchestra, the candles glittered like jeweled chandeliers, and the rough-beamed dining room glowed with color. To the "dare devil," who had fought a fair fight, and won, the whole world smiled with love and content.

Buck Tyson left the Big Creek country and was seen no more at Gold Bug.

THE SILVER CANDLESTICK

THE Gold Bug's clean-up went out once a month. Just when it went, and how, were matters that belonged solely to Hudson, the super; Henderson, the amalgamator, and Colonel Fields, the general manager. The Colonel came in on the 15th of each month to hand out the pink slips, the yellow eagles or the silver bucks. He would remain four or five days, and return over the road on Nero, his yellow-eyed broncho. Sometimes he took the gold with him; at other times it went out on the buckboard; and now and then he sent it out by Slivers on the stage.

One February he came out as usual, arriving on the 15th, just five days ahead of one of the biggest snowstorms that ever buried Gold Bug under its feather tick. The crew received its monthly pay, deals and debts were squared down at the Dewdrop, and at midnight the camp buckled down for another month's routine.

Early on the 22nd the amalgamator carried the general manager's saddle-bag from the retorting room of the mill-house over to the office. The saddle-bag hung from his hand as is filled with lead. He laid it down on the floor near the desk, and a little while later the Colonel prepared to leave.

On the night previous, and while eating supper with the diggers at the boarding house, the general manager reminded the men that next day was February 22nd.

Washington's Birthday, at Gold Bug, was unique among all other days of the year. On that day every man of the crew, from The Kid of the lower level pump station, to Mickey Donnell, the camp routsabout, made an extra effort to "tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth." It was a strain of great tensity on the nervous system of the camp, but since capital was placed on veracity, for that one

day at least, the effort was well worth the sacrifice. The Gold Bug management gave a prize to the man who could give the best account of himself at the day's close. This year the prize offered was a miner's silver candlestick. The general manager had the stick made especially for the occasion, and every part of it, from the loop to the beak, was the pure white metal of Colorado.

Simpson, the foreman, held it over the mess table, where the light from the candles made it glitter like a jewel. "The digger who gets this will be well paid for tellin' the truth," said the foreman. "But it must be remembered that no sort of a lie will pass tomorrow—not for the one who gets this stick. There ain't many cherry trees around Gold Bug to tempt us, but there are many easy chances to let our tongues slip—there are many ways to tell a lie, and still keep silent. This stick goes to the man who is most successful in standin' off a falsehood, or who can prove that he made the best fight to prevent deception."

On the morning of the 22nd. the storm that had been scouting along the backbone of the Big Creek mountains for several days, scattering light volleys of snow, joined the main forces, and charged with full fury upon the pine-whiskered ranges. The general manager donned his bear coat, cap and gloves, and with only his nose exposed to the wind, mounted Nero and struck through the storm toward Boulder. The heavy saddle-bag was strapped to the saddle.

In less than an hour he was back at the office, warming his back before the fire that crackled and leaped in the broad fireplace. "The storm didn't bother me," he explained to Dixon, "but Nero lost his wind—couldn't keep his pace—the blamed hostler must have fed him too much barley this morning, for he's pretty nearly foundered. I had Tom throw the bags off before he took the broncho to the stable. It's out on the porch; I wish you would bring it in Dixon, as I want to cache that luchre."

The bookkeeper went out, admitting a blinding gust when he opened the door. He returned shortly, and laid the saddle-bag on the desk, putting it down dubiously with a strange expression on his face. "I understood you to remark

that you had carried the month's clean-up in this bag," said he, quizzically.

"Yes, that's right," the manager replied.

"Well, there's something wrong. If that gold is in here now, you certainly had a light clean-up this month. This bag is light as cotton. One side of it is open."

The Colonel had been half asleep before the fire. The bookkeeper's words awoke him instantly. "What's that?" he exclaimed. "Opened, you say?" He spoke sharply, and came toward the desk, lifting the bag apprehensively. Then he thrust his hand through the open flap. The bag was empty! "The gold is gone, every ounce of it, over $20,000!"

"The bag was just as you see it now, when I picked it up," said Dixon, hurriedly, to ward off possible suspicion.

"I know," the manager replied. "The gold was carelessly put in the bag, and fell out. I dropped it out on the road, and it's now buried under the snow. I may have lost it only a short distance out. Go tell Simpson to saddle the two roans and come around at once. I want him to go with me. We may be able to find it if we hit the road at once."

Dixon jumped into his coat and dashed up the trail to the shaft house. Simpson had just come up from the lower level, and the bookkeeper made known the trouble. Within five minutes the two roans were stamping and snorting by the office door; within six, the general manager and the foreman were in the saddle, and dashing down the snow-piled road. The fleece had ceased falling, but the wind blew with increased fury, biting icily at their exposed cheeks.

A half-mile from camp they came upon the sorrel team of Mickey, the roustabout. Mickey lived with Peg Leg, the fiddler, and their cabin stood off from the road a short distance, completely concealed by tall chaparral and rank cinnamon. The sorrels were steaming, and the newly-cut tracks indicated that the buckboard had just come up the road, and that the team had only recently been tied, possibly to wait a few minutes while the roustabout stopped at the cabin. There was a chance that Mickey, who had just come over the road, had found the gold.

"We better stop and ask him about it," suggested the

Colonel. "Mickey may have seen it as he came along. My trail is only partially obscured, and the gold would not be completely covered, unless piled under a drift."

"I think the gold would be safer on the road than in Mickey's hands," declared Simpson. "I wouldn't trust either he or Peg Leg with a punctured poker chip."

"I suppose Mickey isn't very reliable," the Colonel returned, "but his bad reputation has come to him, no doubt, through his association with Peg Leg. Possibly it would be best for us to approach the cabin afoot, that we may not make any noise. The team's being tied up out here looks suspicious. I am unable to understand why Mickey should stop unless he had business of importance at the cabin."

They left their ponies on the road, and proceeded cautiously toward the cabin. Smoke blew thinly from the low chimney, and when the two men reached the back well, they heard Peg Leg talking loudly. The general manager and Simpson put their ears to a chink and listened.

"What you want to take it back to the mine for? They will never miss it," Peg Leg was heard to say.

"But he did miss it," Mickey answered. "I saw his tracks where he wheeled and came back."

"He'll never expect to find it. If you hadn't come across it, it would soon have been buried under the snow. We'll freeze on to it. The Gold Bug has plenty more, and these four bricks will never be missed."

"I don't see it that way," Mickey answered, "I'm going to take it back."

"The hell you are!"

"That's just what I am. It don't belong to me, and I'd feel devilish squeamish with so much wealth around me."

"You're a little fool," Peg Leg informed him, bitterly. "This is lost money—the loser to weep, the finder to keep."

"No, it ain't mine. I'm going to take it back. If I had found it on some other day, I might have kept it, or some of it, but today—do you know what day this is?"

"Aw, shut up!" yelled Peg Leg, stamping the floor with his wooden limb. "What's the use of you and I bein' poor

PEG LEG HAD FLOORED MICKEY WITH A CHAIR AND WAS SAVAGELY JABBING HIM WITH HIS WOODEN LEG.

devils all our lives, when we have a chance like this to make a haul?"

"I want to make mine some other way," Mickey said. "I'd enjoy my chuck better, and I know I'd sleep without fear of the jim-jams. No need chewing the rag, the bricks go back."

"You'll get my consent first, I'll tell you that," Peg Leg fiercely declared. "Let go that bag, drop it, I say."

"No, I can't do it, Peg."

The fiddler swore as only a fiddler can. Then the two men heard him stamp on the floor, as he wrestled with Mickey to get possession of the gold.

"Stand back, Peg, stand back," Mickey warned. Then came the sound of a struggle, as the two fought over the gold. Peg Leg was much the larger of the two, and from the peep hole Simpson saw him force the roustabout to a corner.

