
This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

Google™ books

<https://books.google.com>





WILLIAM CHARVAT
American Fiction Collection

The Ohio State University Libraries



... Let me do
it.

THE
ADMINISTRATRIX

BY
EMMA GHENT CURTIS
AUTHOR OF "THE FATE OF A FOOL."

NEW YORK
JOHN B. ALDEN, PUBLISHER
1889

Copyright, 1889,
BY
EMMA GHENT CURTIS.

DEDICATION.

T O I R A K . G H E N T ,
M Y F A T H E R ,
A N D
T O T H E R E V E R E D M E M O R Y O F
M A R Y P A L M E R G H E N T ,
M Y M O T H E R ,
T H I S V O L U M E I S A F F E C T I O N A T E L Y I N S C R I B E D .

P R E F A C E.

I have endeavored to portray the cowboy as he is.

E. G. C.

CONTENTS.

I. The Vaquero,	9
II. The Roundup,	14
III. The Tenderfoot,	20
IV. An Unintended Meeting,	28
V. The Mysteries of Cowboyism,	35
VI. Progress,	52
VII. The Water Question,	55
VIII. Peculiarities of the Tenderfoot	60
IX. Strange Events,	70
X. Still Stranger Events,	88
XI. So Many Riatas are Thrown,	99
XII. That They Become Tangled,	107
XIII. But the Vaquero is Roped,	111
XIV. The Riata is Securely Tied,	116
XV. Discovery,	121
XVI. Action under the Riata,	130
XVII. Something New,	138
XVIII. The Pious Cowboy,	149
XIX. The Cowboy as a Poet,	152
XX. The Crookedness of Fate,	160
XXI. Various Occurrences,	168
XXII. The Cowboy as Philosopher and Novelist,	176
XXIII. Experiences,	211
XXIV. The Cowboy as Romancer,	217
XXV. At the Circle Bar,	228
XXVI. The Spring Roundup,	231

CONTENTS.

XXVII. Sweet Recreation,	- - - -	243
XXVIII. Raisin' Thunder,	- - - -	255
XXIX. Ways and Means,	- - - -	260
XXX. Eulalia,	- - - -	266
XXXI. Detection,	- - - -	271
XXXII. Incidents,	- - - -	282
XXXIII. The Heart History of Hen Hall,	- - - -	289
XXXIV. Deepening Clouds,	- - - -	296
XXXV. Love Thoughts,	- - - -	298
XXXVI. Tragedy,	- - - -	301
XX.XVII. Widowed,	- - - -	305
XXXVIII. The Estate,	- - - -	309
XXXIX. Interlude,	- - - -	311
XL. The Darling of the Circle Bar,	- - - -	312
XLI. Getting Acquainted,	- - - -	320
XLII. How the Circle Bar Kept Sunday,	- - - -	325
XLIII. Milroy City Has a Race Display,	- - - -	329
XLIV. Experiences of an Offender,	- - - -	337
XLV. The History of a Night,	- - - -	344
XLVI. The Drive,	- - - -	348
XLVII. The History of a Day,	- - - -	353
XLVIII. Gloom,	- - - -	365
XLIX. A Last Glimpse,	- - - -	371

THE ADMINISTRATRIX

CHAPTER I.

THE VAQUERO.

"O, who is so gay as the gallant vaquero,
With his beauty of bronze, neath his shady sombrero ?
He smiles at his love and he laughs at his fate ;
For he knows he is lord of a noble estate."

The Vaquero.

ON one of the long slopes of Bernalillo, where the junipers and piñons of the lower foothills begin to give way to the pines of more elevated regions, there might have been seen, one September day, a solitary horseman.

His figure and aspect were well in keeping with the Colorado landscape. His bent head and slowly moving broncho, together with the long shadows that ever and anon lay upon the little park he was crossing, gave an air of dreaminess to the whole entrancing, picturesque scene. The very mountain range wrapped in its delicious half blue haze, seemed sleeping away the late September afternoon. The little park, where the broncho left the prints of her small, unshod feet, was bare save for its carpet of gramma grass, and its occasional clump of tall, spreading, buckthorn cactus ; below were dense belts of piñons and junipers ; above were scattering pines, contesting with more piñons and junipers the occupation of the lofty slopes ; for the latter climb high upon the hillsides. The junipers—cedars as they are more commonly called—are at their best on the foothills below the park ; they are masters there, and their gnarled, irregular limbs, bright foliage, and blue-green berries present a strange attractiveness.

There had been a hard day's ride ; it had been barren of

results and both broncho and rider were weary. The former walked slowly along, occasionally turning her head slightly toward the country below her, and requiring on the part of her rider a slight pressure of the rein upon her neck. Her dark bay flanks were soiled with dust that lay upon lines of perspiration; her very nostrils seemed clogged, and the occasional vigorous snorts which she gave was evidently an effort to clear them. Her beautiful head and graceful neck hung low; in her bright eye alone remained ambition and animation.

The person of the rider inspired searching interest rather than instant admiration. Either man or woman would have found in him a subject for intense and fascinating study. The face was fine, yet scarcely handsome; it was too pronounced, too aggressive for beauty; there was more of will-power and decision than of comeliness. His face would have been fair but for exposure to the scorching Colorado sun; the eyes were blue, intense and searching; they were fearless without insolence—almost without complete self-confidence; they were not small, yet the heavy, prominent brows above them made them appear so, save when their intense gaze was centered. A wide-brimmed gray felt hat pushed slightly back from a broad wrinkled forehead showed a furze of short, straight, light brown hair. The nose was fully up to the average size and was slightly irregular. The cheek bones were just perceptible; the mouth was strong and determined, with lips that shut firmly together and seldom relaxed; the upper lip was wreathed with a short mustache a shade lighter than the furze of hair that showed beneath the hat. His not slim, not stout person, was clothed in a complete suit of buckskin; the shirt was trimmed down the front with a double row of cut fringe; a single row of the same garniture adorned the outside seam of each pantaloons leg. Instead of the dainty high-heeled boot, which most cowboys sport he wore moccasins. A silk handkerchief combining very homely shades of red and blue was tied about his well-tanned neck. His clothing seemed arranged for comfort and convenience rather than for appearance. Many beads were missing from the elaborate pattern on his moccasins, and the fringe upon his clothing was in several places torn loose and hanging. A pair of gloves stood half out of a pocket, while the sun was taking full liberty with his already browned, calloused hands. A huge coil of weather-beaten rope hung at his saddle horn, and a rolled slicker was tied in one of the numerous strings

which depended from his saddle. There was no revolver or weapon of any sort in sight; a handkerchief, quite as lacking in good taste and beauty as the one about his neck, showed a corner of itself out of the pistol pocket. He wore neither coat, vest nor suspenders; perhaps the way to offer a cowboy the crowning insult would be to present him with a pair of suspenders for everyday wear.

The rider drew rein for a moment. The half dream upon his face gave place to an intense study which was soon replaced by the light which tells of a fresh plan. He turned his broncho's head down grade and started at a somewhat smarter pace toward a small valley, where even at that distance green fields and orchards were discernible in sharp contrast to the monotonous brown of the surrounding parks. He crossed a deep gulch where quaking aspen and wild cherry trees rustled in the wind, to find a smooth footing for his faithful little mare. He rode for some three miles before reaching the outskirts of the settlement. A neat adobe building stood upon the slope just above the orchards and fields. The school-house must not occupy arable land; arable land is scarce and consequently valuable; there is plenty of space above the level of the irrigating ditches for the school-house. A tall, slender girl, pretty but delicate looking, with dark hair and the darkest possible shade of gray eyes, was sweeping a cloud of dust away from the door. Not perceiving the rider she laid aside her broom and proceeded to give her skirts a series of smart blows to drive the dust out of them; then she patted her braided hair for a similar reason, and drawing a handkerchief out of her pocket she wiped her flushed face.

"Hello," said the rider in a half-doubtful tone.

The young woman looked hurriedly up. "Good-evening," she said confusedly.

The rider took off his hat, but not as the lady first supposed, from courtesy. He suddenly remembered that his face was also probably dusty, and acting upon the thought he drew the handkerchief from his hip pocket and vigorously mopped his sunburnt features. He was evidently embarrassed.

"Have you noticed any cattle strayin' about here, Miss?" he asked as he nervously pocketed his kerchief.

"Cattle? why, yes. There are nearly always cattle grazing about." She was reassured now, and her silvery tone was easy and natural.

The rider gained confidence.

"Well, did you notice among 'em a fine red and white spotted yearlin' heifer, branded half circle Z O on the left hip, and with a cancelled triangle bar on her right shoulder? She had an underbit in her right ear and a lump on her nose."

The lady smiled—an amused, interested, delicious smile.

"I'm a stranger here," she said. "I don't know much about brands; I've heard of them, but never thought to notice them."

"A stranger?" he echoed. "Why, don't you teach this school?"

"Yes, sir; but I've only been in the state five weeks; I've only been in the neighborhood a week."

"Well! But I suppose your folks all live out here." Many a man feigns ignorance in order to bring about a desired conversation.

"No, I have not a relative—not even an acquaintance—in the state. I am here for my health." Then she feared that she was becoming too confidential—these cowboys were bad, dangerous men; everybody back East said so—so she added quickly, "But I haven't noticed your—cow—I don't remember any spotted ones."

"That's odd. There are generally pretty plenty of spotted ones. You couldn't tell me of any one else that's seen her? You might have heard the folks where you stay say something."

"I haven't heard her mentioned." Then she made a movement to enter the house.

"Well, I won't keep you waitin'—but if you'd happen to see her and notice the brand, I'd like for you to send me word. She's a fine animal, and I'd hate to lose her. I bought her, and I haven't got my brand on her yet. I believe I told you she had a lump on her nose?"

"Yes, sir; and if I see her, I'll tell some of the neighbors and tell them to tell you." Again she approached the door. The rider turned his mare toward the settlement, but paused to add:

"She's been runnin' with a roan Texas maverick two years old, and an American cow branded an the left side with a bar eleven. The cow's red. She'll most likely be with them."

"Yes, sir; I'll watch for her."

"All right; you can send word to the Bar Eleven ranche. Good-bye." He spoke to his broncho, and just touched her

flank with the spur. The short rest, and the cooler air of evening, had to some extent renewed her vigor; she gave a quick little snort, and galloped away in the direction of the settlement. The numerous straps and thongs attached to the saddle, and the riata over the horn, swung out and returned to lash her dark bay sides. The vaquero turned in his saddle and looked back. The teacher stood in the school-house door, shading her eyes with her hand, and looking after him. The amused, interested smile was still lighting her face, when she perceived him watching her. She quickly dropped her hand and entered the house.

When she was again inside the school-house she burst into a silvery laugh. "What a saddle!" she said to herself. "And such stirrups! And all those strings! And those hideous handkerchiefs!" Then she began dusting the desks, but soon paused to again laugh aloud. "I wonder if he thought he looked pretty," she said almost audibly. "Well, I don't believe he'd look so bad if he were dressed like a white man. And so that is a cowboy—a real, genuine cowboy. And yet he didn't eat me." She drew from a pocket a little book, on the back of which was written in a legible but somewhat irregular hand, "Everyday Thoughts of Mary Fleming." She opened the book, wrote at the top of a page "Sept. 15, 18—;" then she proceeded to fill out about two pages with a neat cypher, unintelligible to any save its inventor. This done, she arose with the smile still upon her face, finished her dusting, took up her dinner-pail, locked her school-room door, and started down the same road that the vaquero had taken. But him she was not seeking; like the average mortal, at five in the evening, she was hungry and wanted her supper.

As she walked down the rather steep grade toward the alfalfa fields and young but thriving orchards, she breathed quickly, and her cheeks glowed with almost an unnatural hue. An occasional short, dry cough accompanied her nervous movements, and indicated the nature of the malady because of which she had sought the Colorado hills.

CHAPTER II.

THE ROUNDUP.

THE blue-eyed, buckskin-shirted vaquero rode through the little settlement, pausing for some reason at the house situated at the highest limit of the scattered group. He then turned his broncho again toward the higher country, and rode at a slow pace to a level park about five miles above the last farm house. Upon a level spot on this park, near the low bank of a very tiny stream, lounged, sat and lay a group of men of all sizes and nearly all ages. A dozen or so ponies stood grazing about. Some of these were saddled and bridled, doing their best to get a supper of gramma grass in spite of the forbidding bit. Some had been unsaddled and tethered. Some, more beloved perhaps than the others, were being caressed and fed lump sugar by their masters. Two men lay beside a huge fire with their heads upon saddles, and their flushed, drowsy faces indicating a half sleep; they did not choose the vicinity of the fire because they were cold—the weather was exceedingly pleasant—they had come in hungry after a long ride, and they wanted to catch the aroma of the preparing supper and badger the cook. They half dozed from time to time, waking only to brush the snapping juniper coals off of their shirts and chaparejos,* and to hurry up the cook. The latter all-important personage stood over the fire, stirring a huge caldron of coffee with a big iron spoon, and frequently lifting the cover off a similar caldron filled with beans. He flourished the spoon with which he had stirred the coffee, and told one of his eager watchers that if he thought he could "hurry up the chuck any faster than he was doing, to come and take the job or else shut up. The watcher quieted. He was a tall, athletic, splendidly built man of some twenty-eight or twenty-nine years. His face was singularly handsome. He raised to a sitting posture as the cook said to him in a rather sharp tone:

* Usually abbreviated to "chaps"; pronounced "shaps."

"Now, Stan Lancaster, if you're so all fired hungry, rustle you a scoop and fill up. The hash's ready."

Stanley Lancaster and his companion rose, took some tin plates and cups from an improvised cupboard in the mess wagon, and began to take ample supplies of beans, beef and coffee from the caldrons. The other men began to approach the fire and follow their example.

"Hello, Jim!" shouted Lancaster, as he perceived the buckskin covered rider stripping saddle and bridle from his broncho. "Just got in?"

"Hello. Yes," responded Jim, as he took the riata from his saddle horn and tied it about the neck of his broncho. "Here, now, Kate, go get your supper," he said, as he gave her a little pat on the neck. He looked dreamy and preoccupied. As he dragged his saddle away to put it under the "grub wagon," he stepped on one of the latigo straps which he had forgotten to fold through its ring, and came near falling.

"Which way did you ride, Jim?" asked Hen Hall, a long, angular, gawky individual, whose unsuspended blue overalls seemed in imminent danger of slipping down over his lean hips and losing themselves hopelessly. He hitched them up as he spoke and slipping his hands behind him drew the strap a little further through the buckle.

"Been over to Ute Gap; trying to see if I could see or hear anything of a heifer that's running over that way."

"See her?"

"Yes—No!"

"I didn't know that any of your brand run over there, Jim;" said an exceedingly young looking, fantastically dressed fellow, with almost white pompadour hair.

"Well," said Jim, "this'un don't exactly carry my brand yet—wish she did—maybe will sometime." Then he looked round suddenly and reddened. The men threw up their hats and chorused forth a laugh.

"Haven't taken to maverick hunting, have you, Jim?" asked the youth.

"Shut your jaw, Kid, and give Jim a chance to toot," said Penobscot Bill, very mildly, "maybe he'll clear himself."

Jim scratched his head and leaned against the mess wagon.

"There are times," he said, in his increased confusion, "when a man's justifiable."

"In what?" asked Hen Hall,

"Why, in ropin' an unbranded critter that's got no one to look after her; and seein' her safe through the winter when the feed's short, and takin' good care of her. I know that if I'd rope such a one that I'd put the brand on 'mighty light and turn her into a pasture that's runnin' over with feed, and that's got lots of piñons for shelter." And Jim leaned hard against the wagon, and looking dreamily over the heads of the busily eating group, gazed away at the far-off settlement on Trelawna Creek.

"Say Jim, do you know what's the matter with you?" asked Kid, as he gulped down a huge mouthful of beans. "If you don't, I can tell you. You're locoed."

Jim kicked his saddle under the wagon and looked vacantly at the men. Then he turned his eyes to where Kate was picking up her supper.

"That knot in that rope is a mighty queer one for a cow-man to tie, Jim. Choke the brute to death," said Lancaster.

"Thought you was the man that always intended to shun tanglefoot," said the Kid, as the piñon bough upon which he sat broke and turned him and his plate of beans back into the lap of Penobscot Bill who was supping in the immediate rear.

"Thunder and lightning!" said Jim, waking at last, "what's the matter with all you fellows? Who said I was drunk?"

"Well, you're acting mighty funny, Jim," said Lancaster, ending his sentence with a long, musical little laugh.

"O, I'm a funny boy—just get me started right," said Jim, with wrath in his eye. He then approached the little run, washed his hands, face and neck in its pellucid waters, dried them on the handkerchief from his hip pocket, retied his neckerchief and approached the mess. He loaded a tin plate with food and ate ravenously, all the while maintaining silence. He soon finished his meal, and announcing that he would now saddle a fresh horse and go to the relief of the boys who were holding the cattle, left the mess.

He took a coiled riata from under the mess wagon and walking a few paces off to where some twenty unpicketed ponies grazed, he approached one well tattooed with saddle marks and making a quick, well calculated fling of the riata, secured the pony by the neck. The pony was apparently accustomed to this procedure, as he quietly followed in the direction that Jim led. He was soon saddled, and with his captor

upon his back was galloping away to where four mounted men were holding a large herd of quietly grazing cattle.

"Go in to supper, boys," shouted Jim, as he approached the two upon the hitherside. "They're quiet; I can hold 'em. If they make a start let some of the other boys be ready to come out and help."

The men needed no second invitation. With a light touch of the spur they were off for camp. Jim rode round the herd and sent away the other two watchers. Neither was there any hesitation in their going. Jim bore the reputation throughout those hills of "a natural born cowman." All the other cowboys felt that when Jim arrived upon the scene that whatever emergency was present was fully met.

The group that now surrounded the fire was an interesting one. Sixteen men displayed almost as many different positions. There was great freedom of attitude and perhaps too great freedom of speech. Profanity is by no means unknown in a cow camp. Three elderly men who were present wore coats, vests and suspenders; but be it distinctly remembered that these were cattle owners who were assisting in the rounding-up of their stock, and not in any sense cowboys. The latter were dressed with considerable, though by no means complete, uniformity. There was not a pair of suspenders nor a vest to the entire thirteen, and the slickers tied to the different saddles that lay scattered about were the nearest approach to coats. They wore broad hats at all sorts of angles; there was one shirt of buckskin—the others were of flannel or handsome cloth more or less elaborately decorated, some with tucks, but most with colored machine done embroidery. They wore blue or brown cotton overalls and over these chaparejos made of brown or yellow leather trimmed with fringe of the same material. Only two were without the leather chaparejos; these had the useful articles constructed of bearskin in its natural color and state. The easy fitting clothing showed to splendid advantage many a fine form; but this muscular perfection was in several instances marred by a slight tendency to stoop, caused by long continued saddle exercise. Scarcely a man of them all was without a revolver.

One of the groups that formed about the fire for the purpose of conversation or bantering was composed of Stanley Lancaster, Hen Hall, Penobscot Bill, and Kid. Now the Kid had a name. His cognomen came from his being the most youthful-looking man in camp. He was nineteen years

of age, but he looked younger. His name was Charley Wentworth, but if any one had addressed him by it he would have looked round in surprise.

"Say, Stanley," said Hen, in his long, drawling voice; "have you ever got round to spark that new school-marm on Trelawna yet? They say she's mighty purty. You know the Scriptures say 'tain't good for man to be alone."

"I'll get round there one of these days," answered Stanley, slowly, as if mentally calculating whether he ought to do the lady so great an honor.

Kid gave an upward stroke to his pompadour hair.

"Now, look here, mister," he said, in a lofty tone. "Do you suppose I'm going to let you go over there and break that girl's heart? If you do, it's because you don't know how to bank on the Kid. I'm going to take that girl in myself."

"Humph! She wouldn't look at you twice," said Stanley.

"Yes, she would. She'd be scared the first time she looked, and so she'd look again to see whether she had any foundation for her scare. When she found she hadn't, she'd stand mighty still, and listen to the gentle flow of my sweet voice while I did some tall talking."

"And what would she do when you got through your speech?"

"Tell me to go straight off after the preacher."

Stanley gave a musical, indulgent laugh, and bestowed a slight and very good-natured pat upon the shoulder of the forward youth. It was gracefully done. What act of Stanley's had ever been executed otherwise? He was grace from the loftiest lock of wavy blond hair on his head down to his well-formed, gracefully booted feet.

"Wonder what's ruffled Jim up so?" he said.

"In love," said the ready and mischievous Kid.

"Now," said Stanley, musingly, "I'd feel sorry for Jim if he was to fall in love. Get left, sure. Jim ain't popular with the women."

"I never heard of him trying to be popular with 'em," said Hen Hall. "Never heard of him even keeping company with any girl but Amy Chellis; he seems to be popular enough there."

"Oh, Jim's not the lady's man that your humble servant is—not by a long chalk!" said Kid, as he placed his tin plate upon his head, and bowed it into Lancaster's lap. "I

tell you I intend to break so many a heart, that you'll get ashamed of yourself, and lay your discouraged soul to rest beneath the surging waters of the Gaston. But I won't interfere with the action of the little school-marm's heart; she's to be the bright, particular star that's to light my flower-strewn pathway. Gimme some more beans, Hen."

Hen took the tin plate out of Stanley's lap and proceeded to the bean-pot, whither he was going to replenish his own stock.

"Want a spud, too, Kid?" he asked.

"No; don't like spuds unless they're boiled inside their slickers. They get water-soaked when they're cooked any other way." The cook had upon this occasion peeled the potatoes and cooked them with the beef.

"Now, look here, Kid," said Lancaster, "they say that little school-marm's both pretty and proud. Pride must have a fall. Her heart must be broken. Now, if you refuse to take the job, I must try my hand. The thing's got to be done. Sabe?" And Stanley finished off with his long, musical little laugh.

Kid whetted his knife against his boot-leg, and shook it under Lancaster's nose. The knife was his only weapon; he was one of the few who had no revolver. Lancaster rose, gave him a good-natured kick, and went in search of the coffee supply.

Hen Hall threw away a goodly sized piece of beef-rib which he had been picking, set down his plate, and drank the last of his coffee. Then he drew out a huge pocket-knife, opened it, wiped the blade upon his chaparejos, and began to pick his ungainly yellow teeth.

"B'lieve I'll go out an' help Jim," he said, as he closed the knife and put it into his pocket. "The Scriptures says, 'Bear ye one another's burdens.' I calculate, from Jim's looks, that he's got a middlin' heavy load on, somehow. Jim didn't look right to-night. It's gittin' 'bout the time of year for mountain fever."

"Girl fever," suggested Kid.

Hen yawned. He tolerated Kid—so did every one else—but he felt that the latter ought to recognize the fact that people got tired. He walked slowly out to where the ponies were grazing, and went straight up to a beautiful little sorrel mare. He placed an arm round her neck, and drew his long red fingers through her silky mane. He held the other hand to her mouth; she searched it, and found something to her

taste. After she had disposed of the tidbit, shaking her head up and down in her effort to make the most of it, Hen turned and walked away toward a saddle that lay upon the ground. "Come, Princess," he said quietly. She followed him, and soon was galloping with him to where Jim Madnau held the herd.

The fire was brightening, for the shadows were deepening. An irregular line of bright, golden light crested the darkening range—the last lingering caress of the fast-flying sun. The men threw down their plates, and stood or lounged about the fire. The snapping cedar boughs threw long tongues of wavering light upon the fast darkening sward. The moon rose, golden and majestic, and did her utmost to supply the glory that had fled with her mighty progenitor.

"Who's going to night-watch?" asked big Bill Coffroth, the owner of three thousand head.

Three men were selected to watch for three hours, three more for two, and another three for the last two hours of the night. The first watch saddled horses and galloped away; Jim and Hen soon returned. Saddles were drawn into convenient positions to serve as pillows, and heads of all descriptions were placed thereon. Slickers were unrolled and saddle-blankets unfolded for covering. The cook washed and piled away in the mess-wagon the last of the tin plates. He covered the caldrons, and kicked the remnants of the fire together. Then he drew out of the mess-wagon his roll of bedding, and disposed himself therein. The camp sank into quietude, that was not disturbed until the first watch sent one of their number in to awake the second.

CHAPTER III.

THE TENDERFOOT.

MARY FLEMING hurried down the side hill into the valley. She entered a yard enclosed by a neat paling fence, and hurried up the walk to the front-door of a good-sized, white frame house. To the right of the said frame house was an abandoned adobe structure which had served as a dwelling house in earlier times. About the yard, and drooping over the low roof of the adobe, were apple trees, not old nor very large, but of sufficient age to be well hung with fruit. The

place was not showy or pretentious, but was neat, attractive, and home-like.

Mary hurried into the sitting-room. A well-preserved old man, with half-curly brown hair, just touched with gray, was filling the long wood-box with piñon. His eyes were keen and intelligent; his manner brusque but kindly. His person was stout and erect. An old lady, also rather compactly built, sat knitting a sock. Her blond hair was also streaked with gray, but her still handsome face pictured wondrous content. Both looked around as the young girl entered.

"O—O—I've seen a cowboy—a real genuine cowboy!" exclaimed the latter, as she set her dinner-pail upon a little stand near the door. "He did just look too funny; but I didn't think he looked very mean, though."

"A cowboy?" said the old man, giving a sort of smack with his lips as he finished. "Why, they're no rarity; they're as thick as coyotes."

"But this is the first one *I* ever saw—I mean the first one I was ever close to. I saw two in the street at Milroy City; but this one *spoke* to me."

"Did, eh? Well, most of 'em can talk; some of 'em talks too much. What did he say?"

"Why, he asked about a—cow."

"Did? Didn't ask you to marry, then?" This was said with awful coolness, as the old man straightened the last stick of piñon and closed the lid of the box.

"Oh, now, Mr. Hogan!" said Mary, pouting.

"Well, I thought from your excitement it must be that." The old lady laughed quietly behind her glasses as her husband made this little comment on youthful enthusiasm.

Mary now put on a serious look. "He wanted me to ask about her," she said. "She was spotted red and white, and had some kind of brand on her to tell her by—it was—some kind of a geometry sign, I *believe*," she mused; "then she had some kind of cancellation on her shoulder—and a triangle on the same shoulder, I think." Here Mr. Hogan laughed aloud—a proceeding quite unusual with him. "Why, was he making fun of me?" added the girl, quickly, as she colored a vivid scarlet.

"No, no; but you don't seem to understand brands. What else did he say?"

"Well, he said a triangle bar; but I know he was mistaken. There *is* no such thing as a triangle bar."

"He meant a triangle over a bar; this way," and the old

man drew with his finger upon the wall an imaginary figure.

“ But what do they have it *for?* ”

“ So that each man will know his stock ; my brand is a half-circle seven.”

“ A half-circle seven ? ”

“ Yes ; a half-circle over a seven.”

“ And they make those marks on the cows ? ”

“ Yes ; they have an iron made in the shape of the brand, and they heat that red-hot and touch the skin with it ; it burns the hair off, and leaves the brand on the skin.”

“ I’d think the cow would jump.”

“ She can’t ; she’s tied.”

“ I’d think the man would burn his fingers.”

“ Burn thunder, gal ; the brand is at the end of a long rod.”

“ Oh ! Well, isn’t it cruel ? ”

“ Well, yes ; of course it is. But then, if I didn’t brand my stock, some one else would mighty quick do it for me.”

“ Well, I’d be glad if they did. If the poor cows have to be hurt, and there’s no getting round it, I’d be glad enough to have some one else do it, and then my conscience would be free of cruelty, anyhow.”

The old man got almost out of patience. He hastened to say :

“ But, gal, they’d put *their* brands on the cattle.”

“ What would they do that for ? ”

“ Why, to steal ‘em ! ”

“ Why, do very many people do *that?* ”

“ Weren’t there any people in the part of the country that you came from that broke into people’s houses and stole grub ? ”

“ Ye—s ; of course.”

“ Well, I doubt if there’s a range that hasn’t got its cattle-thief, any more than there’s a town that hasn’t got its grub-thief.”

“ Well, people are terribly mean to burn poor cows just to get to steal them, anyhow.”

The old man came near exploding. He laughed loud and long, while the young girl reddened dangerously.

“ Joshua ! Joshua ! ” exclaimed the old lady.

“ I’ll tell you what I’ll do, gal,” said the old man, when his laughter had ceased. “ I’ll take you out to see the round-up Saturday. They’ll be camped on Aspen Creek till Tuesday. This is Thursday. We’ll all go out Saturday, and

then you'll have a chance to learn all about the cow business."

"Oh! oh! That will be grand!" said Mary, clapping her hands. Then she seemed to reflect for a moment. "But will we be safe?" she asked, hesitatingly.

"Safe? What's to hurt us?"

"Why—I've read—that the cowboys—"

"Oh, yes; so've I. Now, look here, gal, they's *some* cowboys that's jest the noblest fellows on airth; they's others that's as good as gold when they're sober, but git mighty unsteady when they're boozy. Then, of course, they's some genuine bad ones, that don't care for either God nor man, and had rather kill somebody than to clean out the gun-barrel after they're done shootin'. I've seen all three sorts. But then they ain't any of them goin' to hurt you. They ain't any of the *worst* kind here, anyhow; they stick to the frontier, where the law ain't very thick. But even if they was here, they wouldn't hurt *you*. If there's anything in this whole world that a cowboy jest naturally hankers after, it's a gal. Good, bad, and middlin' are all alike there."

"But if they are so fond of women—"

"Oh! you're afraid one of 'em'll carry you off. Well, it wouldn't surprise me very much if one did. But let me tell you one thing, gal; if he does, it'll be mighty apt to be with your full and free consent. These cowboys are a winnin' set—especially the good ones—I've known of 'em carryin' off mighty fine women; and the women didn't pull back very hard neither."

"Well, Mr. Hogan," she began, indignantly, "if you think for a single moment—"

"I don't think much about it, gal; I shan't lose no sleep over it. But if you want to see the round-up Saturday, Harriet and me will go along with you. Then they's another thing. Dan Hopkins' wife has got a new sewing-machine, and since the agent's gone she can't do nothin' with it. I told 'em you claimed to be a good hand at sewin', and maybe you could doctor the machine. He said he'd be glad if you'd come over some night and try it."

"Very well. Where do they live?"

"Maybe you noticed the top of a house about half a mile ahead; due west from here? It's nearly hid amongst cotton woods."

"I don't remembor seeing it."

"Well, that's where they live; and you'll find 'em a mighty fine old couple."

“ Any children ? ”

“ Not here. They’ve got a daughter back east tryin’ to support a drunken husband, and then they’ve got a son in Sacramento. They’ve been here about seven years, and have done well, considerin’ how hard up they was when they come.”

“ What do they do ? Are they farmers ? ”

“ Well, the old man does do a little ranchin’ now, but for a long time him an’ her kept a truck-patch, and sold the stuff in Milroy City. I tell you they done well. Jim let ’em have house-room, and let ’em have five acres of ground on the shares ”

“ Jim who ? ”

“ Oh, here I go again, talkin’ away about some one you don’t know. Why, Jim Madnau, of course—feller that came here more’n seven years ago from York State—cattleman—gettin’ rich fast.”

“ Has he any children ? ” (Was there ever a young girl who did not wonder whether some rich man in her new field might be the father of a noble and handsome son ?)

“ Children ? Why, bless you, no ; he ain’t got any wife yet.”

“ Why, he is pretty old, isn’t he ? ”

“ Just about a good age to marry. Told me he was twenty-one when he come here, and he’s been here seven years. He’s got a good house up there that he built a year ago, and I shouldn’t wonder if he’d be hunting a wife to put into it one of these days.”

“ I shouldn’t think he’d have any trouble finding one, as rich as you say he is. Is he handsome ? ”

“ Well, now, there’s nothin’ flashy about Jim ; he’s a very good-lookin’ young man, but he’s not one of the sort that goes slashin’ round wastin’ all he earns on perfumery and neckties and tailor bills. He has good clothes, and he wears ’em when the right time comes ; but, as I said before, there’s nothin’ flashy about him.”

“ I suppose the girls are all in love with him ? ”

“ Well, I know one thing ; they can’t none of ’em have any serious objection to Jim. As to their bein’ in love with him, I can’t say ; he’s a feller that don’t bother ’em much. Never heard of him waitin’ on any girl but Colonel Chellis’s Amy, and I never heard of him takin’ her anywhere but once or twice.”

“ Amy Chellis. I heard of her while I was in Milroy City. Is she here now ? ”

"Yes; she's home from school for good now. Nothin' more to do in life except to find a husband."

"Well, if Mrs. Hopkins lives with a rich young man, I don't want to go there; he'll think I'm running after him. If Miss Chellis wants him, I shall not give her any uneasiness."

"Why, Jim ain't there, *now*; all the cattlemen's out on the round-up; ain't likely to be home for two weeks yet. They've got to gather up what's on Turkey Creek after they leave Aspen. If you don't want to meet Jim, now's your time."

"Well, then, I might just as well go this evening."

"No, no," interposed Mrs. Hogan; "you and Joshua have talked so long now that it's about supper-time. You'd be in the dark getting home. To-morrow evening will be soon enough."

Mary helped the kind old lady prepare the ample supper and wash and put away the dishes. While assisting in the latter work, she was intently thinking over the problem of making friends of the Hopkinesses. She was pre-eminently social by nature, and the shrewd wisdom of old people delighted her. But how could she court them without the neighborhood inferring that she was also courting Jim Madnau? Like all attractive and vivacious women, she had felt the keen blade of slander, and had trembled and wept at its sting. Her brows contracted as she said, in a half-plaintive voice, to Mrs. Hogan, while they were alone in the kitchen :

"Are the people in this neighborhood bad to talk?"

"Oh, I reckon it's like all neighborhoods. There's some that 'tends to their own business, and some that tries to 'tend to other people's. But then I've always noticed that the people that talks the most is generly the ones that has the least room to talk. Seems as if they want to keep a dust stirred up so's people can't see them an' their failin's too plain. I've seen it happen mighty often that the talkers lived to see the ones they'd slandered come out ahead of 'em. I always say that if a girl goes ahead and does the best she can, that no one has a right to talk. I've seen people that were ready to talk about every girl that was mentioned; this one wasn't all right, and that one did so and so, and this, that, and the other; and I've seen the time come, sooner or later, when those people had to put their hands over their mouths because of a scandal in their own families. When people are

always talking scandal, it shows that their minds delight in scandal and scandalous things. Their children hear so much of such things, that they git soaked full of 'em, and are mighty easy to lead off. I pay mighty little attention to the trash I hear. The talk of the worthless is worthless." It was all said so quietly and softly and slowly, that it descended upon the girl's spirit like a sweet and soothing balm. She had hoped that in the new field of labor she had selected that humanity was honest and kindly; she was now informed that it was also a part of the world she had left. She placed the last pile of dishes in the big corner-cupboard, and drawing out the little diary, she slightly bent her narrow chest above it, and began to write in the cypher already described. This is her translated thought :

The tongue of scandal is wagged by creatures whose hearts are filled with envy for beautiful characteristics not their own, and jealousy of noble qualities which their own unworthiness causes them to hate. They are spiteful and unhappy in their inferiority, and like the salt and bitter ocean that cannot get above its level and carries on an incessant warfare to beat down its picturesque and verdant banks, they try to undermine, to wash away and to destroy the good to which they cannot attain. When they have cast down a creature there is a dull roar of coarse approval as he falls and sinks from sight, and all murmur in callous indifference when he is lost forever. So old Ocean washes at a piece of mossgrown rock until it is dislodged; it engulfs it with a triumphant roar; but when it lies low and forgotten beneath the wave, it only murmurs over the ruin and begins to attack the rocks beyond.

She put the book out of sight and taking the broom, swept the crumbs about the table and stove into the dust-pan. This done she paused and leaned against the wall, for her cheeks were flushed and her breath came short. But the work was done, and with an effort to hide her weariness from the watchful eye of Mrs. Hogan she followed that lady into the sitting-room where the old man sat thoughtfully studying the fire.

Mary chatted with the old couple about her old home in Indiana, about her arrival and stay in Milroy City and about her difficulty in securing employment.

"And you didn't know any one here?" asked the old lady.

"No ma'am. I had no acquaintances in the State. There were some people in Milroy who used to know my father and they were very kind to me."

"What name?" asked Mr. Hogan.

"Mr. Kirke. A man who builds and repairs carriages."

"O, yes; Ben Kirke. One of the best fellers in town. Seen him lots of times. You boarded there, did you?"

"Yes, for a while. Mrs. Kirke did not have very much room so I had to hunt another place. I was afraid I never would get a school."

"And what if you hadn't?"

"I'd have worked out. I wasn't able to work but I suppose I could have earned my board at least."

"You've got the right kind of grit, gal; you'll come out all right yet."

"I hope so."

"But be careful about taking cold," said the old lady. "Consumption is a mighty bad thing." Mary's eyes sparkled and she said:

"I'm afraid, Mrs. Hogan, that it is food consumption that threatens me now. I never had such an appetite as I've had since I came to this state. Don't you notice how I eat? I almost ate Mrs. Kirke out of house and home while I stayed there."

"Yes," answered the old lady. "People always eat hearty when they first come to Colorado. The bracing air does it. It'll do you good. I look for you to quit coughin' and befat and rosy by Christmas time."