"We'd better go and pull him off," said the foreman, "for he's getting desperate and might do Mickey considerable damage."

They rushed around to the front and pushed in the door. Peg Leg had floored Mickey with a chair, and was savagely jabbing him with his wooden leg. Though blood spurted from a broken nose and a bad cut on his head, the roustabout would not release his hold upon the treasure.

Simpson took Peg Leg by the scuff of the neck, and sent him spinning to a further corner of the cabin. Then he lifted Mickey to his feet.

"It's a good thing we stopped," said the general manager. "We were none too soon, and would have got in sooner had we known that one-legged maverick would attempt to murder you. You're true blue, Mickey, and no mistake. We heard you talk, and know you have the proper stuff in you. I'll take you to the office, and have your head patched up. Bring Peg Leg along with you, Simpson. We'll tell the boys the straight of it tonight, and let them kangoroo him."

A little while later Mickey lay at ease on the big couch in a warm mine office, with the camp doctor working over him. The four bricks reposed safely in the vault, and the general manager, settled deep in an armchair before the fire,

idly amused himself at blowing the smoke that floated over him from his glowing cigar.

That evening, after "chuck" was over, and just before the night shift went on, the crew assembled in the bunkhouse "parlor." Simpson called to order, and those who had exerted themselves during the day to prevent a slip of the tongue, gave their experience. The "Benedict," who occupied a cabin alone, who was never known to treat anyone except himself, and who was always without tobacco when approached for a "chew," confessed his ownership of a plug to all comers that day; Tony Bill had said no word about the Bowery, and frankly admitted to those who asked him concerning it, that he was an ex-member of the Whyes; even the Old-Timer had denied himself his beloved tales of "Californy," and the diggers were on the point of voting him the candle stick, when the door opened and the general manager came in, leading Mickey by the arm. Of all the crew, Mickey was at least expected to be in line for the prize. His bandaged face prevented his telling the story, so the Colonel told it for him, with greater embellishment than Mickey would have given it.

When the manager was done, the tales of the Benedict, Tony Gill and the Old-Timer were as waste on a tailings pile —Mickey's deed was the real yellow metal in the retorting pot.

The vote that followed was unanimous. The candlestick went to Mickey.

A CONFUSION *of* GOODS

WHEN Lem Golden learned that his Sister Ann was coming all the way from Dakota to make him a visit he prepared to quit his seat at the boarding house mess table. He straightway put one of the camp cabins in fit condition for company. Education had taught him taste, necessity had taught him handiness, and by the aid of the two he transformed the rude cabin into something approaching the rooms of his home out on the Dakota plains. He divided the cabin into three parts: drawing room, curiosity shop and kitchen. The latter department was given all due consideration by Lem, as he was not alone to have the pleasure of his sister's company during the summer, but would enjoy a respite from the "camp sinkers" and "mulligan" of the boarding house. The hot biscuits his sister could bake would, indeed, be a welcome change. So the freight wagon brought in a real cook stove. Then cups, saucers and spoons, pots and kettles appeared as if by magic.

Unfortunately for Lem, though fortunate for another, as later developments proved, he was caught between the cage door and a station beam just a few days before the time for his going out to Boulder to meet his sister, and was so badly bruised by the squeeze that he could not make the trip. It became necessary, therefore, for Lem to send someone else. There was not a digger in camp but who would gladly have gone, had he been asked, and more than one voluntarily hinted his willingness to meet and escort the young woman to Gold Bug.

After due consideration Lem decided that Barney Mayfield was the most competent of all. Barney was his bunkie and Barney was his friend; more than that, Barney was his cousin, and flesh and blood go a long way in the conferring of special favors.

So Barney togged himself in his best, buying a new Stetson and a full suit of corduroy for the occasion. He also bought the biggest and brightest crimson tie carried in the camp store. It was of the four-in-hand kind, and Barney, with a real miner's clumsiness, could not arrange it alone. Lem arranged it for him, with the understanding that it was to remain so arranged till after Barney's return.

In due time Barney was fully prepared for the journey. The express boxes were slid under the stage seats, the mail pouches were stuffed into the boot and strapped in, Slivers cracked his blacksnake over the leaders, and Barney left Gold Bug amid the cheers and hurrahs of a crowd that had assembled at the camp store to see him off. The stage bounded and rattled down the road, diving into the canyon, and leaving a thin trail of dust in its wake.

According to schedule, the stage made the 40-mile trip to Boulder in one day, remaining over night and returning to Gould Bug the day following. The train arrived at six in the morning, just a half hour before the stage departed.

On the morning that Miss Anna Golden was expected the train was three-quarters of an hour late, and Slivers was obliged to hold the stage, a circumstance that always brought from him such remarks as only stage drivers are capable of making. To Slivers' credit, however, be it known that on this occasion his remarks were confined to the more secluded precincts of the stage stable, and were heard only by the horses and the hostler.

Barney Mayfield never suffered a longer half hour than that passed by him before the arrival of the delayed train. He had not slept much that night, because of his fear that he might not awake in time to be at the depot when the train came in. Then, to add to his discomfort, one side of his crimson tie came down, and though Barney worked heroically to replace it, he could not readjust it to the crisp, smart shape it was before. It hung as limp and shapeless as a dish-rag on a line and, finally, in a fit of disgust, Barney told the looking-glass that "the darn thing could hang."

At last the train came. Since it paused but a brief time at the station, Barney made haste to climb into the vestibule

and entered the rear chair car. He had never seen Miss Anna Golden, but Lem had so frequently described her that he knew he could recognize her instantly—brown hair, dark "hazel" eyes, round cheeks, quite plump.

Barney stood a little while at the door and looked down the car. Most of the passengers were asleep and were doubled and stretched in various styles of discomfort on the narrow seats. Everybody snored.

Near the middle of the car a young woman, attired in a neat white waist and trim blue skirt, and a dainty hat poised on her head, half arose and looked at Barney expectantly. She reached for a traveling case and umbrella in the rack, and by this, as well as her general resemblance to Lem's oft-repeated description, Barney knew she was Miss Anna Golden. He walked hurriedly and confidently down the aisle. "Wait a minute," said he, "I'll get them down for you." Then he added: "And how is my little cousin this morning?"

"Oh, fine," she responded, extending her hand. "I am glad you came; they said you would meet me; and I came near passing my station, as I was dozing a moment ago."

"This is the place," Barney replied, taking her hand. There was such a warmness in the grasp, such an air of genuine cordiality about her, such a pretty smile upon her lips, that—well, he did what all good and true cousins are privileged to do. He stooped and kissed her on the cheek. It brought a bright crimson blush, but after it was all over she smiled at him even more prettily than before.

He took up her load and followed her down the car and out on the platform. Her trunk was put aboard the stage, and in a little while the two occupied a seat all alone in the coach and were whirling along the dusty road, oblivious to the alkali.

"How did you recognize me so quickly?" she asked, when they were some distance out from Boulder.

"Well, you was the only one in the car who was ready to get off."

"But there might have been several women ready to get off with me; in fact, another one did get off, but she came out of the other car. I saw her walking around the platform,

looking about anxiously while you was putting my trunk on the stage. You might have taken her for me."

"Yes, but I didn't," Barney returned with a triumphat smile. "I knew you the minute I spotted you. I would have known you on Fifth avenue or Broadway, or any other of them places where people are as thick as flies on a molasses keg. I couldn't help but know you after Lem's description of you.

"Lem?" spoke the young woman instantly. "Who is Lem?"

"Oh, come on, you're coddin' me," returned Barney, a sickly smile appearing suddenly on his face. "You don't mean to tell me you don't know your own brother?"

"I have no brother," declared the young woman, drawing away from him. "I thought you were my cousin, Max Freeman, from the Silver Bell. He was to meet me. What have you done? Where are you taking me?"

'I though you were Miss Anna Golden," Barney stammered. "Her brother sent me out to meet her. I am from Gold Bug."

The young woman put her handkerchief to her face and Barney was become of the awful fear that she was going to cry. A peculiar coldness and numbness took possession of him. Such a predicament as this he was altogether unprepared to meet. He was sorry, very sorry; not that he had been courteous and kind to her, that he had even gone so far as to kiss her, but sorry that he had made such a mistake. The real Anna Golden was no doubt waiting patiently at the depot, wondering why no one came for her.

"We must go back," the young woman declared. "Cousin Max will be looking for me."

Since it was the only plausible and reasonable thing to do, Barney offered no objections, and crawled up to make explanations to Slivers. Barney fully expected to hear Slivers deliver a string of oaths that would make an Irish tar turn blue with envy, but much to his surprise, Slivers doubled up on the seat and laughed; laughed so violently and heartily that he mixed his lines and let both leaders get astride of the tongue.

THE GIRL LEANED HER HEAD AGAINST THE DOOR SILL AND LOOKED OUT ACROSS THE BRONZED MOUNTAINS.

The stage was turned about on the back track for Boulder. Barney and the young woman settled down to make the best of the situation.

Now that things were working towards proper adjustment, Barney felt better. He made up his mind to at least become acquainted with the girl. Why not? She was good looking, she was gracious, she was tasty in dress, she was plump; Barney could ask no more.

"You say you are going out to Silver Bell?" he inquired.

"Yes, Cousin Max works out there, and has secured a place for me at the boarding house."

"Slinging ha—waiting on table?"

"Yes," replied the girl, lowly, from behind her handkerchief. "Isn't that all right?"

"Certainly it's all right; but I was just thinking."

"Thinking of what? It's pretty late for you to be thinking. You should have been thinking when you came into the car, and not imposed upon an innocent, helpless woman."

"I'm sorry I treated you the way I have."

"Your treatment has been all right, I suppose, considering the circumstances. You have been kind, but you were unthinking. It vexed me to think that I took up with you so readily, that I let you—"

"You thought I was your cousin."

"But you are not."

"No, I am not, but even though we are not cousins, it is all right, anyway," Barney smiled at her and received a faint smile in return. "It is all right, because we seem to have a sort of liking for each other, as people sometimes have. I liked you the moment I first glimpsed you. I just couldn't help but like you. I guess it is one of these affinity cases that we read about."

Notwithstanding its frankness, there was something pleasing in Barney's philosophy, and the girl liked it, as she knew she liked him. There was more than empty flattery in what he said; there was eloquence, the rough, unpolished eloquence of a miner, but above all there was genuine sincerity.

"I am glad you like me," she admitted, removing her handkerchief, and gazing at him with a lonely, almost sad look glowing from the eyes where tears still lingered tardily, "but strangers should not be as familiar as we have been."

"Someway, we don't seem like strangers," Barney said. "Seems that I have known you for a long time."

"We must not forget that we are strangers," she demanded, retreating again to her corner, as if to close the entire incident.

But Barney did not intend that matters should end that way. "Now, look here," said he, coming straight to the point. "You and I have been thrown together by some power unknown to us, and over which we have no control. I always figure it out that there is a reason for these things. Whenever anything happens to me that I don't understand or can't explain, instead of passing it up and forgetting it, I just conclude that it means or will mean something to me, and by and by I find out that it does. You have been brought across my trail for a good purpose. You say you are going out to Silver Bell to sling—to wait on table. That's where you planned to go, but that strange power has switched you off the path and headed you toward Gold Bug, a better, bigger camp than Silver Bell ever was or ever will be."

The girl smiled aloud. "You're clever," said she. "You should have had some one better than I to pour that talk upon."

"It has been reserved for you," Barney declared. "I did not know I carried any such talk in stock, but the one for whom it is meant having appeared, and the time having arrived, I am obliged to deliver it. But as I was saying, or going to say—why can't you go out to Gold Bug? I don't want you to sling—to wait on table at Silver Bell; it would be too hard for you."

"It would be no harder than waiting on table at Gold Bug," said the girl.

"What's the use of your doing either? I have a different plan in my mind. There are several pretty little cabins up there; you can pick out the best one. and I'll see that it's fixed fine and dandy. I have a good job, and will guarantee

that there will be plenty coming right along to keep the two of us comfortable."

The girl leaned her head against the door sill and looked out across the bronzed mountains, now glorious in the crimson and purple of morning. The smile left her face. She knew the man was not jesting. She knew he was in earnest. She did not drop her head to peep up through her eyelashes and say: "Oh, this is so sudden." Such a remark would have been imminently appropriate, but it is one that comes from the lips of those who have heard such proposals many times before.

Barney looked at her and waited, but she made no reply. Finally she turned her head from the door and looked at him, and though she spoke no word, the warmth of a lonely woman's soul glowed in her eyes and Barney understood. He was right; they were not strangers, though they had never met before. He lifted his hat, and with bared head, raised her hand to his lips.

In a little while they were back at the depot, with the stage backed up to the platform. Slivers was still gurgling with unrestrained laughter. This joke on Barney Mayfield was the richest Slivers had come upon for several trips, and he intended to enjoy it to the full.

Barney helped the young woman out, and the two of them skirmished hurriedly around the depot in quest of the lost cousins. They found them in the waiting room, and Barney was again obliged to explain the situation. "Cousin Max" received it soberly, but "Cousin Anna" enjoyed it even more than Slivers.

And since the thing was to be settled at once and for all time, Slivers held the stage while Barney "rustled" a license and a preacher. They all boarded the stage and drove a little way out of Boulder, where the ceremony was performed in the old Concord, with Slivers and "Cousin Max" as best men. It did not occur to Barney till then that he did not know the young woman's name.

"It was Emma Medley," said the girl, with a merry laugh.

"But it's something else now," Barney replied, after the minister spoke the word.

WHEN THE RED JACKET PAID

THE Red Jacket was a sort of annex to Gold Bug. It was located about a half mile further up the canyon, and was a part of the properties of the Gold Bug Mining Company. There was a 20-stamp mill on the Red Jacket, and the men employed on the day and night shifts were a part of the Gold Bug crew. Hudson, the super, kept the 20 stamps pounding night and day, though both he and the Gold Bug management knew the Red Jacket wasn't paying. But to hang up stamps was something Hudson would not do. The thunder and roar of a stamp mill was music to his ears, even though the price was dear.

One day a young fellow, clad in khiki and miner's boots, came in on the stage. He went at once to the superintendent's office and introduced himself. The introduction, together with the letter of instructions received by Hudson a few days before, put him by the knowledge that the young fellow was Layton Pelford, the new super the general manager had sent all the way from the East to take charge of the Red Jacket.

Hudson led him to the door and pointed a fat finger up the gulch. "You'll find Red Jacket up the canyon yonder, just beyond the waste dump," he directed. "There are 12 men on the day shift and 10 on the night; the booky can give you the list. The candles are at the blacksmith shop, and the powder is in the mag. Won't you come have a drink?"

"No thanks," the newcomer returned, "it's against my rules."

"All rules miss fire out here," Hudson returned, leaving the office abruptly and hitting the trail for the Dewdrop. The Red Jacket and its new super were dismissed from his mind for all time. The new super jumped around like a brown grasshopper on a hot stove. He was all over the surface workings in less than an hour, inspecting every part of the Red

Jackets equipment from the shop bellows to the smelter. He mounted the skip and went down the incline, stopping on every level and dodging into each drift and tunnel. Shortly after he emerged, the Red Jacket stamps were hung up, and the machine drills pulled out of the stopes.

That evening, after the supper clatter had subsided at the mess house, and the night shift was getting its canvas coats from the change room, the Red Jacket men were called to the superintendent's office. They straggled up reluctantly and stood around in little groups and squads, much like guilty school boys waiting a turn at the gad. It was rumored around during the afternoon that "the devil would pop" that night.