"Yes, and then I'll have to stand at the front gate with a two-year-old club in one hand and a rawhide in the other to keep the men away," added Mr. Hogan in a dry, half-snapish tone that might have made a stranger believe him crusty.

"Joshua! Joshua!" remonstrated the old lady with a laugh. Mary scarcely knew whether to pale or to laugh. She hardly knew the old man yet. She had resided with them only since the preceding Sunday, and she sometimes felt at a loss how to consider the old man's brusque manner.

"Most girls of twenty-one years wouldn't have had the courage to come way out here alone," he added, after a short pause.

"Courage," said Mary, as her large eyes dilated. "It was a matter of life and death. I couldn't have lived more than a few months back there. It's natural to want to live."

"Of course it's natural. Even *I* want to live, old and crusty as I am. Is there much of a family of you?"

"My mother and father are dead. I have a sister seven-

teen years old who is strong and hearty. That's all of us except cousins, uncles, aunts, etc. My mother died when my sister was a babe, and father when I was very young. The relatives raised sister Iola and me."

"Was there any property left you?" asked Mrs. Hogan.

"No; Iola and I will have to support ourselves. She is studying for a teacher too." The little story ended in a sigh as if the life history behind the few words might be a very sad one. But if there were sadness it was well concealed for it was only when in deep thought that the sparkle left the dark eyes and the bright animation deserted the pretty, intellectual face.

The old man punched the fire and the old lady plied her knitting; presently the latter said:

"It's a good ways past half after eight, Mary; you'd better go to bed and get a good night's rest. If I've studied you right, I believe that it's too much thinkin' and studyin' that's the matter with you. You can't make much earthly use of a brilliant mind after your body's worn out and laid in the grave. You'd better get to bed and get a good night's rest.

Mary acted at once upon this excellent advice and upon her snowy pillow dreamed of vaquero and round up, and of her prospective visit to the cowboys' camp.

CHAPTER IV.

AN UNINTENDED MEETING.

ON the evening of the next day Mary followed the directions of Mrs. Hogan, and readily found the combined home of the Hopkinesses and Jim Madnau. It was not difficult to find; it stood about half a mile ahead at the side of the straight road.

It was a homelike, pretty place. The tall cotton woods threw a refreshing shade over the level grassy yard. Well in their shadow stood a neat two-storied brick house suggesting comfort and room. It was plainly finished; even its doors and windows were in the severest style. There were no flowers in the neat yard. The place derived its attract-

iveness from its cleanliness, neatness and appearance of substantial comfort, rather than from any attempt at ornamentation.

The visitor advanced up the sanded walk and knocked at the door. She was admitted into the family sitting-room by a tall, thin old lady to whom she introduced herself. The lady in return announced that her name was Mrs. Hopkins.

"This is my old man," she added in a high pitched, quavering voice as she turned toward a gray-haired individual, quite as gaunt as herself, who sat in the rocking-chair with his hands on the arms. Mary bowed.

"Make ye'sef at home," quavered the old man.

The visitor took a chair set for her and for a moment mentally compared the couple with the Hogans. "Prosperity has made the Hogans rosy and robust in their old age, and adversity has made these people so thin and sad that even their late advances cannot undo the sorrow of years," she mused, for Mary was a sort of philosopher; she studied people much as she studied books; she believed in her absolute right to read them all. She was none the less persistent in her study because she occasionally found her first perusal incorrect. The old couple stared at her quietly as she drew off her gloves, but she was not in the least embarrassed; it is the searching gaze of those who are near our own age that throws us off our guard; we must believe that there is interest as well as curiosity before we tremble and redden.

"Mr. Hogan said you had a sewing-machine that needed repair," she said, quietly.

"Well, I can't say as it needs repair," said the old man, preluding his sentence with a short, dry cough. "It's a bran new one, but Sarah don't know how to work it. She thought maybe as you could show her."

"I can do plain sewin' on it, as long as it works right," added the old lady, "but it's when it don't work right that I don't know jest what to do."

"I shall be glad to help you in any way I can," said Mary, "I am ready to get to work at any time."

The old lady wheeled the machine from its corner into the light of a west window, and laid aside the cover.

"It is an elegant machine—a beauty," said Mary. That sentence won the old lady's heart; a bright smile played over her wan, meagre features; she had owned so few pretty or valuable things; praise of any of her possessions was sweet

to her. She lost all her stiffness of manner, and began volubly to recite the history of her purchase, and of her discussions and arguments with the agent. She became a sunbeam and flashed light that reflected from the wrinkled face of her bent and bowed husband ; it reflected back upon Mary ; she warmed and went on praising the machine, until the old lady laughed so hard she dropped her spectacles. Then she started the machine to work and ran up long seams in a blue flannel shirt the old lady brought out—then she explained —then she stitched on the collar, and then put on the gatherer and gathered the sleeves onto the wristbands—she told all the mysteries of the gatherer, and the old lady said she wouldn't have believed it—she put on the tuck marker and tucked the bosom in magnificently artistic style—then she paused, and used up a good deal of valuable time expatiating upon the virtues of the tuck marker. She then arose, and the old lady took her place, and while Mary counselled and explained, she sewed in both the sleeves. Under Mary's directions she then adjusted the hemmer, and used it to perfection. The shirt was now all complete save the buttons and button-holes. Mary gathered some bits of cloth, and taught the old lady the use of all the attachments. She was very quick to learn. "Law, now ; if that agent had jest talked like that, I'd knowed all about it, long 'go. But he used sech big words and done all the sewin' himself, and I couldn't tell nothin' about it. I wouldn't a needed a machine at all if it wasn't that my eyes was givin' out. I've seen the day no machine could beat me. But I do declare ; it's half-past five ; I must go right out and see to supper." And the old lady, quite as happy over her proficiency as a child would have been, arose smiling and radiant.

"There is a little dust in the machine, Mrs. Hopkins," said Mary. "If you like, I will give it a good cleaning and oiling, and will wind you some bobbins."

The old lady was delighted ; she brought forward oil, cloths, and thread. Then she left the room to attend to supper, and the old man went out to do the feeding.

Mrs. Hopkins soon returned with a plate of cakes.

"I thought you could be eatin' these while I was gettin' supper ready," she said.

"Thank you ; but I cannot stay to supper. I told Mrs. Hogan that I would be back." The old lady protested, but Mary was firm ; she was determined not to make too free in the rich and eligible young man's home. The old lady again

left her, and she went busily on with her cleaning, and her cake munching. The cakes were delicious, and she took an extra big bite out of the second. Just as she did so she looked up, because the door had been darkened ; she started nervously ; two men were entering the room ; young men, too ; they raised their hats to her, walked in, threw their hats under the stand table, and took chairs as if they owned the premises. The younger-looking one colored—his blush was just perceptible through the tan ; Mary looked at him ; he was the cowboy who had paused at her school-room door. The other one was, oh, so handsome and graceful and stately ! He was not in the least disconcerted at seeing her ; he seated himself with wondrous self-command, and gave her a look of respectful and interested inquiry. His fair, slightly tanned face took on a look of admiration ; it was only when he perceived the girl's rising color that he turned his eyes away.

The annoying scarlet mantled Mary's face, intensifying its appealing beauty ; and then, as if satisfied at having shown her rosy, fled away to let her admirers see whether she was improved by being blanched marble white. The situation was a trying one ; she had returned their bows, but her mouth was full of cake, and there before her lay the once tempting tidbit with a huge half circle missing. The cake had lost its charms, and the blue shirt upon which her elbow rested seemed to burn her ; it was the mate to the one worn by the handsome stranger ; there was no denying either cloth or cut. The red again flew to her face. It is never so embarrassing to be embarrassed if we can keep the embarrassment concealed ; but when we cannot do so our confusion fairly revels in its triumph over us.

"Good afternoon," said the tall blonde, with a well-bred and pleasant smile.

"Good afternoon," Mary managed to articulate, as she swallowed her cake. Then she tried for full three minutes to thread the needle bar. His soft, dreamy eyes of deepest blue, his splendid nose, the long silky mustache that obscured his mouth, his neat-fitting and picturesque dress, the broad tan-colored hat with its band of many colors, appealed to her vivid and now excited imagination. But there was naught even in his beauty and attractiveness that affected her like the deep, stern, persistent gaze of his companion's studious eyes. When in her embarrassment she turned her eyes from the one to the other, she always started afresh at that gaze and resolved to look that way no more. The men, per-

ceiving her agitation, withdrew their scrutiny—which had been the result of surprise and curiosity on their part—and began a desultory conversation on general topics. Their remarks did not “hang together” very well, and it was quite evident that they were not particularly engrossed upon the subjects they discussed; but time was disposed of, and that is the chief object of many a conversation.

Mary's self-confidence was in part restored, and she fell to studying them. The taller one, she was certain, would drive an artist crazy; and then what an exquisite, soft, musical little laugh he finished off each one of his sentences with! How agreeable and persuasive was his voice! He was Jim Madnau, of course; and she told herself that Amy Chellis was *not* welcome to him after all. But she greatly feared that other creature was reading her thoughts; she wouldn't be a bit surprised; he looked like he could read her soul history at a glance; she hated him, with his searching, reading, inquiring eyes. What right had he to look away when he was talking to Jim Madnau, and steal side glances at her? He was probably some upstart who worked by the month or day for her hero's wage. She was no longer annoyed when Jim Madnau looked at her; her heart swelled, and she wished he would look often; but whenever he did, that other annoying creature followed his glance, read all there was in it, and then proceeded to extend the same compliment to her. From the crown of her head to the sole of her foot, she bowed before her hero; from the crown of her head to the sole of her foot she feared and dreaded his subaltern. She had seen handsome men before, but here was a new specimen; this one was the beau ideal of beauty, as well as the ideal of a type beginning to possess strange interest for her—the vaquero.

Just as she finished overhauling the machine, Mrs. Hopkins entered the room.

“Well! I didn't expect to see *you* here,” she said in some surprise, as she perceived the two men.

“I had some stock to look after down this way, so I thought I'd step in and see if you had my other shirt done,” said the beauty.

“Well, it's gettin' along that way; I had trouble with the sewin' machine there, and couldn't do no good with it till this evening when——” then she seemed to remember that some sort of introduction was necessary. “This is Mr. Madnau and Mr. Lancaster, Miss—what did you say your name was?”

"Fleming."

"Miss Fleming. She come down to fix the machine that had got out of shape, and show me how to run it; and she's done it mighty well; I'm sure I don't know how she's to git her pay."

Mary resolved to escape. She announced that it was already past the time for her to be at home; she donned her hat and began drawing on her gloves. She replied to Mrs. Hopkins's numerous invitations to come again, and stepped to the door. Her hero stepped toward her and without the least embarrassment, but with evident concern, said:

"It's getting near dusk, do you object to an escort?"

Why should she object? To be sure the acquaintance was short, but what impropriety was there in walking away under the protection of such a knight? "Certainly not," she answered. Together they walked down the road chatting of the minor things that serve to amuse young people who wish to remain in each other's company. They talked of things that in themselves interested neither and laughed at remarks that in print would have wearied them. Mary bade her escort adieu at the gate and went into the house with the memory of the admiring eyes swelling within her, and with that long, smooth, delightful laugh rippling in her ears. There was but one thing to annoy her: as she left the Hopkins's door she looked over her shoulder, and there, bent upon her, almost fiercely regarding her and her companion, as they walked away, were the eyes of that hated, feared, dreaded vaquero. She entered the house making furious mental vows for revenge. She decided not to mention the escort home; she feared Mr. Hogan's teasing tongue. The old couple were just sitting down to supper.

"Well; you made a pretty good long stay of it, Jim must a been there after all."

"He was," said Mary in a quiet tone and with a rare smile. She thought that if she met the old man half-way he might be more merciful.

"And did you get the old lady's machine to sewing all right?" asked Mrs. Hogan, determined if possible to check her husband's levity.

"Oh yes, it works beautifully. It is a good machine."

"I'm glad to hear that;" said the old man, determined not to be crowded out. "Dan Hopkins and his wife has seen mighty hard lines, and when Dan come and told me what he did about the machine not workin', thinks I Dan's

been tuck in again. I'm glad the machine's all right. But how did you like Jim?"

"O, very well; I liked him better than the man that was with him."

"Who was that?"

"Mr. Lancaster, I think was the name."

"Yes, and your decision shows you've got good sense. Jim's worth a state full of Stan Lancasters. Jim's not home for good, I reckon."

"O, no; he just came—for some clothes, I believe." Then she colored; the idea of her having constructed that shirt for Jim Madnau. Then she mentally complimented herself upon her judgment of people and ate her supper in a happy mood; then she helped with the dishes, and afterward chatted with the old people until half-past eight. She did not retire at once upon entering her room, she lighted her lamp and once more turned to the pages of her diary. She wrote:

"Something tells me that to-day I have met the man who is to share my fortunes. I have formed several ideals but none were so splendid as he. What more is there to be desired? He has wealth, youth, beauty, and manliness of the loftiest order. I already feel how easy it will be to love him. And he has never loved another—has seldom even kept company with a lady. It is quite plain that he admires me. If this is to be my fate, I believe that it can only be a happy one. There is but one thing to fear; I dread lest in some way I arouse the jealousy and anger of that other man. I fear him. When he looks at me he makes me tremble. I would willingly see the jealous interloper suffer, if only he does not do me some fearful injury in return. I dread him; he is in my thoughts and I can not tell why, as I would gladly cease thinking of him. Never before have I felt the resentment I felt to-night."

CHAPTER V.

THE MYSTERIES OF COWBOYISM.

IT was half-past ten on Saturday morning when the Hogans and the impatient school-marm climbed into the spring wagon to drive to the round-up camp. This mode of travel was selected because Mrs. Hogan could not ride horseback, and there were no side-saddles at the ranche.

"Now, then," said the old man, "I've got some things to tell you, gal. I'm not takin' this trip entirely on your account. I've got a few head of calves that Jim promised to git up and brand for me. I ain't keepin' no brand now; and then there's four or five steers that I thought might be beef. I want to see how Jim's comin' on with 'em, if the steers is in good fix, as they ort to be, I'm goin' to try to drive 'em down to Milroy next week. But I thought you'd like to come, so I just mentioned bringin' you and Harriet along. I'd be a sucker to quit my work to take a pretty girl to a roundup camp where she's liable to git carried off, unless I had some other business, too. Then another thing's this; I can drive within a mile and a quarter of camp on the road and then I'll have to take out across the flat. There's ant-hills, and prairie dog holes, and gullies and one thing and another, and it's goin' to be middlin' rough drivin'. Now I don't like to have gals yellin' out and sayin' 'O my!' and 'O dear!' and 'O my goodness gracious!' every time the wagon makes a bump. I've seen city gals do that way, and even country ones that wanted to show off. I'm goin' to drive the best I can and I want that fact considered."

Mary could not repress her laughter. Although she feared the old man half disapproved of her eager, questioning enthusiasm concerning Colorado institutions, yet she could not help but perceive his desire to please her. Then her joy at the prospective visit was so great that she became a child—satisfied for the moment in the wealth of the moment. To be thrown thus so close to a phase of life which her romantic eye had from a distance studied was too keen a pleasure to be in any sense underrated; so Mary laughed a little,

smiled a little, laughed again and again smiled, until the old lady wondered whether she ought to encourage such levity by joining the merriment, and finally decided that she ought. But the old man sat alone in the front seat as solemn as an owl; he did not even look round to see the extent of folly behind him. After they had ascended the slope for some distance, however, he turned and pointed out to Mary the Black Mountain, where the dreaded Mexican brothers, Juan and Fernando Benita, had in an early day buried the bodies of six victims whom they had murdered and robbed. And Mary fell to dreaming of the romance of being captured by Mexicans and being delivered before any harm befell her by that tall, handsome Jim Madnau;—but wait; there rose before her dream-vision the piercing, searching glance of the other; the glance that seemed to read her soul—of course he would be there, watching her and her rescuer; and the beauty and the romance faded. There settled in their stead an unquiet longing—a wish that that other person had never entered into her vision—from her first sight of him, when he had paused at her school-house door to inquire about his stock, he had disquieted and disturbed her. Why did he enter her day-dreams to dispel their carefully constructed perfections? Her reverie was dispelled by the stern voice of practicality.

"Now, gal," said Mr. Hogan, "if you'll look over the flat there to the right, just on the other side of them cedars yonder, you can see the top of the grub wagon. That's the camp." The old lady assisted Mary to find the exact location, which, when found, the latter lady heralded by a chorus of exclamations.

"Taint nothin' but a cow punchers' camp;" said the old man sneeringly.

"We—ll;" said Mary, half vexed, but in a rather soft tone. "Who said it was anything else?"

"Nobody; but you act like it was kingdom come, or a gold mine."

"It may prove both to me;" said Mary musingly. Then, she burst into a laugh which the old lady joined.

"Think, you'll ketch Jim then, eh?" said the old man, quietly.

"Mr. Hogan," said Mary, with a large and admirable amount of dignity, "do please quit bothering me about Jim Madnau. I've seen men before. I don't make up my mind to marry people the first time I see them. Then, I don't

think about men and marriage all the time, either. I think about mental improvement and national improvement; and above all I think about my school work. I'm interested in that more than in anything else upon earth."

The old man drew in his cheeks and sucked his teeth in a way that was exasperating in the extreme, but he said nothing. The wagon now took out over the flat and the drive became rough, though because of the elevation of the park the view was so good as to compensate for the unsteady vehicle. Mary began to talk with the old lady concerning the high points in view on the northern boundary of the park; she found most of these to possess no name save a local one, so she named them to suit her own fancy. One was the Buffalo; another covered with blackened tree trunks was the Burnt King; another, graceful and ethereal, was the Fairy; and still another that had an overhanging brow whose angle remind her of the bend in the saddle of the stern-eyed rider who had awed her into wondering interest at her school-room door, she named the Vaquero. She would never tell the last name however; she half hated herself for giving it. The hills showed her their outcropping ledges of limestone, sandstone and granite, and even at the distance of perhaps a mile she fell to studying their formation.

The wagon made a short, rapid progress down a steep grade and then abruptly stopped. Mary drew her eyes away from the hills and as she saw the unmistakable evidences of a camp, gasped out:

"Why, I did not think we were here, yet."

"But we are, though," said the old man, almost snappishly. "Now you and Harriet jest stay in the wagou till I go over and kind o' prepare 'em for this unexpected happiness. I see they're jest gettin' ready to eat. Don't see Jim: I reckon he's helpin' hold the herd; no, there he is along with Stan Lancaster. They're all lookin' at you, gal; don't blush. Well, I'll be back in a minute." And the old man hurried toward the mess.

Then it was that Mary noted the glances that were stolen at her and saw the whispered consultations and the three or four smiles, and devoutly wished she had not come. But it was too late. The cowboy camp was before her and her presence there was in answer to her own ardent wish. If there were only some other girls there she would not care. Well, there was nothing now but to make the best of it: so with quickened pulse, dilated eye, scarlet cheek, and embarrassed

mien that heightened her beauty a hundred-fold, she awaited the approach of a group led by Mr. Hogan. There were three beside the old man ; they were Jim and Stanley, and a big, bushy-whiskered, middle-aged man.

All three saluted Mrs. Hogan, and the two young men bowed and spoke to Mary.

"Mary, I'll introduce you to Mr. Coffroth ; this is the school-teacher, Bill," said Mr. Hogan, presenting the burly stranger. "O, I forgot to tell her name ; Fleming, Mary Fleming ; but then I don't 'low it'll stay that long," with a long wink at the two young gentlemen which made the buckskin clothed one color a little in spite of his tan. "Now, Jim," he added, slapping the latter severely on the shoulder, "this gal's a regular tenderfoot ; she's pizen to learn all about the cow business ; I turn her over to you for the day, pervidin' you ain't too busy, and you're to answer all her questions, no matter how many of 'em there are. She knows considerable now, and she wants to know more. You're the best cowman in the valley, Jim, so I give her to you to be instructed."

During this little address Mary had turned from glowing scarlet to ghastly white. Her air castle had tumbled again just as it always tumbled. The splendid, handsome blonde before her was *not* Jim Madnau, and the keen-eyed, bronzed, buckskin shirted creature, whom she dreaded and feared and disliked, was. She turned sick, while all her short life's little defeats arrayed themselves before her. But what if the handsome Stanley Lancaster was *not* the advancing Jim Madnau ? Could she not respect him still ? In her day-dreams had she coveted wealth more than bliss ? What if Mr. Hogan *had* praised Jim above Stanley ? Mr. Hogan might be prejudiced in favor of property—he very probably was. All this surged through her mind in an instant ; she turned and looked at Lancaster. He was serene ; he stepped to her side and said in his soft, agreeable voice :

"Miss Fleming, if Madnau is to have your society for the afternoon, it is nothing more than just that you go to dinner with me ; Madnau must not attempt to inaugurate a monopoly."

She smiled, and all her color returned as she said :

"Certainly ; Mr. Madnau will get sufficiently tired of me during the afternoon ; it would be cruel to inflict my society upon him during dinner also." Then she placed her hands

upon his extended arm and was lightly lifted out of the wagon and placed upon the ground. As she walked away with him, reassured and happy again, she looked round to see if Mr. and Mrs. Hogan followed, and then she saw again—but why should she brood over and resent what she could not help? She would be light and happy. If Jim Madnau persisted in annoying her, she would—well, she *had* punished certain men a little in her time.

She was led to the mess and introduced to each man. There was some difficulty about finding proper names for Penobscot Bill and Kid, but these gentlemen finally handed over real, genuine names, and the emergency was duly met.

Lancaster procured the brightest tin plate obtainable for Mary, and having loaded upon it beans, bread, beef and dried apples sufficient for about four people he presented it to her. Less embarrassed by her strange position than she would have conceived possible ten minutes before, she began to eat of the really well prepared food. For be it known that the cowboys' cook must be careful; the cowboy always makes war upon an ill-cooked mess, unless perchance he has cooked it himself.

"How much sugar, Miss Fleming?" asked the watchful and ready Lancaster, as he held a large spoonful of the article over a huge tin cup filled with coffee.

"O, none. I don't drink coffee, Mr. Lancaster."

"Now, that is too bad. It is the only drink we have. We have neither tea nor milk."

"Why, I'd think you'd have *milk*," said Mary, in a tone of deep conviction, as she looked first at Lancaster and then at the large herd of cattle "held" near by.

The boys all managed to keep their faces straight, but Mrs. Hogan smiled quietly, and Mr. Hogan choked himself well nigh past help on beans.

"Them ain't milk cows, gal," said the old man as he recovered.

"But I see cows out there with nice little calves by them." persisted the astonished girl.

"Yes, and the very sight of a milk bucket would scare the wits out of them cows. Why, who do ye think is goin' to milk cows twice a day when they run ten and twenty miles from any human critter's house?"

Mary did not pursue the subject. She looked puzzled, and wondered if it were really safe to be near such beasts. But she was soon aroused by the appearance of Jim Madnau

at her side. He placed in her hand a cup of clear water but said nothing.

"Oh, where did you get this?" she eagerly asked, forgetting for the moment her dread and dislike.

"Out of the creek yonder. You needn't be afraid to drink it. It's just melted snow from Bernalillo."

Afraid to drink it. The idea! After that long drive too. But perhaps this mind-reader knew she disliked him and half expected her to refuse the cup because he proffered it. If so, she would disappoint him. She liked to surprise people. She took the cup and drank eagerly.

"Thanks," she said softly, as she gave him a smile that was all thankfulness and not at all coquettish; for the cool, delicious draught drove away even the previous moment's caprice. He looked pleased and walked away from her; she looking after him, half regretting that he was really Jim Madnau and wondering if he would continue to watch her. Why didn't Stanley think of the creek? She knew; he thought it would be rude to leave her; that was kind of him to think of that; but then his presence would not relieve her thirst. Well, anyhow, Mr. Lancaster meant to do just right; any mistake of his would be a mistake of good intention; and then he would make the mistake so gracefully, too.

She conversed in a low tone with the Hogans, Stanley Lancaster and big Bill Coffroth. The latter gentleman's tone was not low, but it was very instructive; he had much to say upon the subject of school teaching, and during the course of the conversation gave Mary quite a number of valuable suggestions as to how the profession should be carried on. Mary, however, like the ungrateful creature that she was, wanted to talk cowboy.

"Now," said Bill, "a child orter be made pernounce a word right, right from the turn loose; and then it 'll always git that word plumb. Now when a kid's let go sloshin' round amongst a lot o' words like a maverick runnin' through a patch o' cactus, it's goin' to do some o' them words up. That's as sure as taxes."

"Yes, indeed, Mr. Coffroth; I agree with you exactly. But can you tell me why they don't have the camp nearer the creek? If it was down in that low place there, there would be more shade; and then the men wouldn't have to climb that steep bank with heavy buckets of water in their hands."

"Yes, but when it rained in the mountains, as it's liable to

do any time, that crick 'ud fill that low place up to the top and we'd all git drownded. Then there's 'rethmatic—”

“ Why, do those storms happen often? Storms that would make a flood of this little creek ? ”

“ Yes, liable to happen any time. I've heered this crick roar when I was over on Trelawna. But then, as I was sayin' about kids learnin' to figger—”

“ Why, if you were on Trelawna Creek, I'd think its roar would have drowned the sound of this creek.”

“ But Trelawna wa'n't roarin'. It wa'n't flooded then.”

“ Why, how could this creek be flooded and Trelawna not ? ” asked the lady, whose practical geography was that of the plain. “ It seems to me that two creeks so close together would rise simultaneously.”

“ Now look over yender,” said Bill, pointing with a beef rib to a point in a secondary range of lofty hills; “ Trelawna heads way off over in there. Now Aspen—this crick—heads way back there on Bernalillo. Now, you see it may be rainin' pitchforks on the head of Aspen and sendin' a sea down here, when it's good hay weather on Trelawna. And then there's grammar that needs lookin' after. Now I've seen men that didn't know one word from another that was always tryin' to herd with good society, and they couldn't understand why they was run off the range.”

“ Yes, indeed, Mr. Coffroth. But what do the men do when those heavy rains come ? ”

“ The cow-punchers, you mean ? ”

“ Why—the cowboys.”

“ Why, most of 'em cusses.”

“ But don't they get wet ? ”

Stanley Lancaster was tired of a middle-aged married man monopolizing the conversation. He proposed to answer the last question himself. He hastily untied the slicker from the saddle on which he sat.

“ Here is our protection,” he said, as he shook the garment out and handed it to Mary. “ It's a slicker. It covers a man down to his boots. He's all right when he has this on. Sleeping in the rain is the worst of it. We put our slickers over our blankets, but even then the rain finds a way in.”

“ Oh,” said Mary, “ I've seen slickers in Indiana, but I never saw them tied to saddles before. But I'd think you'd take cold getting wet while you are asleep. Do you have to sleep right on the ground ? ”

"We do take cold when the weather is very severe;" said Lancaster, giving a little cough as if the suggestion had brought it on.

Jim Madnau now broke silence. His voice held just the faintest measure of contempt—only keen ears would have known it was there; but Mary perceived it and disliked him for it—he was trying to make light of Mr. Lancaster.

"Why," said Jim, "I've slept for two weeks at a time—and slept sound every night, too—when durin' all the time there wasn't a dry thread in my blankets."

"Why, how did that happen?" asked Mary, turning her large, surprised eyes upon him. "Why didn't you spread your blankets out in the day-time and let them dry?"

"Couldn't. We were on the trail. On the go all the time and didn't stop for anything till night come, unless you'd count a half hour or an hour at noon a stop."

"Where were you going?"

"Drivin' cattle from Texas up here. It was in August. The fall rains commenced as soon as we got into Southern Colorado, and they kept up for two weeks. There'd be a few hours of hot sun now and then, but we couldn't stop for such things as dryin' blankets. When cattle's on the march they don't stop 'em for anything unless they get footsore."

"Didn't you take cold—and get sick?"

"Never was sick since I was a kid."

"Well!" Then Mary looked fixedly at Madnau's stalwart form and ruddy cheek. Instinctively she laid her hand upon her own thin, narrow chest; she sighed and envied. She forgot that she was staring until the young man, flushed and puzzled, turned his face away from her eager, longing eyes.

"Take another piece of beef, Mary," said Mr. Hogan. "Harriet's eatin' the second piece."

"No—thank you," she said, dreamily. "I don't care for anything more." Then she remembered that she had no right to obtrude her troubles upon a care-free company. "I do not know when I have eaten so heartily," she said, as a smile lighted her face. The cook gave her an answering smile, and she rose from the saddle which had served her as a chair. She shook the crumbs from her gray cloth dress and turned smilingly to Lancaster.

"And how have you enjoyed the dinner?" he asked, bending his head and laughing softly.

"Hugely. You have a good cook and the men are all very kind."

Lancaster drew her away a little distance, and said in a low whisper: "And now Madnau is to have you for the afternoon."

"Yes; poor fellow," said Mary, laughingly, for she did not yet intend to encourage any advances. She had read a novel once upon a time in which a cowboy had proposed marriage after a seven minute acquaintance! Eternal vigilance is the price of security. She, in consequence of the said resolve to employ vigilance, did not answer in a whisper, and Jim's quick ear caught her words, and his ready intuition divined that they referred to him. Lancaster kept on saying pretty nothings and making delicate compliments, and laughing his delightful little laugh, in which his blond mustache parted just enough to show his white and handsome teeth. The Kid had made no movement whatever to dispute Lancaster's possession. In fact, all the men were so surprised at the sudden and unannounced visit of the trio at their camp that they were too nervous to properly entertain. Only the self-confident Bill Coffroth and the ready and unabashed Lancaster were complete masters of themselves. The Kid sat in the rear of Penobscot Bill, blushing to the roots of his pompadour hair, and eating such bits as the braver ones were willing to bring from the mess pots for him. In consequence of this arrangement he got but one spoonful of sugar in his coffee and but one plate of beans. The spuds were boiled inside their slickers, but not a spud found its way to the Kid's hand. He looked sad and sorrowful and hungry, but the mess pots he would not storm; they were guarded by a pretty young lady, and Kid was more courageous in the presence of imaginary ladies than of real ones. He dragged away a saddle, put it on a horse and galloped away. He would face creatures who were not dressed in pretty gray cloth, and who could not talk back. He liked the idea of women, but he must get used to them gradually; he had been away from them for so long that he remembered but one of their traits—that was their ability to make a fellow feel uneasy.

Hen Hall sat during dinner where he had a most excellent view of the teacher. He was not embarrassed. He was past thirty years old, and although he had lived much on the frontier, he had often made brief returns to an old home where family ties were unforgotten. And Hen had had a romance—a sorrow—how often the two are the same! A real heart sorrow drains our youthful blushes away in tears.

Hen, though for years a cowboy, had never been seen by any of the Gaston Valley men to take a drink of liquor or to visit any questionable resort. He always had a dollar for the unfortunate and an arm for the burdens of the weak. He carried in his breast pocket a little clasped Bible, whose fastening was well-nigh ready to burst because of the playing cards between the leaves, placed there to mark his favorite scriptural passages. He went quietly about his duties, either passing unnoticed the profanity and obscenity of many of his companions, or pausing to administer a rebuke so pointed and yet so kindly that none could be offended. He seldom exhibited anger, and so far as the Gaston Valley men knew, did not possess an enemy. He told acceptable stories of hunting and adventure, and when his slow, half-nasal tone was heard, others became quiet. Hen was well liked, and he liked all his associates in return. Perhaps Jim Madnau was dearest of all to him. Jim was so genuine—so Hen thought—and Hen loved solidity and hated sham. Hen unblushingly, and yet politely, studied the lady. He pronounced her a fine woman, yet he did not feel jealous of Lancaster. If he were displeased at all it was upon Jim Madnau's account and not upon his own.

Lancaster and Mary had talked for perhaps twenty minutes when Madnau approached them. He walked rapidly, as was his wont, but his steps were irregular and unsteady, as if he did not quite relish his approach.

"I've got to go out, now, Miss Fleming," he said. "If you're goin' along, I'll rig up one of the men's saddles for you; that is, if you think you can ride one. I'll have considerable trouble to hold the herd if I don't get out there before the fellows on this side leave. They'll break up and get to scatterin'."

"Well—I—suppose—I *can*—ride a man's saddle; I have rode my uncle's saddle, but it did not have such a high front as these have." Mary spoke as if she did not altogether want to go.

"Well, I'll rig one up. You can use the horn like it was the horn on a lady's saddle. I'll throw the right stirrup over to the left side and that will make it about the right length. I'll put you on Kate; she gets mean spells, but when she wants to behave herself she's the finest saddle nag in the valley; she's been all right to-day. Will you be ready by the time I get her saddled?"

"Yes; but if we are just going out there where the herd

is, why can't we walk?" she asked. She did not altogether like the idea of an uncertain horse and a man's saddle, with only Jim Madnau to catch her if she fell.

"Can't do any good holdin' cattle on foot," said Jim decidedly. Then he added: "But Kate won't hurt you, when she's all right in the morning she's all right for all day. I've rode her for years."

"Very well, then; I'll be ready," said Mary, mentally determining to be a good girl, go with the undesired escort, and throw her perverseness away. Perhaps after all she would get some information out of him. She could endure his searching, watching, annoying, haunting, pursuing, jealous glance for an hour or so, if she could really learn something. He was soon by her side, leading the pretty Kate.

"O, this is the horse you were riding when you came by my school-house, the first time I saw you," she exclaimed in enthusiastic honest admiration. "Oh, she's a perfect beauty! You don't mean to tell me *she* ever misbehaves?"

Both men laughed; Jim at the warm and unaffected praise of his capricious favorite, and Stanley at the very thought of Kate having good qualities. For Kate be it remembered was the property of Jim. Had Stanley owned her, he would doubtless have been less prejudiced. Jim had turned one stirrup, which was no small task because of the numerous leathers in the way.

Mary, all the time protesting that all Kate's faults must be wholly imaginary, was lifted into the saddle by Jim. He placed her foot in the stirrup and somewhat awkwardly arranged her dress so as to make it answer as well as possible for a habit. He then mounted his own horse, which all this time had been quietly munching grass, and the two rode to where the Hogans still sat talking with Bill Coffroth and the other cattle owners.

"Good-bye for the present," said Mary to Lancaster as they left him standing alone. And Lancaster waved his hand, then lifted his hat, then he turned away, saddled a horse, mounted, and galloped off in the direction of the hills.

"How long are you two larkies goin' to be gone?" asked Mr. Hogan, well pleased, now that Mary was under Jim's protection. Now that Lancaster was gone, Mary saw that she must make the best of Madnau, else she was certain of a dull afternoon; so she smiled and brightened.

"It's all owing to Mr. Madnau," she said. "If he gets

tired of my questions and sends me back to camp, as he's likely to do inside of an hour, I won't be gone so long as I will if he endures the ordeal till sundown."

"But Mary, we must be home before sundown. We must be home by five o'clock," said the old lady.

"Very well, I see Mr. Madnau has a watch. I'll start for camp at half-past three. Good-bye."

"Can you stay in the saddle if we put 'em to a gallop ?" asked Jim as they turned away from the group.

"I will stay in the saddle, never fear; get up, Kate." She maintained her seat very well, for the mare's gait was easy and natural.

"Oh, isn't she nice !" exclaimed the rider to her pleased escort. "I'm in love with her."

"Yes, she's a nice saddle nag, but you've got to watch her. Now if she takes after a cow brute, she'll make every turn that it does, and she'll make it quick as lightnin', too. Then's when it's hard to stay with her."

"Will she get after the cattle this afternoon ?—even if I don't tell her to ?"

"Well, if they make a break and she's close to the leaders, she'll start to head 'em off. You see she's a trained cow horse. If you'd start her up a little, and she'd see a cow runnin', she'd take after her and run her into the herd yonder. That's why I've been warnin' you."

"Well, I hope she won't throw me. I wouldn't be afraid if I had a side saddle."

"If she starts off, just bear down on the stirrup and catch hold of that string there."

"She seems a little awkward about the bit."

"No wonder, she isn't used to bein' reined that way. Rein her by the neck—this way—just lay the reins over her neck, press in the direction you want her to turn. All cow horses are used to bein' reined by the neck."

"Why I never heard of such a thing—never in my life. Why do they do it ?"

"Well, when a man just uses one hand, he can manage the neck reinin' easier than the bit. A cowman wants his right hand free for the quirt or the snubbin' rope."

"Oh, what are those ?"

"This short thick whip is a quirt, this coil of rope hangin' to the horn of my saddle is a snubbin' rope, riata or lasso, which ever you want to call it."

"And what is the snubbing rope for ?

"To catch cattle with ; we have to catch the calves to brand 'em."

They had now reached the herd. Mary sighed profoundly as Kate paused.

"Are you tired ?" asked Jim.

"No, no ; but I was thinking. There are so many things I don't know, and what's more, I'm afraid I never will learn them. Why, I thought I was pretty well educated, but out here when I talk to people, I can't understand many of the common words they use. I can't even manage this horse right."