The new super came to the door and begun to talk. Though he was a minnow, his was a deep base voice, slow and deliberate. "There's no need of you boys taking the trail for the Red Jacket tonight," said he, "as there won't be anything doing there for some time, at least till the pay streak is located. The mine is a loser, as all of you know. This red dirt around the office could just as well be run through the mill as the rock now being taken out. I've been put in charge by the management, and am going to try to find the pay streak. I'm sorry, but I'll have to turn off every man except the engineer and fireman and the lower level drill men. The others may come in and get their pay."

It was a sweeping order, and a stunning blow to the Red Jacket men. When the first shock of it had passed, each man stepped forward, as his name was called, received a little pink slip, and walked out sullenly.

When all were gone, the little super turned to the desk, lighted the dusty lamp, and scrawled off a brief telegram to Colonel Fields, general manager of the Gold Bug Mining Company, New York:

"Have shut down mill. Fired whole crew, except engineer, fireman and four drill men."

Then he drew from his trunk a sheet of pale blue paper, found a dainty envelope to match, and returning to the desk, wrote:

WHEN ALL WERE GONE THE LITTLE SUPER TURNED TO THE DESK AND SCRAWLED OFF A BRIEF TELEGRAM.

"Miss Lottie Fields,
New York City.

"My Own Dear Lottie:

"Just arrived at the mine today. Have found things at the Red Jacket in very bad shape, and I've a big task before me to make a mine of it, but I'm going to make a hard try. Please pardon this very brief note, but having just arrived, and with so very much to do, I can only drop you a line tonight. With much love, and trusting I may hear from you every day, I am, yours truly, LAYTON."

He mailed the letter at the camp postoffice, but as Placer was the nearest telegraph station, the roustabout was called and dispatched on the 20-mile ride to put the message on the wire.

Next day Pelford made an expert examination of the Red Jacket, particularly of the long lower tunnel that had been driven deep into the mountain from the inclined shaft, and below the old workings from which all the pay ore of the mine had come. The long tunnel followed blank rock its whole length, and touched ore at no point throughout its course.

This was peculiar. If the veins above were permanent, the tunnel below should have struck them. "True fissures don't pinch," was one of the things he had learned in the study of mineralogy. It was evident the veins of the Red Jacket were not true fissures, at least they did not hold to the dip defined on the upper levels.

Pelford went above and exploited the old workings, making a careful survey of the stopes. Then he discovered the error, and learned why the Red Jacket's pay streak had not been struck.

The new super was well pleased with his day's work, and returned to the office in better spirits. The roustabout brought in the mail, also two telegrams that had come by the afternoon's stage from Placer. One was from Colonel Fields, and read:

"Why in thunder did you close down? Stockholders won't stand for it. Start it up at once."

The other message was signed "Lottie," and inferred:

"Papa is very angry. May discharge you. Please be careful."

Pelford leaned back in his chair and took a long breath. His jubilant spirits suffered a rude shock. He got a little relief by tearing the Colonel's message into bits and scattering it over the office floor.

But the little super was not the sort of man to "tear a passion to tatters," though he could do a telegram that way. He sat for a long time, thinking seriously. He had been put in charge of the Red Jacket mine, but the management, like many companies with stock on the market, was trying to tie his hands behind him, just to please the shareholders. Pelford knew he was right in discharging the crew, and that the only way the Red Jacket could be made to produce was to find the lost pay streak. He knew he would bring down the wrath of the colonel, he might even lose Lottie, or the chance of winning her, but he was superintendent of the Red Jacket, and he must place his mine above everything, even above Lottie, should it come to that. Yes, he concluded, he would find that pay streak.

When he arrived by this conclusion, he seized a notebook and penciled the following message to the general manager:

"No need grinding blank quartz. Nothing in it but expense to company. Am looking for ledge."

A second was worded:

"Don't be alarmed. I will be careful." This was scratched several times and cut down to 10 words, including, "with much love," as it could not be sent collect, and would cost $2 to New York.

Again the roustabout was called and dispatched through the night to Placer.

Pelford outlined a plan with extreme care, and decided to adhere to it religiously. He set the machine drills near the middle of the long tunnel, and directly beneath the stopes of the old workings. A crosscut was started each way. The vantage point was selected after he had hand-picked each wall nearly its whole length.

THE TWO DROVE OFF AT AN EARLY HOUR NEXT DAY.

None but his workmen were allowed in the tunnel. Even a "write-up" man, desiring to boost the Gold Bug properties through his special edition, was turned away by the firm little super.

The drills clattered day and night, driving the crosscuts rapidly.

Between his hours on duty and those spent in his bunk, Pelford was kept busy answering telegrams from the general manager. The irate colonel called him an educated fool. He had been sent out there to keep the mine running, not to close it down. If orders were not more closely obeyed he would have to be discharged. Lottie could no longer write to him. The privilege of telegraphing remained his, but love sent by wire, or received that way, collect, is an expensive luxury.

Two weeks passed and the drill penetrating the east wall encountered the lost ledge. The first shot brought down a mass of white quartz, glittering with virgin gold. Pelford took the discovery with complete unconcern. The crosscut was continued through the vein, and drift run following the hanging wall. The tunnel had been driven parallel with, and only a few feet from the ledge.

The time for making known the discovery to the management had not yet arrived. Pelford considered that there were several matters that must needs be adjusted before the colonel knew the truth. So he sent the brief message:

"Indications are good."

There was not much encouragement in this, and Colonel Fields finally grew desperate.

One evening Pelford received a wire advising him that the mill on the Red Jacket must be started at once. "Unless I report that the stamps are pounding, the stockholders will mob me," the message said.

Pelford calmly instructed: "Stand 'em off with a gun."

This was an unfortunate remark. It brought the immediate information that the colonel and an expert were coming West to make an examination of the mine.

It would take them four days to arrive, but even at the end of that time the discovery would not be in shape for

critical inspection, so Pelford at once set to work to cover it up. This was a game in which more than one could play. So the drills were removed from the quartz of the east drift, carried to the crosscut on the opposite side, and set to work on the blank rock. The timbers were replaced, and the entrance to the crosscut so admirably covered up that the best expert could not have found it. The drill men wondered, but asked no questions.

When the blustering general manager and the expert arrived, Pelford courteously led them through each stope and drift, tunnel and shaft from top to bottom of the Red Jacket, letting the expert arrive at his own conclusion as to the location of the ore body.

At last he brought them to the crosscut on the east wall of the tunnel, and within a few feet of the concealed entrance to the ledge. The expert held aloft his candle, pecked off small bits of rock with his hand-pick, and looked sober. "Strange, strange, indeed," said he. "If this ledge is a true fissure, here is where the ore ought to be."

"But it's as blank as a brick," retorted the general manager in despair.

"It certainly is," the other replied.

The expert later went through the mine alone. That night he reported to the colonel that the Red Jacket was done. "She was nothing but a pocket vein," said he. "You've worked that out, and you may as well quit, sell the machinery, or add it to the Gold Bug, and report to the stockholders."

The two drove off at an early hour next day. Pelford, with his present force of men, was to remain on the Red Jacket "till further orders."

The buckboard had no sooner disappeared down the canyon, than all hands were at work clearing out the concealed tunnel. The four drills were set on that side, and were soon clattering wildly, as if to make good the lost time.

Just five days later, or in time to catch the general manager on his return home, Pelford wired:

"We've found her. A horse threw her over, but she's come in, rich as silk."

In the dim light of the dusty lamp the little super read

the reply the following night. It was merely a request to send full particulars by mail. It was apparent that the colonel doubted the discovery.

Pelford wrote two long letters. One was on pale blue paper, the other on Gold Bug stationery. One was addressed to Lottie, and was a rehearsal of the story he had told many times before. The other was to the colonel, with a detailed account of the strike as an introduction. Incidentally, it was mentioned that the Red Jacket was yet in its infancy, and that 40, instead of 20 stamps should be at work. Following this came the main body of the letter. It was not as lengthy as the part preceding, but to Pelford it was far more important. "I do not wish to appear arbitrary nor unreasonable," he concluded, "and you may wonder what this has to do with the Red Jacket. Really, it has much to do with it, much, at least, as long as I am identified with the mine. I have found the lost pay streak, but to find it I was obliged to pursue a policy entirely at variance with your wishes. In using my own judgment in the matter, I have not only incurred your wrath, but have been ordered to sever my attentions to Lottie. Possibly you do not know it, but I have been in love with her for some time. I am just as determined to win her, as I was to find the Red Jacket's pay streak. I beg that the much-feared parental objection be removed."

The letters were mailed, and Pelford waited and worked. Deeper and deeper the drills penetrated the treasure vault.

At the end of two weeks the order came:

"Collect crew and start up Red Jacket. All parental objections are removed."

Thus it was the Red Jacket took a new and longer lease of life.

JOE KELLEY'S BURRO

THE conversation around the big box stove in the Gold Bug bunk house drifted one evening from snakes to lizzards, from lizzards to turtles, from turtles to grasshoppers, from grasshoppers to chaparral, and from chaparral to burros, which sequence psychologists would have pronounced a perfectly natural order all through. The Benedict and Tony Bill, Slivers and The Spanish Fly took the lead on matters pertaining to snakes, lizzards, turtles and grasshoppers, but it remained for the Old-Timer to have the floor when the burro was trotted into the ring.

"I think the miners of the West ought to get together and pass resolutions thankin' the burro for his time-honored and faithful services in the gold fields, and then give 'im an honorable discharge," the Old-Timer said.

"Yes, sir, the burro not only deserves to be retired, but ought to have a big marble slab erected to his memory. The honest little donkey that piked the trails and bore his load uncomplainingly for the gold hunter, is hieing from view over the Great Divide, with we old-timers following at his heels. He has received his last pack, likewise his last cussin'.

"But, after all, the burro was the most faithful friend the prospector ever had. He was a pal who could be depended upon. He never got mad and tore up earth and fumed and cussed because the beans were too salty or the bacon not fried enough; he never wanted to divvy up rations and call quits; he never got up in the night and ran away with the last clean-up. No, sirree, the burro never complains. He would eat anything, from chaparral thorns to buck brush, and was always on hand when stakes were pulled. He stood by his pal when everyone else swore that pal was a liar and a thief. He would follow that pal anywhere, up any kind of trail, and would go anywhere his pal would go, ex-

cept up a tree. He would have climbed a tree if he had claws instead of hoofs.

"You didn't know that one of the richest mines in Colorado owes its beginning to a burro, did you?"

None of the crowd assembled in the "parlor" were aware of such an important circumstance, and the Old-Timer proceeded.

"It may smell like salmon, but it's a fact, just the same. The burro I'm telling you about was the property of Joe Kelly. The burro's name was Billy, and he was the toughest little jackass that ever wore hair. Joe was tough and weather-beaten enough, but Billy was more so. The diggers down at Central camp used to bet on who would wear out first—Joe or Billy. The odds were about even.

"One spring Joe packed his outfit on Billy and hit the trail for the mountains. It was early May, and on the higher ranges a few splotches of snow still hung tardily here and there, and the frost plant was just peepin' its soft brown cone through the fat earth for a glimpse of sunlight.

"When night came on the fourth day out, Joe halted and struck camp. 'Well, here we are agi'n,' said the man to the donkey, in the familiar way Joe had, for he said he had learned that even a Mexican jackass liked to have a good man talk to him, and that he would rather talk to a jackass than a lot of men he knew.

"That night, after Joe had cooked and thrown his flapjacks and bacon behind his belt, he spread his blankets and sat down for a smoke. While sitting there, he fancied he heard an unfamiliar noise from the canyon below. ''Pears to me there's something prowling around here,' Joe mused to himself, and drew his long rifle across his lap. 'Maybe a panther trying to scare up a late supper.'

"By and by there was a crackling of dry twigs across the trail. Billy lifted his long ears and snorted, peering into the gloom. Just then the campfire blazed up bright, and Joe saw two dusky men, crouching low, creep across the path, not twenty yards away. 'Injuns!' he muttered aloud, and at the same time cocking and raising his rifle. But he kept his finger from the trigger, and shortly the sounds disappeared,

as did the dusky men who crossed the trail. They evidently ascertained what they wished to know, and withdrew. 'Well, so long as they won't bother us, we won't pester them; ain't that right, Billy?' The donkey assented with a shake of his head. Joe smothered his fire and rolled up his blankets with the long rifle under his head.

"After his coffee and bacon next morning, Joe shouldered his pick and shovel and struck off up the creek. He found moccasin tracks in the soft earth, but saw no Injuns. It was in the afternoon, and while panning the dirt by the creek that the first suspicious sound caught his ear. Joe dropped his pan and made an investigation. The sounds were like those of a man in pain, and they came from the shelf rock above him. He cocked his rifle and drew himself to the crest of the bank. Up there he came unexpectedly on a wounded Injun. The redskin was lying at the foot of the canyon wall. He was twisting and squirming in agony, and groaning like a man who's just about gone. The red man's body was streaked as much with blood as with paint. He had slipped and dropped from the precipice.

"Joe brought water from the creek, and the Injun drank with a dying thirst. Then he stretched him at ease on the cool grass and cut splints to bind his broken leg. While he was doing this three other Injuns came right out of the forest, like shadows, and stood off watching Joe. Then they drew closer and brought Joe to a sudden understanding with a loud:

" 'How!'

Joe turned quickly and reached for his rifle. 'Why in thunder didn't you tap the knocker?" he said. 'You scared me into the middle o' next summer, sneaking in like a lot o' bobcats.'

" 'Tillicums, tillicums, hyas tillicums!' cried the red men in chorus, as they came forward with lowered rifles. The injured one told his story, and the dusky features of the three listeners lighted with smiles. Joe never knew till then that an Injun could smile. One of them spoke a sort of English, and from him the prospector learned they were a part of a wandering tribe under Chief Tyhee. Their camp

was a half sun's journey away. They did not know how they would get the wounded brave to his wigwam. Could the paleface, who was wise in many things, tell them?

"Joe went back to his shovel and said he would lend them Billy. So he told them where the donkey could be found, and the three smiled yet more broadly. Billy was brought and the wounded redskin placed aboard. The burro struck off up the creek with his lead, one Injun leading him, the other two holding the wounded brave astride.

"Joe went back to his shovel and pan. Late in the afternoon two of the Injuns he had met earlier in the day, together with a third strange one, appeared at Joe's camp. The third was old Chief Tyhee himself, and he was riding Billy.

" 'Mamma-looch, mamma-looch!' the chief exclaimed, when he drew near.

" 'Hello, there,' Joe replied.

" 'Big chief like paleface friend,' said Tyhee, assuming an attitude of supreme dignity.

" 'I'm mighty glad to hear it,' Joe assured, modestly.

" 'Big chief like small pony. Want to buy 'em. How sell?'

"Joe was not in a trading mood. He couldn't part with Billy, not for all the chief's kingdom, and he told him so. Tyhee grunted his displeasure. He was unused to being refused anything he set his heart upon.

" 'Big chief like cuiton,' continued Tyhee; 'will give paleface good price. Will give paleface many squaws.' The brave held three fingers aloft. It was a tempting offer, but Joe believed he would prefer the donkey to a wigwam full of squaws.

"The chief was silent for a while. Then he played his trump card. 'Gold!' said he, 'will give paleface much gold.'

"The magic word touched the weak spot in Joe's heart. He at once took an interest in the proposed trade. 'Gold?' he asked, 'how much?'

" 'Heap. Must dig.'

" 'Let's see 'em.'

" 'Will paleface take 'em?' The old chief was too shrewd to show the treasure before the deal was closed.

ONE SPRING JOE PACKED HIS OUTFIT ON BILLY AND HIT THE TRAIL FOR THE MOUNTAINS.