"O," said Jim, "it's not knowin' anything just to know the cow business. There isn't anything to it. It don't take knowledge like school-teachin' does." And he looked at the teacher as if he could not understand why her spirit had fallen so low. The fact was, Mary disliked to be surpassed at anything. The things wherein she surpassed Jim Madnau did not possess the least present interest for her. She wanted to possess more frontier knowledge than he did, and because she perceived his superiority in that direction her self-esteem suffered. She however found him to be more interesting with his knowledge than he would have been without it. She slackened her rein and let Kate eat grass while her eyes wandered away to the hills. Then she turned and looked at her companion ; he had moved some twenty paces away to steady the herd in the absence of another cowboy, and he was not looking at her ; he seemed to be in a reverie. In fact she had not been annoyed by his searching glance since she had been alone with him ; he had seldom sought her eyes and from this she concluded that he only watched her because he did not want Lancaster to surpass him in the matter of conquests—he was jealous of Lancaster and not in the least fond of her, so her anger rankled, but she would make use of him ; she would learn so much about Colorado institutions that when she returned East she would astonish people with her knowledge. But she must wait ; he had galloped around to the other side of the herd where two men about two hundred yards apart were stationed as guards. He had soon delivered his message to them and was again at her side the herd. She approached and asked quietly :

"What is the object of bringing the cattle all up in a bunch this way ?"

"Why, the owners want to know the condition of the stock ; they drive all that are fat enough to some shipping

point and send them away for beef. They brand the calves, and some of the owners take the poorest brutes up and feed them during the winter."

"Are any of these so poor that they will have to be fed this winter?"

"Yes, a good many of them; there hasn't been much rain this summer, and feed's mighty short. There's a red two-year-old there by the side of that pied maverick that's goin' to turn up her toes pretty soon, if she isn't looked after."

Mary bit her lip. Stanley wouldn't have used such an expression. Then Madnau did not laugh, either; he did not even mean what he said to be humorous; he was talking straight facts, and that was the best language he could use. But she must learn what a maverick is."

"Now, what is a maverick?" she asked, in a half-vexed tone.

"An unbranded brute," answered Jim, proud of his information.

"Then why don't they call them unbranded brutes instead of that outlandish name?" Her tone was dignified, and cold and distant now.

"Well, it's this way. There was a fellow down in Texas that didn't brand his cattle. He kept 'em in big pastures, and he had lots of 'em."

"Cattle or pastures?" with a tantalizing smile.

"Both. Well, one day he got killed, or died or something, and some fellows cut his fences and let his cattle all out on the range. They run everywhere, and all the cow-punchers got to calling them mavericks."

"But *why* did they call 'em mavericks?"

"Why, the fellow's *name* was Maverick."

"Oh, I understand. And is that one of Mr. Maverick's cows?"

Jim turned a confused, worried face, in which a laugh was struggling to the front, upon the lady.

"The man's been dead fifteen or twenty years. You wouldn't expect to see one of his cows up here now, looking as young as that, would you?"

"N—o. But if that one isn't his, why isn't it branded?"

"Well, that's one that was missed when it was a calf. You see, lots of times a cow gets off in the mountains with her calf, and stays there till after the fall round-up; sometimes she stays longer. After a while her calf gets so it don't care any more for her than it does for any other

cow, and then it won't follow her any longer. As long as it runs right with her, people can tell who it belongs to—that is, if the cow's branded. But if it comes down out of the hills and gets rounded-up after it gets separated from its mother, nobody can tell who it belongs to, and so it don't get branded, and stays a maverick. You see the name's got to be general." Jim, after this strong exertion to make dark things clear, took off his hat and mopped his face and head with his hip pocket-kerchief. But Mary was not satisfied. She had eaten a heavy dinner, and she had lost the handsome Stanley; she was slightly irritable and very curious.

"What becomes of the mavericks?" she asked.

"Well, they belong to the state—so the laws say. But when the round-up's in camp, and they find a good fat one, it generally shares the fate of old man Maverick himself. It dies suddenly."

"And the men eat it?"

"Yes; you ate some for dinner."

"We'll."

"You see, we know that some of the cattlemen lost 'em, and so we think the cattlemen have a right to eat 'em, as long as they're all agreed. Now, if one fellow would get 'em up and brand 'em for himself, he'd be stealing from some of the rest: but when we all sit down together and eat one of 'em, we're all served alike."

"Ye—s." And Mary fell to studying the buckskin suit. She wanted to know about it, but she feared she had already taxed her companion's patience. She reddened, and cleared her throat.

"If you're not tired to death of my questions," she said, "I'd like to know about that suit. I never saw anything like it before."

"This? O, it's just buckskin."

"Yes, I thought so. But why don't the other men wear buckskin too? Nearly all the rest have ordinary clothes—mostly."

"Well, you see I came here when this part of the country was new. There were only three settlers on Trelawna besides Mr. Hogan. Deer were as thick as rabbits in these hills, and the first winter I was here I killed one hundred and fifty."

"Oh—oh! What did you do with them?"

"I skinned 'em, and saved the hides. Once in a while I'd take a quarter home to eat."

"And you cooked it yourself?" Mary was becoming so deeply interested that her humor was improving wonderfully. Her head bent toward Jim in her eager desire to hear all he had to say.

"Of course I cooked it myself. Used to broil it on the coals. Beat all the fried meat in creation."

"And you lived in that little cabin by your new house—and you lived all alone?"

"Yes, I lived alone. O, once in a while a cow-puncher or two or a gang of hunters would come to the cabin."

"To visit you?"

"Well, not exactly to visit. Didn't visit much them times. They'd come to stop over night, or till the weather cleared up."

"I shouldn't have thanked them for that."

"O, all frontier men do that. They'll come to your cabin and go right in, whether you're at home or not, and hunt up the grub and go to cookin'. I've gone to my cabin more than once and found three or four there, cookin' away for dear life."

"And what did you say to them?"

"Oh, just said 'Hello.' I didn't care. I've went to other men's cabins the same way. Why, if a man on the frontier was to lock his cabin, he'd have everybody down on him just about as quick as if he'd go to stealin' horses."

"We—ll, but your clothes? You were telling me about them."

"O yes. Well, I sold a good many hides to the Indians—sold or traded 'em—and a good many of the best ones I kept. In the winter, when I hadn't much else to do, and when the weather wasn't good for deer, I'd make me clothes. I got quite a stock on hand, but this is about the last of 'em. The deer have got thinned out of late years."

"You say you made those you have on?"

"Yes, I made all I ever had. I used to buy gloves and leggin's and moccasins of the squaws, but I always made my clothes."

"Why, what did you sew them with?"

"Sewed 'em with a whang."

"What's a whang?"

"A piece of buckskin string."

"And the Indians? What has become of them?"

"Well, they've gone off West. They don't stay around when civilization gets well started. They've gone over the range."

"Now, there's another word—range; you call the mountains the range, and yet you talk about the feed on the range being short. Most of the cattle seem to run on the—what you call the parks."

"Yes; the parks and valleys form the cattle range: the cattle *range* over them."

"Oh, yes. But what time is it? It must be nearly time for me to go back to the camp."

"It's thirty-five minutes after three."

"Well, I must go; and I've learned a great deal, Mr. Madnau."

"Well, I'm glad you have. And Miss Fleming, the next time I see you, you must tell me all about *your* trade—school teachin'." This last was said with a provoking smile that showed Jim's teeth, and exasperated Mary fearfully, telling her plainer than any words could have done, that she had been presumptuous and inquisitive. "I'd better ride back to camp with you," he added. "Kate will behave herself better if I'm where I can speak to her."

No word was spoken as they rode to the group; not until Mrs. Hogan hailed Mary from beneath her sun umbrella, was the silence broken.

"I was just thinking it was time to go," said the old lady. And Mary struck her broad-brimmed straw hat violently on the top to drive it lower down over her face, and hide the angry surging color. She was more than ever resolved to hate Jim Madnau. Never before had such a feeling of resistance raged within her. There was no fate so horrible that for the moment she would not have visited upon him. For him, in his serene and conscious superiority of strength, and for all she knew, intelligence, to stoop from his manhood to make light of a woman! So filled was her mind with resentment, that the image of the splendid Lancaster was for the time swept away. She gave Madnau a good-night from lips that trembled with rage, and without assistance from any one, climbed into the spring-wagon.

CHAPTER VI.

PROGRESS.

IT was late in the afternoon of the next Monday. Mary, "Miss Fleming" in the school-room, bent over the last slate. The spelling lesson was done with and the grade figures were carrying pride or dismay to the hearts of the spellers. On this occasion there was a large percentage of pride, for the lesson had been well prepared. The satisfied look upon the faces of both pupils and teacher augured this. The latter wrote "100" upon the last slate, and laid it upon its owner's desk. Then she stepped to the area in front of the pupils' seats. She was pleasant to look upon in her neat gingham dress, with her dark hair in a little crown on her head and in ringlets over her brow. She raised one hand, and a smile broke over her face.

"All who have learned something new to-day, raise hands," she said. A score of hands of all descriptions and shades went up.

"What have you learned, Tommy?" to a ten year old son of big Bill Coffroth.

"I've learned that the world goes round the sun once a year," exclaimed Tommy, as he bobbed out of his seat.

"And Maggie?" to Maggie Haskins.

"I've learned that it takes from four and one half to five bushels of wheat to make a bar'l of flour."

"A barrel, Maggie."

"O, yes; a *barrel* of flour."

"And Eddy?" to little Eddy White, aged six.

"I've learned that two rabbits and two rabbits are four rabbits; but that two rabbits and two cats are just two rabbits and two cats."

"Very good. And Florence?" to a girl aged fifteen.

"When a pitcher of very cold water is placed in a warm room, the outside of the pitcher is soon covered with moisture. I have learned that the cold surface of the pitcher causes condensation of the surrounding air, causing it to leave a large portion of its moisture upon the vessel."

"Very well. Now, John."

"I have learned that Christopher Columbus, sailing under orders from Isabella of Castile, discovered America, in the year one thousand four hundred, ninety-two. The continent had previously been discovered by the Northmen."

"That is right. Willie, keep very quiet; we all want to hear. Now, Kate."

"I've learned that the square drawn on the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle, equals the sum of the squares drawn on the other two sides."

"Correct. Now, Willie."

"W'y, the old hen ma set, mashed all her aigs and then runned off."

"Well, I wouldn't tell that in school, Willie. There children, we've laughed enough now; let's get quiet. Ella?"

"I have learned that the Earth is a great magnet; that it has a north and a south magnetic pole, and that these poles are not the same as the other poles."

"That is true. You will learn to state it better as you get better command of words. Now, which one of the first reader pupils can tell me the motto for his class? Well, Willie?"

"Keep on trying."

"That is right. Now, the motto for the fifth reader grade, John."

"Do not blush because your opportunities have been poor; blush if you have failed to improve them."

"Now the third reader motto, Maggie?"

"Measure the day by what has been done."

"That is right. Now the fourth reader; Minnie?"

"We rise by the things put under our feet."

"Correct. Now the second reader, Henry?"

"We will make a noble effort."

"Very well. Now all in concert give the motto for the whole school."

"Look aloft!" came in a ringing shout.

"Very well. Books. Monitors." Then came an interval of hurrying preparation. "First division rise—pass out. Second division rise—pass out." She followed to the door to give a note to Maggie Haskins. Then she returned, and sat down to look over some copy books. The pleased look still mantled her face. The reason of the continuance of the smile, was the presence in her pocket of a little note from Mrs. Jere Herron, asking her to accompany herself and

husband to the ball on the Friday evening. Mary was a conscientious school-marm, but when her week's work was done she was sufficiently human to love play. She loved dancing, and could scarcely keep her ready muscles quiet in the hearing of music. She would have preferred the handsome Stanley as an escort, but that fact made Mrs. Herron's kindness none the less admirable. Of course, Stanley might not ask her, and then she would be cheated out of the party, for Mr. and Mrs. Hogan did not attend balls. The note had been given her by Maggie Haskins, and a polite acceptance had been sent to Mrs. Herron by the same hand. But Mary did not allow the thought of the ball to interfere with her work. She finished looking over the copy books, and laid them aside. She then placed upon the black-board a list of words for the second reader class, a list of questions for the history class, and half a dozen problems for the highest arithmetic class. Then there were tables and copies for the little folks, and lastly the sweeping and dusting. When all was accomplished she drew out the little diary, and seating herself took up her pen : the sunbeams came through the west windows and lay in almost horizontal lines upon the furniture and occupant of the room ; one of them broke in a flood of gold upon the dark coronet of hair that crowned the occupant's head. The lady opened the book and smiled, showing a line of white teeth; in that smile lay expectation of triumph ; she was reading the passages referring to Madnau and Lancaster. For a few months she had been reporter and local editor for a paper in her old home city, and thus had she acquired the habit of writing down her thoughts. But the reportorial fury did not take possession of her this evening. She read and smiled—then re-read and smiled again. Then she dipped the pen into the ink; then she read and smiled again. Then she shook the black drops from the steel point and pushed pen and bottle away. She sat with the leaves of the book between her fingers until the sunbeams fled ; and looking out of the window she saw that the sun had disappeared behind the gold-crested range. She donned her buff chambre sun-bonnet, took up her dinner-pail, and hurried home.

As she hastened down the slope in obedience to the voice of an appetite new and strange to her, it might have been seen that there was more of tan and less of hectic flush upon her cheek, than when a few days previous she had met and talked with the rider at her school-room door.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WATER QUESTION.

AGRICULTURE upon Trelawna Creek is carried on solely by means of irrigation. Magnificent fruit ripens upon symmetrical young trees, but the roots of those trees must drink periodically from the flowing ditch. Currants, gooseberries, and raspberries take on various shades of entrancing color, but unless the shrubs stand upon the ditch, bank, or where a mimic flood can be liberated over their roots, naught of scarlet wealth will they yield. The delicious strawberry reaches the acme of perfection here, but it must have a wealth of water poured into its rootlets' mouths ere it blooms and produces. The finest vegetables may here be found, all prospering and producing upon the banks of toy streams or in beds that may be flooded from the neighboring ditch. Magnificent fields of alfalfa, timothy, corn, wheat, and oats are hauled away from Frelawna's fields, but they are only coaxed into perfection by the streams of water kept at their demand. The fierce Colorado sunlight, unchecked by the cooling effect of copious rainfall, parches every growing thing, save the hardy native vegetation.

The supply of water is in many instances inadequate to irrigate the land that might be cultivated. The streams are taxed to their utmost; ditches are taken out here and there, are taken round the points of hills, are conducted across smaller streams and ravines through flumes, are carried over low ground on raised earthworks. These ditches are taken out as long as the volume of water in a good water year will support them; when the older land owners, those who have the prior right, are satisfied that this limit is reached, they cease to allow individuals and companies to take new ditches out of that stream. In seasons when the winter's snow has been light in the mountains, the volume of the streams is considerably lessened; there is a scarcity of water for irrigating purposes and unless cool heads and generous hearts make amicable arrangements for distribution of what exists,

there often arises strife. Men are quite as ready to fight for their famishing cabbages as for their famishing children—indeed in occasional instances, if a man's cabbage perish, so will his children also.

The law favors the oldest ditch. Were there twenty ranchers on a creek, and the supply of water for the season adequate for but one, the owner of the oldest ditch could use all that supply. The rights of the others would rank according to their titles. Joshua Hogan was the oldest settler on Trelawna Creek; he had lived there thirteen years. He might have taken a ranche higher up the creek—the one Jim Madnau owned—but the one he selected pleased him better. His ditch was an individual affair and was taken out of the creek some distance above the fields it was intended to irrigate. The three settlers who beside him lived on the creek at the time Jim Madnau took up his land, lived some three miles below him; they always had plenty of water, owing to a mysterious rise in the bed of the creek just above the ditch taken out for their land. Why this rise of water existed the ranchmen could not tell, but it was certain that it did exist and that it assured them a competence. Whether at some distance up the creek a portion of its waters entered a subterranean channel to again appear, or whether some mountain-derived spring finds outlet here, it cannot be said; but out of the mica glittering sands the supply arises and is known as "The Rise in Trelawna." Above this rise, Jim Madnau was the second settler and owner of the second water right. The three miles between Mr. Hogan and the Rise were now covered with cultivated fields; people were living there, striving to gain bread and even wealth. Bill Coffroth was one of the settlers; he owned a hay ranche, for the poorer members of his herd of three thousand head must often be fed through the winter. His need of water was great, and owing to the fact that his land was so situated as to receive no waste water from other ranches, his facilities for obtaining it were not so good as those of his neighbors. Frelawna generally furnished water in abundance for her settlers; but during the summer season of 18—rain had been scarcer than usual; snow had been light the previous winter and consequently Frelawna ran low. Mr Hogan and Jim Madnau and the now numerous settlers below the Rise had all that was needful, but the fields of the three-mile strip suffered.

The residents of that strip were of the opinion that Ho-

gan and Madnau should divide their supply; the two individuals referred to believed that they ought to be as generous as possible. They were generously inclined and were willing to allow their fields to be injured to some extent in order that the fields of their neighbors might be benefited to some extent. But all who give have materially the same experience. They learn that no matter how much is given, the receiver feels that the quantity is a beggarly one and that the giver ought to keep up the donations indefinitely. They also learn that the receiver believes that some one else has been favored beyond himself, and that the said receiver retains the larger portion of his gratitude to be showered upon the giver for some future favor. It was so with Messrs. Hogan and Madnau. They worried along all summer with less than half the water that rightfully should flow in their ditches. They let Bill Coffroth have the whole supply for a week when their alfalfa was suffering, they allowed Jere Herron to water his cabbage at the expense of their fruit trees, and gave Stanley Lancaster the supply that should have "filled out" their corn. Jim and Mr. Hogan were in thorough sympathy with each other and often did things in concert. But their acts of self-denial did not give satisfaction; Bill Coffroth swore that Hogan and Madnau were getting rich at his expense, notwithstanding his ability to buy both of them out at the shortest notice. The entire three-mile strip rumbled and groaned and grumbled. Though not a man's crop was an entire failure, Mr. Hogan and Jim Madnau were as severely berated as if famine had devastated the land. Stanley held long consultations with Bill Coffroth, and Bill Coffroth held long consultations with Jere Herron, and all three went over to see Pete Gregg, and Pete Gregg sent for Abner Jones so that the matter might be discussed. They talked some of going below the Rise and laying the matter before Col. Chellis to get his valuable opinion, but they finally decided that this would be bringing Messrs. Madnau and Hogan into too great publicity and making them feel their position too keenly. The party then separated, and on the road home Stanley and Bill decided between themselves that the most effective means would be to tear out the dams that drove the water into the two envied ditches and thus let a head of water reach their fields; the work might be done at night and the alfalfa fields could be much benefited before the mischief was discovered. The round-up was completed sooner than the cattle men expected,

and Bill and Stanley, being at home to look after things, effected the demolishing of the dams on Thursday night. Their alfalfa yield in October would be much better, even if the fields of the two upper residents did suffer a little from drought.

On Friday morning as Mary Fleming emerged from her bedroom, rosy and well rested after her sound sleep, she was startled to hear an angry and somewhat high-pitched voice in conversation with Mr. Hogan in the yard. She looked out of the kitchen window. There stood Jim Madnau in buckskin suit and high rubber boots. A shovel was on his shoulder and wrath was in his eye. He was relating to Mr. Hogan a narrative concerning ditches and dams, and in his excitement he threw in a few of the latter articles extra. Mary listened spellbound; it was just what she expected of Jim Madnau.

"Yes," said Jim, as he kicked a fence post to knock the mud off of his boots, "I had everything in runnin' order at sundown last night. I didn't get home till one o'clock and then I went right to work at the ditch. I expected that lower field of mine would be all wet up this morning. I had everything fixed so the water would go through all right."

"O, it's that Lancaster cuss," said Mr. Hogan.

"I think it's Bill Coffroth. But then it's not past Lancaster, either."

"I wouldn't be surprised if both of 'em had a hand in it."

"Well, like as not they had. I'm goin' to find out, and if it was them, I'm goin' to make trouble. I don't want to say anything till I find out. It might be some children's done it, and if it was, there's no use kickin' up a row with Lancaster and Coffroth."

"No, of course not. Well, you find out, Jim; find out if you can. You say you put my dam back again?"

"Yes, I put both of 'em back. Put 'em so they'll stay, too, unless some *man* tries to take 'em out. If they go out this time, I'll know no child *tore* 'em out. Well, I must be goin'."

"Haven't had your breakfast, have you, Jim? No? Well come right in and set down with us. Harriet'll have things ready in a minute."

"No, I must be rustlin'; Mrs. Hopkins will wait on me if I don't come. Good-morning." And Jim balanced his shovel upon his shoulder and strode hastily away. Mary

turned from the window with a sneer upon her face. It remained right there while she set the table and set up the chairs. The idea of Jim Madnau coming right there in her hearing to berate Stanley Lancaster—and all just because he knew well enough that she preferred Stanley. He talked loud on purpose for her to hear. When all were seated at table, she turned to her host and said:

“What did Mr. Madnau want, Mr. Hogan?”

“O, some durn sneak’s tore out the dams of our ditches and let the water all down the crick. Jest as we was ready to use it, too.”

“You don’t think Mr. Lancaster did it, do you?”

“Well, gal, I’ve watched things on this crick a good while, and I’ve found out that a man that won’t steal anything else, will steal water. But mind you, I ain’t sayin’ that Stan Lancaster won’t steal anything else.”

“*Joshua! Joshua!*” exclaimed Mrs. Hogan.

“Well, Harriet, I can’t help it. I’ve been waitin’ on the water for more’n a week now, jest to give them other fellers a chance, and this is too thunderin’ aggravatin’.”

Mary was angry, but she determined to pursue the conversation. She desired information more than vengeance. She drove all the wrath out of her tone and asked:

“Isn’t there enough water for all the folks?”

“No, there ain’t, not this season, that is. There’s generally more than’s needed.”

“But why don’t the people divide what there is equally?”

“You’ve got a better edication than the teacher on Elk Crick, and that gives you ten dollars a month more pay than he gits. Why don’t you divide that ten dollars with him?” asked the old man rather snappishly.

“But money and water are different.”

“Not so very different, gal. Water is money in this country. I got to this crick first; I settled here when my scalp was in danger. I wasn’t holdin’ on to the coat tails of these other fellers, keepin’ them from comin’ out here and settlin’ down.”

“And Mr. Lancaster is one of those that hasn’t enough water?”

“Well, whiskey’s cheap; it does him ‘bout as well.”

Mary struggled for composure; what was the use of getting angry at a prejudiced old man?

“He owns land, doesn’t he?” she asked.

"He's got a quarter section. He can git water on about forty acres of it and the rest is good pasture land. He ought to do well. Then he's got about a hundred head of cattle."

Mary smiled; she might be safe in liking Lancaster, after all. She was not at all mercenary, but she wished to be assured of bread. The Hogans both noticed the smile, but did not comment.

"I wish you would tell me all about water rights, Mr. Hogan," said Mary.

The old man gave a prefatory cough and then a lengthy discourse upon prior rights, shares, irrigating heads, reservoirs and other questions pertaining to the irrigation system. Mary, after listening to it, came to the conclusion that unless the water supply proved more plentiful in after years that serious dislike might arise between the two settlers at the opening of the cañon and the inhabitants of the three-mile strip.

Jim and Mr. Hogan did not learn who were the offenders in this one instance, but they kept such close watch afterward that their water supply was not disturbed again during the fall.

CHAPTER VIII.

PECULIARITIES OF THE TENDERFOOT.

MARY FLEMING was the child of circumstances. The conditions of her childhood, training and education were peculiar, and a peculiar individuality was consequently the result.

Her face and person have already been described as beautiful; but while some of the ordinary faults of the comely woman were hers, others were absent from her. To a certain degree she was vain, but her vanity was so susceptible of chill, so easily set aside, that she would often pass in an incredibly short time from the highest self-confidence to the most abject despair. She had been blamed, ridiculed, slandered and criticised by officious and envious relatives until she carried with her even now, a shrinking readiness to dodge expected blows. Naturally a creature of strong impulses her training had left her variable and spasmodic. Her vivid and

romantic imagination, never directed but always suppressed to the utmost, had made her, when alone and unoccupied, a continuous dreamer. The necessity of pleasing or conciliating many people of many turns had developed the actress. The many slurs as to her worthlessness cast upon her by jealous cousins rendered her ambitious of self-glory ; while the restlessness produced by an unsettled residence and a state of almost continual dread of punishment or blame, had almost produced the adventuress. Indeed on many a night after some day of unusual hardship she had mentally resolved to don male attire—even children can see how abundantly God showers blessings upon trousers—and rush away to sea or to battle ; or to some other arena of freedom or death ; not that she regretted that she was not a man—no romantic woman ever wished to yield up her sex—but she wanted liberty to select her life walk ; she longed for dearth of restraint. But the vanity was almost justifiable ; the impulse, though often ill-timed, hasty and unwise, was generous and hearty ; the dreams though wildly romantic, were lofty and clean, the dramatic cunning for self-protection only ; the ambition, a weapon with which to humble tyrants. The woman was still there, and in her, almost the poet and the philosopher ; for much as is to be said against the tyrant trainer, adversity, all must admit that his vigorous rubs brighten many a rusty spot of character.

The best actors are those who most closely follow nature ; Mary was true to nature as her best self, and when acting she was still natural. As naught else is so lovely as nature, so none are so lovely as the natural. Those whose innate attractiveness has not yielded place to custom, affectation and prejudice enthrall us in spite of ourselves. Mary Fleming was one of the few who had not permitted an attractive individuality to be ironed over society's moulding block into the prevailing shape. In spite of her ill-treatment her credulity was great ; her vivid imagination through it all supplied an air castle with its accompanying knight to be won and triumphed in at last. In the new people she met she had abundant faith. The liberal education which one of her uncles provided for her, and the yearning affection of that uncle's wife, gave her hope for the future and faith in mankind.

She loved character and hated restraint. As a child she had gained a reputation for peevishness and temper because of her dislike of the straight lines drawn for her by loveless and unsympathetic aunts ; in but one of her periodic homes did

she find love and peace. She was the wild bird, who, free, would do you service by ridding your garden of worms, bugs and weed seeds, and ravish your ears with wild bursts of soaring song ; but caged, would beat her head against her prison walls, and moan and chirp discordantly.

She had had more than her share of lovers, and her experience with all had been much the same. She had been attracted to each in turn by some trait of mind or by some physical feature that appealed to some one of her many romantic fancies—some brilliancy of talk or perfection in song, some gleam of the eye or curl of the lip, some poise of a fine figure, or graceful movement of a hand. She had enchainèd them with her fascinating flow of lively and intelligent conversation ; she was a brilliant student, and during her conversational play must talk books. She filled her admirers' ears with algebra, geometry, sines, arcs, tangents, axioms ; she devised corollaries and scholiums from their most ordinary statements, and smilingly noted their astonished faces. She told them pretty stories of myth and hero and wraith ; she interested them in the wonders of natural history ; she leaned upon their arms in the still night with raised finger pointing out the constellations, and voice relating the rare romances connected with their naming ; she tripped beside them in the daytime, picking flowers to pieces and dilating upon stamens, pistils, bracts, whorls and honey scales. And her admirers were delighted ; many of them were comparatively ignorant of the themes she discussed ; but if her eyes flashed and her face glowed while her silvery voice vibrated, did not the latter circumstances counteract the former ? And then she managed them so nicely, she had such a delicate way of making the gentlemen feel that she believed them quite as well informed as herself ; if she asked their opinions or advice it was certain to be upon some point of which they were masters.

And the same ending came to all these little affairs. After a few weeks of mutual devotion she fell from studying how to amuse the gentlemen to studying the gentlemen themselves ; this was the fatal moment ; she would invariably discover some similarity to her obnoxious Uncle Bluecut, or to some one of his equally obnoxious sons, and the spell was broken. Marriage with them meant the cage she was trying to keep out of. She would mope for a few weeks, meet the discarded with a cold eye, and redouble her attentions to her books, until another unsuspecting gentleman showed her

some attractive oddity of build, speech or manner. Let us hope that the wounds she inflicted were not deep ; indeed her attention always seemed so much more given to the things she discoursed upon than to her auditors that the latter were hardly justifiable in appropriating much of her regard. This rotation of lovers had somewhat shaken her credulity in regard to ordinary men, and had well-nigh tired her of them altogether. Her meeting with the vaqueros was therefore doubly refreshing. Here was the novelty of a new and interesting class added to western peculiarity ; so she fell at the feet of the class and asked the handsome Stanley Lancaster to stand representative while her ardent nature worshipped. She expected to find in the vaqueros dearth of the obnoxious traits of Uncle Bluecut and sons, and very little in common with any of the men she had previously known. The vaqueros knew so much about a phase of life of which she was totally ignorant that she could listen to them talk, and need not for some time be compelled to exert herself in order to entertain them ; the fact that she was a little jealous of their superior knowledge in that one direction did not detract from their attractiveness in the least. The whole race of cowboys were interesting to her with the one exception of the feared, hated, dreaded Jim Madnau.

On the evening of the ball at Uncle Peter Chase's, Mary stood before the glass in the Hogan sitting-room arranging her hair and dress.

"Does Miss Chellis ever attend the parties out here ?" she asked, as she fastened a cream rose at the side of her dark coronet.

"No, I never heard of her going to any of these parties ; she'd be too stylish for that. Her mother visits round some, but I never heard as anybody about here is much acquainted with Amy," said the old lady.

"I met a lady out riding yesterday evening that answered your description of her ; Mr. Madnau rode past and they spoke very friendly," said Mary, as she pinned a big bow of cream ribbon at her waist line on the left front side.

"She does shy around Jim some," said the old man. "You see the old Colonel thinks Jim wouldn't be a bad match —thrift and money go a long ways, gal ; but I don't think she'll be at the party. She wouldn't know what to do with herself without sofys to set on."

Mary was secretly delighted at the prospective absence of the beauty ; there was a chance now for her to be the belle of

the evening—perhaps—awful thought—if Miss Chellis did come, she would try to attract the dashing Stanley! So Mary bowed up the illusion at her throat and arranged her frizzes with great satisfaction. The Herrons were soon in waiting, and after a somewhat rough ride in the farm wagon the party arrived at the roomy residence of the Chases. The ladies were sent upstairs to lay off their wraps. They found themselves in a room full of pretty girls, laughing and chatting and arranging costumes. The three pretty Chase girls, hostesses, were everywhere, welcoming and entertaining. They were blooming, lovely girls. Rose, Lily and Violet, Mary called them, but they bore the less poetic names of Lucy, Emma and Sarah. Lucy, the Rose, was of blooming complexion with wavy auburn hair; her form was voluptuous, and her eyes blue and frank; she wore a white muslin dress and blue satin ribbons. Emma, the Lily, was large and tall like her sister; she was a blonde of the noblest type; her yellow hair was curled across her forehead and drawn in heavy braids behind; she also wore white and blue. Sarah, the Violet, was smaller than her sisters, with dust colored hair and violet eyes that flashed in glorious contrast to her neat dress of pink organdie. But alas! all three of these pretty girls had obscured with white powder all the rich, warm, beautiful color in their faces.

There was a deal of scraping and tuning going on below, and one by one the gentlemen began to file up to the door to escort their partners downstairs. Mary had become separated from Mrs. Herron and her enterprising and interesting four-year-old son, Bertie, and she had no partner; she presently awoke to the fact that all the ladies had gone downstairs and that she was alone. She was annoyed at this. She had but few acquaintances among the young people yet; she could not reasonably expect that any one would search for her. She thought she had better go down alone; she went to the head of the stairway and looked down; the hallway was crowded with men grouped about the musicians; she went back into the room, drew a chair to the stove and sat down.

Soon she heard a light step and a gay voice on the stairs; there was also a heavy tread. Ah, she was not forgotten. Some one was coming for her. "You wait here a minute and then come to the door, please," said the gay voice. Then in at the open door swept a vision of loveliness. Amy Chellis! Yes, it was the same girl whom Mary had seen out

riding. Poor Mary fairly gasped as she looked up, for Miss Chellis was like some fabulous creation of light. Her blue eyes shone like gems, reminding Mary that hers were dark and dreamy; the arrangement of her yellow hair was a perfect mystery of braids and curls, reminding Mary that her own was dark, and she just now remembered it, most unbecomingly dressed; her pearly cheeks reminded Mary that hers were not only dark by nature, but sunburned. She was rather short and just plump enough to be a fine figure, reminding Mary that she was slight and thin. Then her clothes! She wore a low-cut blue silk dress, heavily adorned with white lace; on her feet were white kid slippers. She walked to the bed and laid off a blue velvet mantle lined with white fur. She turned and walked to the glass without noticing the one occupant of the room, and stood a moment arranging the little curls on her forehead and the tuber-roses upon her bosom; then the silvery voice—with a little affectation in it, Mary thought—rang out, “All ready.” A few heavy footfalls and at the door stood Jim Madnau. Yes, Jim Madnau, in faultless black coat and vest, light trousers, and with a tube rose-upon the lapel of his coat. Not a trace of the cowboy suit, but the blue eyes, the intense glance were there. Would he notice her? He looked at her sharply, then blushed, bowed and said, “Miss Fleming, good-evening.” She perceived that embarrassment had caused him to pronounce her name before the greeting.

“Good-evening,” she replied.

She thought he had opened his lips to speak again, but Miss Chellis took his arm and said gaily:

“Let’s go; I’m ready,” and Mary was left alone again.

The music rose high and full below, and the voices of the callers and the tramp of merry feet rang clear upon her ears. She went out and looked down again; the hall was still full of men looking in at the merry-makers in the rooms on either side, for two quadrilles were dancing. She returned and sat down; the dancing would go on all night, and there she must remain alone and forgotten. How disagreeable the rich Chases and the aristocratic Chellises were! How like her Uncle Bluecut’s family the whole world was! And that handsome Lancaster; where were he and his devotion? And Jim Madnau, the incarnation of all that was diabolical, he knew she was up there alone and forsaken. And his supercilious lady, Amy Chellis, who had almost brushed against her and not noticed her. Such clothes for a country ball!

Then she looked down at her own cheap red cashmere, faded and made over; she thought of the rose in her hair and the bow at her waist that had done service on her summer hat, her old Japanese fan compared to that other of ivory and painted satin; her dark sunburned cheeks—and then the tears began to fall.

The fire had burned low and the room was chilly; she took her cloak and wrapped herself in it; she took a book from the table, but it was a disagreeable book, and made her tears fall faster. Once, twice, thrice, the command had been given to choose partners—then she could not tell how, he had got there without her hearing, but Lancaster stood before her, handsome and irresistible in the conventional evening black.

"Why, Miss Fleming! what's gone wrong?" he asked.

"Nothing; but I'm homesick—as I can be."

"Well, well! Here I've been looking for you everywhere, and everybody has been asking everybody else where you were, and everybody answered that you must be in *that other room*. And now I find you here, crying your eyes out because you're homesick. Don't you dance?"

"Yes—a little—sometimes."

"Then why aren't you downstairs?"

Mary was ashamed to confess, but she did. She told him all about how she came to be left alone, and laughed with him over it.

"Well, get rid of those tears and we'll stand at the head of the set in the big room."

"Will there be time to get the tear stains off?" she asked playfully.

"Certainly; this is only the first figure."

She went to the wash-stand, bathed her face and rearranged her hair. Then they had a delightful talk about Colorado, Indiana, and lastly New York, Lancaster's native state. Mary told her many adventures and trials in the strange land, and Lancaster complimented her on her bravery and perseverance, rounding off every sentence with his long, smooth, delightful little laugh. It was time to go down and take their places all too soon.

"Are the marks all gone?" she asked, pointing to her cheeks as she arose.

"Yes, and your eyes are shining like two stars. Come on." He took her hand and drew it through his arm. They walked down stairs, and entering the large room, stationed themselves at its head.

"Hello! so you've found her, Lancaster?" said Jere Herron.

"Yes; crying like a school-girl for homesickness," and he drew his arm closer, so as to press her hand just the least in the world.

"And have you been up there all the time, Miss Fleming?" continued Mr. Herron.

"Yes, sir."

"Well now, that's too bad. When I went up for Hulday, she said she thought you had gone down with Emma Chase. We didn't see anything of you."

"I had gone back to the stove a minute. When I turned round I found I was alone."

"I shouldn't have found you to-night if Jim Madnau hadn't told me he saw you up there alone, and wondered if you were sick." (So then that wretch had asked about her after all.)

The other dancers were now in place. Mary looked round the room and saw present nearly all the men she had seen at the round-up camp. Broncho Charlie stood opposite her with Sarah Chase; Penobscot Bill was in a corner *tete-a-tete* with blonde, bewitching Bella Martin; the Kid seemed trying to hide himself behind any one who was willing to act as a screen, while Hen Hall stood quietly looking on. He was the only man who retained his cowboy suit. Those who knew Hen were not surprised at this; he generally attended the parties, where he had a kind word for all, but he never danced nor paid attention, beyond ordinary civility, to any lady. It was the commonly accepted theory that Hen had been crossed in love.

The music, consisting of two violins and a banjo, was in the hall, so that both rooms might have the benefit of it. Amy Chellis and Mr. Mopely, the school-teacher from Aspen Creek, stood at the right of Mary and her partner; Jim Madnau and Louisa Hart were the other couple.