"'Will take 'em,' Joe answered.

"Tyhee led off on the burro, beckoning Joe to follow. Two miles up the canyon he halted in the shadow of a rocky ledge near the brink of the creek. Here the three Injuns moved a pile of stones heaped at the foot of the canyon wall, revealing the treasure.

"'Much gold, dig,' commanded Tyhee.

"Joe broke off a fragment of the quartz and examined it carefully. It was nearly half gold. The vein was the richest Joe had ever looked upon.

"The deal was closed. Tyhee and Billy disappeared. Joe went wildly to work. Days and days he toiled, and plied the yellow-streaked ore in a great heap by the glory hole. Weeks passed, and with slack grub and the gold craze and over-toil, the fever came and Joe became a sick man. Strange shadows flitted across the trail when he went down to his work. One day the Injuns came with Billy, and found Joe rolling in delirium. They built a trench and built a fire of live coals; on this they piled stones to heat, and on the stones they laid leaves of the wild grape and cinnamon. Then they rolled Joe in blankets and laid him on the steaming leaves, and in two hours they had roasted the fever out of him. But there were other things than fever that ailed Joe, things that the red men's medicine could not reach. He needed rest and better grub and soap and coffee. These the red men could not give, and as Joe was too weak to walk, and the Injuns could not go, they turned Billy lose and told him to hike to Central camp.

"So it happened that one day, while a lot of we diggers were lounging in the shade in front of Tom Mackey's place, Billy came into town, jaded, travel-worn and hungry, and dragging his halter under his feet. He made for Joe's cabin and halted near the door. An anxious crowd gathered 'round the donkey, eager for some news from Joe. Billy was much troubled. He stamped his feet impatiently, and trotted uneasily to and fro. He was telling the crowd about Joe. His language was that of a Mexican burro, but it was not hard to understand.

"The miners shook their heads in grave fear. 'Somethin'

is wrong, boys, said one. 'Joe's in trouble, otherwise Billy would never leave him. We'd better take the donkey and back track.'

"And back track they did, with the untiring burro always in the lead. On the afternoon of the third day they found Joe; not dead, but nearly so. He lay on a bed of pine boughs, and in his delirium was running his hands into a sack of dust, and sifting the yellow stuff through his fingers. Joe was well on the road to Daffyville, but the diggers soon had him safely on the right track.

"A month later Joe was well, and a rich man. The Tyhee mine made him a fortune. And Billy? Oh, he built the donkey a swell stable, shod him all 'round in silver horseshoes, and put a silver bell with a gold clapper on his neck."

FOR THE LOVE OF SADIE

NO one seemed to know who they were or where they came from, except Bob Daniels.

They were the only passengers on the stage that day, and, as indicated by the way bill, the two of them had made the entire trip from Boulder. While Slivers threw the mail bags down, one of the twain, a short, broadshouldered, deep-chested fellow, who had miner written all over him, climbed out and turned his gorilla-like face to the crowd that circled the coach. Had it not been for the timid creature that followed him, the crowd would have then and there pronounced him a bad proposition.

This timid creature was as unlike her companion as she could possibly be. She was small and delicate, with a face as white and lifeless as wax. She trembled as if in fear when he took her by the hand and sit her on the ground. Then he picked up the two bundles of luggage and, giving her a grunt of command, led the way to the boarding house.

Later that evening the stranger appeared as the mine office and applied for work. Though both shifts were already full, Hudson, the super, put him on the list, giving him a stope on the 600. Whenever a human machine like that found its way into Gold Bug, it was always sure of a job.

Since he was a married man, the stranger was shown certain favors, for married men were few and far between in camp, and were more to be encouraged than discouraged. Thus he was assigned for the day shift, and was given a cabin up on the hillside, away from the main camp, where the thunder of the stamp battery was less terrific, and out of the range of the stray bullets and wild songs of the Dewdrop.

The hard work and tidy care of the big miner's wife soon made the little cabin the neatest in camp. The Old Woman gave them two extra cots from the boarding house,

and Hudson donated a chair from the mine office. Palmer had a table in the laboratory that he found but little use for, and sent it along with the chair and the cots.

A week or more passed before the grizzled stranger met Bob Daniels. Bob was night shift boss on the 500, and had been in camp but little more than a month. He was also big and rough and whiskered, but his heart was that of a child, and his steel gray eyes sparkled with the merriment of youth. He spent the bulk of his wages at the Dewdrop bar and over the little green table in the card room, and had a turn at the wheel now and then, but he always played square, and owed no man a cent. He had heard considerable talk about the big human chimpanzee, who swung the hammer with the strength of a Trojan, and who grunted his few words like a mad Indian. But as he was on a different shift, Bob had not seen him, and when the two met it was merely by chance. Bob had remained in the mine to extract a stick of dynamite from a missed hole, and did not come up till the night men were going on.

Half way between the shaft house and the sump tank, he came upon a huge thing in the trail. Darkness had settled, but Bob saw enough through the gloom to convince him that it was the human gorilla he had heard the diggers talk so much about. Instinctively, he dodged to one side and reached for the place where he sometimes carried a gun.

But it was not the mere thing of being startled that put Bob Daniels on his guard. The first glimpse, even in the darkness, that he had of the big man's face, recalled a host of bitter memories. He knew at once he was face to face with one whom he had hoped he would never again meet.

It all came upon him in a flash—the Tin Cup camp, the Gold Dollar, and Sadie, and—he cried the name aloud:

"Chris Dolan!"

The other man made no coherent reply. He only grunted in surprise, and jumped, as if for shelter, behind a clump of manzanita.

Daniels stood in the trail and looked upon the huge thing that glowered from behind the bush. "I'm sorry you've come, Chris," said he, "but I'll take it for granted that you did not

know I was here. Five years ago we quit, and agreed to take different trails. I would have been the happiest man on earth but for you. Sadie would have married me had it not been for you. It was the lie you told that won her from me—made her believe I was a thief and a scoundrel, and not fit to associate with decent women. Well, I'm no angel, but I believe in fair play, and it was for her that I took the blame of that Leadville mix-up, and stood trial. I've served the sentence that rightly belonged to you, that Sadie might not be unhappy, but I must confess that I don't love you any better now than I did then. There ain't a camp in Colorado big enough for the two of us. But I've signed for another month, and will stay it out. We must be a little more careful after this, for next time we meet I might have my gun."

I was a long speech—much longer than Bob Daniels was accustomed to make. Chris listened in silence, and when Bob stepped to one side, accepted the movement as a command and shambled past him up the trail, pausing again when Bob inquired:

"If you don't mind tellin' me, Chris, how is Sadie?"

"Only tolerable," Chris answered. "I learned the day after we arrived that you were in camp, but it was then too late to move. I told her you were here, and she wants to see you."

"I'm sorry, but I can't—I must not. It wouldn't do. Don't forget, Chris, that between you and me there's no such thing as letting bygones be bygones. We traveled too rough a road to forget."

When he had ceased talking Chris went on up the trail. Bob entered the boarding house and ate the supper that was waiting for him.

By practicing caution, the two men prevented further accidental meetings on the trail. But their second meeting, like the first, was by chance. One black night, and near the middle of the shift, the water supply for the mortars run suddenly low. Bob had finished his work on the 500 and came up with the powder gang. As there was no one else handy, the foreman sent him out on the ditch to ascertain the trouble. He took a lantern, but without lighting it, struck

off up the ditch, which wound around camp, hanging to the steep hillside.

At one time, when he came 'round the shoulder of a ridge, he believed he saw a light in the window of Chris Dolan's cabin. It flickered only for an instant, and then went out. Bob halted and held his eyes on that part of the canyon where the light was seen, but it appeared no more, and he moved on, though not without some wonderment.