"First couple balance to the couple on the right; join all hands and balance four," shouted the caller. It was astonishing to Mary how Amy Chellis could go through the set without seeing any one in it save Jim, Stanley and Mr. Mopely. The gentlemen, in this figure, deserted their own partners, took the lady to the right, and advanced with her. This movement in due time brought Mary round to Jim Madnau. While they stood together he asked her to dance with him when his number was called next time. It was number

fifteen, and would be called the next set but two. It was easy to see that Jim had never attended dancing-school; he danced solely for the enjoyment to be found therein. When it came time for him to balance forward with Mary and leave her with a new partner, she was not aware that all was ready, when without a word of warning he seized her by the wrist, and with one gallant leap, landed her in the middle of the set. It was all she could do to keep her feet; then he seized her again and sprang forward as if the house was on fire and he was dragging her out of it. Then he abruptly paused before the couple with whom they were to dance and scattered everybody from his vicinity by his energetic movements. All this time his brows were contracted and his lips tightly compressed, with an air that said he had come there to dance, and meant to dance or die. By the time Mary regained her original partner, she was wiser and wearier than when she left him. Stanley's graceful, easy movements were more agreeable than ever.

She then danced a quadrille with Uncle Peter Chase, and another with Mr. Mopely, who was introduced by Jim Madnau. Then came a waltz, when all who could crowd upon the floor might dance, and Stanley came for her.

"Do you waltz?" he asked.

"I try sometimes; but I am the poorest waltzer in the world."

"Well, let's try." A man is willing enough to teach a novice to waltz if her face be piquant and her waist shapely. Mary was, in truth, a poor waltzer, but Stanley adapted his step so nicely to hers that she got on very well with him. He held her very close—just a little too close she feared—but then he was so kind and gentle, and she *knew* he loved her. Jim Madnau was punishing the floor, with one arm about half around Amy Chellis; and Mary, as she watched them, felt that she would give but little for what was left of Amy's white kid slippers. As for herself, she got along so much better than she had expected to that she was sorry when the music ceased and it was time to leave the floor.

"Why, you'd soon waltz charmingly, Miss Fleming," said Lancaster.

"I hope so, but my faith is small," replied Mary.

"Well now, just consider yourself engaged to me for the next waltz, and I'll show you how to reverse."

"Very well; but I do not like to tax you so heavily, just to teach me to dance."

"Ah, Miss Fleming, you give infinitely more than you take," and he looked fixedly at her with his blue eyes full of tenderness. Her confidence in herself was fully restored; she no longer cared for Miss Chellis's rich silk and pearls. She was in a merry mood. Uncle Peter Chase and Mr. Herron joined in the conversation, bantering her for being a tenderfoot, and all were in high glee when Jim came for her to dance. Lancaster took Miss Chellis and stood opposite them, Miss Chellis still not deigning to notice Mary. During an interval between figures she perceived that Lancaster was asking his partner some question, and from the motion of his lips judged he was asking her to be presented. Whatever it was, the lady shook her head indignantly and stood staring at the opposite wall with elevated nose. After two more quadrilles came another waltz, when Stanley came again for Mary and held her closer than ever. Stooping over once until his long blond mustache almost swept her cheek, he whispered to her that Miss Chellis was jealous of her. She looked up, and caught Jim Madnau's glance upon her, angry and scowling. He blushed and withdrew his gaze, but Mary was troubled all the evening. He himself came for her next, and danced as violently as ever, but he said but little. Mary tried hard to put him in good-humor, donning her gayest manner and coquetting with a will; she succeeded sufficiently well to set him laughing at her nonsense.

Supper was announced and she was led out by the incorrigible Lancaster; it was a magnificent repast, cakes, fruit, ice-cream, and confections—but it was all spoiled for Mary. Only the looks of things prevented her hurling an orange at Jim Madnau. He was according her the full honor of his usual surveillance. After about two more hours of amusement, Bertie Herron waked and demonstrated his intention to be heard. The Herrons and Mary prepared to go. Stanley Lancaster bade her good-night with eyes full of interest and a hand-clasp full of tenderness. And yet she was not satisfied. She feared, try hard as she might to stifle the dreadful fear, that she was beginning to see in Stanley certain similarities to her cousin Tom Carver. Any such discovery she knew would be instantly fatal to her admiration for him; she hated this, for her mind was satisfied that he was madly in love with her. As for herself she could amuse herself punishing Jim Madnau; but what consolation would poor Mr. Lancaster have?

She had made up her mind in regard to one thing : if Jim Madnau asked for her company to any parties she would accept. He kept his eyes off of her when he had her at short range. Bashful people are as apt to be gazers as any, but they do their gazing more at a distance ; they don't hold one by the arm and look down into her face after the fashion of Mr. Lancaster. When a creature is held just close enough to a hotly burning fire so that his flesh is scorched thereby, it is possible for him to become so frenzied that he will leap into the glowing flame in order to end the matter. It was thus that Mary felt concerning Madnau. But if she leapt into the fire, could she leap out again, or must she be held there forever ? Would there ever be a possibility of escape ? With this thought maddening her she bade the Herrons good-night and entered the Hogan residence. She hastily locked the door behind her, gained her room, dropped upon her bed and drew a pillow over her face. Then instead of being thankful for the pleasant evening she had enjoyed, she began to pour forth a flood of angry tears. Why could not that dreadful Jim Madnau watch Miss Chellis, and keep his eyes off of *her* ? Poor, tender, loving, defeated Stanley ! But no ; not defeated, after all. She *would* love him—she *would* dance with him in spite of that jealous, watchful fiend. She would punish Jim Madnau fearfully ; she would make him rue the day he began to shadow her ; she would keep his company if he made advances ; and then like an avenging Nemesis she would await her time. It was only her own wicked fancy that conjured up in Stanley similarities to Tom Carver. Jim Madnau was the whole Carver family and infinitely more. He was a wild beast, only to be entrapped by strategy and conquered by rarest skill.

Coquettes, like customs, die hard.

CHAPTER IX.

STRANGE EVENTS.

MARY did not feel particularly active next morning. She got up to breakfast with a bitter taste in her mouth and her head reminding her in some way of a visit she had once made to a sawmill.

"Don't feel very brisk this morning, I reckon, Mary," said Mr. Hogan.

"Not very. I'm some sleepy yet."

"Yes, I warrant; and you can hear the fiddles everywhere you turn, can't you?"

"Yes, sir, they punished what little sleep I did get."

"Yes, and your eyes stand bugged out till you could knock 'em off with sticks. You see, gal, these little dissipations has all got to be paid for sooner or later—sooner or later. A little all-night, or nearly all-night dance, and a midnight supper, and a headache and a heartache all next day."

"But I thought you did not object to dancing, Mr. Hogan?"

"Well a *little* dancin', so long as it's done in reason, will do very well; young people have got to be amused and I can't see but what dancin' does better nor most anything else, though it does look kinder silly to see all them heads bobbin' round. I used to go, me and Harriet, and I had lots of fun while I was jumpin' round on the floor; but when I'd got through and was standin' off watchin' the others cavortin', it struck me as all kinder useless. But I was ready enough to take my place when my turn come again. Now, if young people would git together and dance till ten or eleven o'clock and then not eat a bite, but go home and git a good night's sleep, there'd be no objections to it. But they don't do that; they git together and dance till daylight, and eat enough greasy cake at midnight to kill a maverick steer. That's what I don't believe in."

"Well, a few mornings like this will convince me that you are right," she answered.

The next day was Sunday, and a Sunday-school was to be organized at the church. This church had been built by the settlers on Trelawna; it was an unpretentious brick building and belonged to no denomination. When different denominations wished to hold services of their own particular kind, such services were announced and held. But since no one sect was wealthy enough to build a church, a union building was decided upon, where divers sects were listened to in turn. The Sunday-school was to be purely union. The church stood to the east of the school-house about a mile and a half and a little less than half a mile south of the creek. Thus it occupied a central position in the three-mile strip. The school-house stood upon ground given by Mr. Hogan, and was in reality almost at the edge of the district,

which terminated on the east at the end of the second mile of the three-mile strip. It was on a little park at the base of the hills, half a mile south of the creek. There was another school-house below the Rise, but no other church; the citizens of Trelawna, in order to worship, must either come to Calvary or go to Milroy City. Services were once in a great while held at the school-house below the Rise, but in general the settlers preferred to assemble at the church.

Colonel Chellis was elected superintendent and Lucy Chase secretary. Mary was installed as teacher of a class of boys from about thirteen to fifteen years of age, many of them her day pupils. The programme was quite interesting, but the distressing cough of Colonel Chellis almost brought tears to Mary's eyes. After the dismissal, Stanley met her at the door and inquired if he would be badly in the way beside her. Receiving a negative answer, he took her Bible and stored it in his breast pocket. Then she looked round and saw—but why should she enumerate the times she was put to the rack? Miss Chellis and her father paused and spoke to Jim Madnau, and he came on between them. Mary could hear Amy chatting gayly, but Jim spoke but seldom; there came a vivid red spot on either of her cheeks, while her forehead turned white; there was a fear as of danger in the rear—as if there was a presence behind her that needed narrow watching; there was an impulse to look back and be prepared; but—for what?

She *would* conquer this feverish madness that she dreaded, hated and could not understand. So she laughed at Stanley's little pleasantries, giggling gleefully when the state of affairs demanded no more than a smile. She rejoiced when they reached the creek and the Chellises and their escort turned to the east. She excused herself from Stanley at the gate, saying, which was quite true, that she had letters to write. But when he was well out of sight—he had turned and gone east in the direction of his ranche—she again donned her hat and walked up and down the road to wear out her vexation. The letters must wait until she was in a letter-writing mood.

On the Wednesday evening following, as she sat crocheting mittens for the colder weather, a brisk rap was heard at the door and Jim Madnau entered, blinking at the bright light. He was dressed in his buckskin suit, and wore spurs, indicating that he had come on horseback. His clothing was mud-bespattered.

"Water out on the road?" asked Mr. Hogan, as he caught sight of the markings.

"Yes; broke over this afternoon. It's your ditch that's broke. I fixed it up as soon as I found out." Then the two fell to talking crops, mines and local politics, thus giving Mary time to regain the composure that had been shaken. She wondered why she could not be as calm as Mrs. Hogan, who sat so quietly knitting yonder. But then if she was nervous so was Jim; that was some consolation; this fact helped her in a remarkable degree to recover her equanimity.

Mr. Hogan went to the cellar for some apples, and Mary determined to put Mr. Madnau at his ease.

"How did you enjoy the party, Mr. Madnau?" she asked.

"O, I had a very good time. How did you like it?"

"Famously! I hope they'll have another somewhere soon."

"There's to be one at John Branch's, on Boulder Creek, Friday night. If you'd like to go, I'll take you over."

"O, thank you; I should enjoy going ever so much."

Mr. Hogan came in with the apples, and the conversation became general. When nine o'clock came, Jim arose to go. As he reached for his hat, he said,

"We'll start from here about seven o'clock, Friday evening. We'll go in the same rig with John Mopely and Lucy Chase. John and I fixed it all up last night."

"(), did you?" she asked, saucily. "But how did you know Lucy and I would accept?"

"Oh! well—that is—John had already asked Lucy—and I just thought——"

"O yes; I know all about it, Mr. Madnau. I won't leave you in the lurch this time; but it was a great risk to run. All young ladies are not so easily carried off to parties as I am."

Then Mr. Hogan roared, and Mrs. Hogan tittered, and Jim blushed furiously, putting even his ordinary bronzed hue to shame. Mary enjoyed his discomfiture so much that she determined to push her advantage so far as to tease him. It is dreadful to think of the terrible things the mouse will do when it gets the cat safely tied up. (The cat please take warning.)

"You will have to insure my life against the vengeance of Miss Chellis," she said. "By the way, how can you possibly endure a party bereft of her?"

"Well, the fact is—you see—I didn't hardly think she'd like to go away over there."

"O, that's it. And so I may thank her disinclination for my opportunity," and she laughed merrily.

Jim darkened again.

"Now, Miss Fleming, I didn't mean that at all. The fact is, you asked me an awkward question, and I tried to answer it by giving a wretchedly bad excuse. I'd like to have your company; and Miss Chellis has nothing to do with it; I am under no obligation to any young lady." His voice was angry, and Mary trembled at the storm she had aroused. Stanley would have sounded that exquisite little laugh of his had she bantered him so.

"Why, I was only joking, Mr. Madnau. And what harm was there in what I said, anyhow?" Her own face was hot, and she was vexed and humbled at having this scene go on in the presence of the Hogans.

"Well, it would be little and mean in me to do as you hinted," he said, in a somewhat softened tone.

"But I did not mean it. Here, now, swallow your vexation in a big apple." She passed the basin to him, and tried hard to laugh. He took an apple—then burst out laughing—then all were convulsed, and peace was restored.

"I tell you, Jim," began Mr. Hogan, "it's no use to bandy words with the women. They'll wind you up every time. It's well enough to be on good terms with 'em, but when they get to goin' on like Mary was a while ago, it's better just to stand still and laugh at 'em. The law don't give 'em any privileges, so it's no more than right for us to give 'em a little liberty with their tongues. Women say lots of things they don't mean."

"Thank you," said Mary.

"He will hit the women once in a while," said the old lady.

Jim now remembered that he had started home; he placed his broad hat at a very slight angle upon his head. (Let us hope that the angle was unintentional.)

"We'll start about seven o'clock, then, Miss Fleming," he said. He listened smilingly to Mary's assent, then said good-night, and opened the door. Three hearty good-nights followed him out.

He had not more than got out of hearing, when Mary asked the Hogans:

"What made him get so angry when I said what I did? He nearly frightened me to death."

" Well, you don't look much like a corpse, gal," said the old man. " But Jim ain't used to gals much, and can't take his own part very well; then you're jest from the east, and like as any way he thought you was makin' light of him. But then the biggest part of it all is jest what he said: it would be mean to do as you said, and Jim resented it. But he wasn't mad; you jest had him cornered tight and beat out, that's all. Jim don't know society very well, but he knows the world mighty nigh by heart."

" What do you mean by that ? "

" I mean, nobody won't fool Jim very badly. His good sense 'll take him where Stan Lancaster's stinkin' little laugh won't even interduce him. Why, what do you suppose Jim wants of that darned little Chellis critter? She's nothin' but a toy."

" Well, she's pretty, anyhow," said Mary, with a sigh.

" Yes, any gal's pretty that'll go and buy beauty by the box at a drug store."

" But why does Mr. Madnau take her around ? "

" 'Cause she hunts him. But he don't want her. He wants a woman that's got more sense, and that knows he's a good feller, and will appreciate him for it. She wouldn't appreciate nothin' but his pocket-book."

" Now, Mr. Hogan, I want to ask you something. Don't think I'm mercenary—but don't you think he ought to be appreciated some for that ? "

" Well, now, that's a matter that I've thort a good deal on, gal, and comin' right down sentimental, I b'leeve he ort. 'Cause if he hadn't been industrious he could'n 'a' made money in the first place, and if he hadn't been careful and sober he couldn't 'a' saved it. So I think that when a young man's got money that he's earned by industry and saved by frugality and sobriety, it's a pretty good sign in his favor."

" What makes them call some of the cowboys such odd names ? " she asked presently.

" Who ? "

" Why, the cowboys. They call that Mr. Wentworth 'Kid,' and they call another one 'Penobscot Bill,' and another one 'Broncho Charlie.' "

" O, that's jest to save time and trouble. Them two last ones don't hardly deserve a name, anyhow."

" Where do they stay ? "

" Why, Bill Hammin and Kid Wentworth work fer Jim."

" Do they stay at his house ? "

"Yes, when the Kid ain't out on the range, and Bill ain't down to Milroy drunk."

"Why, does he drink?"

"Well, when he goes down to Milroy, and that ain't often, for Jim tries to keep him away, he gen'lly gets hold of somethin' that settles in his feet: I won't say what it is."

"I thought Mr. Hall worked for Mr. Madnau."

"He does. But he don't call him Mr. Madnau, though; neither does any of the rest of the boys; they jest say *Jim*, and it wouldn't surprise me if Jim would discharge 'em if they went to misterin' him. Jim's a risin' young man, but he's jest one of the boys, out and out."

"And Broncho Charlie?"

"Name's Charlie Ford. Works for Stan Lancaster and Bill Coffroth by turns. Stan keeps him till they fall out, and then Bill keeps him till they have a flare-up. By that time he's made up with Stan and goes back."

"And that young fellow—Gus Waite, I believe they call him."

"He's workin' for Jere Herron now; good boy, too. I think I'll try to get him in the spring. I've got to have a man before corn plantin' time. Jere's brother is comin' out from the States in the spring, so I think I'll try to get Gus. If he comes he'll help me in the spring round-up, as well as with the corn."

"But why does Jim Madnau have so many men?"

"Well, he's got lots of cattle, and then he does lots of ranche work; raises lots of hay to feed his poor cattle durin' the winter. Then he's clearin' up some new ground now. He's got Kid Wentworth and Bill Hammin grubbin' grease-brush on the side hill, as he calls the little raised plot in his pasture. He's goin' to put that in alfalfa. Then Hen Hall's ridin' for him most of the time. They all ride a good deal—expect to do their ranche work at odd times. Some cow-punchers kick at ranche work, but when Jim or me either hire men we let 'em know they're to do whatever they're set at. Jim ain't too good to roll up his pants and wade mud, and he don't expect his men to be. Well, here I go, talk, talk, talk; Harriet tells me I'll talk myself into my grave, and then talk the lid off my coffin, and maybe she's right. It's after ten o'clock, and I guess we'd better all hunt our corrals for the night."

There is not much to relate concerning the party at Mr. Branch's. The drive was very pleasant and the dancing

enjoyable. Stanley Lancaster was very attentive, but somehow Mary was thinking so busily of her plans for humbling Jim that she thought but little of him. She danced with him often, and talked to him much, listening patiently to his sorrowful recital of the fact that Jim had never mentioned the party to him till he had secured her company; but her thoughts were with Madnau. She was getting tired of Stanley's little laugh, and his endless compliments. There was opportunity for battle with Jim, and her soul loved battle.

On the road home Jim asked her if she would like a horse-back ride on the following Sunday, and upon her answering in the affirmative, he proposed a trip to Dead Man's Cave. The plan was mentioned to Mr. Mopely and Lucy and it was agreed to make up quite a party.

So that accounts for the party that stopped at the Hogan gate for Mary the next Sunday morning. The party consisted of Mr. Mopely, Stanley, Penobscot Bill, Broncho Charlie, the three Chase girls and Bella Martin, while away in the rear, safely away from the girls and their dangerous allurements, was the Kid. Jim was in the house, awaiting Mary as she shook out the folds of a recently finished riding habit. When the skirt hung just to suit that lady, she emerged from her room and was escorted out and helped into a saddle, which Jim had gone all the way to Milroy City to hire. On the road to the cave they rode far enough away from the others so that their conversation was their own. Mary was glad of this; it gave her a fine opportunity to forward her dark design. She resolved to utilize the old scientific rule, but not just in the old way. She was really curious to know whether Jim Madnau "knew anything," so she would make him talk. But before she had got well started her own ardent, nature-loving soul checked her. They left the park, and entered a picturesque little cañon with alternately widening and narrowing walls. The grass on the narrow sward beside the winding, rock-bedded little creek, and the cedars that grew from clefts in the perpendicular walls, gave their vivid green to contrast with ledges of white, red, and yellow rock. The transparent, pellucid water found still pools in which to pause and rest, or rippled over inclines, or dashed down little precipices, forming toy rapids and cascades.

"Oh! oh!" exclaimed Mary, involuntarily clapping her hands. "Isn't it lovely! Oh, it's paradise!"

Jim laughed softly, but his eyes contained no ridicule.

Perhaps beneath a stern exterior he loved nature and beauty too. She caught a gleam of sympathy in his glance and softened toward him. It might not be necessary to punish him so terribly after all. She was so entranced by the new and delightful scenery, so enraptured by the glimpses of hazy hill that shot into view where the walls of the cañon were low, to be hidden again when they were high and precipitous; so lulled into inward peace by the song of the rippling water; her fevered blood was so cooled by the sight of distant snow-robed, ice-crowned Bernalillo, that she forgot her plans, and allowed the enginery of the conversation to be taken from her. Jim told long and interesting stories of new lands, of lynchings in early days, of blood-curdling adventures with Indians, Mexicans and highwaymen, in no one of which he figured as hero. And Mary listened, locating, as she heard, the scene of each narrative within those entrancing walls built by nature to assert that even nature loves beauty, romance and variety. Then he talked of the national prosperity, the stock market, and the grain acreage; Mary listened to this in surprise; how ignorant he was of society to talk to a lady of such things. He was the first young man *she* had met who persisted in carrying on a sensible conversation; but strange to say, she was pleased. The young men who talk business and politics to their male friends, and reserve their stock of pretty nonsensical nothings for feminine ears, do not always give the pleasure they expect to. Jim recited in his somewhat "cowboyified" language the story of Major Powell's expedition on the Colorado River; he described the cañon of Green River, and the appearance of the vegetation near timber line;—but not a compliment, not the beginning of a compliment, not a shadow of a compliment did he pay to his auditor, unless telling her that she would doubtless eventually learn to rein Kate by the neck be taken for one.

Arrived at the cave the party dismounted. They decided to lunch before descending. The ladies produced from the numerous tie-strings on their saddles little packages containing sandwiches, boiled eggs and cake; these were spread in common upon a large flat rock, and partaken of with a will; even the Kid ventured to the board at a safe spot between Penobscot Bill and Broncho Charlie, and modestly accepted a slice of bread and a chicken wing tendered by Bella Martin. But it must be remembered that these were not the names of these gentlemen to-day—they had on

their society names for the festive occasion, and were Mr. Hammin, Mr. Ford and Mr. Wentworth. The Kid, however, kept far enough away to avoid being addressed by his stately surname.

The cave was located on a sharp rising grade within the cañon, some fifty feet above the bed of Frelawna. Its mouth was near the centre of a little local rise, sufficient to turn a sheet of mountain flood aside, and so prevent the inundation of the cavern. The grade was sparsely covered with cedars, piñons and buckhorn cactus, while at its foot, just above the rocky creek bed, stood a dense thicket of scrub oaks, interspersed now and then by tall, handsome cottonwoods, that were beginning to yield up their leaves to the light October frosts. But the still green grass at their roots bespoke the mild and temperate Autumn.

"Oh, I am so thirsty!" said Mary, as she rose from the improvised lunch-table.

"You are? And I forgot to bring a drinking-cup. Is there a drinking-cup in the crowd?" demanded Jim.

None were forthcoming.

"How do you get drinks when you are out after cattle?" asked Mary.

"Get down on our prayer-bones and drink out of the creek," said Jim quietly, and without the slightest idea that his language was inelegant. "Will you drink out of my hat brim? It's a new hat."

"Why—yes."

"Well, come on, then."

Mary descended the grade in the rear of her escort. He watched her narrowly as she stepped from rock to rock, holding her gray habit with one hand, and carefully selecting her route; but he did not offer to help her until she reached the steep bank. He leaped down and turned to her.

"Will you stay there, or come down?" he asked.

"I will come down." She started to clamber down alone.

"You need help here," he said quietly, as he reached up and took her by the arms. He steadied her a moment, then lifted her down and placed her upon the ledge of rock where he stood, as if she had been a feather's weight. Then he took off his hat, struck it with his hand to free it from dust, creased the brim, stooped and dipped the improvised cup into the creek, and held the desired blessing toward Mary. She laughed aloud.

"Well, I'll remember *this* drink," she said, as she stooped

to the hat-brim. Then Jim stooped and drank in the fashion he had already described. By this time the rest of the party were clambering down the bank ; they had found a discarded salmon can, left by some previous visitors to the cave, and from this they drank. The girls insisted that Mary drink again, believing that she could not have enjoyed her new-fashioned goblet sufficiently to induce her to fully quench her thirst ; but they were mistaken. Mary loved novelty, and had been secretly pleased at getting to drink out of the hat of a strange and dreadful cowboy ; so she declined the salmon can. They returned to the cave mouth and prepared to descend. The opening is a vertical shaft some four feet deep, from which leads a sharply inclined, narrow gallery. The candles were lighted and all advanced.

"Now who is first ?" asked Stanley, as he stood at the dark and frowning mouth. "Remember, now, two murdered men found in here, and their ghosts are always seen at two in the morning, and two in the afternoon; it's fifteen minutes of two now," and he closed his elegant watch.

All clamored to be first, and there ensued a good-natured scuffle. Emma Chase and Charlie Ford were in the lead, when in some mysterious manner, Mary found herself in the grasp of Stanley, his arm round her waist, being hurried to the entrance.

"Come on, Miss Fleming, let's be first anyhow," he said. Mary was half angry at this rudeness, and in trying to free herself, slipped and fell feet foremost into the cave, then slid some fifteen feet or more down the incline before coming to a stop. She uttered no cry, but rising began trying to steady her nerves. She heard murmurs and exclamations without, and then advancing steps. In an instant Jim stood beside her, white and scowling in the light of his candle.

"I'm not hurt at all," she said quickly.

"It might have killed you," he said with a hoarse, fierce voice.

"But it didn't, you see. My dress is soiled, but that is the extent of damage," she said, as she shook and brushed her skirt, and tried to laugh off her companion's fury. The entire party soon came up ; Stanley was profuse in his apologies ; Mary was gracious, but Jim still lowered.

"Well, I was first into the cave, anyhow, that's *one* victory," said Mary, with a laugh that freed the strained nerves of all, and the equanimity of the party was restored. The gallery in which they stood was walled with red marble, the

jagged points on the right hand corresponding to irregular cavities on the left, showing that this four-foot subterranean hall was but a fissure left in the rock after some awful convulsion of perhaps ages ago. This hallway leads to a small room from which branch off several halls, one of which becomes for many yards a mere tunnel through which the venturesome explorer must crawl. In the room is a ledge of rock which is called the sofa, and a niche in the wall about four feet from the floor which is called the card receiver, and where many visitors have left cards. The roof of this room is so lofty that the light of the tourist's candle fails to reveal it to the eye. The party broke into twos, threes and fours for purposes of exploration. As they started in their several directions, fearful groans and dire shrieks were heard in a distant gallery, which caused several to turn back. But although it was just two o'clock, the time for the ghosts to groan and appear, the confidence of the party was entirely restored by discovering that Kid was absent from their midst. The explorations proceeded. When Jim and Mary were alone, the former made a few pointed remarks upon what he was pleased to designate the "cussed freshness" of Stanley. Mary did not reply to these, and then Jim fell to discoursing upon caves and the different subterranean wonders it had been his lot to see. At half-past two the party reassembled in the main room and marched up the incline. The Kid kept in the rear, and when asked if he heard any groans was honest enough to reply that he did hear something strange about two o'clock. And he looked so innocent that the crowd was merciful. At three o'clock, after Mary had indulged in a short hunt for specimens, in which her science-loving nature delighted, the party were mounted and headed for home. Bernalillo was behind them now, and the cultivated valley below. The scenery was less fascinating, and Mary, her mind free to act in the absence of new and entrancing sights, resolved again to find Jim out. She introduced the subject of books. She was surprised that Jim had read so much and so well. But how he unconsciously slandered the great authors! The idea of him coolly and without any idea of impropriety, alluding to Ivanhoe as a "terror" and to Felix Holt as a "roaring snort," and referring with unsteady voice and almost with tears in his eyes to the death scene of Jean Valjean as "a big pow-wow." Then with eyes full of earnest tenderness he explained to Mary that the very country they

were now passing through, Evangeline had "stamped round over," seeking her beloved. Mary felt that some good young woman with a great supply of courage and a missionary turn of mind ought to marry Jim and try to moderate his language; give him polish and convince him of the necessity of conforming in some degree to the usages of civilization. She had known several courageous, muscular young females who she was certain would bring round this dreadful person in a swift and effective manner. She was half beginning to believe he would be good to a woman, provided she did not let him know she was afraid of him. She felt the red spots come out on her cheeks again as she thought of his anger at the accident at the cave mouth. But no; *she* would never risk it. Why, she would be in terror all the time; because if she looked at another man, even at a long distance, Jim would be furiously jealous and would ceaselessly follow her with that fierce glance of his, and would perhaps even scold her with that fierce heavy voice—the same voice he had employed to-day to berate Mr. Lancaster. Poor Mr. Lancaster! In fact the very thought of herself becoming missionary for the redemption of Jim Madnau's literary criticism, and for that gentleman's general felicity, was so terrible that the two red spots receded from her cheeks again, and she proposed to the innocent cause of her uneasiness that they gallop ahead and overtake Mr. Mopely and Lucy Chase. Jim assented, but the newly formed companionship did not last long; she soon found that they were alone again and that she was listening to the account of the capture of a year-old grizzly bear which one of Jim's friends had once lassoed and "drug" into camp. There was another point; Jim ought to get a wife who would persuade him to say "dragged" instead of "drug." A man whose judgment, memory and character seemed so excellent ought to be rescued from such linguistic pitfalls.

"Where did you come from, when you came here, Mr. Madnau?" she asked when the bear story was finished. She wanted to learn as much of his history as possible so as to know how best to proceed.

"I was born in New York state, but I was a cow-puncher in Nevada two years before I came here."

"And when did you get time to read so much?"

"Well, I read some at school. Then there's nearly always some chap in a cow camp that's got a book or two, and all the boys read 'em."

"People have such odd notions about cowboys. Why, I supposed they were like wild people."

"They're something like all other men; good, bad and indifferent. But we're rough and crude, some of us; others are sleek and tricky; others rough and perfect devils." There was so little self-recommendation in this that Mary rebelled.

"I have seen some of them who are gentlemen," she said.

"Well, you haven't known 'em long."

"And when I find them out, will they be, all of them, selfish and coarse and sensual as the majority of men are?" she demanded, in a high key.

"You will probably find a few who are not—you will find just as many *men* in this profession as in any other. I know something about men in all ranks. I know they are faulty creatures, and that the majority of women either encourage or tolerate their faults."

At this shot Mary bit her lip and was silent, wondering what he meant and rankling against him. Of course he meant her favor for Stanley; Mr. Hogan had hinted that Stanley had faults.

"If women tolerate and encourage men's faults, it is because they recognize their subordinate position and the uselessness of railing against what they can not remedy," she said, tartly.

"The servility of one class invites the tyranny of another," he said. "I don't justify men's faults—I think them contemptible—but if women would stand up for their own rights, and have nothing to do with men who mistreat their sex, or who drink and carouse around, there'd be an improvement in things. Women could lead men anywhere if they'd just set about it. Instead of that, they hand over the reins to the men, and consent to *be led*."

"Could any woman lead *you* if she'd set about it?" she asked, in an exasperating tone.

Jim looked at her—half-doubtfully smiled—saw the expression on her face—then frowned heavily.

"I know the women are not used right," he said. "It's a shame, and I'd like to see things righted; but the women ought to show more spirit. They keep too still under their ill-treatment; they don't say a word about wrongs that men would raise the devil about. Women don't know their power. I can conceive of circumstances about

women that would lead me to fight, or——. But then there's another thing: women are just as apt to run after their worst enemies as they are to accept kindness from their best friends." His voice was hoarse and heavy, and his eyes fierce and defiant.

"We are helpless—we have no chance of knowing—we are simply the nation's children—or worse—and our credulity is as that of a child," sobbed Mary, as her face fell into her bridle-hand, and her tears stained the bright, brown leather. She could see no reason why Jim should scold her. No other man had ever dared to speak so to her.

"I know women are treated mean," he went on, with unsteady voice, almost unmanned by the tears he had evoked; "but why don't they git up, and raise thunder? Every woman has influence over *some* man, if she'd just use it. But she'll go on, listening to some dude's nonsense, when she knows very well he'd kick her into the gutter if she'd give him the ghost of a chance; and she'll shy clear off from some honest man that would take care of her and respect other women."

Mary vouchsafed no reply to this, and presently Jim continued:

"Now, as long as young men know that they can roll in the gutter, and mix in all kinds of dirt, and do all kind of mean things, and then turn round and be petted by the finest women, why they'll lots of 'em hunt meanness—that's all. But when they know they'll be kicked out of decent society for their cussedness, why, they'll quit it, and that quick, too."

"But who is to start this? There are not enough nice young men for all the nice girls, and some of them will have to do without gentlemen company; and I, for one, am honest enough to admit that it is natural for a girl to want a gentleman friend."

"Some of 'em might have to go without gentlemen friends for a while, but it wouldn't be for long. There isn't going to be any large number of women start off in any direction, no matter what it is, without some men followin' them. You see, when the women encourage these rakes, and forgive 'em all their cussedness, they're not givin' themselves a fair shake, and they're not givin' the young men that's tryin' to be decent a fair shake. Now, of course, if the women's wrongs are ever righted, the men have got to right 'em, 'cause they've got the votes and the power; but they're not

goin' to get a move on in that direction while the women take things so cool. If the women would keep ding-dongin' at 'em all the time, they'd wake up and do something."

"Custom and society have kept us down till we have no spirit," faltered Mary.

"Well, I've seen women that had plenty of spirit that used it all against their friends," said Jim, coolly.

Mary felt as if Jim was getting the best of things, and that the conversation might be more agreeable to her if changed, so she said, as graciously as possible:

"Mr. Madnau, I tried to get Mr. Hogan to tell me why they call Mr. Hammin 'Penobscot Bill,' and Mr. Ford 'Broncho Charlie.' He did not give me any satisfaction. Now, why do they call them those names?"

"Well, it's a sort of habit in a new country. There are nearly always a few toughs that have left the East and come out here that are either bad men or want people to think they are. Sometimes they don't want their names known, and if you ask 'em, they tell you some first name like Tom, or Bill, or Charlie, or something, and good fellers take the habit from them, and lots of times just give first names. Some peculiarity gets hitched on to that name, and when it gets there once, it stays. Now Charlie Ford is the best hand to break bronchos in the whole valley, and that's how he got his name. Bill Hammin came from some little town back in the States—I think it's this side the Mississippi somewhere, but I'm not sure. He used to talk so much about the place when he first struck camp, that the name froze to him, and he can't shake it off."

"And the Kid?"

"Well, we call him Kid because he *is* a kid and acts like one. He's only nineteen."

"I wish I was nineteen again," sighed Mary.

"You do? How old are you?" (without the least idea of impropriety).

"Twenty-one."

"Twenty-one? I'm twenty-eight, but I don't wish I was nineteen. I have not got through my life very well, but I've got over some rough roads safe, and if I had to go over 'em again I might not do so well as I have. There's some things in my present life that I'd lots rather see remedied than to go back over the past. If people would use the time that they put in kickin' about the past to improve the present, there'd be less bad past to kick about." Just then it

occurred to Jim that he had been rude. "But you needn't think I meant you," he said, quietly, as he noted her flashing eye. "I know that you can't have much to regret; that you never did anything to fret over. I was hittin' somebody else."

As Mary did not know what reply was best for this shot, she very wisely refrained from making any. They were riding slowly along now, close beside the rocky wall; she put out her hand and detached a small piece of rotten granite. She did this with the intention of beginning the science *rôle*, but her mind was so engrossed with the problem of human philosophy Jim had spread before her that she could not proceed. She looked dreamily at the rock a moment, then let it fall. As it left her hand, her eyes followed it; she caught sight of a silver spur, with bright, long rays, strapped to her escort's heel.

"O, your spurs! I never noticed them before!" she exclaimed.

Jim looked in the direction of his foot, but said nothing.

"I'd like to look at one of those some time, when you're not wearing it," she said eagerly. Jim took his rein in his right hand, drew up his left heel, stooped, and unfastened the spur, and gave it into his companion's hand.

"Oh! oh! Isn't it pretty? But then—isn't using a spur nearly as bad as some of the things the women do?"

"Oh, a spur is bad; I just wear 'em from habit. I've never abused a horse with 'em yet; but I saw those, and somehow I wanted 'em. They're the prettiest pair I ever saw. I give twelve dollars for 'em. Got 'em out in Nevada when I was only nineteen. I don't generally care for such gewgaws, but somehow I always liked *them*."

Mary returned the spur and Jim readjusted it upon his heel.

"There's another thing," she said. "That day I was out to the round-up camp nearly all the men carried revolvers. Why did they?"

"That's custom too. It started years ago when the cowmen had to protect themselves from the Indians. They wore revolvers to kill Indians then; and because they wore revolvers they got to killin' one another. Men don't kill one another unless they have some way of doin' it. It's got to be custom now for all cowmen to carry guns and they's lots of 'em gets into the pen on account of it. I've known good men go to the pen just because they happened to have a high temper and a gun. I used to think that I couldn't get along

at all if I didn't have a gun strapped on me, but one day there was a shootin' scrape in camp and one of the boys peppered the boss. Then I got to thinkin' it over. I knew I had a thunderin' temper and that if I kept on carryin' that gun that I was liable to git mad at some of the boys sometime, for they're always devilin' one another, and shoot him fore I thought what I was doin'. And a man don't need arms on the range, not one cowman in a thousand is goin' to pitch onto an unarmed man. So I traded my gun for a copy of Longfellow's poems, and a navajo blanket, and two new eucher decks that one of the boys had, and I've never carried a gun since."

"And did that man kill the boss, as you call him?"

"Course he killed him; made a regular lead mine of him."

"And what became of the man?"

"He lit out. Good thing for him he did too. And yet he wasn't a bad man, if he'd have let whiskey and guns alone."

"Well, do you enjoy being a cowboy?"