The ditch was on a level with the cabin roof, and only a few yards from the eaves. When he neared the house he heard the gurgle and splash of wasting water, and knew that the break in the ditch was just beyond the cabin. He took a match from his jacket to light the lantern, but was arrested in the act by the crunch of a pisk. It was evident that someone was at work on the break. Without making a light, he crept farther up. When near at hand he peered from behind a chaparral.

The ditch, at this point of the hillside, was lifted out of the denser darkness of the vale, and Bob was able to distinguish rocks and trees and bushes at some distance. Thus he easily saw a man at work on the break, and only a brief glimpse was sufficient to convince him that the man was Chris Dolan. Fully half the flow was escaping through the break, and Chris was working desperately to stop it. It was beyond Bob to arrive at the cause of the accident. There had been a heavy fall of snow, but no thawing as yet, and the ditch banks were firm.

Bob finally concluded that Chris had been tampering with the ditch, and was fully convinced of this when he saw him pause in his work to move a heavily filled canvas bag out of the way of the escaping water. Bob was of the opinion that Chris had attempted to bury the bag under the ditch, and had loosened the bank.

Bob stood up and made his presence known, walking slowly down the ditch with the lantern dangling against his boot leg. Chris dropped his pick in surprise, and recoiled several paces down the slope.

"What's the trouble?" Bob asked, ignorantly.

BOB SAW ENOUGH THROUGH THE GLOOM TO CONVINCE HIM THAT IT WAS THE HUMAN GORILLA HE HAD HEARD THE DIGGERS TALK SO MUCH ABOUT.

"Break in the ditch," Chris replied. As he spoke he discreetly dropped his coat over the canvas bag.

"We noticed the water was running low down at the mill," Bob explained, "and supposed there was a break somewhere. Simpson sent me up to find it. How did it occur?"

"Don't know," Chris answered, still working furiously; "heard the water gurgling—woke me up—and I came out to fix it."

In other days Chris never indulged in long sentences except to lie, and Bob was confident his characteristics in that regard were still unchanged.

Daniels lighted the lantern, and gave a hand to mending the break. In a little while the repair was made, and the escaping water turned into the ditch. No further word passed between the two, and when they were done, Chris picked up his coat, being careful to gather up the bag with it, and started toward the cabin.

"Hold a minute," said Bob, "let's see if we can figure this thing out. I'd like to know how it happened."

"I don't give a cuss how it happened," Chris replied, by which Bob was to understand he desired to dismiss the subject.

He started to move away again, when Bob said frankly: "I might as well be plain with you, Chris, and tell you. I know just how it happened. You've been up to your old tricks again. You've lifted a sack, and were trying to cache it under the bank here. Come, now, 'fess up, ain't I got it about right?"

Dolan hung his head, and hugged the coat and he concealed the bag closer under his arm. He made no reply, and Bob continued:

"No need of your trying to hide it. I'm on. Drop that stuff, and I'll see that it's taken care of."

"Curse my luck!" cried Dolan with an oath. Then he settled to the ground and dropped his head to his knees. "You're not going to squeal on me, Bob?" he asked, piteously. "Honest to God, I've dragged this bag around with me for a year, trying to get rid of it, not by spending it, for it's all here, just as I found it. But it has been my hoodoo. This

was my third attempt to hide it since I came to Gold Bug. And now, if you take it, and it leaks out—"

He was interrupted by the opening of the cabin window. A white face appeared in the dark hole, and a woman's voice asked anxiously:

"What's the matter, Chris, why are you out there?"

It was Dolan's wife. It was Sadie. Bob knew the voice —he had heard it many times before. But in those happy days it did not seem so old and sad as now.

"Just a break in the ditch," said Chris. "It is fixed now, and I'll be in soon."

The window closed, and the white face disappeared.

"Does she know you have this?" Chris had willingly relieved himself of the bag, and Bob picked it up.

"My God no! The Gold Dollar mill haul was the last scrape she knows of my being in. I've been square since then. This stuff was piled in to me by some of the gang, now scattered. It's from the Boulder bank; been nearly a year since it was lifted, but hounds are still out; but they don't suspect me, and I'm safe as long as the stuff's kept out of sight. For God's sake, Bob, put it where nobody can find it."

"Leave that to me," Bob answered. "I'm glad I came upon you just when I did. It may save trouble; also, I'm glad to know you're straight. Had I known that, I would not have been so harsh the other night. But we'll keep the same sweet distance between us, for as I said before, you and me have several bygones that we can't shake."

Daniels gathered the bag under his coat and returned to the mine, reaching the mill just as the night shift was piling out of the shaft cage, six at a time.

A month later a lone horseman came up the stage road and pulled rein on the summit of the ridge. It was an afternoon in April, and the rider tilted back his hat to whiff the north wind, that came soft and warm down the canyons of the Colorado mountains. The snow peaks of Baldy and Preston were pink lighted by the subtle touch of spring. The frost plant peeped its delicate cone through the fat earth by the edge of the melting snows.

The man hitched up his holster another notch, with a mute suggestion of hunger, for an aroma of boiled beef and baked beans drifted up the canyon from Gold Bug boarding house, a half mile below.

At a slight touch of the spurs the horse dashed down the road, and in a moment stood panting before the mine office door. The man dismounted, leaving the reins dangling from the bits, and entering, found Hudson at the desk.

"I'm Bliton, the sheriff, just down from Boulder," announced the new arrival. He slipped his glove and extended his hand.

"And I'm Hudson," the super answered, with a cordial grasp. "Whose trail are on?"

"To be honest, I must confess I don't know. It's a cold trail at best, and mighty hard to follow. I'm still working on that Boulder bank hold-up, that happened over a year ago. I got wind that one of the gang, carrying the sack, drifted in here about a month ago. I want to know if you have a man on your list by the name of Evans—Bob Evans?"

"No such a name with us," the super declared. "I know every man Jack of the crew, and am pretty certain we have no Bob Evans. Dixon, over there, has the books, and you can look them over if you wish."

"No need," the sheriff assured. "Your word is good enough."

"We have a Bob Daniels," the bookkeeper informed, as he glanced hurriedly over the time sheet. "He came here about six weeks ago."

"But he's not the man Bliton wants," Hudson declared.

"Is he square-jawed, broad-shouldered, black-haired, gray-eyed, medium—"

"Yes, but we have a dozen men that could answer to such description," said Hudson.

"Where is this Bob Daniels now?"

"Down on the 500. Usually sleeps during the day, but we changed shifts two days ago. Want to see him?"

"Not just yet; but I would like entrance to his room. I'll search it—"

"Room?" Hudson snorted. "Do you think we're run-

ning a summer hotel out here? His room is a lower shelf down in the bunk house. Go search it if you like, but be easy about it, as some of the night boys are still asleep, and will crack your noggin if you wake them."

"They'll never know it," the sheriff assured. A moment later he followed Hudson across the camp to the long low building that served as sleeping quarters for the men.

They crossed the parlor on tip-toe, and passed down the dark aisle between the rows of bunks, from many of which the deep breathing and long drawn snores were heard even above the distant roar of the mill.

Near the middle of the room the two halted, and Hudson indicated a lower bunk. "That's Bob's apartment there," he informed. "This is too much like stealing eggs from a hay-loft to suit me. I'm going to quit you." Whereupon he turned on his heel and left.

The sheriff searched first in the pile of straw that served as mattress for the bunk; then pulled the blankets and lifted the pillow, but found nothing except two packages of smoking tobacco and a box of cigarettes. Finally he got down on his knees and reached exploring hands under the bunk, dragging out two pairs of miner's boots and a badly worn slicker. Then his hand came upon a canvas bag. It was heavy, and he clinched his fingers hard around it to bring it out. The officer's eyes gleamed triumphantly when the bag was hauled into the dim light of the bunk house. It weighed nearly twenty pounds, and bore in big letters across one side, the words: "Boulder National Bank."