"O, that altogether hangs on how I'm situated. When I've got a cabin or some place to stop at I can call my own, like I've got now, it's well enough. It's a hard life even then, for a man that takes care of his stock right has to be out in all kinds of weather. But when I was in Nevada, out on the trail a good part of the time drivin' a lot of poor, foot-sore, slow cattle, through hot sun, rain, snow or whatever come, I tell you that was tough. When cow-punchin' is like that, it's the hardest life there is. I've read of fellers that thought it was all romance, and I always wished I had 'em out on trail a while in a snow storm with the cattle doin' their best to git out and hunt the brush. If they didn't know how to cuss, they'd mighty soon learn. They'd git romance enough to last 'em ten years in less'n ten hours. But the wages are pretty good and there's always men that's willin' to try what's new and venturesome. So the profession keeps full in spite of the men it kills off."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Well, if men aren't strong the exposure gets away with 'em. Then all cowmen have to break bronchos once in a while, so as to keep up their string of saddle nags, and that's hard on 'em. Shakes 'em up so they get to bleedin' at the lungs; and if they keep up tacklin' bronchos long enough, they're gone. Breakin' bronchos is more fun for the ones that look on than it is for the man in the saddle. We leave

the creek here and won't skirt it again for two miles. Want a drink?"

"Yes, please."

It was some consolation to make this man wait upon her anyhow. This time she drank from the hat brim without a word. They were out of the cañon and upon an open park. There was here better opportunity for riding abreast, and the party gathered into two groups, with the Kid between as connecting link. The conversation became general and Mary and Jim were alone together no more that evening.

CHAPTER X.

S'TILL STRANGER EVENTS.

MARY's school improved under her careful and spirited management; the bright, ambitious, gladsome faces that met her every morning were to her an inspiration and a cheer. Each little life represented to her power for good or ill, for happiness or for infinite suffering. The little that she could do to temper the strong, to encourage the timid, to strengthen the weak among her little band, she did. She was getting quite well acquainted with Jim Madnau; she still resolved to punish him, but had decided in her own mind to make the punishment less severe than she had at first intended. She was using the book lore plan now, but it seemed less successful than formerly. Jim was quite willing to listen, but he was not satisfied with what she related. He thirsted for knowledge. His opportunities had been poor, and now that he had an opportunity he resolved to make the most of it. So on the evening when Mary began to talk star, Jim proposed to go out and see where all these wonders were located. So Mary and Mrs. Hogan donned cloaks and hoods and the gentlemen put on their hats, and all went out into the night. There was no moon; only frost and chill and starlight. Mary pointed out and explained, and Jim became enthusiastic; he had her recite Newton's law several times for fear he might forget part of it, and tell over again the number of moons each planet displayed. He asked questions until the confident student began to fear for her ability to answer. He went on until the Hogans succumbed to the chill and entered

the house. He did not notice their absence, but went on until Mary was so chilled that she was obliged to complain.

"Well, I declare, I ought to have thought of that," he said, "but I never hardly get cold. I'd forgotten about you being sickly. But you see I never had much chance, and it's not often I see people that know much about such things. Let's go right in."

And Jim, awakened to the fact that he had neglected a young lady's comfort, became so officious in his attentions that Mr. Hogan slyly winked at his wife. He drew a chair to the stove for her and put three sticks of piñon in the stove, one of which he soon after had to seize with the tongs and carry out of doors to keep the chimney from burning out and setting the house on fire.

"Now the next time I keep you standing in the cold telling me a lot of stuff I don't particular need to know, you just light out and leave me. I didn't think I was such a yahoo," he said savagely.

Mary sat by the fire and silently concluded that her previous methods were all lost here. Her former lovers had listened gracefully and let her conclude when she chose. They had noticed her, rather than what she was saying, and had not kept her out in the cold talking nebular hypothesis until her fingers were numb and her nose frigid. She feared new plans must be evolved; if not, the hunter might possibly become the game, and the chase be finished from an opposite direction from the one it had taken at the start.

She continued to meet Stanley quite as often as she did Jim. He occasionally came over in the evening and talked with her until nine. He happened into the school-house at noon on two occasions, and remained until time to call the school to order. He brought her a novel which he recommended very highly; and his widowed mother came over to pay Mrs. Hogan a very friendly visit and lend her a new cook-book. Mr. Hogan continued to advocate Jim's cause, but was less warlike than usual toward Stanley. Mary's cheeks were of a warmer hue when Jim called; Mr. Hogan noted this fact and was wise enough to be content with the prospect.

One evening when the two were alone together, Mary asked the old lady:

"Did you ever see any of Mr. Madnau's family, Mrs. Hogan?"

"No, I never did. He's an orphan. His father was killed

in the war. His mother died when he was about eighteen. He says she was a good woman and told him when she was dying that she wanted him to do his best to be a good man. He says she was sickly, and he had to work to help support her and himself as long ago as he can remember."

"It's been a long time since he's had any one to care for him, then," said Mary after a little pause.

"It has, that. I'd be glad if Jim could get some one in his house to cheer him up a little. You see Joshua and me feels like Jim kind o' belonged to us, and we'd like to see him do well."

Mary did not pursue the subject. During the next few days she wondered if, after all, she had not better undertake the missionary work herself. She began to enjoy Jim's visits very much indeed. It was such delicate flattery for a man to talk to her as if he thought her his equal or even more. She began to like the way in which he asked her for historical dates and facts. It might not be so bad to be Jim's cyclopedia after all. He would consult her constantly and with confidence; and the cyclopedia in turn would have the consolation of knowing it was owned, consulted and guarded by some one who was able to appreciate it, and even make marginal notes of additional knowledge on many subjects. But it was not until she had on several occasions found herself staring vacantly at Stanley when he was visiting her, without the least idea as to what he had been saying, save that it ended in a question that required some sort of answer, that she saw that her peace of mind was gone. On one of these occasions she straightened herself valiantly in her chair and said:

"Mr. Lancaster, I have taken a severe cold" (this was true), "which has settled in my head. Please repeat your question," and Stanley had repeated his question and finished off with his little laugh. Mary answered him and then set about listening and entertaining as a lady should, in spite of the bronzed face and piercing blue eyes that danced before her in mid-air. She wondered why Stanley's face looked so meaningless and his laugh sounded so empty. And on the evening when she expected Jim, she started at the slightest sound and became white and weak if time crept on without bringing him. She became eager to hear him talked of, and fond of walking where she would not be overheard and drawing out the syllables of his name. And once when Mrs. Hogan had asked her if she would be home from

school early, she had turned, stared vacantly at her and begun to utter that name. Then she had checked herself and looked wildly about her, as if she had been sleep-walking and was just awaking. A dozen times she found herself about to pronounce those forbidden syllables to her spelling class. She walked in fear lest she would at some unlucky moment betray herself. And yet, like thousands of the sickest people, she utterly refused to call her disease by its right name.

On a splendid November Saturday she went up to her school-house soon after dinner to get a book she had forgotten. When she returned she found Miss Amy Chellis in the sitting-room. When Mrs. Hogan introduced the two ladies, Miss Chellis became at once confidential and friendly in the highest degree. Mary was so much surprised at the turn affairs had taken that for some moments she despaired of regaining her self-possession. But when she had done so she fell in love with her bewitching caller at once and more than forgave the fancied slight she had received at the Chase's ball.

"Do you know, Miss Fleming, I've been wanting to get acquainted with you ever since you came on the creek; but it just happened so I never could;" said Amy, lifting a beautiful, wax-like finger.

"And I have wanted to meet you, too."

"And why did you stay away from Sunday-school a few Sundays back, and leave your poor class in the lurch?"

"Oh, a little party of us went up to Dead Man's Cave."

"O, yes; and you went with Mr. Jim Madnau of course. By the way, that's a shame, now. Here all the girls in the neighborhood have been breaking their hearts for him and you just step in and take him away from us all." And Amy made a mock show of weeping.

Mary was so conquered by her visitor's sprightliness and vivacity that for the time even the image of Jim Madnau fled. Her ready credulity came forward, and she worshipped the soft, peachy face, the blue, bird-like eyes, the spun gold hair and voluptuous form, until she could well-nigh have taken her heart out of her bosom and given it to her guest. And her head swam as she listened to the delicate flattery and nicely turned compliments, too skilfully bestowed to give offence to the most discerning. Amy was an old pupil in society's school and had learned her lesson well. The girls talked and giggled for full two hours; then Amy noted

the shades of evening gathering and declared she must go. But Mary must go a part of the way with her—it was so lonely in the phaeton for but one. Of course Mary would go. She feverishly donned hat and cloak and stepped into the phaeton.

Of course the turning of a youthful head by the flattery of wealth and popularity is so unusual an occurrence that some comment is advisable. Mary, in the circle of her relatives had been treated as an inferior. Her Uncle Bluecut's family held their heads high and as continually looked out for opportunities to crush Mary if she made any attempts at a similar venture. They had jealously watched for opportunities to injure her standing in good society. The attention then of youth, beauty, wealth, social-standing and general popularity might easily turn such a head. And Mary's peculiar training had not left her sufficient self-control to accept this state of affairs with calmness. She was nervous and flurried, and showed plainly by her disturbed manner that she was unused to the caresses of society's loftiest stratum.

The phaeton sped down the road for a distance of a mile before Mary spoke of returning home. Then she spoke decidedly. The shadows were rapidly darkening.

"Well, I'll let you go, but I'm coming after you in the morning to come and spend the day with me," said Amy.

"Oh! Oh! But—" began Mary.

"It's no use to begin that now. I intend we shall get well acquainted and have some good times together. You've nothing to keep you up there alone all day."

"Well, then—"

"Of course, you'll come. I'll be there by half-past nine. Well, if you *must* go, good-night," and she gave Mary a kiss, warm and affectionate. Mary had never liked the custom of women kissing each other—it seemed vulgar and deceitful to her; but her feelings now underwent a change. What was that kiss, save love and friendship and protection? She leaped out of the phaeton and hurried back up the fast darkening road.

She had gone but a little way when she heard the sharp click of hoofs and a voice in angry protest or command. Some drunken rough perhaps, and she here alone in the darkness! She looked about her. The road was skirted on the north by the fence of Mr. Hogan's pasture; on the south it lay open as far as the steep banks of Frelawna; al-

ready chilled by the rapidly lowering temperature of night, she began to tremble. She was no coward, but she knew the wisdom of avoiding a night-meeting with a drunken rowdy. She crept under the fence and hid behind a clump of black currant-bushes. The horse and rider were rapidly advancing. The horse was foam-marked, rearing and plunging. She would leap forward a few paces, then pause abruptly, jump backward, run sideways, then stand on her hind feet with her fore feet in air. With a wild start Mary recognized the rider's voice. He was Jim Madnau, and this was Kate in the full enjoyment of one of her "spells."

"Go on, you blanked old hag!" requested Jim, as he struck her with his spur. Kate leaped up, turned round in mid-air, gave her hind heels a furious perpetual motion display and alighted upon the same ground she had previously occupied, but with her head in the opposite direction from the one it had had when she arose. Jim's hat flew off and sailed over in the direction of the currant-bushes, where it at last found rest. Kate chewed her bit a moment, then raised on her hind feet, took a long breath and leaped forward in the direction of Milroy City. Having satisfied her desire to travel in that direction, she made a side run of about forty yards towards the creek, then just in time to save herself and rider from the precipice she turned and made another side run for the fence.

"I'll stave your ribs in!" shrieked Jim.

Kate gave a furious snort, executed another aerial turn, ran furiously down the road for some distance, turned sharp enough to crack the saddle strings almost as if they had been whip lashes, then slowed her movements, gave a long satisfied snort, and quieted, every muscle trembling, eyes flashing and nostrils flaming. Jim seemed to understand these signs.

"So then, you've come round, you old minx," he said. "Why couldn't you have behaved yourself in the first place, and saved all this racket, hey? Now I've got to get down and hunt up that blanked hat."

Mary had long ere this reached through the fence and secured the hat. Jim looked valiantly round for it, but of course it was not to be found.

"Well, I'll have to let the cussed thing go till morning," he muttered. Then he went back to Kate, who had been standing unsecured in obedience to his order all this time, and began to adjust the saddle. "Why, your shoulder's

bleeding!" he exclaimed. "Confound you, and me too. Durn any such a team of hard-headed fools! You old hussy, you! Blank a durned spur, anyhow. Somebody ought to use 'em on *me* awhile. I'll put the cussed things where they won't be the cause of me making such a fool of myself again for awhile; stand here now, Kate." He stooped and unbuckled the spurs, drew them off and strapped them together. He then walked to the steep bank of the creek, under which, just there, lay a deep pool, and raised his spurs in the air. There was a sound as of the breaking of thin ice, and then Jim came back to Kate, patted her neck and leaped into the saddle. Mary did not wait for him to leave the creek bank. She heard the ice break, and then she started and ran up the field inside the fence until she was far in advance of him. Then she crawled through the fence into the road. The full moon was rising and sending long beams of light into the valley. All her fear was gone, but the episode she had just witnessed left struggling within her a variety of emotions. She was so nervous as to be almost hysterical; the ridiculous and the pathetic sides of the scene were so closely allied that laughter and tears battled for the control of her face. But as she heard Jim approaching, the ridiculous side gained the victory, and she could scarcely stifle an audible laugh. She walked at the side of the road in the shadow of the undergrowth, and when Jim came alongside, she said:

"Good evening, Mr. Madnau."

Jim started nervously.

"Why, where did you come from?" he asked, as he recognized her voice.

Mary explained that she was going home after a short ride with Miss Chellis.

"Well, here," he said, as he dismounted; "won't you ride Kate the rest of the way?"

"No, thank you, I'll walk along."

"But she won't hurt you. She has been raising thunder a little this evening, but she's all right now. I know her like a book."

"Well, if you'll vouch for her, I'll mount." Jim threw over the opposite stirrup and lifted her into the saddle.

"Now you must lend me your spurs, Mr. Madnau. If I ride a cowboy saddle, I must have cowboy spurs," she said.

"My spurs? Well—I haven't got 'em with me to-night."

"Why—have you lost them?"

"Well, I suppose I may as well out with it. Kate got to buckin' and raisin' the mischief back yonder a ways, and I was mad, and I cut her shoulder with 'em. Then I saw what a fool I'd been, and I threw 'em away."

"Well, don't tell any one just where you threw them, Mr. Madnau."

"Why?"

"Because I don't want my schoolboys to leave school to drag the bed of Trelawna for silver."

"Oh!—um!"

"And here's a present for you." She drew from beneath her jacket a soft gray roll which, shook out, proved to be a sombrero. In reaching for the hat, Jim showed his face to the moonlight; it was white and agitated. He walked on in silence a few moments, then said unsteadily:

"I've got a devil of a temper."

"So have I," said Mary, in so much agitation that she failed to recognize the fact that she was indorsing very questionable language. The only other words spoken during this journey were when after Jim had lifted her from the saddle at the Hogan gate, they gave each other an agitated good-night.

When Mary went into the house, the Hogans were at supper. Mary took her place, apologizing roundly for her tardiness.

"I reckon you've had a good time, Mary," said Mr. Hogan.

"O, just splendid!"

"Smart girl."

"Yes, indeed. I never met any one I liked better."

"Mary," said the old gentleman, looking cautiously round the room as if searching for eavesdroppers; "don't you let Amy get away with you."

"Why, what do you mean by that?"

"I mean jest what I say. Amy likes Jim pretty well herself, and she likes his money better. And it just occurred to me this evenin', when Harriet told me she'd been here, that maybe she wouldn't a made this call if it hadn't been you and Jim was keepin' company."

"Oh, Mr. Hogan! She's the last girl——"

"Yes, yes, Mary, I know. But don't mention what I've said to nobody. Jest hold on to Jim, and don't let anybody get in ahead of you."

"But what if I don't want Jim?"

"Well, you'd better want him. You stand a mighty sight of chances of doin' worse."

Mary changed the subject, but she felt a little harsh all evening toward Mr. Hogan for hinting that Amy might bear watching.

After the supper dishes were washed, she asked Mr. Hogan as they all sat in the sitting-room:

"Mr. Hogan, do you consider a bad temper a very bad indication in a man?"

"That all depends, gal," answered the old man. "When I see a child exhibiting bad temper, I say to myself that that child needs training. It's likely to git to be a great and good person that'll do lots for humanity if it's trained right. Bad temper gen'lly shows itself in anger at what we consider the trampin' of somebody on our rights; you can't well git the temper out of a child, so the best way is to train and direct it. If a child is taught to git jest as mad at an injury to another person as he would if the injury was done to himself, why, the more temper he has the better. He'll raise a racket then, and like as not, start a reform. In my experience I've found that the best and the worst people was both well supplied with temper; but that the best ones got maddest at other folks' wrongs, while the worst raised thunder about some little injury to theirselves that was mighty often too small to be seen by the naked eye."

"But how is it when a man you think highly of gets angry—and—shamefully whips his dog—or horse—or something?"

"Well, any man that's got temper is apt to let it git the start of him once in a while. That's bad. But we ain't none of us perfect. Now, there's Jim. He ain't a bit quick to fight on his own account, but they's some things he'll go off like a self-cockin' revolver about. I've seen Jim git mad at some feller that was abusin' some durned critter without cause, and you'd think a volcano had broke loose somewhere in the hills. But the maddest I ever saw Jim git was once when some fellers on the crick got a poor hired gal into trouble and then went round makin' fun of her. Jim told 'em he considered the girl worth more to humanity in three minutes than they was in three centuries, and that raised trouble. Jim got into three fights over that, and licked his man every time."

"And how is Jim—about such women, anyhow?" she asked, nervously.

"Why, he stays clear away from 'em. But if any one goes to abusin' 'em in his hearin', he tells 'em either to prove

their innocence or shut up. All the time that dance-house was in Milroy, Jim never went near it. But lots of the other young men on the crick was there at some time or other. Some of 'em went to look on and see the others dance, and some went to hunt for some other feller; they all had an excuse, and they all got the name of runnin' to the dance-house. But Jim was never seen there. You see men are so fond of tellin' on each other for bein' at such places that if Jim had ever been there, it would a come out."

"But might not a good man go to such a place to try to save the inmates, Mr. Hogan?"

"Yes, I think he might. But if he didn't want his reputation injured, he ought to be a married man, and take his wife along, and select his time nicely, and then he ought to be an evangelist. Jim ain't a married man, and I never had him pointed out to me for an evangelist. I think Jim has jest about the right proportion of flesh and blood to know that he's safer away from sech places. It's all right enough for a good man to go to sech a place for purposes of salvation—there's room for lots more of 'em to go than do—but then, gal, if *no* men ever went there, there'd be no sech dens, and no need for salvation fer their inmates."

"And does Jim ever drink?"

"No, he don't. He's got too durned much sense to work like a slave, and then go and give his money to a s'loon keeper, that's too lazy to work, and too cowardly to steal, and too big feelin' to beg. If he was a drinkin' man, some s'loon keeper would a had all that property, and Jim would a had snakes in his boots, pervised he'd been lucky enough to have any boots at all."

"And so you seem to think Jim almost perfection?" she asked, with a laugh.

"O, he ain't perfect. He gets mad sometimes, and when he does, he cusses. I've tried to reason Jim out of cussin', but he always says that I cuss a little too; but then that's only when I ain't watchin'. Then he declares he's got a natural passion for bettin' on horse-races, if he'd only let it loose. But he don't drink, nor smoke, nor chaw, nor run with bad women; so I think, gal, you'd better kinder look over the cussin', as long as he don't overdo things—Jim don't cuss as bad as some, though I *have* heard him do up a pretty good job once or twice—and kinder try and kiss the bettin' fever out of him."

"Mr. Hogan!" exclaimed Mary.

"O, you needn't go to performin' that way, gal. I'm about three times as old as you are, and about four times as ugly, and that's why I think my judgment is about seven times better nor yourn. Three and four is seven, you know. I think that when you're all safely married to Jim that you'll thank me for these little suggestions. You're kinder sickly, and Jim's mighty able to take care of you."

"But you wouldn't have me marry him for that reason alone, Mr. Hogan?"

"If you marry Jim, it won't be for that reason alone. I've been watchin' things drift fer some time. Jim ain't slidin' towards you, while you're standin' stock still. You're movin' too."

Mary colored deeply, but could not repress a smile. We do not so much mind being taken at a disadvantage, if the work is skillfully done. She stood watching the pleasant old lady knitting, until a new thought struck her. Then she took a chair, and said:

"Mr. Hogan, why have you quit making light of Mr. Lancaster?"

"Didn't want to waste my ammunition, gal. I know'd you was safe from Stan Lancaster long 'fore you did. Whenever a gal is talkin' to a feller with her eyes and thoughts on some one else, and yawns when he jest barely gets outside the door, 'stead of lookin' like everything of interest to her was jest swallered up in an earthquake, she's mighty safe. I didn't care fer Stan comin' here, 'cause soon as I saw he wasn't goin' to bag the game I thort I'd kinder enjoy his disapp'intment. You see Stan makes his brags that he's left a good many gals sore-hearted. If it's so, I've kinder got my opinion as to how much sense they had; but nevertheless, I don't mind seein' him punished fer blowin'."

The subject was allowed to drop. Mary was in such high anticipation of to-morrow's joys, that her sleep was imperfect, and troubled with dreams. She was dressed and waiting long before the appointed time for Amy to appear.

CHAPTER XI.

SO MANY RIATAS ARE THROWN.

MARY found the Chellis mansion commodious in size and elegant in furnishings. The great parlor, with its heavy velvet carpet that deadened her footfalls, was filled with the most elegant upholstered contrivances for the encouragement of indolence and ease. A splendid concert piano stood open. At the windows the light came in softly, mellowed by passing through softest lace. Rugs, bearing woven images of couchant tiger, rampant lion and contemplative leopard, lay about the room. Two marble-topped tables supported heavy plush albums of rare portraits and views. On the walls in heavy gilt frames were displayed fine paintings of some of the world's rarest scenery.

As Mary sank into a scarlet plush chair she sighed. How cheap and crude she felt—much as a wildwood rose might have felt in that silver vase on the centre table beside that big pink creation of a hundred fragrant petals. Even in her old native town she had seldom sat down amid such splendor. And could Jim Madnau turn from that girl in the blue silk yonder, nestled amid all this splendor, to seek *her*, in the Hogan's plainly furnished, rag-carpeted sitting-room? She gazed at her companion in stupid wonder. The air in the room was hot and stifling; her head swam.

"How well that old chair sets off your complexion, Mary," chirped Amy.

"*Old chair?*" echoed Mary.

"Why yes. I've been wanting papa to get some new parlor furniture. But it was the color I referred to—it makes you look so charming."

"New furniture," silently mused Mary. "Is she reading my thoughts, and trying to prove to me my unfitness for Jim? My inequality in the fight? Does she want to show me that that which astonishes me is old and crude to her?"

Well, I admit my inferiority, and if she *is* determined to have Jim, I give up the fight."

It seemed so much harder to get up a subject of conversation than it was yesterday. They had talked so much about the gentlemen yesterday. Presently Mary began to talk literature, and here, at least, she soon became confident of superiority. Amy had read much, but her list included nothing that required effort. She had read but few of the books with which Mary was familiar. They compared lists of authors and works for some time, finding but little that both had read, and consequently being able to discuss but little. They next tried music with no better success. Amy played little and badly. Mary had some natural talent, but she had had but little teaching, and was out of practice.

"Don't you like music?" asked Mary.

"No; not very well. Practicing is too much work," said Amy, with a toss of the head.

"O, I wish I had an instrument to practice on; I wouldn't think of getting tired."

"Yes, I believe you would, Mary. People get tired of the things they have, and want the things they haven't. But how do you manage to live out your days with that prosy old couple up there?"

"O, Amy! you're mistaken; they're not prosy. Mrs. Hogan is just as kind as any mother could be, and Mr. Hogan is very entertaining. He is a great talker, and is quite original and philosophic."

"And then you are helped out by the frequent calls of Mr. Madnau and Mr. Lancaster," said Amy, clapping her little hands together, and laughing.

"O, they don't come very often."

"I'd like Jim better if he wasn't so deceitful," ventured Amy.

"Deceitful? Why I thought him provokingly honest," said Mary.

"Oh, that's just one of his tricks. That's the way he throws people off their guard. He wants people to think he's above such foolishness as love and things of that sort. He don't say much, but he has a lot of cute tricks that make a girl think he's dying for her. Now Stanley is the honest one. He comes out and commits himself—says something. And he's so handsome and agreeable, too."

Mary felt the air grow hotter and more stifling. The perfume of the big pink rose sickened her. There was a deadly

sinking at her heart. She looked helplessly up at Amy, as a child might when it recognizes your power and begs you to spare its toy.

"I'm—half—sick—to-day," she gasped, as the color fled from her face. How she hated her unsteady nerves, and mourned her haphazard training.

"Are you?" said Amy, hurriedly. "I'll call mamma." She ran out into the wide, cold hall, leaving the door open behind her, and thus flooding the room with cooler air. Mary stood up resolutely. Did *all* women—all the thousands of women that crowd earth—have to suffer this, perhaps only to be disappointed at last?

Amy came in, bringing with her a woman of about five feet four inches in height, rather stoutly built, youthful-looking, and handsome. Her face was particularly pleasant, and her carriage stately. She wore a handsome costume of black silk, with a scarf of rich silk lace at her neck. Amy introduced her as her mother.

"I'm sorry to have troubled you," said Mary. "Amy ran off after you before I had time to tell her not to. I feel better now; it was only a moment's faintness. I have had such spells before; I always get over them in a few minutes."

Mrs. Chellis was overwhelming in her friendliness. When she found that Mary really would *not* be put to bed, or have her feet put in hot water, or have a glass of wine, or a cup of tea, she sat down and entered into a friendly conversation with her. She had thought of her so often, out here alone, away from her people. Was she an orphan? O, dear, that was too bad. And she must be so careful. People are so deceitful and so unkind to strangers. She must watch people, and not let herself be imposed upon and deceived. She felt that a lone young woman ought to trust to the judgment of some well-judging older person concerning the friendships she formed. Then she fell to talking of the school, and telling Mary how well she heard she was doing. Mary was completely won. The woman's voice and manner were so cordial and hearty. She left them presently, and soon after dinner was announced. Mary was led through the hall, and then into a sitting-room almost as gorgeous as the parlor. Here she was introduced to Colonel Chellis and the Rev. Mr. Pander, of Milroy City. At dinner she was placed very near the latter gentleman. He engineered the conversation, and forwarded the opinion that the world was leaving its original sinless and happy state, and rushing without any delay to

perdition. Mary, ill-starred creature that she was, in answer to a question from the good man, replied that though things were very, very bad, according to history they were improving. Mr. Pander therefore opened a terrific fire upon her unprotected head that made her regret, so far as it left her able to regret anything, that she had ever harbored such a thing as an opinion. He quoted authors with D. D.'s, and LL. D.'s, and M. A.'s, and B. A.'s to their names, until the mass of roast turkey and mashed potatoes Colonel Chellis had heaped upon her plate seemed a mountain of formidable titles and dire facts. He kept on proving her down long after she had withdrawn her eyes from his face. She took up her fork, mentally praying that learned people would learn to temper their erudite breezes to the shorn lambs of society, but her unsteady fingers would not retain their grasp. Mr. Pander concluded with a long flourish concerning Perpetua, Calvin, and Arnold of Brescia, and as he rounded off the last long sentence, letting his voice fall with a strong, rising inflection, Mary's fork fell to the floor. She blessed the soft carpet that broke the sound of its fall, and with flaming face stooped and recovered it. But if the turkey had been roast-hawk, and the candied peaches and Bavarian cream had been sawdust immersed in melted lead, she could scarce have enjoyed her dinner less.

Amy was wiser. She either appeared to agree or kept silent, and so ate her dinner in peace.

Mary could have sunk on her knees, so thankful was she to find herself once more in the parlor, away from the glaring silver, the glittering glass, the uneatable food, and the incorrigible Mr. Pander.

"Is Mr. Pander a relative of yours?" she asked Amy.

"No; and I'm glad he isn't. But when papa's cough gets a little worse he always has him out here to stay awhile. That's why we live out here," she went on, softening her tone a little; "it's on account of papa's health. We used to live in the city, where there was something to hear and see. My married sister lives there now, and she's always writing about how much she gets to go about."

"Why don't you live in Milroy? It's not a large place, but it wouldn't be so lonesome as the country."

"O, the doctors wouldn't let papa live in town at all. They said he must live out in the country, and take long walks or horseback rides every day. I visit Amelia sometimes; but papa is so selfish, he wants me to stay here most

of the time. It's nearly time to start for Sunday-school. I'll have to go up to my room for some powder. Do you want some?"

"I never use it."

"Well, I do. You can look at those views while I'm gone."

During the absence of Amy, Mrs. Chellis slipped into the parlor and had another little talk with Mary, detailing to her her sad trials with hired girls and hired men. They had in this western country such a way of setting themselves up as equals to their employers; and girls were so scarce; and when you got a good one, she was so apt to overlook your interests, and marry the hired man and set up for herself. The whole programme was so annoying, that unless a woman was able to do her own work, she was positively foolish to marry and undertake to keep house. She would hate to see Amy marry, just on that account.

Amy here appeared in cloak and bonnet. Mary donned her wraps, and arranged her hair at the large mirror in the hall. The girls entered the phaeton and drove off. The two gentlemen were walking ahead of them. Mrs. Chellis seldom attended the Sunday-school, because of the necessity of overseeing her household arrangements. The girls soon passed the gentlemen, and in a short time arrived at the church. Mary, although the day had not been as pleasant as she had expected it would be, was quite willing that the crowd should know she came with Amy Chellis.

After services were over, the two girls threaded their way out through the crowd of gentlemen who had managed to get out of the door first, and who waited to see a man, or Tom Jones, or Bill Smith, or somebody. Of course it was not the girls they wanted to see. Talk about truthful people! Love and deceit are quite as inseparable as early frosts and blues.

Jim and Stanley were among the individuals who had to see a man. There must have been a crowd between them and the man they wanted to see, because the girls got into the phaeton without assistance, and drove away. Mary could not resist an impulse to look back. The two young men were in their saddles, following at a brisk pace. Mary stated this fact to Amy, and the latter began to check the speed of her horse.

"What are you slowing him for?" asked Mary.

"Why, if they want to catch up, it's a shame not to let them," answered Amy.

They were alongside in a moment, Jim upon Mary's side of the vehicle.

"Out sunning yourselves, ladies?" asked Stanley, after the greetings had been passed.

"Yes," answered Amy; "I suppose you might call it that. Ladies have to go out sunning themselves alone, nowadays, if they go at all," she added, laughingly, shaking her whip, first at one, then at the other.

"I'm sure, then, that they are themselves to blame," retorted Stanley.

"The idea!" she said, with a mischievous little laugh. "Now, there are you two gentlemen on horseback, and we two girls in the phaeton, and neither of you have the courage to advise any alteration in the crowd. That looks like we were to blame."

"We do advise an alteration, to be sure," said Stanley.

"Of course, of course," said Jim. "Here, Stan, your horse is *very* gentle; Miss Fleming likes to ride horseback."

"O, Mary, it is the very horse Mr. Madnau is riding now that you ride so much, isn't it? You said you liked her so much," said Amy.

It is jealousy that first tells us of the birth of love. Mary did not want to hear Stanley's little compliments and tiresome little laugh; but what she dreaded most was seeing Jim in the phaeton with Amy. Hadn't Amy enough blessings without Jim Madnau? She made a feeble effort to keep things as they were.

"But I'm afraid I'll tumble off that saddle, though," she said.

"Why, Mary, you contrary little witch, you! Why, you told me just this morning that you rode Mr. Madnau's saddle the day you were out at the round-up camp. Come now, be good; and don't spoil all the fun."

"But I haven't any riding dress."

"Oh; is that all? Well I can remedy that. Here is the summer lap robe under the seat. I can pin this round you and just make you look splendid. Stand up now, like the good little school-marm you are." Amy adjusted the robe, tying the fringe together until she had produced a *very* fair semblance of a skirt. Amy declared that Mary looked charming, and that she herself would ride Mr. Madnau's horse if there was any possibility whatever of her being able to ride a man's saddle. Mary stood, the object of observance on the part of the church people who kept passing

them, her cheeks red with mortification and anger at being out-generalized in this fashion. Jim dismounted and lifted her into his saddle without a word. She looked down into his eyes as he placed her foot in the stirrup—what was it she saw there? Alas! what was it he saw in her own that made him start and color? Whatever it was dropped down upon his shoulder, a little bead. Then filled with self-contempt, she threw back her head and resolutely gathered up her reins. The phaeton flew on in front and Stanley was at her side. She got on but poorly with him at first, but the thought of her revelation to Jim nerved her to effort and she, for the first time in life, flirted intentionally and desperately. She smiled and bent her head when he spoke. She laughed gayly at his stupid nonsense; she leaned over and patted his horse's neck and called him a pretty jewel. A woman is never so brilliant and fascinating, never so lovely and lovable, as when she is in love. Love has opened every channel of charm and caused her to bring all her forgotten and neglected resources to bear. She recognizes the value of the game she hunts and is armed for a desperate chase, even though society demand that that chase be hidden from the eyes of all. She can fight alone by stratagem, and stratagem she consequently studies. But her love she can no more conceal than the rose can conceal its color; thus she attracts to her all things in search of love. And Stanley, noting Mary's glowing, feverish face, all unable to see that its color was jealousy and love for the man in advance of them, took the plainly visible fire to be burning for himself. They passed the phaeton, waving their hands to the inmates, but paused at the junction of the branch with the main road for Jim and Amy to overtake them again. When the phæton was beside them Mary said decidedly as she rose in the saddle and slipped off the improvised skirt:

"Here is your lap robe, Amy; I'm much obliged to you for it. And Mr. Madnau, what shall I do with your horse? I'm going home, now."

"O, now, Mary, hush!" began Amy. "I'm not going to let you go, yet. You're going to spend the evening with me."

But Mary was determined to end the wretched day. Of course Amy was not to blame, but the misery had lasted long enough.

"Yes, indeed, I must go; Mrs. Hogan does not like to have me get home late," she said firmly.

Jim had opened his lips to speak, but he was too slow. Amy spoke quickly: "Well then, if Mary *will* go, and there's no holding her back, can't you take care of the horse, Mr. Lancaster?"

"I certainly can, Miss Chellis," said Stanley.

"And don't you two folks be so happy together that you'll forget all about poor us;" she called after them.

Mary struck up a song Stanley had taught her; he joined in the long rollicking chorus that echoed musically through the evening air. When they arrived at the Hogan gate, neither man nor vehicle was in sight save the phaeton, now a mere black speck in the east-bound road. Stanley lifted her out of the saddle and placed her upon her feet. Instinctively her eyes turned to follow the vanishing vehicle. It was an unlucky moment for her; Stanley, encouraged by her warmth of the afternoon, clasped her hand tightly, threw an arm round her, and bent over her face with intent not to be mistaken. Goaded to the utmost by the miseries of the day, she now became a firebrand. She struck wildly at him with the hand that was free, and in burning and uncontrollable anger stormed out volumes of defiance and hate, not knowing herself the full significance of her incoherent anathemas; for reason had for the moment fled, leaving only the mad defeated cohorts of passion in command. Stanley freed her and tried to apologize. She answered with such bitter defiance that he almost lost hope. But he was accustomed to women as a class and confident of conciliating even so unusual a specimen. He kept on apologizing and giving his affection as an excuse. She made no answer to the tender of love, but presently agreed to allow their friendship to go on. Then she went into the house. Happy at finding the sitting-room deserted, she ran into her little bedroom. It was cold in there, but it was a refuge while she calmed her nerves. She took up the little diary and read therein of her bygone favor for Stanley. "It was the ripple that preceded the earthquake wave," she muttered. Then she tried to write, but the pencil did not move. "There are no words," she muttered, "none; there is only dumb anguish that all the language of earth cannot portray. Love requires no conditions; it is fate; it comes to us undesired and leaves us vanquished and lost. It is a cyclone that enwraps and wrecks us against our will. She, who has everything, has won; and I, who have nothing, have lost."

And yet she had made up her mind, she would show her wound to the least possible extent. She would join the thousands who protest they have not loved and lost—the thousands whose words are gilded closet-doors that shut grinning skeletons away from view. Happy is the fox who can bring himself to believe in the acidity of the fruit that hangs hopelessly out of his reach.

CHAPTER XII.

THAT THEY BECOME TANGLED.

MARY, in quick and heavy despair, gave up the fight as lost. The enemy was too well entrenched; resistance is useful only when hopeful. She was conscious of nothing save a dull ache in her heart and a feverish longing for change of scene. She moved about the house mechanically, and in the morning was glad of the routine of school work that would employ her. She allowed no thought of the future to break upon her; she had enough to do, to battle with the agony of the present.

In the evening after school was over she sat at the sitting-room window, staring stupidly out into the road, when she saw what drove every particle of color out of her face, and took away even the poor power to cry out in her pain. Her head just dropped upon the sill, as with dazed eyes she looked upon the death parade of her hopes. Jim and Amy, the former in faultless black, the latter elegant in black velvet riding habit, were cantering down the road. They had been up the creek somewhere, perhaps visiting the agate beds or the cave. Mary was alone in the sitting-room. She must act. Quiet was impossible. The reaction came on, and where was blanched, death-like cheek, was now the hectic blush of frenzy. She rose and steadied herself with her hand on the back of a chair, as the return of her cough shook her form. "It is killing me," she muttered.