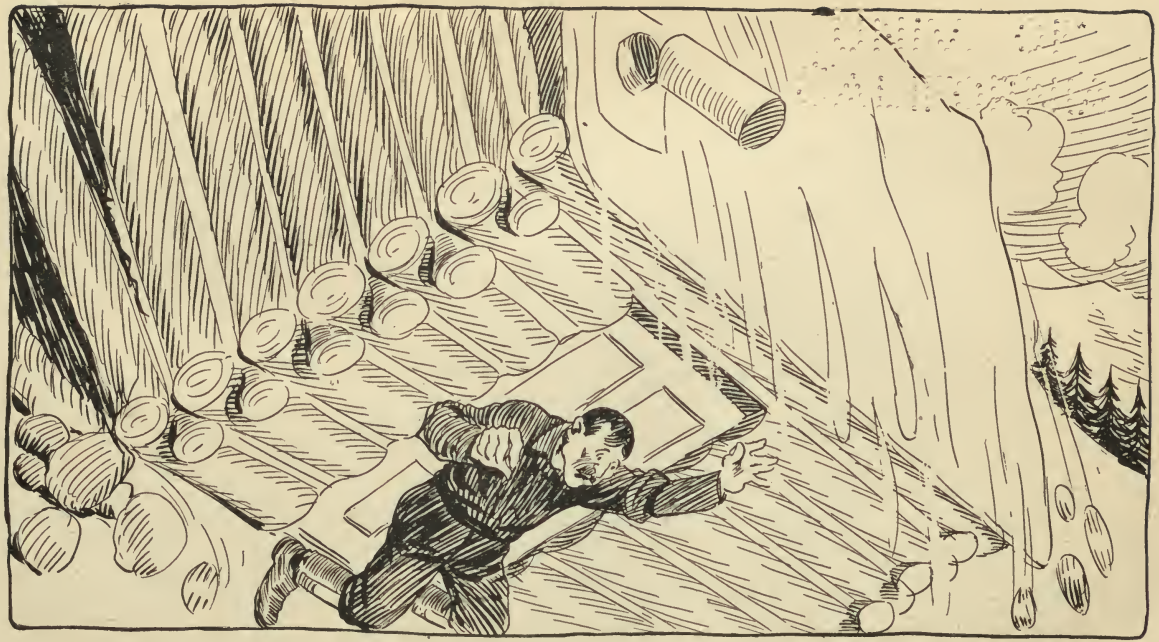
Two minutes later the sheriff dropped the bag on Hudson's desk. The super puffed hard at his pipe for a while, then turned his black eyes to the window, and remarked:

"Well, I'll be damned!"

"Not such a cold trail after all," said the sheriff. "This is a snap so far. The next thing is to get my man. Did you say he is down in the mine?"

"Yes, he's shift boss on the 500. I'll go down with you."

Hudson led the way to the shaft house, the two boarded the cage, and were dropped to the wide station on the 500-foot level. From a half dozen candlesticks, stuck in the



THE SLIP GAVE WAY AND THE CABIN TILTED OVER, CATCHING BOB UNDER THE DOOR.

station posts, well spent candles sputtered their yellow flames. Ore cars rumbled and roared down the drifts, and machine drills clattered from the stopes.

The two men groped their way down a long tunnel, and climbed a ladder that led from an ore chute aloft. They clambered into a broad stope, flickering with candles and alive with the "Pink! pink! pink!" of the jacks on the drills.

"That's your man over there in the red flannel shirt," said Hudson.

The sheriff stooped and crossed the stope. When he drew near, Bob caught the flash of his star, and understood.

The sheriff made as if to draw his gun, but the miner raised his hand. "Spare your powder," he said. "I'm on, and am with you. Just give the word and I'll lead or follow."

"I guess you'd better lead," said the sheriff, as he dropped in behind, and followed him down the ladder and through the dark tunnel to the station.

When they came to the surface they found the camp in great commotion. The big brass gong at the office was clanging wildly. Blue and red-shirted miners, bare of head and with unlaced boots, were piling in confusion from the bunk house and cabins. From up the canyon came a roar and crash as of a hurricane tearing the forest. The earth trembled, and the mountain sides was shaking.

"It's a slide!" said the super. "There's a big snow slip on Baldy." He ran back to the shaft house and called up Simpson. "Simp! Simp!" he yelled. "Get the men out of the mine; there's a slide up here, and if the shaft is covered, they will be buried like rats."

The big super ran madly from the trail to the bunk house, to rout out the remaining men, driving them all, like frightened sheep, to the middle of the vale below.

The day shift poured out of the mine like rats, and scattered for the open plateau.

Then came the slide, or a big part of it. Half of Baldy broke from the apex, and slipping down, left a deep red scar in its wake. At first it moved gently and easily, then jumped and leaped. Pines broke and snapped and twisted like straws

under the avalanche of snow and earth; the cabins and buildings of the upper end of the camp crushed and crumbled and rolled under the mass. The great mountain shook as if afraid.

Half way across camp the slide halted. The mill still thundered its battery, as if in defiance, and the "chug! chug!" of the compressor was heard above the rumble and crash of destruction.

After the first slip had quieted, the crowd looked up from the vale and beheld a little cabin, half torn from its foundation, hanging at the base of the avalanche.

"It's Chris Dolan's cabin!" said one.

"Chris, Chris, where is he?" inquired the super, excitedly.

"And his wife," yelled the Old Woman of the boarding house. "She's up there with him! Listen, I hear her screaming! They can't get out!"

A shudder passed through the crowd of rough-and-ready men. Though accustomed to danger, this was an ordeal to test the nerve of the bravest of them. The screams of the woman continued to come from the cabin. It was certain death to attempt to rescue her; at least, the chances were one in a thousand. If the slide would hold only for a little while. If it did not hold—

Suddenly a man rushed from the crowd and crossed the camp. He was clad in red flannel shirt, his arms and head were bare, his sleeves rolled high. He ran nimbly up the steep slope toward the cabin. It was Bob Daniels. They vainly tried to stop him. They shouted for him to return, but he paid no heed. Up, up, he climbed, into the very jaws of death, with the gravel rattling and rolling about his feet, and the snow slipping, slipping, gently, treacherously, while the watchers below held their breath and waited.

He reached the cabin and climbed in. Shortly he came out, carrying a woman in his arms. It was Chris Dolan's wife. The crowd cheered lustily. He carried her down the steep slope through the spongy snow and across the camp to the open and safety.

When he had delivered his burden to the Old Woman,

he rushed to the mill, seized an ax, and was up the hill again toward the cabin. This time Hudson, the super, was with him.

"Chris is in here!" Bob shouted, as he smashed the window and crawled in. "He's pinned under his bunk."

Rapid blows of the ax followed, and in a little while the huge body of the miner, limp and unconscious, was passed out, and Hudson bore him down the hill. At that moment the slip gave way and the cabin tilted over, catching Bob under the door. Hudson halted as if to turn back. "Go on, for God sake, run!" Bob shouted, as the cabin rolled over and was caught under the avalanche. With a wild shriek the slide let go, and hurled its millions of tons of snow and earth upon the camp. Hudson and Chris were scooted and buffeted by the van of the mass out across the slope, and tossed and rolled over the mill to the edge of the plateau, bruised and bleeding, but safe.

Hudson put two shifts at work on the slide, and the sheriff remained and worked with them. They dug for ten days, driving tunnels in the mass of earth, looking, searching, probing for Bob's body. At last they found it, and the funeral was held at the camp cemetery, a half mile up the canyon. The stamps were hung up that day, and both shifts were there to stand around the grave with bared heads and heavy hearts. A preacher came all the way from Boulder to preach the funeral, and the miners sung "Nearer My God to Thee," more pathetically than the dear old song was ever sung.

Over the coffin Sadie mourned and wept, for now she knew how wide and deep was the love of him who had met death smilingly that Chris might be saved.

They heaped the mound with mountain daisies, and the Boulder bank sent out a stone to mark Bob's last resting place. At its base was the inscription: "Don't Be Hard With Him, God, for He Was Square."

THE END

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