As soon as the pair had passed some little distance, she fled into the road and nervously walked up and down, her hands spasmodically clenching each other. The sun had set and the bitter cold of night was succeeding the pleasant, sunny temperature of day, but still she hurried on, walking up and down as if running from some pursuing fate. If Amy loved

him like this, was it not charity to be glad she had won the object of her devotion? No, no, love is selfish—she could only hate the one who cheated her. She could marry her loved one if all other women died. And yet she could not doubt Amy's friendship. Amy believed that *she* loved Stanley. Well, well; her school would be out in a week and then she would fly; no matter where, just so that it was out of sight and hearing of Jim Madnau. She saw, far away in the gathering shadows of the east, an approaching horseman; it was he, returning; she fled into the house.

The next evening she heard Mr. Hogan say that Jim had gone to Milroy City that morning and been caught on a jury; probably he would not be home for a week. Mary was thankful for that; she could teach her last week through without seeing him, and perhaps get out of the neighborhood before he returned. The next Sunday would be Christmas day. She had lost three days, when her cough was at its worst, and would make these up during the holiday week. She would get ready for her journey during the latter part of the week and start on the following Monday. Where would she go? Away from Frelawna.

The making of a definite plan strengthens and helps us. She got through the week with a little less misery than she could have hoped for. When she arrived at home on the Friday night, she was surprised to find Amy waiting for her.

"You are to go home with me and spend the holidays, every one of them," said Amy.

"But I have to teach on three of them."

"How is that?"

Mary explained. Amy looked puzzled, annoyed and disappointed.

"Well, you can come with me and stay till Sunday evening, can't you?"

Mary concluded, after Amy had explained that Mr. Pander would be absent, that she could. She made ready, and was carried off.

She felt less restraint on this occasion, and got through her first evening very well. Mrs. Chellis's girl had "flared up" and left, so Mary helped Amy wash up the magnificent china and glassware after supper, while Mrs. Chellis attended to the silver. There was so much enjoyment in a dish-washing party to Mary, that she had, during its progress at least, much pleasure. She broke no dishes, but made them shine

amazingly. Then there was a very pleasant interval in which she talked political history with Col. Chellis, in which conversation both were gracious enough to keep their tempers. Mary liked politics and political history. She loved to go over the Missouri Compromise, the Wilmot Proviso, the Webster-Ashburton Treaty, the Omnibus Bill and its many provisions, the Dred Scott decision, the liberty of the little Republic of Texas and its final annexation. She had only read of these things, but Col. Chellis was old enough to remember the actual occurrence of most of them, and the stir they had caused. And Col. Chellis was pleased with her ready memory and eager questions, and expressed in very decided terms, his wish that Amy would read more history, and less slush. Amy rebelled at the word "slush," and gave her father a few pointed suggestions as to her own ability to choose her reading, after which the conversation lagged.

In the morning Amy again helped with the dish-washing, expressing to Mary, who assisted her, her complete disgust of girls who left people, just because they were not asked to eat at the family table. And Mary remembered how she had once worked out a few weeks to get some money for a pet scheme of her own, but she did not narrate her memory to Amy. She was learning the wisdom of carefully considered statements. After the dish-washing was done, Mrs. Chellis set about baking cakes. Mary wanted to protest against a woman wearing black cashmere and velvet while she mixed up fruit cake, but she held her peace and offered her services. Yes, she might cut the citron and stone the raisins. Amy might sift flour, which she did, greatly to the disparagement of her pink flannel embroidered wrapper. And while Mary worked away at the raisins and citron, enjoying her task, and the homelike feeling it brought, Mrs. Chellis became more and more cordial and sympathetic. Amy, because of the necessity of soiling her hands with household work, was not in the highest good humor; but her mother's beaming friendliness made up for all lacks. Mrs. Chellis did hope, that if Mary married at all, she would get a good husband. There was so much danger of a girl doing badly. Did she have any serious thoughts in regard to Mr. Madnau now? She hoped not, for she was quite sure Mr. Madnau was not good enough for a well-educated young lady like herself. She understood, too, that his mother used to wash for a living, and that, of course, would prevent his wife

holding her head high. It was no disgrace, certainly, she agreed with Mary, to be the child of a woman who had taken in washing; but then such people were looked down on; there was no denying that.

"But Amy goes about with him," faltered Mary.

"O, yes; out here in the country it don't matter. She just goes with him for company's sake."

"I have seen better educated men that were not near so honest, sensible and good," said Mary, in a voice that was just audible.

"O, that's likely because you don't know him," said Mrs. Chellis, with a beaming smile. "He was out in Nevada two years; there's no telling what he did while he was out there."

Mary wanted to say that she believed decency possible, even in Nevada, but her voice died; she bent low over her pan of raisins in silence for what seemed to her a long time. Then she rallied.

"Don't you believe a man's real nature, if it's very bad, will come out at some time during seven years?" she asked.

"No, indeed; not near always; I've known people behave themselves the best kind for years, and then break out. I 'low the reason Jim keeps so still is because he's done something terrible out in Nevada, and don't want to get his name in the papers here, for fear they'll find out where he is."

"But he does get his name in the papers. I saw the other day a local calling him the best cattle man in the valley."

"Well, if he's done anything bad out there, of course they wouldn't think it was the same man, unless he got his name in the paper for some kind of a scrape here. I 'low if they'd hear of him behaving himself, they'd think it wasn't the same man. Now Mr. Lancaster is a nice young man, and his mother is just as kind as she can be. You could marry him, now, and settle down and be a neighbor of ours. You're a stranger here, and I'd hate to see you throw yourself away. Mr. Hogan won't do to listen to; he's a good enough old man, as far as that goes, but then he thinks there's nobody but Jim. He don't think Jim's got a fault in the world."

Mary did not reply to this harangue. The ability to suffer was left, and she suffered. All the old sickening doubts of men rushed back upon her and she cowered beneath their fearful weight. She felt that though her love must die at the discovery of crime and deceit in her loved one, its grin-

ning skeleton would remain tenant in her heart forever, keeping out other tenants, and all ambitions and joys. She bent lower than ever over her work, and tried to recall a time when she had not been marked out as prey by some designing person. But to have Jim Madnau turn deceiver was too bitter for the salve of philosophy.

"I've been writing to Amelia about how well you were getting along with your school, and that you were going around some with Jim. She used to know him. I'm going on a visit to her next week, and leave Amy to keep house for her pa. That is, I'll go if I can get another girl. The work is too much for Amy alone. Amelia seems interested in you. She'll want to know if you're going to marry Jim. Now, what shall I tell her?"

"Tell her—I never—will—marry him—never on earth!" gasped Mary, as she set down the finished fruit, with a loud slam of the pan. The well-appointed kitchen swam away in a sea of confused sights. She rose from her chair, and tottered to the water pail. She lifted the tin dipper.

"O dear, don't drink out of that old thing; here's a silver mug; I never use that dipper, only to fill the tea-kettle."

"It's good enough for me," said Mary, as she raised it to her lips. "I'm getting another of those faint spells," she continued, as her head swayed from side to side. "I'll go right home. I might get sick on your hands, and cause you worlds of trouble. I'll get my things now, Amy, please."

There was a chorus of protests, but they were useless. Mary had reached the limit of endurance, and she knew it. She resolutely refused the phaeton. She was soon hurrying up the road, breathing in the sharp, frosty, bracing morning air. She took long breaths of it, distending her narrow chest, thanking God that the air was pure and unpolluted, and that there was no one to dispute with her the possession of all she desired of it.

CHAPTER XIII.

BUT THE VAQUERO IS ROPEO.

MARY spent two weary days before the reopening of school. She could not blame the Chellises—they meant to rescue her, of course; but she felt towards them as we feel toward the surgeon who comes to cut the bullet out of our arm. His

visit and ministration is necessary, but we enjoy both so little, that the dislike is gradually widened to include himself. She did not attend Sunday-school. Mr. Hogan was present, and came home with the very wonderful news that Mrs. Chellis was disappointed of her visit. Her daughter Amelia, with her husband and her large band of interesting children, had arrived at the Chellis mansion the night before, to spend the ensuing fortnight. Amelia doubtless believed that in the way of visits, at least, it is more blessed to give than to receive.

On the road to school next morning Mary met Jim mounted upon Kate, and proceeding down the road. She nodded stiffly to him and hurried on, not pausing to give him an opportunity to speak. Snow fell during the day; the long delayed winter had come with its howling breath at last. The sky cleared about two o'clock, and the sun shone out on a goodly white coverlet that sheltered the valley. The surrounding mountains had been white for weeks. In the evening Mary found the Chellis's hired man waiting for her with a cutter. Miss Amy had sent for her to come down and stay all night, and get acquainted with Mrs. Lee and her family; she would be sent back in the morning in ample time for school. When we begin to feel a little of our own strength, we decide that the surgeon may use his sharp instruments on some one else. Mary, with all possible faith in the Chellises as friends, dreaded their probing so much that she sent an excuse. She was not very well, and a night ride in the snow would make her cough worse. She would wait for fairer weather.

On Wednesday evening she found herself kissing her pupils good-bye, and dropping tears over their faces. The "speeches" had all been "said," and the little closing exercises were done. There were a few visitors—only a few, for some snow still lay upon the ground. Soon the house was cleared, and she was alone. She gathered up her books, and was soon at her boarding place.

"The little drama is over," she muttered, as she entered her room. When she emerged she found both the Hogans in the sitting-room. Mr. Hogan was evidently in war-paint.

"Mary," he began, "what's been making you so down-hearted lately? You're as dumpish as a sick calf."

"O, it is laziness, I suppose."

"Now, gal, tell me the truth. Haven't you and Jim had a round-up?"

"We're not as good friends as we were," faltered Mary.

"Who's to blame?" he asked, looking her sharply in the eye.

"Both of us, I suppose."

"Are you goin' to make it up?"

"I cannot tell. We still speak. But what is the difference?"

"Difference? Why, you won't either one of you ever be worth a cuss—not a durn cuss."

"Why, Mr. Hogan, I don't think the matter is so serious as that. We were just friends."

"Just friends? Good moonshine! The idea of a girl that's been carryin' her heart round on her sleeve, like you have, talkin' like that! You jest give yourself dead away every time Jim's name's mentioned; and Jim's worse than you are. And now you've let some durned nonsense come in between you and separate you forever. I don't know of anything on earth that's sech big fools as lovers, anyhow."

"Joshua! Joshua!" protested Mrs. Hogan.

"I don't care. Now here's Mary, a poor sick gal, without friends or home, jest throwin' one of the best chances in the state away. And there's Jim, standin' and poutin' at the world, when he might reach out and ketch on to what he wants and be happy. Neither one of 'em'll ever be worth a cuss in *this* world, and I doubt if they ever git to a better one the way they're doin'."

"But, Mr. Hogan," began Mary, through her fast-rising tears, "Jim has been showing his preference for Amy Chellis, and I don't want to run after him."

"No; but you'd a blamed sight better run and stick your head in the fire than do the way you're doin'. I told you before that Jim didn't want that darned Chellis critter. The reason he's been goin' around with her of late is jest because she's been runnin' after him."

"But would you have me rush out into the road when Mr. Madnau is passing by, and ask him to marry me?"

"No; but I'd have you speak to him like he was white. I was standin' in the field the other mornin', and saw you speak to him, and if he'd been a Mexican Greaser, with a little mean Ute blood mixed in, you couldn't 'a' spoke to him no surlier than you did. If you'd meet Jim with a kind of half-civilized look, everything would come out all right yet. I've knowed young people to do things they regretted all their lives; and they thort the things was awful smart

while they was doin' 'em, too. Now, Dan Hopkins tells me that sewin'-machine's out of order again, and his wife would like to have you come and fix it. Jim went to Milroy again this mornin', and from the kind of treatment he's been gettin' out here, I wouldn't be surprised if he'd stay down there a while. So I don't think you'll meet him."

"Do you—are you sure Jim is all right, Mr. Hogan?" asked Mary, as she donned her wraps.

"Some people would doubt the reputation of a saint," savagely muttered Mr. Hogan. He did not generally rate Jim so highly, but he was just now laboring under very heavy excitement, and to have his *protégé*'s goodness called into question was too much.

Mary was soon talking with Mrs. Hopkins in Jim's sitting-room. She was shown into a little guest-chamber off this room, that was flooded with warmth that flowed through the open door from the piñon wood that burned abundantly in the sitting-room fire-place. The old lady explained that she had wheeled the machine in here to prevent Penobscot Bill elevating his feet upon it, as he had done once in a moment of tarantula-tea induced enthusiasm. The old lady employed different language, but thus Jim would have innocently described the incident. The old lady explained the refractory behavior of her favorite, and then went out to get supper. Mary closed the door almost to, leaving only a narrow space to admit warmth, as she did not want to be disturbed. She had well-nigh completed her work, when she heard the front-door open and steps sound on the floor. Chairs were drawn up to the fire; then she heard a voice, which she knew to be Stanley's, say:

"So Milroy's dull, eh?"

"Yes; everything's dull now," said a heavy, discontented voice she knew to belong to Jim.

"Everything but Amy Chellis, eh?"

"Humph."

"Well, Jim, I suppose you've about made up your mind in that direction. I've made up mine in another. I've concluded to marry the little school-marm."

"You *have*?" Mary felt that it was her duty to inform these gentlemen of her presence, but it was so far from her inclination that she only quaked and sat still.

"Yes," said Stanley; "I've got to marry some time, and she suits me better than any of the others. Mother's getting

old, and I'll have to have some one to look after me. I guess I'll marry her."

"How do you know you can get her?"

"O, no danger about that. These girls all come out here to marry. 'Most anybody can get 'em."

"I shouldn't want a girl that 'most anybody could get."

"O, well, I don't mean just that. I mean they'll all take a reasonably good chance. She'll be no trouble for me to catch."

"Of course you're above the weakness of being in love with her," said Jim, in a voice rendered hoarse by contempt.

"O, I've been in love with lots of women, Jim, in my way. But Mary will do me very well. She's educated, and makes a good appearance. Then I know she's virtuous, too."

"*How* do you know?"

"O, well, the other evening I just thought I'd test her a little. I wouldn't marry any woman I hadn't tested, you know. So I grabbed her, and tried to kiss her—ha, ha—and she just flew all to pieces, and abused me like a pirate—ha, ha. Of course I got her in a good humor again, but I saw she wouldn't stand any fooling."

"And if she had tested you, Stan, how then? Would she have found you overloaded with virtue?" asked Jim, in a tone that almost strained hospitality.

"Ha, ha! Why, Jim, you put the shoe on the wrong foot altogether. Sometimes I half believe you're in love with her yourself."

"Well, my love won't stain a woman, anyhow," said Jim, as if in deep contemplation. "But go ahead, Stan; invite me to your wedding, and I'll dance with the bride," and Jim seemed to be trying hard to get the concern out of his voice.

"All right, Jim. Well, I'm comfortable now. I guess I'll be going. So long."

"So long."

There were steps across the floor, and then a door was closed. Mary rose from the machine, and opening the door, passed out. Her face was reddening and paling by turns. She paused at the door, and when Jim looked up she said, resolutely :

"I was in that little room fixing the sewing-machine, and I heard all that was said. I ought to have spoken, but I could not."

"And does he predict the truth?" demanded Jim, as he rose from his chair.

"No! No! No! No!" and her face went into her hands.

"I wish I thought there was a chance for me."

She gave a little moan, and then Jim said, hoarsely:

"I wish you cared for me like I do for you."

"I do," and her hands went down to her sides, defiantly.

Jim, with the indescribable look of possession on his face, took a long step toward her. She began to shrink, for she saw his stalwart arms rising. Never had he looked so formidable. She hid her face again, for—like Cornwallis at Yorktown—she did not want to be on hand when the conqueror took possession. There sounded a sharp step upon the dining-room floor, then the turning of the door-knob, and Mrs. Hopkins walked into the room, arriving upon the scene just as Jim was very near his destination. Mary had uncovered her face, and was assisting Jim in looking unconcerned.

"Why, when did you get home?" said the old lady to the latter.

"Just a few minutes ago."

"And did you git the machine to doin' any better?" she asked of Mary.

"O, yes; it works beautifully. It's one of the most superb sewing-machines I ever saw."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RIATA IS SECURELY TIED.

MARY sat at the supper-table in Jim's house that evening, and conversed with Hen Hall and Penobscot Bill. She made some overtures toward Kid, but these only resulted in that gentleman pouring the bulk of his cup of tea down his shirt-bosom, so she withdrew her attentions. Penobscot Bill, on the other hand, was exceeding affable; if Jim and Lancaster both failed, as public rumor of late predicted, who could say that Penobscot Bill would not be the happy man? Hen Hall was kind, but not effusive; Hen's romance was done, and he lived only to do his duty and help others. Mary was

embarrassed at table, and the accident to Kid, as well as the suspicious scrutiny of the old couple, and their questions as to her future course, did not tend to put her at her ease. She was glad when she found herself on the road home, with her hand drawn through Jim's arm.

The Hogans were soon in possession of the leading facts. The old lady beamed happily through her spectacles, and the old man rubbed his hands with glee, and made the happy announcement that there were a few sensible people left in the world after all. When Mary escaped to her room, she tore out the page of her diary whereon she had confessed her favor for Stanley, and rent it in pieces. The very memory made her hide her face. On another page she wrote:

"Well, I have made a discovery. A cowboy is just a man, after all. The idea of me once believing that there was no deceit in Lancaster—of me believing that his clever acting was *love* that he was liable to declare at any moment! Of me believing that class or profession makes dearth of the characteristics of humanity! And to think I once believed Jim Madnau to be a sort of biped hyena! Had I forgotten that every profession has its fops, its villains, its superficial tricksters, and its *men*? Had I forgotten that courtly, deceiving flatteries are vipers that sting, and that noble and honest manhood may be clothed in ill-fitting garb? I have learned some wholesome lessons of late—may they make me less credulous and more observing."

Jim had agreed to come for her in the morning and take her to see the Circle Bar ranche, located among the upper foot-hills, near the head of the creek. They were early galloping over the parks and skirting the edges of the hills, Kate being on her very best behavior. They had not taken the cañon road, but were riding across country.

"Miss Fleming," said Jim, forgetting that he had a right now to call her Mary, "why did you meet me the way you did that morning last week? I wanted to talk to you and you wouldn't give me the ghost of a chance; were you mad at me about something?"

"No, not that—exactly."

"What then? I know there was something."

"Well, we're friendly now, and why isn't that enough?"

"But it isn't enough. Hadn't old Mrs. Chellis been tellin' you a lot of stuff?"

"Why do you ask that?"

"Well, because I know the old woman. She always has

her nose in somebody else's business. I knew you'd been there a good deal and I thought likely as not she'd been tellin' you a lot of things about me."

Mary confessed to a few private interviews with the lady. Jim laughed. "And how much of it do you believe?" he asked.

"I don't believe any of it *now*."

"Well, Miss Fleming, I'm not good enough for *you*, I know, but I'm fitter than some men. I used to feel like fightin' when I'd see that Lancaster around you," and Jim's eyes were warlike. "But I'm goin' to tell you one thing, Miss Fleming, and I hope you won't think I'm tryin' to rule you, but sometimes you let people manage you too much. You believe in smooth people too readily, yet you can be as independent as anybody, sometimes. Now I'm confident you used to think Lancaster was a terror when in fact he'd have injured you quick as wink if he possibly could. O, I used to want to lick him, though. Then anybody ought to know that Mrs. Chellis is too good to last long; why that woman is always plottin' some deviltry. I don't know as I ought to say it, but they've been settin' traps for me, for a good while now. Of course it wasn't *me* they wanted; it was what little property I've got; but they set no end of traps. That day I took Amy out ridin' I couldn't get out of goin'. I knew that as long as you and me had been goin' together that I hadn't any right to take her, but I couldn't help myself. But then I never let people get round me till they do me some injury. You're so much better than I am that I ought to be ashamed to lecture you, but you need to develop strength. People get imposed upon if they don't show their teeth once in a while. I believe that if Mrs. Chellis would get hold of you now, she'd talk you out of this. What do you think?"

"Well, I don't know. She cannot talk me out of caring for you, though. I've been pulled and hauled about so ever since I was a child, that I've no strength left. I'll have to learn strength from you."

"Well, I've a notion to take you to Milroy to-morrow evening, if you don't object, and have this business fixed up, so that Mrs. Chellis nor no one else can interfere. What do you say?"

Perhaps Mary ought to have fainted, but she did not. She felt much as the child who has just fallen downstairs, feels towards the person who picks it up. Having lost con-

fidence in herself she was willing to trust herself to her rescuer for a while. So she only said in a low tone : "Do as you think best. I'll be glad to have it over with." In a few minutes talk became sprightly again. The suspense that had induced bated breath was gone and the nerve pressure lifted.

"Do you mean that Amy asked you to take her riding that day ?" she asked.

"Well, she just as good as asked me."

"Horrible !" said Mary with a little shudder.

"No, I don't agree with you," said Jim. "I didn't exactly like the way she did because I didn't enjoy her company, and didn't want to take her. But I'd be glad if women were considered to have the same right 'bout selectin' their company and their lifemates that men have. Now sometimes a man would be glad to have a girl's company and is too bashful to ask her. She may like him very well, but she knows society won't let her ask him. He waits till he gets older and gets a little more courage, and maybe then this girl he liked has married some fellow that was all cheek, and he's got to take his chances with what's left. I say let whichever one is the best at talkin' do the askn'. There'd be lots more happy couples if one had the same right to talk plain as the other. Now it was awful hard for me to get started to talkin' to you about this; I've had it on my tongue to say hundreds of times—almost—and I used to wish like everything you'd start it."

"Oh ! Oh !"

"Well, I'd been glad if you had. Now the way things are now, a woman hasn't half a chance. If a woman has a preference, society won't let her tell it, when maybe if she'd make some advances, she and the man she loves would both be happy. The way things are now, lots of good women sit year after year waitin' for the lover that never comes, and wind up by being objects of scorn, when in reality they're almost saints at heart. Then some of the meanest men get some of the best women, just because they've got the cheek to rush in where angels hesitate about invadin'. I tell you things need squarin' up pretty badly. A love match is so scarce the way things are now, that nothing but deceit keeps up lots of peoples' professions of love. A woman has no choice in anything ; all that is left to her is chance, and it's generally a blamed poor chance at that. If I was a woman

I'd howl like a pack of coyotes but what I got a little decent recognition."

"Yes, and then they'd call you a bold, strong-minded, un-womanly jade," said Mary, who had had some experience in arguments with her Uncle Bluecut's family.

"I'd rather they'd call me strong-minded than weak-minded," said Jim. "Look here, now; we give the most credit for the gainin' of our national independence, and for the freein' of the slaves, to the ones who made the most noise, and did the most work. We call the ones that sat back and petted the old institutions the hardest kind of names. Now this is the old question over again. Some day the freedom of women will be recorded in history, and the credit will fall to those that are humpin' themselves at work, and takin' all sorts of ignorant insults now."

The pair soon arrived at the Circle Bar ranche, the property of Mr. J. C. Talbert and his two sons. The Talberts were among the wealthiest residents of Milroy City. The ranche was in the care of a cowboy, known as Texas Ike, but the two Talbert boys were always on hand at the round-ups. The house at the ranche was a tumble-down adobe, always teeming with cowboys. There was nothing particular to be seen, but the ride was a pleasant one, and commanded some fine scenery; then the ranche was a stopping-point on the main road over Dwightmere Pass. Jim and Mary paid their respects to Texas Ike, who was lying at full length on the sunny side of the house, absorbing as much warm weather as possible, so as to be prepared for the snow and ice that changeful Colorado might display on the shortest notice. Ike was quite friendly, and accepted in excellent good humor Jim's polite refusal to come in and take a drink. Perhaps he would have the jug brought out, then? No? Perhaps then the lady would have a "little sompthing?" The lady took her cue from Jim, and answered very politely that just then she cared for nothing to drink. Jim then invited Ike to call at the Bar Eleven ranche, and to bring along with him the seven cowboys who stood around in generally suspenderless state, and galloped away with his companion.

The next evening Jim brought a buggy and took Mary to Milroy City. Saddles do very well for single people, but to a recently married couple they are rather suggestive of distance. Mary told her intention to the Hogans before starting. Her brain was in such a whirl that she realized but

little that happened until Jim said loftily, as he stepped into the buggy to drive away from the minister's house :

" Mary Fleming Madnau, sit over a little."

" O, Jim !" she said, clasping her hands tightly together.

" What is it ? " he asked, as he gathered the reins in his right hand, and took possession of his new property with his left arm.

" O, it all seems so strange."

CHAPTER XV.

DISCOVERY.

O, how people did talk ! O, how people *do* talk ! O, how people *will* talk ! O, how people always talk if they have anything to talk about ! O, how they talk if they have nothing to talk about ; for they manufacture something rather than abstain from talking. The magpie ran off and married the cuckoo ; did you hear of it ? The rhinoceros went courting the hippopotamus ! Tell me all about it, quick ! The opossum said that the calf told him, that the old hen said that she heard the turkey-gobbler say, that he was told by the cow, that the horse said, that the owl said, that the pig said, that the hog said, that the cat said, that the rat said, that the mouse said, that the elephant said, that the lion told him, that he overheard the elk tell the tiger, that the kangaroo told the duckbill, that the swan told the whale, that the ape had said in the presence of the baboon, the bat and the monkey, that the antelope had told him as a sacred confidence, that the leopard had told the buffalo, that the bear had said to the fly, when the latter presumed to alight upon his nose, that he, the bear, was no fool, if he *did* have fits !

When Frelawna heard of the stolen marriage of Jim and Mary, it shook as if with an earthquake. Sunbonnets were hastily donned, as the ladies ran from house to house, wearing out shoe-leather and circulating news. No two people had just the same bundle of news nor the same opinion in regard to the affair, although there was considerable unanimity in the opinion that Jim Madnau, though a sensible enough man in regard to some things, had permitted himself to be completely taken in by a wicked and scheming adventuress. For

all Mary's excellences as a teacher, and virtues as a woman were at once disbelieved in, and she was pronounced to be what the women had feared and the men suspected "all along." If she had come and told *them*, now, and had a big wedding, and invited all the nice people, that would have been different; but this way she had hurried matters showed plainly enough that there was reason for speed. They were sorry to see a nice young man like Jim taken in so, but then he needed a little punishment. He had always held back from the girls on the Creek. Mrs. Chellis, becoming all of a sudden very friendly with her neighbors, threw new light on the matter; there were two reasons; one was Mary's advanced age; she had confessed to Mrs. Chellis that she was twenty-six years old, and of course a girl is always at least five years older than she confesses; then she had furthermore confessed to Mrs. Chellis that very grave charges might at any time reach the West in regard to her. Mrs. Amelia Chellis Lee put in her oar; she had not seen the creature—did not want to—but she had a friend in Milroy City who had heard considerable. Mr. Lee, the husband of Amelia and father of that lady's five interesting children, was of opinion that the match would be of short duration. The woman—and Mr. Lee had seen enough of women to be able to judge them critically—had of course married Jim for his property, and would "skip out" as soon as she could get possession thereof. Mr. Lee saw but one way for Jim to retain her; abundant family ties might insure her presence in the bosom of her family; whether that means had been employed to keep Mrs. Lee from straying may never be definitely known, but it is certain that for so young a woman, Mrs. Lee's family ties were numerous. It is astonishing to what an extent we unconsciously pose as criteria by which to judge our neighbors. Mr. Lee, being a highly educated and advanced gentleman, according to his own opinion—and who is so capable to judge ourselves as ourselves?—with the world standing behind him astonished at his learning and glory, was credited by the populace of Frelawna with having pronounced a verdict that entirely met the exigencies of the case. The opportunity that a wedding affords to a certain class of humanity for choice predictions and chaste language is duly appreciated and generally made the most of. The Chase girls were displeased that Mrs. Chellis should say such things of Mary, and all three complained to their mamma that the lady had been too severe. But Mrs. Chase

shook her head sagely and assured her daughters that "no stranger need deny what 'Lizy Chellis said; 'Lizy Chellis knew the world, and no stranger need come into the neighborhood and try to run down her character for truth." Whether the great popularity of the Chellises was caused by their long continued snubbing of all their neighbors may be a mooted question, but popularity is occasionally won in that way. Fiction is sometimes stranger than truth, but not always. Pete Gregg and wife, Jere Herron and wife, and the elder Chases were certain that Jim had met his match, and been roped in at last. He had escaped many evils; but a smart, bold, bad, scheming woman had been too many for him. Stanley Lancaster and Broncho Charlie pitied the girl; she was a young, unsophisticated, inexperienced, good-hearted invalid, and Jim had just talked her into marriage, with that smooth tongue of his, instead of waiting for her cooler judgment to select a better man. It was probably well enough, though, after they thought it over, for the girl was not very attractive, and Jim was probably her last chance. The Joneses hated to see women of doubtful character encouraged by marrying property; a woman ought to be made to *prove* her character, and be kicked right out of good society unless she succeeded in doing so. And now one thing is left to be told which it is feared will give an air of unseriousness, and perhaps even of downright falsehood to this entire history. Little Mrs. Martin actually attended to her own business throughout the whole trying ordeal! When told of the marriage by her daughter Bella, she only said that she hoped the young couple would be happy and do well! As the author does not wish to make this work appear unreasonable, she begs the reader to rack his brain for the memory of some such individuals as Mrs. Martin, and after he has called up a few such, to believe that their counterpart lived on Frelawna. Mrs. Martin was so busy with such inferior pursuits as nursing a consumptive husband, struggling with poverty, reading with and educating her daughter, and writing stories for such small sums as she could get, that she had no time to put on a sunbonnet and race over the neighborhood, repeating and listening to the chaste and lofty comments of her neighbors. Of course Mrs. Martin was not overly popular.

But when Jim and Mary emerged from the church on the following Sunday they felt no cold breezes from all this collection of icy prejudice. Such a hand-shaking and well-

wishing and congratulating ! Even Mrs. Chellis enthusiastically kissed the dreadful female about whom such frightful rumors were soon to float ! Mrs. Chellis had been so seized with a desire for religious truth to-day that for the first time in a year she had left her household overseeing and attended the Trelawna Sunday-school. She told Amelia just before setting out that she would go to Milroy city to church, where she usually went, when she attended divine service, but she did want to see whether Mary had been spending her new husband's money for clothes, and how she looked in the possible new finery. Mr. and Mrs. Lee were introduced and were very effusive—they were in fact almost gushing. Mrs. Lee paraded all five of her interesting children so that Mary could note their elegant cloaks and hats and the braided trousers of Maximillian Augustus, which were the delight of his mother's eye. During the conversation Mrs. Lee took great pains to impress the new and rather overawed Mrs. Madnau with a sense of her importance. She explained that her long and aristocratic visiting list made *two* hired girls necessary ; one to do the housework and one to take care of the children.

" And who teaches the children ? They don't all go to school, do they ? " asked Mary, as she looked with real interest at the pretty, but vacant little faces.

" Roy, there, goes to school. They'll all get schooling enough. Their father intends to send them off to school when they get older. I haven't time to teach them ; dear me ! If I began that, I never would get any visiting done."

Mary looked stupidly at her for a moment, wondering if she would ever become like that ; she clutched her husband's arm and answered the greetings of others. Mrs. Lee went away smiling, and together with Amy insisting that Mary and Jim come soon to visit them. Amy was quite as friendly as the rest of her family. She might be disappointed, but a person must have feeling to experience pain. From the warmth of the greetings that were showered upon them, the young couple could gain little idea of the bitter things that were said out of their hearing. But because Mrs. A. and Mr. B. carefully tell us what our neighbors have said about us, and as carefully conceal what they themselves have said, and because the neighbors all tell us what Mrs. A. and Mr. B. have said and as skillfully conceal what *they* have said, the reports all reached the bride and groom sooner or later. But when people become exceeding friendly in our presence

and exceeding critical in our absence, nothing is more certain than that we are getting on advantageously in life. Jim and Mary reasoned thus, and so threw off the stings of their small neighbors' venom.

Mary, being the only newcomer among so many old residents, found her position in her husband's house a rather embarrassing one. Mrs. Hopkins prepared at once to remove herself, husband and luggage into the old cabin. Mary and Jim both petitioned her to stay, but their prayers were useless. The old couple would stay and do Jim's gardening for him and take care of the cows, milk and butter, if Jim so desired. But the old lady wanted to be first in the house wherein she dwelt. It was finally agreed that the offer of the old couple should be accepted—they would take the cows, hens and garden on shares; and the old lady would help Mary with the work until the arrival of Iola, who had been sent for as soon as the marriage took place. For now that Mary had a home she was determined to share it with her sister. The old lady and gentleman moved out at once and made for themselves a very snug home in the cabin.

The old lady's services were not called in often. Jim found the house so pleasant that he himself concluded to act as Mary's assistant. His help consisted chiefly in blindfolding his wife with the dish towel, hiding her slippers, and tying her apron strings in the most incorrigible knots. It was not until he had his ears boxed for wiping a plate with his handkerchief that he awakened to the fact that the time for play and thoughtlessness had vanished. For bliss had made a boy of Jim.

The house had been furnished with articles selected by the old lady. There was sufficient to keep house with, but all was plain. The house had no proper parlor; the front room was used as a sitting-room; it was carpeted in good taste; it contained plain, strong wooden chairs, a lounge upholstered with brussels, a book-table and hanging lamp. The room on account of its size looked rather bare. Mary suggested this fact to Jim, and at the end of two weeks a piano took up just the right amount of space to make things appear cosey. Jim would have bought new furniture for this room, but Mary objected; she was already overwhelmed with the idea of her sudden prosperity, and found considerable difficulty in persuading herself that she actually had dominion over all the pots, pans, dishes, chairs and furnishings in that house,

And she wanted to get used to this fact before she became the possessor of more wonders.

Her first week was one of discovery. She learned that her husband, though well nigh a saint in her eyes, almost invariably forgot to take out the ashes when he kindled a fire in the kitchen stove. She learned that Kid was a person of some education, and that he had nails in his boots that cut the sitting-room carpet; also that he was much given, as soon as his embarrassment at the new state of affairs was over, to singing snatches and fragments of songs, of which no one seemed to know the origin. There were seldom more than four lines, and a stanza was seldom repeated. She learned that Hen Hall exhibited but one fault, and that was his neglect to pick up his cast-off clothing, but this little weakness he shared with all the gentlemen in the house. Penobscot Bill presented quite a list of peculiarities: first and foremost, he never was known to shut a door; second, he held in complete scorn everything in Colorado; there were certain places where he had sojourned which he pathetically referred to in a general way as "back yonder," that contained all the blessings of life and none of the drawbacks; sometimes he said "back yonder in Penobscot," or "back yonder in Elizaville;" but his reference was more frequently to "back yonder," pure and simple. He always kept his mouth open, save when it was necessary to close it over a morsel of food or a chew of tobacco; he was so excessively polite in one particular that he never refused an invitation to take a drink. At table his politeness was less noticeable; he always abridged his language as much as possible, and at table he carried this to the utmost, making such requests as, "Gimme smoot meal," if the oatmeal was desired; or, "Gimme smash," if the hash was the longed-for article. When he addressed Mary, he prefixed "Please," as "Please gimme smilk." He always shook his glass to attract Mary's attention, and if no one was ready to pass the bread just when he wanted it, he rose to his feet, braced his right hand against the back of his chair, and grasping his fork in his left hand, reached over and secured a slice, and was back in his chair with almost chameleon celerity. When in embroidered flannel shirt, bearskin chaparejos, high-heeled boots, spurs, and hat well on one side of his head, with two revolvers strapped round his body, and an overflowing cartridge belt, Bill was in full dress. According to Hume he would have possessed beauty if only he could have found some one to appreciate

his peculiar style. His finger length, dust colored curls, and his confident-looking red eyes never met just the favor that Bill felt to be their due. Jim had told Mary that Bill's boots smelled like something had crawled into them and died, and as the gentleman in question pulled off the said boots and left them in the sitting-room every night, Mary had ample opportunity for learning the truth of this statement. She finally adopted the plan of lifting the boots on a long stick, throwing them into the angle of the stairway, and shutting them out of sight and smell. She begged Jim to request Bill to wash his feet and buy a clean pair of socks; but Jim said he did not want to get a fight on his hands, and so the matter rested.

Another peculiarity of Penobscot Bill was that he belonged to the class of humanity known as echoes. One might think that so valiant an appearing gentleman, armed so heroically, would be mentally independent; but it was not so. Bill was always attached to some mouthpiece to whom he acted as a sounding board. When Bill's mouthpiece made a statement in an affirmative tone, Bill said, "Yes; by thunder;" when the mouthpiece made a statement in a negative tone, Bill said, "No; by Jacks." He was just now acting as echo for Broncho Charlie, and since that gentleman was seldom present at the Bar Eleven ranche, Bill occasionally was compelled to stand on his own intellectual legs. He had lived thirty years as an echo and the chances all pointed that if he escaped the deadly revolver and the more deadly tanglefoot, he would live as an echo at least thirty years more.

Mary also discovered that Jim and Stanley and Bill were not the only young gentlemen whose hearts she had touched; she discovered that four-year-old Bertie Herron was among her victims. In spite of his mother's disapproval of the marriage, Bertie was still true, and whenever he could elude the maternal vigilance, he would run up to the Bar Eleven ranche as fast as his chubby legs could carry him, and spend happy hours with his adored one. Mary loved children, and save for the fact of Bertie carrying off all the case knives to dig wells with; branding the cat, and insisting upon the enforcement of equal rights in regard to the pantry and its contents, she had no objection to his visits. Neither had Mrs. Herron any serious objection; she was fond of gadding, and by her son's visits to Mary, she gained in two directions; she could visit the other neighbors unencumbered of her son, and then in the evening could go to the Madnau resi-

dence and bring home her young wanderer. Thus she could gather up news during the day and leave it crisp, fresh and in large quantities with Mary at night. Since Mary loved the loss of her household order better than she loved gossip, she enjoyed Bertie's visits better than those of his mother.

Another discovery made by Mary was that her husband was much more tractable than she had expected to find him. She tremblingly asked him one morning, preluding the question with a kiss, if she might say a few words in regard to his language. Jim had surprised her by urging her to watch him and correct him, as he had never had much chance to learn the rules of correct usage. She alluded to his habit of omitting to sound the "g" at the end of the syllable "ing."

"Why, do I do that?" asked Jim in surprise.

"Why yes, you always do; you say, 'bein'," and 'goin'," and 'startin'.'

"Well, I never noticed myself doin' *that*," he said with wide open eyes.

"There! you did just then. You said 'doin'.'

"Well, I never noticed it before. I've noticed others leavin' off their 'g's,' though."

"There, now, you did it again. You said 'leavin'.'

"Did I? Well, I'll watch myself. You hit me whenever I make such a break, and I'll soon get over it."

"And then, Jim, if I were you, I wouldn't call people I admired, 'snorts,' and 'howlers,' and 'terrors.' The other day when I asked you what kind of a young man Gus Waite is, you said he is a 'high kicker from Scranton.'"

"Well, it's all habit, Mary. I don't notice it. The crowds that I run with talk that way, and the first thing I know, I'm firin' off too."

Mary doubled her fist and gave him a little blow on the chest.

"Hit me harder, so I'll remember," said Jim, as he took in a long breath. "Now, hit me just as hard as you can. Hit me; you can't hurt me," he said, as she hesitated. Mary complied.

"Didn't that hurt you?" she asked, wonderingly.

"Do you think there's muscle enough there to hurt anything?" he asked, as he pushed up her sleeve, "Look here, now; here's an arm for you," he said, as he pushed up his own sleeve, and revealed muscles like knotted cords. "Compare that arm and this; and yet," he said, as his eyes took

on a sudden pity; "we, the strong, have all the power, and you, the weak, have none; the law places you utterly in our power, to bless or to blast as we choose. We, who have all the natural power are given all the artificial power as well. As Hen Hall says, 'To him that hath, shall be given; but from him that hath not, shall be taken away, even that which he hath.' Queer things in this world."

After this language lesson, Jim got along very well when alone with Mary; he paid due respect to present participles, and did away with many of his choicest phrases. Of course this cost effort, but Mary had little caressing ways of evening up accounts that always made Jim feel that the effort was worth making. But there was no use combatting time-honored custom when among the cowboys. In the old associations the old language would unconsciously break out and hold high carnival until Jim would note the worried look on his wife's face, and for some few minutes mend matters. But the reforms were of brief duration. Mary at last concluded that time alone could cure him, and resolved to let things take their course.

She furthermore learned that her husband had a system of measuring heights and distances, as well as hay in the stack, not to be found in any book she had studied. He had studied them out himself, and when she tested them, she found them invariably correct. This originality puzzled her, but it caused the respect of the student to flow in the same channels with the admiration of the romancer and the love of the wife.

"Jim," she said one day, after learning that he did not object to counsel, "Mr. Hogan says you swear sometimes."

"He didn't say *swear*, did he?"

"He said you *cussed*."

"Well' I do, a little, sometimes. When a man *swears*, he's at it so much that it gets to be a habit, but if he *cusses*, he only breaks out when he's mad. There's a difference, you see."

"But it's wrong, Jim; and it's useless and foolish, too."

"But it's such a habit, Mary. Nearly everybody does it,"

"But please don't be like everybody, Jim. I don't like everybody. You're unlike other men, and I want you to be more so. Be yourself." Then she twined her arms round him and laid her head on his breast.

"Missionary among the wild men," said Jim, softly, as he

patted her head. "But I'll try, if you'll continue this mode of persuasion."

CHAPTER XVI.

ACTION UNDER THE RIATA.

MARY was surprised at the calm, the restfulness, the hope, the sweet peace that surrounded her daily life. The once abused, unappreciated, homeless orphan rested in her home harbor of security as does the weary mariner after his voyage of ceaseless chill and storm. She fell, when alone, into her old habit of dreaming, and rare indeed were the love castles of her creation. Her wish that the bliss and security she enjoyed might be possible for all was the foundation of the mind palaces she wrought.

A few weeks after their marriage, she stood with Jim at their sitting-room door, while the balmy wind gave suggestions of a still far distant summer; for after the snow which generally falls on or about the holiday week has cleared away, the weather often becomes springlike enough to entice the fruit buds to swell, often, alas, like Caesar, by their temerity in venturing in response to pleasant urging, to meet their death in the fickle month of March. Mary stood with her waist in her husband's embrace, one of her hands half caressing his face, her dexter finger lying lightly between his teeth.

"Jim," she said, dreamily, "it seems unjust that I should be so happy in my love while others are so miserable. What have I done that I should unblushingly enjoy love, while other women, more unfortunate indeed, but perhaps no worse at heart, must blush and suffer and hide?"

"You have complied with a custom," said Jim. "I cannot call it a law, because a law, in the proper meaning of the term, controls all alike. Since fully half the marriages are unrecognized by law, the institution can in no sense be said to be governed by law. Reason and nature say that cohabitation is marriage; the law says that the speaking of a few words is marriage. The unrecognized marriage can result in as many children as the other, and because the words have been omitted the law is silent, while these children grow up in misery, neglect and shame. The natural bent of

humanity is the pursuit of happiness. The aim of civilization is the pursuit of happiness without trampling upon the happiness of others. Marriage is an institution for the securing of happiness. Liberty demands that it be made possible for all and compulsory for none. Passion we inherit from a long line of ancestors, first brutes, then brutal, then imbruted ; it is of no more use to deny its existence than to deny the existence of hands ; hands may be kept idle and passion may be absolutely held in check, but neither is natural. But since civilization is slowly teaching us that there are better employments for our hands than rending the weak and causing misery to the helpless, so it should teach us there are better uses for passion than the shame of women and the misery of children. Love and passion that might result in happiness, now result in infinite misery. As long as the unthinking child is permitted by his mother to mess over the choice food upon the table, and after tasting, reject and select again, only to leave a new article soiled and unchosen, he selects without judgment and rejects without consideration, asking only the indulgence of his extravagant caprice, regardless of that which might have blessed and nourished him, now left unfit to bless or nourish any. As long as the unthinking man is permitted by law to tamper at random with the rights and persons of women, and after soiling familiarity to reject and select again, only to leave a new creature blasted and unchosen, he selects without judgment and rejects without pity, asking only the indulgence of his merciless sensuality, regardless of the woman who might have blessed and strengthened him, now left unapt to be chosen as the blessing or companion of any. The laws—what there are—in existence now for the regulation of the social evil, have for their only object the persecution of the women whom other laws have allowed to be sunk to a condition that renders a life of crime a necessity. To do away with the possibility of a certain crime is better than to punish it. A national law pronouncing marital association marriage, and authorizing an officer to register the parties to cohabitation as husband and wife, would deal the death blow to seduction and end prostitution once and forever. The woman whose youth, ignorance or weakness allowed her to be oversuaded, would not then be a shamed girl, compelled to flee respectability and seek her bread in the avenues of crime ; she would be a married woman. There would be no inducement for her companion in guilt to flee, since neither

time nor distance would free him from the bond of marriage. Even if he did desert her, she would be a deserted wife, and not an abandoned dupe. Her child, who certainly is not to blame for the conditions of its birth, would then be provided with a legal as well as a natural father, and need not forfeit property, protection and respectability, because of the inadequacy of law. *Can a law that provides respectable parentage for one child and neglects to do so for another be just?* Should not law provide for all alike?

"Under a law pronouncing cohabitation marriage—and such a law need not interfere with those who wish a religious marriage also—secret polygamy would be the only social crime possible, and this would speedily diminish; for the rendering impossible—or as nearly impossible as human law can approach, for no law against any crime can wholly prevent that crime—the rendering impossible of prostitution would take the premium off of the libertine, and force him into an unpopularity he has never yet known. Were there such a law, parents who do not want mesalliances in their families would teach their sons self-control. Young men who feel too lofty to take fallen women for wives, would keep their distance from such women if they knew that only a divorce could free them from the companionship once formed."

"Might not such a law result in the marriage of a good many more children, Jim?" asked Mary.

"The law as it exists now, results in the moral ruin of thousands of children every year, and from this ruin not one in ten ever rises. I do not believe in the marriage of children; but the marriage of children is infinitely to be preferred to the prostitution of children. The law I refer to would do away with so much vice that there would be less vice to attract the public attention. Children would hear less of its discussion; their imaginations would consequently be less excited and there would be less incentive to early marriage. The law would be a long step in the right direction; this age can not make all the reforms that need making; this age should grapple with and strangle the worst evils, and leave such questions as the discouragement of child marriage to future thinkers.

"So many people are so jealous of their liberty. Some would say that if a man were compelled to take his first mate as a life mate that personal liberty would be at an end."

Jim drew a long breath. "When the King of Persia,"

he said, "sat in unquestioned power over his millions, with unlimited right to tax, to kill, to pillage, to burn and to destroy, there was an example of *perfect liberty*. But it was the perfect liberty of but one creature. When power, position or tradition gives perfect liberty to one creature, it gives perfect slavery and dearth of all liberty to all other creatures. Perfect liberty means unquestioned right for the strong and unquestioned submission for the weak. Legislating against the abused liberty of the strong means increased liberty for the weak. In absolute freedom the strong will trample upon and crush the weak. Justice demands not that all be absolutely free to act as they choose, but that all be made by the law equally able to protect self. When the people in different nations began to arise and demand a share in the government, the sovereigns all uttered the same cry : 'You are taking away my liberty, and my rights.' When the baron of Western Europe found his vassals slipping out of his power, when the Russian noble and the American slaveholder were told to let their bondsmen go forth free, they sounded that same cry. And now that the libertines of America feel in the breezes of progress the assurance that the women they have triumphed over will be lifted from under their feet and made their equals before the law, they too, sound the tyrant's old cry ; ' You are taking away our liberties and our rights.' A bitter curse upon the tongue that asks liberty for self and slavery for others. Why, Mary, in some ways women are *worse off* than slaves. A slave, as long as he had ability to take care of little children, to pull weeds, or even to sit and with aged bony fingers skim the bits of floating cane from the sugar-water vats, had a money value and was an object of a certain amount of care and protection. But after a fallen woman has arrived at a certain stage of degradation she has no value to any one and does not receive at the hands of any member of the human family the consideration that is given to a stray dog. I think it high time we had laws to render such degradation impossible."

"And will we ever have them, Jim ? Is there hope ?"

"Humanity, reason and investigation do not always sleep."

"I spoke to Uncle Bluecut once about such a law, and he said it would give the women all the advantage."

"If that would be true I could not object to it, for after the advantage being on the side of the men so many ages, I consider it only just that the women should have their turn. But it would not be the case. Men are stronger than women

and the strong are seldom victimized to any great extent by the weak. A man would stand more chances of entrapping to wifehood the woman he coveted, than would a woman of tricking her most desired one. Women enjoy being hunted far more than they enjoy hunting, and it would be long years before any change could train this trait out of them. But the nation will not give us such a law while the women submit so easily. There is no use in them denying their dissatisfaction at the present state of affairs ; they'd gain far more to come out and demand equality and their right of helping make the laws that govern them. There is a good deal of truth in that old saying that 'Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow.' If I was a woman whose husband believed me fit to occupy under the law only the position that is granted to convicts, I'd never give him any peace till he changed his mind. I'd give him reason to believe I was capable of making a disturbance, anyhow."

On the next day after this conversation the Madnaus went to Milroy City to meet Iola. As this young lady takes off her wraps in the sitting-room she will be presented to the reader. She is a little taller than her sister, and carries flesh sufficient for a voluptuous form—there is no undue stoutness and yet no suggestion of the slenderness that characterizes Mary. Her features are clearly cut, her eyes very dark, hair dark and abundant, hanging in dense, well-curved bangs over her forehead. There is independence in the nose, insubordination in the mouth, witchery in the eyes, and charm and command as well as stately beauty in the whole presence. Her well fitting fashionable travelling dress did not reveal to the casual observer the cheapness of its material, for Iola Fleming was one of those young women who look carefully after effect. She had none of the dreamy air of her sister. She was the wide awake, independent girl of the period, and Mary the charming, dreaming, inwardly obstinate gypsy. There were certain resemblances of feature and manner, but they suggested contrast rather than similarity. She looked from her sister to her new brother, feeling some awe of the new relationship and wondering just how she ought to conduct herself. It had been understood that she was to be Mary's assistant in the housework ; and even her first moments in the house were to a certain extent employed in devising means of eluding her new and stern appearing brother's surveillance and rule.

For Iola had dreadful opinions of the inhabitants of this far west clime ; she felt that the closest watch would be necessary to insure her personal safety ; for had she not read that tyranny was their trade and murder their pastime ? She was willing to come, of course ; the change meant adventure and variety ; but personal safety was to be jealously guarded. As soon as Jim left the room, Iola said :

" Why, Mary, weren't you afraid to marry a cowboy ? "

" No ; you'll marry one yet," said her sister, coolly.

" But I thought they were such bad men."

" So did I, at first. And some of them are. But they're just like other men. Some are good and some are not."

Then the two sisters had a long talk of their good Aunt Sally, and Uncle Jake, and their obnoxious Aunt Ellen, and Uncle Bluecut, and all the people whom they had known in their old home. As a consequence supper was rather late. When the men filed into the sitting-room they were introduced to Iola. At the table, Penobscot Bill opened forth in a style that bade fair to end his echo career, asking the new arrival with many a coquettish shake of his stiff curls, concerning her long and lone journey. Iola decided to be very affable, and win the dangerous creature over at once.

" Yes, sir," she said, " I had one real adventure. At Grass City I was puzzled about which train I should take. I hurried across the track to where I saw a train in waiting. A young gentleman in magnificent apparel accosted me and inquired where I was going to. I answered that I desired to go to Milroy City. He told me that my train was just starting out. He seized my valise and we ran to a moving train. He lifted me upon the platform, threw my valise after me, and lifted his hat."

" He might have deceived you ;" said Mary, who was losing some of her credulity. Then Bill told a long string of adventures, some of which caused Kid to smile slyly behind a slice of bread. He gave his dust-colored curls a fearful shake as he said in conclusion :

" The people that really gits adventures, Miss, is the ones that goes where adventures is to be had. Now, when a young gal like you goes round the range alone, adventures jest nat'lly foller on her trail. Gimme smlasses, Hen." Hen passed the molasses pitcher, and while Bill was smearing his moustache with a portion of its contents, the conversation became general. After supper the two ladies washed the dishes, and then played and sang for the pleasure of the

company. Mary tried hard to prevail on Kid to furnish music as he had proved his ability to do ; for when Kid sat down to the piano he could think of more than four lines of a song. But on this occasion his finger was so sore that he could not possibly play, and his cold so malignant that he could not sing, although before he knew of Iola's presence on the ranche he had caroled so joyously in the barn-yard that the echoes of his gleeful voice were borne into the house.

On the next morning the sisters went out to behold various wonderful cowboy feats. Jim, Hen, Bill and Kid mounted fiery cow ponies and rode at breakneck speed round the corral, knocking off each other's hats and picking them up from the ground without slackening the speed of their ponies. They threw lassoes and roped each other's horses, and shot all the spots out of some playing cards nailed to a post in the center of the inclosure. Kid then held an ace of spades in his hand at a distance of about twenty paces while each man in turn fired a pistol ball through the center of it. Jim then made a circle round the center of the card, for he was not to be beaten at marksmanship, even if he did not carry an arsenal strapped round him when out on the range. These performances made the ladies wild with admiring delight, and Mary wrung from her husband a promise to teach her the art of pistol shooting. The Kid then opened the corral bars with his foot, and the four men rode out into a field where Jim was winter-pasturing some of his stock. Each one singled out an animal, rode hard at it, and after several ineffectual attempts seized it by the tail, gave the tail a turn round the horn of the saddle, and giving the horse a quick impetus forward, turned the captured animal directly over. Then waving their hats in triumph, the men rode back to the ladies, but they did not receive from their fair watchers the praise they expected. Iola was shocked and Mary very angry. The latter gave the gentlemen a good round lecture on the subject of cruelty to animals that broke up the entertainment forthwith. The ladies suddenly found that the weather was cold, and retired into the house.

The next few weeks were uneventful save as weeks of ripening friendship and social enjoyment. Iola made known certain traits which the reader may wish to be informed of. One of these was a peculiar dislike for washing dishes ; it was Iola's fixed task and was duly performed by her ; but her face was always defiant and her voice high and variable

while the work was in progress. Then when she fed Hankum, the shepherd dog that had long barked at strangers who passed by the Bar Eleven, she invariably forgot to bring in the dish he had eaten from, and wash it. So it often became Mary's task to go forth and gather up the meat platters, tureens, plates and gravy bowls that had accumulated in the back yard. Then Iola had such a desire to put the best foot foremost that on the slightest occasions she donned her best dresses, greatly to economic Mary's horror. Even when Gus Waite, who was now in the employ of Mr. Hogan, came over in his flannel shirt and chaparejos, she dressed with splendor fitted for a ball. Mary insisted that since Gus did not dress up, and anyhow was just a boy, all legs, and bearing a close resemblance to a very independent young Indian chief, that there was no occasion to carry so much style. But Iola perked up her face and pinned on more ribbons. So Mary concluded to let matters take their course. In the home trials with Uncle Bluecut's family, Iola had always fared better than Mary; and while the latter had always gone positively shabby until old enough to earn for herself, money had always been forthcoming from somewhere to dress Iola in tolerable decency. Another peculiarity of Iola was her great fondness for novel-reading—and yet, strange circumstance, she had never read a novel through—she read the first few chapters with deep interest and then, almost swallowed up in her interest in the characters, she flew to the final chapter to learn who married which. Having satisfied herself as to this important point the novel lost interest and was thrown aside for another.

Iola soon formed the acquaintance of Bella Martin, and the three Chase girls. Texas Ike and his seven satellites having learned that Jim Madnau actually had a piano, came down from the Circle Bar to see the wonderful affair, and also to see the ladies who were expected to play it. Gus Waite came over frequently and sat in the background with Kid where he could catch side glimpses of the saucy newcomer. Broncho Charlie came and sat beside his patient echo, while Hen Hall beamed placidly upon all. Mary played and sang to the best of her ability, in which pastime she was assisted by Iola. Jim was happy in the happiness of his household. The early spring promised brilliantly for the social success of the Bar Eleven.

CHAPTER XVII.

SOMETHING NEW.

JUST before the time of the spring round-up Jim one evening piloted through the sitting-room and into the dining-room a new hand; for now that active work was coming on, more help was necessary. The new arrival wore a seedy black cloth coat—for when the weather becomes cold and chill with March winds, even the cowboy must don a coat—a scarlet shirt, blue overalls and high-heeled boots. He laid a worse for the wear, broad-brimmed, tan-colored hat on the piano as he came out to supper. His appearance was sufficiently striking to attract the attention of both Mary and Iola. His forehead was high and almost pointed, surmounted with a crop of short, almost curly black hair. The nose was of admirable form, but a little too short for greatness of character, a little too small for facial strength. The upper lip was short; it stood in an arch above teeth slightly irregular, but of dazzling whiteness; only the lower portion of two of these were usually visible, a short, curly, black mustache obscuring the rest. The under lip drooped; it was heavy, and long enough, had it stood erect, to meet its arched and bearded fellow. His facial hue was ruddy enough to suggest to the casual observer an occasional glass, but not to indicate to any one any great degree of dissipation. His neck was long, but not out of proportion, as it was well clothed with the same ruddy flesh that filled in the space over his rather prominent cheek bones. While there was but little difference in either the height or weight of Madnau and his new hand, this additional length of neck gave to the latter almost an appearance of slenderness. Jim, not knowing the stranger's name, did not introduce him, but he bowed gracefully to both ladies. The strange company and house did not seem to embarrass him in the least. Mary's credulity failed to come to her rescue. She gave him a distrustful glance, but said politely :

“Good-evening. Sit down to supper,” indicating at the

same time the place he should occupy. "How wonderfully self-possessed the villain is," she added mentally as a new qualm of dislike took possession of her. But the new hand joined in the general conversation at the table and gave no cause for the bad opinion raging in Mary's mind. She got possession of Jim as soon as possible after supper.

"Is he a 'gov'ment graduate'?" she asked. Now Mr. Hogan called tramps "gov'ment graduates." He insisted that since saloons and houses of ill-repute are licensed government institutions that the men who finish their education therein, and as a consequence tramp about the country begging their bread, are government graduates.

"I don't know," said Jim. "I can't make him out," and Jim went out to attend to his part of the feeding. That was Friday evening. During Saturday the stranger took his turn at the table conversation, talking with confidence and ease. On Sunday morning he walked to Milroy City.

Mary and Iola discussed the new-comer critically, Mary alluding to him as Mr. McSwifter, and Iola respectfully dubbing him Mr. Redshirt, for when these ladies did not know the name of an individual, they manufactured one to fill the blank.

On Sunday evening Mary sat in the sitting-room, rocking Bertie Herron and endeavoring to console him over a cut finger which he had obtained in a manly effort to cut off one of Hankum's ears. Iola was in splendid costume. As they sat thus alone the new-comer entered. He had brought with him the Friday night before a valise, and from this he had dressed himself for the Sunday in rather cheap but showy clothes. The same hat, however, did duty as a head covering. He looked pleased when he found himself alone with two interesting ladies. He seated himself and laid his sombrero on the floor, making a few remarks to Iola concerning the weather. Mary was busy in her efforts to console Bertie. She patted his head and sang in a soft voice :

"O Sammie, the moon looks so pretty to-night,
She was never so cunning before ;
Her two little prongs are so sharp and so bright,
I hope they'll keep growing some more.
The one prong means office I'm certain to get,
The other means printing for you ;
And city attorney I surely will be
If to me you're just faithful and true."

"Singin' 'bout me?" asked the new-comer, as he tilted his chair back.

"O, no," said Mary innocently. "Is that your name?"

"It's what they *call* me;" said the gentleman loftily. "But it ain't my name. My name's Jennings—Latshaw A. Jennings—the A is for Aurelius—Latshaw Aurelius Jennings is my full name, but round where I've worked they generally call me Sammie. At home they mostly called me Lat."

"O, that song I was singing," explained Mary, "is part of a campaign song I once wrote when I was local editor of a paper. It's a parody on a beautiful poem."

"So you've been an editor then? Well that's a little in my line, too. Me and a friend used to run a paper called *The Howling Blizzard* back in Quinine Center, the town I come from. I tell you nobody but an editor knows anything about what an editor's got to put up with. Did you like the trade?"

"Yes, very well; but my salary was small, I could earn more teaching school."

"I used to teach, too. Had a state license in Kansas when I left there. But teachin' was too confinin' for me. I've got to have my liberty." And Mr. Jennings waved his arms gracefully. Mary made no reply to this and Mr. Jennings remarked that it was quite a long walk to Milroy City.

"It was probably shortened, though, by the expectation of meeting some fair lady," said Mary, feeling that such a remark would please him and considering the presence of a hot-house flower upon the lapel of his coat as grounds for believing there might be such a lady friend. She was right. Mr. Jennings could not hide the gratification in his face. But as he smiled out his pleasure, he said:

"You must think I get girls in a hurry. I've only been 'round Milroy ten days."

"O, some folks are swift at forming friendships," she replied.

"I'm pretty sudden myself," said Mr. Jennings, as he rose, took the flower from his coat and gracefully gave it to Iola. The girl turned a vivid scarlet, but not knowing what else to do, she accepted the flower. Mary was so overcome by the turn affairs had taken that it was necessary for her to go into the kitchen to get Bertie a piece of bread. She had a long, quiet laugh, where Iola could see her, but safely

out of the range of Mr. Jennings's vision. Iola looked out of the window and talked volubly about the weather to just any one at all. Mr. Jennings answered readily, and finally Mary re-entered the room, the picture of matronly decorum. Iola, however, did not honor her with a glance for some time.

At lunch that evening Mr. Jennings became very communicative. The subject of cowboys was introduced; Lat had been a cowboy, off and on, since he was seventeen—nine long, eventful years ago. He had worked for one man three years, for another two; for his uncle four, down in the Indian territory in the midst of dangers and horrors. Then he had taken a good many odd jobs of cow-punching at different times. These troublous years had made him old and wrinkled before his time. Now, at twenty-six, he felt at least forty, whether he looked it or not.

"When I select a profession, it will be law; I'm gettin' tired of the cow business," said Kid.

"Now, you may not believe it, but *I* studied law six months. I had all the state laws of Kansas at my tongue's end," said Lat.

"And why did you leave it off?" asked Jim.

"Well, I don't know as I ought to say, and yet I will. I concluded it was too dishonest a way of gettin' a livin'."

Then Mary's credulity rose a little. The man was better than she thought. Uncle Bluecut was a lawyer, and a man who was too good to be a lawyer had one good trait at least. She would soften her harsh judgment. What if his statements were a little large? Had she any right to dispute them? As far as his calculations of time went, might he not have forgotten? Or perhaps he had not worked full years. He ought to know best, of course. The conversation continued for some moments and then Lat inquired if the young people of Trelawna cared much for dancing.

"Oh, yes;" was the chorused answer.

"I went to one dance that I expect to remember to my dyin' day;" said Lat.

"Did it break up in a row?" asked Bill eagerly.

"Well it amounted to about the same thing;" said Lat in a confident, easy drawl. "I was jest a kid, then. They was a big crowd at the dance and they was crowdin' onto the floor in shape. I'd hunted up the littlest woman in the house and took my place at the head of a set. Jest then a

great big two-fisted chap stepped up with his partner and pushed me right out of my corner. He says, 'we men'll dance now; you kids can dance after 'while!' I told my partner I was goin' to hit him and she said she'd stand there while I done it. Well, I hit him. Then he yanked out a big revolver and come down on my head with it. Well, I never knowed nothin' fer three months and he didn't fer six. They was a lot of my friends there and they jest like to a beat him into a jelly. He'd cracked my skull and I tell you I had a dickens of a time pullin' through. The doctor had to put a silver plate in my skull 'bout the size of a quarter. It's right here;" he said, indicating the region of the imaginative bump, and looking from Iola to Mary. Lat's every action proclaimed that his words were meant especially for lady ears. This intelligence was an enlightener to Mary; she now understood the new comer's large statements—the silver plate pressing upon the bump of imagination stimulated that faculty to unusual activity—of course Mr. Jennings was not to blame.

"And what became of the man who struck you?" she asked.

"O, well, my friends, and I had lots of 'em, talked about lynchin' him as soon as he got able to stand the racket; but I wouldn't have that. I wanted to 'tend to his case myself. I sent him word I was campin' right on his trail and 'lowed to drop him first chance I got. He knowed I meant what I said, and so he sold out what stuff he had fer what he could git, and pulled his freight."

"Well, by thunder!" exclaimed Bill. And right here Bill dropped his office of echo to Broncho Charlie and became echo to the valiant and fearless new-comer. Even though he plainly saw that Lat was laying siege to Iola he silently swore allegiance. But then Bill rather thought Gus Waite had the start of him anyhow. A few moments before, Mary had been angry with Lat; then she became tolerant. Just now she saw great opportunity for amusement, and was as much delighted as is a scientist who catches some new and strange specimen of bug.

Here was a freshly caught specimen of humanity and she would make the most of him. When the party retired to the sitting-room, Mr. Jennings threw off his coat so that his narrative powers might be unimpeded by any superfluous clothing. When dressing in the morning he had obscured that portion of his red shirt that might be visible above his coat

lapels with a huge cream-colored satin tie elaborated with black and pink polka dots. The absence of the coat now showed the gentleman to perfection. His pantaloons, hanging rather low upon his hips held in a small pocket a silver watch, whose big chain fastened to the same garment hung long and flashy. His slight stoop, won by this valiant cowboy by long continued saddle exercise of course, rather in this instance heightened the effect of the bold black eyes, confident air and the muscular body in the scarlet shirt. Bertie Herron had been taken home by his mother, and Mary, unencumbered of other youth, turned with alacrity to study the new attraction.

Mr. Jennings drew from his pocket a huge brown plug of tobacco and having surveyed it critically, took an enormous chew. Bill also dived into his pocket and imitated carefully. Lat chewed vigorously for a few moments. Gus Waite had arrived and was absorbing Iola's attention, so Lat turned to Mary.

"This country is further out of the woods than I expected to find it;" he remarked.

"Why, did you expect to find us barbarians?" asked Mary.

"Well you see I come from a mighty wild country myself. I've been down in the Territory a heap. I've seen the time down there that I was liable to git my neck broke or my head shot off every time I turned round. I've seen some of my best friends shot down like dogs," and he looked in the fire regretfully and chewed vigorously. Then he slowly rose from his chair; he pulled up his pantaloons, pulled down his shirt under the arms, pursed up his lips, took a long step forward, rearranged his lips, took another step forward, and bending at a graceful angle, sent a long jet of tobacco juice into the fire. Then Bill arose and made a similar pilgrimage. With a melting look at the lady of the house Lat resumed his chair.

"Why, what was the danger? Indians?" asked Mary.

"Indians sometimes. But generally bad cowmen. I never had but one real bad scrape with Indians, and that was one time when seventeen of 'em run me into an old buffalo waller. I had nothin' to defend myself with but a Winchester, but I stood 'em off for three days."

"Well, by Jacks!" exclaimed Bill.

"Did you kill any of the Indians?" asked Mary.

"I dropped four or five of 'em. The rest saw the climate wasn't healthy and they pulled their freight. I didn't have

nothin' to eat them three days but two biscuits I happened to have in my pocket. A fellow that was round writin' books heard of that and he put me 'in a novel. Maybe you've read it; it's 'Choctaw Dick the Dauntless Terrifier; or, The Wild Scalp Snatcher of the Plains.' I went in as Sammie the Cowboy."

"Indeed! I never read it, but I'd like to," said Mary, as she narrowly watched the fit of excitement Penobscot Bill was laboring under.

"I've got a copy at home. Just one;" said Lat. "I'd send and get it for you if it wasn't the last one I had."

"Couldn't you get me one of the publisher?"

"I might, I'll write and see."

Iola had succeeded in getting Kid to the piano, and she and Gus were intently listening to his efforts. Hen Hall was reading his Bible, while Jim was deep in a newspaper. The conversation trio were therefore undisturbed. Mr. Jennings went on:

"Well, I come out of that Indian scrape without a scratch, but I didn't always git off so lucky. I remember one time I was sent with a sheriff's posse to capture a band of horse-thieves that had been operatin' in western Kansas. They was sixteen of them and thirteen of us. We follerred 'em down into No Man's Land and chased 'em into a sort of a ravine. They stood their ground there and"—but here he migrated to the fireplace and spat, followed by Bill—"and we sent in a flag of truce and asked 'em to surrender. They sent back word that they'd see us further off. We opened fire on 'em then and kept shootin' at everything we could see movin' till about the middle of the afternoon when we charged 'em. I had a Winchester and I kept fillin' it up and givin' 'em all they was in it till two o'clock. Jest about then I got a bullet in this arm here, and then I didn't take no more part in that fight, 'cept to fire my revolver a few times. But we got all them horse-thieves, though. When we charged 'em, we found we'd killed all but four and we had them pretty full of lead and we strung 'em up."

"Well," said Bill, "I never was much on the cut and shoot myself, but I've got a brother back yonder that jest shoots men to see 'em fall."

Lat attached as little importance to this remark as people usually do to the remarks of their echoes and satellites, and went on :

"Another time just before I was 'lected sheriff of Sancho county—"

"Why, were you sheriff?" asked Mary, in unfeigned surprise.

"Yes; they'd jest organized Sancho county and they appointed me to act as sheriff till the time fer the 'lection. Then they asked me if they might use my name and I told 'em they might. I was 'lected, and served two years. Well, as I was goin' to tell you, they was four fellers, and they was known as the worst men on the border, rode right into Quinine Center in broad daylight and rode up to the bank and shot the cashier dead and got all the loose change they could, and pulled their freight. The officers took 'em in, and at night a lot of us concluded we'd take 'em out. We got ropes all ready to hang 'em and then we went to the jail and demanded 'em. Of course the sheriff wouldn't let us have 'em—"

"But I thought you were the first sheriff of that county," said Mary, as if she wanted all the intricate points cleared.

A wave of trouble crossed Lat's brow.

"That's another county," he hastily explained, "Quinine Center is in Barbadoes county. Well, as soon as the sheriff told us that, we commenced to beat down the doors. When we got 'em open them bank robbers knowed they was dead men if they stayed there, so they jest lit out and run right through the crowd and broke for the woods that growed in a ravine there. The crowd commenced shootin' at 'em, and one shot that was pretty close set Duck Humbold's vest afire. It made the purtiest target I ever seen. I jest dropped on one knee and let 'em have all that was in my Winchester. The crowd foller'd 'em into the ravine, shootin' at everything ahead they could see movin'. We found 'em all dead but Duck Humbold, and he couldn't a possibly lived till mornin'. He asked if I was in the crowd and when I stepped forward he told me that he wanted me to have a pair of gold-mounted revolvers he'd left in his room at his boardin' place. Well, that feller jest begged 'em not to hang him, as he knowed he'd die 'fore mornin', anyhow. But it wa'n't any any use. They strung him up."

"And why was he so fond of you?" asked Mary.

"Well, you see they was a time when Duck was a good feller. We'd been cowboys together, and Duck was as good a cowboy as ever I saw, why he ever got started wrong, I don't know."

"And did you get out of all those dreadful adventures, and only get wounded once?"

"I was wounded twice. Once when I was a cowboy—it was when I was only seventeen and I'd just started out,—a lot of us took Boniveld, a little town in southern Kansas. I'm goin' to jest admit the truth. I was drunk that time—you see I was only seventeen. Never was drunk but twice in my life—that time, and once when I was eight years old, when I got hold of some whiskey they kept in the house for medicine. But when we undertook to take Boniveld we found we'd bitten off considerable more than we could chaw. One of the boys was lots fuller than the rest and he undertook to run the town all by himself. The marshal come up and throwed his six-shooter down on him, but before he got it level he was lyin' dead on the sidewalk. Then the citizens took it up. There wasn't a window anywhere that didn't have a gun pointed out of it, and I never saw citizens shoot as straight as they did. I saw there wasn't enough of us boys to take the town, so I struck for the stable where I'd left my horse and concluded I'd cut out of a side street and shoot for camp. But jest as I got into the saddle an old feller run round the corner of the barn and shot me right in the shoulder here, with a load of fine bird shot. That made me mad. I raised up my arm to see if he'd hurt it much, and when I found he hadn't, I took after him just as fast as my horse could go. Thinks I now, 'old feller, I'll just fix you plenty.' I had a six-shooter and a Winchester; the old man run into a little house close there, and I shot through that house in every direction as long as there was a load left in either gun. I've often wondered whether I hurt that old chap, but I never found out. Three of the boys was laid out on the streets that time, but I got back to camp alive."

"I suppose you let Boniveld alone after that?"

"Not for long; we took it the next year. There were enough of us to do it then."

"And what did you do after you'd taken a town?"

"O, we just walked or rode up and down the street, takin' up all the room we could, and sassin' the citizens and ridin' our horses into the saloons, and callin' ourselves lords, and drinkin' up all the good whiskey."

"And did the amusement pay for the trouble?" she asked with very perceptible contempt.

Lat winced. He had begun to think his fair auditor regarded him as a hero. He again rose from his chair, pulled up his pantaloons, pulled down his shirt under the arms, pursed up his lips and went to the fireplace and spat. He

spat long and vigorously. He turned and found upon Mary's face no diminution of her contempt. This would never do. One of the ladies was in the hands of the foreign element and the other disgusted and angry.

"You mustn't think I'm too bad a chap," he said. "I never was in many such scrapes—not like some men—and I've quit 'em altogether now. And I know I'm honestly sorry for all the harm I ever did. Now one thing in particular, I've grieved lots about," and here Lat sunk into a pathetic, confidential undertone—"it's this. When I was in the Territory, I done something, that I didn't mean to do at all, but it grieves me all the same. I got a young Indian girl dead in love with me, and I don't know how I ever done it, fer I didn't try to, I'll swear. She was the beauty of her tribe and she offered to leave her people and go away and marry me." And as he concluded, his voice fell softly as with a suggestion of tears.

"Why didn't you marry her?" asked Mary.

"Well," said Lat as he squared himself in his chair; "I didn't want to do anything that would bring disgrace on the Jennings family."

"Disgrace?"

"Yes; you see, our family holds their heads high. They wouldn't have liked it," and Mr. Jennings sighed profoundly.

"Then tell widow Judkins to comb out her crimps;
She ain't the widow for me.
The widow Maguire I'm courting like fire,
She's a dainty, sweet, pretty la-de,"

sang Kid in tones that told his bashfulness was gone for the present at least. Lola and Gus applauded; Mary went to the piano to join in the fun, and Lat and Bill were left to form a mutual admiration society.

"Do you sing, Mr. Jennings? We always ask every one to help entertain."

"I sing once in a while," said Lat.

"Well, the others have been singing. Favor us with something, please."

"Well, I'll do my best."

"Shall I accompany you?"

"Well, I'm not used to that, now. At home my sister, one of 'em, would play the piano and I'd sing; but I've been away from home so much that I've got used to singing by myself." Lat then tuned up. He sang a long ditty con-

cerning a young cowboy who had made a series of moral blunders, and wound up his tangled career by getting shot through the body and dying, in a very touching manner. The "touching manner" refers to the dying act of the unfortunate cowboy as well as to the style of singing. Meeting with considerable praise, he sang two more songs, and though these differed widely in meter and poetic feet, all three were sung to the same tune. The reader may doubt the ability of any one to sing Dan Tucker, Marching through Georgia, and Hail Columbia, or any three songs of similar difference to the same tune; but if he does, it is simply because he was never acquainted with Mr. Jennings. Mr. Jennings had one set, peculiar tune of his own, that resembled a detective's dress suit. It could be pulled out here, tucked up there, lengthened in the back, or shortened all round so as to fit any time, stanza or occasion. He adjusted it to suit all three of his songs, and the crowd seemed much delighted by his performance.

"I am going to suggest something," said Mary. "It is this. On next Saturday evening we will all meet here in this room, and each one must sing a song—yes, you too, Mr. Jim Madnau—and if possible the songs are to be of our own composition. What do you all say?"

Lola, Gus, Kid and Lat consented; the others after considerable urging agreed to try. It was also agreed to invite Bella Martin and a few others to come.

After the party broke up for the night Mary expressed her opinion concerning Mr. Jennings to her husband with the greatest freedom. She related the stories of daring and asked Jim his opinion.

"Well," said Jim, "he may talk too much, but then you can't say. Some fellows have been through a good deal."

"But he says he's only twenty-six years old. And he's been a cowboy nine years, and studied law six months, and taught school and been a sheriff and an editor. It takes time for all those things."

"Well, maybe he started out young."

"He must have."

"Well, Mary, he works well. I put him to clearing out the greasewood in the new land across the creek, and he did tip-top yesterday. Of course it may not last. Give him credit for working well, if for nothing else."

"Perhaps he works hard in the daytime as an offset to the violent friction of his jaw in the evening," suggested Mary, thoughtfully.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PIOUS COWBOY.

MARY's heart yearned toward Hen Hall. The tall, gaunt, bony fellow, with his shock hair, homely features, long red fingers, bronzed face and big yellow teeth, had yet a look in his kindly, sympathetic eyes that lifted him, in her estimation, far out of the common. She longed to talk with him, and if possible, probe to the bottom the secret romance she felt satisfied lay deep down in his heart.

When we are done with love, and have shaken off forever its pains, its pleasures and its mighty risks, there come to face and eye a proclamation that the considerate soul-reader never mistakes. Mary's eyes followed Hen anxiously. On Tuesday morning, as he stood by his saddled horse ready to mount. Jim bade him postpone his start for a while. His duty for the day was the bringing in of some range stock that needed feeding to insure their living through the winter. The morning was cloudy and cold, so Jim bade him wait. He tied his horse and went with Jim to sit by the sitting-room fire.

"Do you calkilate Sam to ride to-day?" he asked. Sam was the name Mr. Lat Jennings had given to the man as his usual appellation. There is nothins like having plenty of names. If one gets spoilt, another may be called in

"No," answered Jim. "When I hired Sam he said he didn't want to ride much; he's afraid of bleedin' at the lungs. Said he had to quit cow-punchin' for fear of it."

"How did they get to calling cowboys cow-punchers, Jim?" demanded Mary.

"O, when they're out on the trail, the cattle get footsore and leg-weary. The boys have to get rods and prod 'em to keep 'em goin'. Punch 'em in the ribs, you know."

Hen, in an effort to get his handkerchief, showed the corner of a book in a great inner coat pocket.

"Do you care if I see that book?" asked Mary, eagerly.

"No ma'am," he answered, as he handed it to her. "But I'll just ask ye not to displace them book-marks. They're a set of thin ones I come across that don't bulge it as much as thicker ones would."

Mary took the old clasped Bible and began to turn through it, barely repressing a smile.

"That book was loved by one as was dear to me," he went on. "They's things in there that I like to study over. The first verse of the nineteenth chapter of Proverbs—you'll find the place marked with a queen of diamonds—has given me a sight o' comfort. I'm poor, but I try to walk in integrity. Then the fourth verse of the sixth chapter of St. Mark—it's marked with the nine of spades, if I don't forgit—about how a prophet isn't likely to be popular among his own folks; they's a sight o' truth in that. Jest open the book and turn through till you come to the king of hearts—you'll find a text right at the beginning of the twentieth chapter o' Proverbs that tells purty straight what liquor is. Then the twenty-first verse of the sixth chapter of St. Matthew, where they's an ace of clubs, is worth rememberin'."

"The Bible, I suppose, is your favorite book?"

"The Bible to me," he said, "is jest like a bunch o' cattle. They's lots o' good books and they's lots o' good bunches o' cattle. But I rate the Bible high, missus, fer it's done me good. I take its passages jest like I take cow brutes, rememberin' that they's good and bad in all herds. If I'm goin' to buy a bunch o' a hundred head out o' a herd o' two thousand, I pick out the best I can find. I keep shy o' old fightin' steers that's outlived their time and is too mean to get fat. They'd jest disgrace my good ones if I put 'em along with 'em. When I'm huntin' Scripture passages, I hunt 'em the same way. I hunt out the good ones, and keep clear of such as is all horns."

"You believe that religion does good, then, Mr. Hall? Some people seem to doubt it."

"Well, I'm afraid this loud prayin', shoutin', noisy religion ain't allers best, though it's maybe done good in its time, and of course it's some better nor stagnation. But gen'ly what tends to perdoose over-excitement, tends to check reason. Then this high excitement has got to react, and it's mighty apt to leave nervousness that'll find what it considers a cure in some kind of excitin' sin. A cool, reasonin' religion, without any boundaries to keep our thoughts from strayin' off after the unfortnit critters that's lost in the hills of sin, is best."

"Your ideas are good. But do you not believe that brotherly love and religion are both broadening?"

"Well, they may be, missus. But great and smart people

keep discussin' questions with big names that, far's I can see, don't have nothin' to do with makin' laws to give the weak a chance, nor puttin' out o' the reach o' the unwise the things that injures 'em and holds 'em down and keeps 'em poor. If they's anything in them great questions, as they call 'em, I say they ort to be fitted for the understandin' and liftin' up o' the masses. Then lots of folks that would really like to do right think that servin' the Lord means shoutin' theirselves hoarse praisin' His name. Now, I tell you how I look at that. I'm workin' for Jim, here; now, if I'd set round the house here tellin' what a good feller Jim is, and singin' songs to him, and gittin' up in the night to serenade him when he'd rather be asleep, I'd be doin' jest like lots o' Christians do; but I wouldn't suit Jim, and I'd git fired mighty quick. But when I buckle on my chaps and rustle out amongst the hills and see that Jim's herd is all right, and ain't sufferin' fer water and feed, and bein' run off the range and branded by cow thieves, then I'm servin' Jim as he wants to be served. And if I was ridin' fer the Lord I'd believe it was His wish that I'd ride out in the ravines of darkness and the hills of sin and keep His herd from bein' branded by the devil and run off to where the feed was short and the drinkin' holes in the cricks all dry, and no cedars and pinons for shelter when the blizzards come. I don't see how I'd be helpin' the Lord out if I jest laid round the ranche eatin' up what grub I could git, and then gittin' down on my prayer bones and taffyin' the Lord up, and askin' fer more. The Bible says somethin' somewhere—I've got the place marked with an ace of diamonds—about how people serve the Lord by feedin' and waterin' and looking after his herd, and I think it would do lots of people good to read it over. When a critter has had his moral natur starved ever sense he was a calf, and been let run a human maverick till the devil took pity on him jest cause nobody else didn't look after him, and put his brand on him so deep that even in the spring when the hair's longest it's no trouble to tell whose herd he belongs to, it shows mighty plain that the cow-punchers of the Lord has been huntin' salary harder than they've been huntin' souls. When the roundup starts in, the good cowman tells his cow-punchers to bring in everything, no matter how old and poor they be—the old, poor cows that's jest managed to pick through the winter, the old residents with long horns, and the little yearlin's, whether they're poor or fat. And I feel that a man that ain't willin' to hunt

human critters that way, ain't fit to do ridin' fer the Lord. Well, Jim, the weather seems to be liftin' a little, so I guess I'll see what I can find, out in the direction of Dwightmere Pass."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE COWBOY AS A POET.

DURING the ensuing week Mr. Jennings developed a most striking tendency to discuss his girls. He had during his interesting and eventful career possessed a great many of these articles. He told of quite a number who had been honored by him with matrimonial engagements, but who invariably exhibited upon maturer acquaintance traits unfitting them to enter into the Jennings family. The gentleman under discussion, had, upon discovering such unfitness, picked a quarrel with these ladies in order that the engagement might come to an end without entirely killing the unfortunates. These circumstances were related at the table, in the barn-yard, in the sitting-room, or just anywhere where an audience could be obtained. Indeed it seemed that an audience was quite as necessary to Mr. Jennings as is a cloud to a rain storm. When all other ears failed him he hunted Mary, for whom he was forming a very decided friendship. He showed her his love letters, wherein "Lat dear," and "Dear Lat," and "Well beloved Latshaw," figured numerously, and explained to her how deeply he regretted his inability to return the affections of all these gushing misses. He assured her with unsteady voice that it was all unintentional on his part. If the girls just would fall in love with him, how was he to help it?

Iola was not favorably impressed until one evening he entered the kitchen and offered to help her wash the dishes. She accepted his services, hunted up a wiping towel, and during all that evening treated him with such considerate kindness and politeness, that very frequently after that Mr. Jennings' red shirt might have been seen bending over the dish table. Kid told Gus Waite of these proceedings and made the most of the narration. Gus was a young man of few words; it has already been stated that he consisted princi-

pally of legs. Being, then, a man of action rather than of words, he sent no war-like message to Lat, but came over very frequently in the evenings himself, and assisted Iola with her dish-washing. The two young men having thus taken the sure and short road to Iola's affections, matters seemed ripe for trouble. Iola looked upon Mr. Jennings much more favorably than formerly, and occasionally reproved Mary for her sarcastic criticisms.

Bella Martin and Broncho Charlie had been asked to come prepared to the song party, and Mr. and Mrs. Hogan had been invited as spectators. Mary prevailed upon Iola not to put on an overplus of finery. The few guests came early and the lamps beamed out on an expectant group. There was a good deal of preliminary conversation and Mary had considerable trouble to find some one to start out. All wanted to hear, but they seemed to prefer hearing some one else. Mary had almost lost courage, when Lat offered to start the ball. And then Mary silently blessed him; he had shown himself possessor of one gentlemanly trait at least. What party-giver, who has vainly tried to entertain a backward, unconfident crowd, who persisted in sitting back and refusing to do aught but whisper and cough, will not ring out a chime for Lat? She bade him sit at the head of the circle and begin, telling the others that they would be expected to sing in the order of their sitting. Then with real sisterly tenderness on her worried face for the man who had helped her out of her dilemma, she took her place in the circle. Lat officially cleared his throat and in a voice strong and high, though harsh, he twisted his one tune round the following words, which, he said, one of his numerous girls had composed for his edification.

THE WILD COWBOY.*

'O, daughter, dear daughter, you know I love you true,
 You know I love you true;
But the love that you have for the wild cowboy, I fear will trouble
 you,

I fear will trouble you;
The love that you have for the wild cowboy, I fear will trouble you.

"O, mother, dear mother, you know I love you well
You know I love you well,

* This song was sung in the author's presence by a young cowboy, and is here used with his permission.

But the love that I have for the wild cowboy, no human tongue can tell,

No human tongue can tell,

The love that I have for the wild cowboy, no human tongue can tell.

I would not marry a farmer's boys who toils in the dirt,
Who toils in the dirt,

But I'll rove and marry the wild cowboy, who wears a buckskin shirt;

Who wears a buckskin shirt,

I'll rove and marry the wild cowboy, who wears a buckskin shirt.

I would not marry a blacksmith's boy, who hammers iron and coal,
Who hammers iron and coal;

But I'll rove and marry the wild cowboy, who carries a purse of gold,

Who carries a purse of gold,

I'll rove and marry the wild cowboy, who carries a purse of gold.

I would not marry a merchant's boy, who wears all his wealth,
Who wears all his wealth,

But I'll rove and marry the wild cowboy, who wears a pistol and belt,

Who wears a pistol and belt,

I'll rove and marry the wild cowboy, who wears a pistol and belt.

So mother, dear mother, though you love me well I know,
Though you love me well I know,

Yet I'll leave my home and mother, and with the cowboy go;

And with the cowboy go,

I will leave my home and mother, and with the cowboy go."

This effort having been roundly applauded, Bella Martin, who sat next, went to the piano, played an unostentatious accompaniment, and sang in a sweet, clear voice :

THE SONG OF THE QUAKING ASPENS.

"Now overhead the god of day, his chariot race has done;
His banners flaunting in the West proclaim the goal is won;
The mountains darken as he flees, 'neath night's advancing wing,
And rustling in the evening air, the quaking Aspens sing.

Far up from the haunts of toil and strife, high over the homes of men,
Their white trunks sway in the lightest breeze, of the grassy mountain glen;
As the zephyrs softly clasp their leaves, there breathes a sweet refrain,
In tones that hint of joy and hope, and banish care and pain.

Their voices are more soft and low, than notes of woodland birds;
 And only elfin ears make out, their sweet and hopeful words,
 But man may hear the rustle soft, of their tuneful silvery leaves,
 That is far more sweet than the breath of June, mid yellow harvest
 sheaves.

Sway on bright leaves from your slender stalks, through the scented
 evening air;
 Sing courage to despairing hearts, speak comfort everywhere;
 Bid haste the day of world-wide peace, of which we fondly dream,
 When through the night of gloom and woe, the stars of hope shall
 gleam.

Our lives are like these rolling hills, that tower to the sky,
 We have our hours of warmth and light, when fortune's sun rides
 high;
 But when arrives the darkened hour, which the fates to each life
 bring,
 Let us bide some voice within us wake, and like the Aspens, sing."

Since Bella had composed this herself, she was overwhelmed with congratulations from all save Penobscot Bill. Bill of course had been accustomed to such fine poetry and superior music "back yonder" that he did not become effusive. Gus Waite, sitting next, sang in very good tone to Iola's accompaniment, a song of which he modestly admitted himself to be author :

RICH, OR POOR.

The rich man drives his matched bays out
 In the yellow afternoon;
 In December he has hothouse fruit—
 He eats ice-cream in June.
 He feels himself a mighty lord,
 But listen to what I say;
 There's a time when the poor man his vantage feels,
 And that's on tax-paying day.

The rich man gloats o'er his houses and lands,
 And his barns well filled with grain;
 With pride he notes his sleek, fat stock—
 He is free from poverty's chain.
 He smiles in happy security,
 But my voice with wisdom rings—
 The poor man has far less to lose
 When the cyclone loudly sings.

The rich man owns large tracts in town,
 Well covered with dwellings and stores,
 That rise to the clouds in splendor superb,
 In the glory of nine or ten floors.

His bounding mind can no further rise,
Than to wish his buildings higher—
But the poor man breathes more easily,
When the town gets well on fire.

Gus having been roundly applauded, Mary sang,

THE PEAK.

My cottage stands in a valley,
That's shaded by lines of hills;
And the roar of a rapid river,
My ears with music fills.
As I gazed away to the westward,
At the bordering line of heights,
My eyes are caught by a mountain crest
Where the first beam of morning alights.

Far above the deep, dark canon
That affrights with its somber gloom,
The peak towers loftily upward
Like a chieftain's battle plume;
And oft when the thick gray cloud hosts,
Swarm around it in frowning array,
The peak is obscured from my vision,
Till the baffled besiegers give way.

And then the all-conquering sunbeams
Return to their garrison high,
And skillfully guard their embrasures,
Neath the wrath of an angry sky;
The clouds will return and attack them
With their gloom and their darkness and chill;
But the peak will emerge from their shadow,
And the landscape with beauty will fill.

When I see the thick fogs dispersing,
From its brow to its rocky feet
I think how oft life's sorrows
Speed away with wings as fleet;
Joy and care are but light and shadow,
They drive each other away,
And he is the wiser mortal
Who bids joy longest stay.

It was now Jim's turn. He tried to beg off, insisting that he was no musician, but the crowd was inexorable. So Jim went to the piano, played an accompaniment with the forefinger of his right hand, and sang Peter, Peter, Pumpkin Eater. His wife boxed his ears with a folded newspaper and then called upon Hen Hall, who sang, in a voice not refined and elegant, but strong and pathetic, his voice vibrating lovingly over the names of the little creatures he described, the following :

THE RANGE CALVES.

Our Saviour bade us feed and shelter
 The children he counted so dear,
 But who will feed the little range calves
 When the range is bare and drear?
 The range calves, the range calves,
 The hungry little range calves;
 O, who will feed the range calves,
 When the range is bare and drear?

When chill December's heavy skies
 Throw down their weight of snow,
 And sweep the range with their icy breath,
 Where shall the range calves go?
 The range calves, the ranges calves,
 The little shiv'ring range calves;
 O, who will shelter the range calves,
 Away from December's snow.

Ere the flowers of spring bloom forth again,
 Thousands of them will lie,
 Close beside mothers who fought in vain,
 'Gainst the sky's inclemency.
 The range calves, the range calves,
 The little stiffened range calves,
 But they'll feel no more hunger and shiver no more,
 At the sky's inclemency.

Then came Iola, who sang :

THE SONG OF THE MOUNTAIN MAID.

I love these wild mountains so rocky and steep,
 The gloom of the gorge, the deep blue of the sky;
 I love the dark river that lashes its wall—
 I sing to the star that shine softly on high.
 But the sweets of old nature my heart cannot fill,
 I am lone as I gaze on the river's mad wave;
 I hunger to taste the fond love of my kind;
 May the love that I love be a vaquero brave.

I love the grand storm as it stretches afar,
 When the peals of its thunder roll deep in the night,
 When the lightning illumines with its weird, spectral glare,
 And the storm king rules all with his power and might.
 But e'en while the thunder is rolling apace,
 And while the fierce winds all relentlessly rave,
 I send out my prayer on the wings of the storm,
 That the love I shall love be a vaquero brave.

To the dream one I love I forever will cling;
 There's a light in his eye that assures me of truth;
 I will clasp his strong hand through the long, happy years,
 And the love of my age be the love of my youth.
 My dream love is fearless in heart and in deed,
 In the cause of all justice stern danger he braves;
 His strength is the strength of the storm-tested oak,
 And the rôle that he plays is the hero who saves.

Gus Waite was standing by the piano during this song and it is the opinion of many who were present that he informed Iola that he would like her to bear well in mind the fact that he was a vaquero; but this is not substantiated and is after all, only an opinion. Penobscot Bill was next called upon. Bill denied the authorship of his song, but his denial like many other, was confession itself. In a voice well-nigh shaming a fog horn he sang:

THE COWBOY'S WAIL.

“ I'll tell you all the reason
 I can't git the gal I choose;
 She's dead gone on a little tenderfoot **dude**,
 And that gives me the blues.
 O, if I had a lasso,
 Some two miles long or more,
 I'd choke that dude till his sneakin' soul,
 Histed out fer the evergreen shore.

The next time he comes prowlin'
 And grazin' round my range,
 If his death beller does not shake these **hills**,
 It's goin' to be strange.
 I'll drop him where I find him,
 But his hide won't be for sale;
 As a warnin' to dudes and tenderfeet
 It will hang on a cottonwood rail.”

To say that Bill was applauded would but faintly sum up the facts. He was so vehemently urged to favor the crowd again that he graciously consented; and after a prefatory shake of his curls sang a long ballad concerning a gentleman of freebooting proclivities who secluded himself in a chimney and eventually had the misfortune to fall down into the fire and narrowly escape roasting. Kid then sang,

THE MESTEZO'S SERENADE.

Pray thee listen, lady mine,
 While the stars so sweetly shine;
 Ere the shadows in the hills,—

Like the gloom of human ills—
 Yield their depths to morn's bright king ;
 For undying love I sing ;
 For undying love I sing.

When the sun shall slowly rise,
 And shall bid thee ope thine eyes,
 Then the heart that knows thy sway
 Shall be weary miles away,
 Where the torrent, peak, and tree
 Shall thine only rivals be ;
 Shall thine only rivals be.

Antonita, if thou hear
 Let thy voice my dolor cheer.
 Send a message to my heart
 Lest two lives forever part ;
 And thy wealth of love I'll store,
 In my heart forevermore ;
 In my heart forevermore.

As Kid's favor for Bella was not generally known, the singer was not honored by any annoying glances. His song was very well received. Broncho Charlie declined to sing, but the Hogans sang together the sweet old hymn, "Jesus, Lover of my Soul." Mr. Jennings was kind enough to consent to sing a song of his own manufacture, since "The Wild Cowboy" was the production of one of his numerous girls, and not his own effort. The poem he now offered had been printed in *The Howling Blizzard* at the time that sheet had the distinguished honor to be engineered by Mr. Jennings. The song alluded in a pathetic manner to the sore trials of a cowboy's life, and in its final stanza the author roundly declared his intention to abandon range riding and stay at home "with a true and loving wife."

Just before departure the young people had Mary play the piano while they engaged in the interesting game of "Marching to Jerusalem." In this game a line of persons prepare to march round a double row of chairs placed backs together; there must be one person more than the number of chairs; the captain sits down at the piano—any instrument will do—and begins to play a spirited air to which the players march; the captain suddenly stops playing, when the marchers wildly scramble for chairs. The one who is left without then draws a chair out of the row and retires from the game while the others proceed until all the chairs are taken. Bella, Iola, Lat, Bill, Charlie, Kid, Gus and Jim played the first game with such success that the Hogans

rose and joined in the second, the old man bursting out in loud snorts of laughter, and the old lady screaming with mirth. Even Hen Hall guffawed as Kid, by an effort of legerdemain celerity, succeeded in slipping under Penobscot Bill and causing that gentleman to fall sideways and lay the wealth of his curls in Mrs. Hogan's lap. It was decided to extend the invitations to the next literary evening so that there would be enough ladies to dance a set or two. Amy Chellis had gone back to the city with Amelia, and Mr. Mopely had left Aspen Creek, in consequence of his school being closed. It was decided to invite the Chase girls and Stanley Lancaster, and to have original story telling for the bill of fare. Of course the Chase girls could not tell stories. They belonged to the large family, who when at parties sit back and look at people, no matter how badly they are needed in the entertaining. But they could dance, and so it was decided to invite them. The time was set at two weeks from the song evening.

CHAPTER XX.

THE CROOKEDNESS OF FATE.

THE literary evening at Madnaus' held until near twelve o'clock, and as a consequence the household was late astir in the morning. Mary arose with a mind soaring in triumph. Her evening had been a brilliant success. She had softened wonderfully toward Lat Jennings; she had been sarcastic and even rude to him the week before, but since he had rescued her from a dull party by manfully starting the ball which all others refused to start, she could see manliness and gentility all over him. She resolved to treat him with the greatest consideration while at the breakfast table. But how often the fates contrive, etc.

She hurried into the kitchen whither Iola had not yet appeared, and stooped over the fire which Jim had just kindled. Her face was gaining in color and character and was losing none of its old-time animation. She no longer coughed. As she filled the tea-kettle from the pail Hen Hall brought in, Iola entered the room.

"We must hurry breakfast, Iola; it is dreadfully late," she said.

Iola had evidently had too much enjoyment the evening before. She pouted.

"I hate cooking," she said. "Why don't you make Jim hire a girl. He's able to, a dozen times over."

"I don't want any girl but you. It isn't best for me to be perfectly idle and I don't desire to be. As long as we hire the washing done we don't have to work hard. Jim wanted to hire me a girl in the first place, but I wanted to give you a home. I want you to teach next winter and then, of course, I'll hire a girl."

"I wish people could live without work.

"I don't. The necessity of work is the secret of all improvement." Mary here found it necessary to go upstairs for a supply of clean towels. She tried to laugh off her vexation at Iola, for she knew that young lady well enough to know that she would be penitent in two minutes, laughing in four, and singing like a lark in six. The arithmetical progression of Iola's moods was well fixed in her mind. But when in passing through the men's sleeping room on her way to the clothes closet, she endeavored to dodge Hen Halls chapejos as they lay upon the floor, and in so doing stumbled over Kid's every-day boots and came near stabbing herself to the heart on Penobscot Bill's spurs that lay concealed under Lat Jenning's cast-off shirt, she lost patience. It was only an incident, however, and she went downstairs loaded with towels and struggling against rising ill-will toward the gentlemen of her household.

But the worst was yet to happen. While Iola was singing over the oatmeal-kettle, Mary took a cream pitcher in one hand and a milk pitcher in the other and went to the milk house. It will be remembered that the Hopkinises had charge of Jim's cows, but Mary had had a little stone building created where the milk of two cows was kept for the family table. As she opened the door a terrible sight met her eyes. Bertie Herron and the cat sat upon a bench beside an open milk can. The cat was industriously lapping cream while Bertie was feeding himself the same luxury with a piece of shingle. Mary gave vent to a despairing cry, which every housekeeper knows came right from her heart. She seized the fragment of shingle, shook the cream off it and then employed it to give Bertie a sound spanking, after which she bundled him and his partner in pilfering out of the door.

"What are you in my milk house for? And why do you

come up here this time of day?" she fiercely demanded.

"Boo, hoo; come to see you."

"You did! Well, I'd be glad if you'd wait till I'm ready to entertain company."

"Boo, hoo! Why didn't you whip ta cat, too? Se had her nose in ta cream."

"She wasn't to blame. She couldn't have got in there if you hadn't opened the door and let her in. Learn right now, young man, that when you lead a weaker or more ignorant creature into doing wrong, that you deserve punishment whether you get it or not. Go home, now, and stay with your mamma."

"Se's goin' visitin' to Mrs. Gregg's."

"Has she gone yet?"

"No, but se was gettin' weddy. Se had her bwown dwess on."

"Won't there be any one there, then?"

"Nobody but gappa."

"Well, go and stay with him."

"No, no; Mit Madnau, let me tay here. Gappa won't let me holler. I'll be good and make ta cat be good. Let me tay." And the young man set up such a hue and cry that Mary kissed him, bade him be good and stay.

As a consequence of these little domestic breezes she sat down to breakfast in a rather troubled frame of mind. The men were not at their best, either. One of Penobscot Bill's peculiarities was a tendency to snore, which tendency was trebled and sometimes quadrupled after any exciting event. Bill and Lat were bed-fellows, and it had been necessary for Hen Hall to "sing out" to Lat three different times during the night to wake Bill and stop his sonorous snore. This had caused more or less sleeplessness, which is generally the cause of more or less ill-humor. But, strange to say, Mr. Jennings was serene. He had been treated with much consideration by both Mary and Iola the previous evening, and of course a gentleman who has seen such direful adventures as he had would not be disturbed by a well-intentioned snore. He appeared at breakfast clad in blue overalls, blue flannel shirt and abundant self-confidence.

Mary had dressed herself for the morning in a dark green flannel, embroidered with gold-colored silk. It had been a beautiful dress, but was now fit for only everyday wear.

"Jim," said Lat impressively, "you ought to buy your wife a cart-load of green dresses; that's the most becoming thing I ever saw."

"O, it was pretty once," said Mary, sadly. "But once at night a party of us young people were camping out near a creek. I walked away from the camp-fire to get some water from the creek. I didn't know it was a dangerous thing to do, and before I knew what I was doing I fell over a bank about four feet high into a deep mud hole. I called for help and my companions dragged me out. I had this dress on, and although I washed it carefully, it was ruined."

"Well, now, I had just about such a time as that once," said Mr. Jennings. "I went to see my girl and stayed till late. I was gallopin' my horse home, and first thing I knowed he went over a bank fifteen feet high. Gosh, it was mornin' 'fore I knowed anything."

"Was the horse hurt?" asked Jim.

"No, he came down on a bed o' dry sand. But I tell you it shook me up. I could feel my head spin for hours. I thought for a little while that I never would be right again, but I managed to come out of the kinks."

"Some people have big runs of luck," said Kid. "Now if that had been me, what few brains I had would have been scattered over three counties."

Lat paid no attention to this volatile remark but went on to tell Mary how in that dress and with her hair arranged that way she reminded him of a lady who had once been his best girl, and who had wept bitterly when she found it was not her destiny to enter the Jennings family. Mary's ill-humor was increasing. It was very flattering to be compared to a lady whom Mr. Jennings had rejected, but Mary was an ungrateful creature. Her Aunt Ellen had told her so many a time. Then her experience with Stanley Lancaster and the Chellises had well-nigh dispelled her credulity, and there was danger just now of her independence and irritability getting away of her. She leaned back and said in a stage terror voice:

"Mr. Jennings, it is impossible for me to express my sympathy with the unfortunate female who, through her resemblance to my unworthy self, was bereft of a life of bliss."

Mr. Jennings seemed astonished. In the first place he was not used to such speeches from his lady friends and secondly, he could scarcely believe he had made such a mess of his intended compliment. It came from trying to kill two birds with one stone—from mixing a compliment to a lady with the story of a past conquest. He must be careful

next time. His eyes darkened, his upper lip shortened, and with his black hair, his dark blue shirt and overalls, and finger nails in deep mourning, he looked the impersonation of dark and splendid remorse, and sadly misunderstood amiability.

"You don't quite understand, Mrs. Madnau," he said. "Her looks were all that attracted me in the start. If her other qualities had equalled her beauty, I'd a sure married her. But when I found she wasn't what her looks indicated, I quit her and hunted me a new girl."

"Appearance always indicates character," said Mary, firmly.

"Now I can't quite agree with you, Mrs. Madnau. Now I used to know a girl that looked as innocent as an angel. But she told a lie to one o' my best friends and went square back on him, after she'd promised to marry him, and hurt his feelin's like everything. But I tell you I got even with her, though. I kept company with her about three months and then I quit her, and I broke her heart."

"That was mean of you, Sammie," said Kid. "You ought to have given the girl some tulip salve to mend that heart."

"We women are very unfortunate creatures," said Iola.

"I don't think so," said Lat. "Now when I was round takin' up my ranches and campin' out on 'em, exposed to all kinds o' weather and hardships, I used to think how nice it would be to be a woman."

"So you've got land then?" asked Jim.

"I've got four ranches. I've got forty acres right at the edge of Quinine Center, that's worth about four hundred dollars an acre now. Then I've got two stock ranches in western Kansas and a tree claim in the southern part of this state. I've been tryin' to save up a little as I went along, so I could keep a wife right when I git ready to marry and settle down," and he looked volumes at Iola.

Mary took a piece of bread crust, dropped her fork as an excuse to stoop down, and aimed the bread crust at her sister's toe with such precision that it took effect, causing Iola to laugh at a very solemn remark made by Hen Hall.

Lat seeing the floor unoccupied, went on :

"Now if I had to keep and treat a wife the way some men do, I never would marry."

"But you don't seem to be in any hurry about marriage," said Mary. "You seem to prefer engaging yourself and

then breaking off. I'm afraid you Kansas gentlemen are not gallant."

"Say, I'm from Kansas," said Kid, who was rapidly gaining in self-possession.

"And Gus Waite is from Kansas, too," exclaimed the ready but thoughtless Iola.

"Well," said Lat, "if I was goin' to marry a woman and would find out five minutes before the ceremony that she wasn't a lady, I wouldn't have her. I've made up my mind that my wife shall be a lady. Now, once I was goin' to marry a girl—had my mind all made up—and was just goin' to tell her. I went up the steps and just as I got to the door I heard her mother tell her to do somethin', I didn't understand what; and the girl spoke up and said she wouldn't do it—she'd be darned if she did. Well, I just turned round and walked down them steps and hunted home."

"That girl spoke up just in time to save herself, then," said Kid.

The over-confident construe our rudeness as jealousy when it comes from their own sex, and as an attempt to hide undue interest when it comes from the opposite one. So imagining that Kid was madly jealous and Mary and Iola on the brink of love, Mr. Jennings went on :

"I used to have lots of fun with the girls back where I come from ; I used to get 'em to bet on elections and things. I'd bet 'em a pair of gloves or a new hat against a kiss. I generally knowed in the first place how the thing was goin' to come out, so I nearly always got the kiss."

"I used to have a nation big time with the gals back yonder," said Bill.

"Why, did you bet, Mr. Jennings ?" asked Mary.

"Bet ? why Mrs. Madnau, I staked four hundred dollars once on a single shake of dice."

"And won, of course," said Kid.

"Yes, I won. And I never felt so good in my life. jest turned my old six-shooter loose through the ceilin' as long as there was a shot left in it. Then I run out in the street and pulled my other pop, and shot the lights out of every store in town."

"You must have had a long-winded gun," said Kid.

"O, I always kept my cartridge belt full."

"You ought to have been sheriff at that time so you could have arrested yourself," said Mary.

"It was after that when I was sheriff," answered Lat,

complacently; he'd have Jim Madnau fearfully jealous one of these days. "But the most fun I ever had out of a bet was one I made once with my girl. We was out buggy ridin' and I stole a bow of ribbon from her. I was goin' out cowboyin' next day, and expected to be gone a good while. I asked her to let me take the ribbon along to remember her by. She said she wouldn't care, only she knew I'd give it to the first girl I took a notion to. I offered to bet her a dollar against a kiss that I'd bring it back with me when I come. She took me up. Well I was gone two years. When I come back, she'd got to be a school-teacher. I went to her school-house one mornin' and waited till I seen her comin'. Then I went to meet her, holdin' the ribbon up between my fingers. She let on like she wanted to beg off, but I sure kissed her all the same."

Mary rose from the table, her face pallid save for the dangerous red spot on either cheek. Jim had been mentally calculating how much his beef cattle would bring per head if sold on foot, and had not noted the latest drift of the table talk. But when he saw the agitated face and heaving breast of his wife he became alarmed.

"Are you sick, Mary?" he hastily asked.

"No," she said, in a voice heavily fraught with rising indignation, "I'm dead." Then she walked majestically out of the room and sought her chamber. Jim followed her as soon as the breakfast crowd dispersed. He found her lying on the bed, white and angry.

He knelt and placed her head on his arm, but asked reproachfully: "Mary, what made you do the way you did?"

"What makes him sit at the table and talk like he was Pompey, and the women nothing but a set of ninepins?" she demanded.

"Well, I expect the women he has been used to, were soft. Such fellows naturally hunt that kind. You know there are women, Mary, that haven't a particle of self-will, or judgment, or strength. But don't treat him rude in your own house, and at your own table, Mary—"

"But Jim, every once in a while he touches my fingers when I hand him a cup of coffee or a glass of milk."

"Well, that may be accident; it can't help but happen sometimes. But your fingers belong to me, and it's me that ought to kick."

"Well, I wish you would—wish you'd kick him out of the house. It seems to me that it happens too often for accident."

"O, if I thought he did it a purpose, I'd go right out now and boot him clear off the ranche. But it ain't best to make a fuss about every little thing. Go slow and be sure, and give him just as little chance to be impudent as you can. I don't doubt he's a rake, but when a man's got to have as much help as I have, he can't always look too close. Of course if I'd find out for certain he was a rake I'd fire him no matter how bad I needed him. He's an awful good hand—just a number one hand in fact—and I'd like for you to get along with him the best you can."

"And then he's so rich," Mary went on, "owns so much land—and I very much fear it's all located under his finger nails."

"But Mary, a ranche hand can't always have his nails clean."

"He might find time to dig them out on Sunday morning."

"But you admitted the other day, Mary, that he was good about bringing in water and wood."

"Yes, but he comes round the kitchen to see what his chances are for kissing Iola with that upper lip that he's already worn short kissing the girls. And then he's so brave, too. He's been the terror of many a southern Kansas town, and a mighty punisher of his enemies."

"O, there's once in a while a barking dog that'll bite."

"And then he's been such a mighty editor."

"Well, Mary, you don't know. He may have been in a printing office."

"Yes, he may have been walking along in front of one telling his big yarns, and some fellow may have come up and kicked him clear through the building."

It will be seen that Mary's association with the cowboys was having some effect upon her language.

Jim patted her head, then lifted her up and placed her on her feet.

"Come on, now," he said. "Treat him civilly or else let him alone."

"But I can't let him alone. He will talk to me."

"Well, do the best you can. I need help and he's a good hand."

They found the sitting-room deserted. Iola was in the kitchen struggling with the dishes. The men soon filed downstairs, and as the stair door opened into the sitting-room Mary must meet them. Lat and Penobscot Bill were gor-

geous; they, together with Charlie Ford, were going to eat dinner with the Chases. Hen and Kid had made some modification in their attire to be ready for afternoon meeting, but they did not intend to visit. When Mary learned of the intention of the two former gentlemen, she began to tell Lat the good qualities of the Chase girls and he was soon as radiant as if no dark cloud had settled over the breakfast-table. No matter how deep the wound in Lat's heart, the prospect of a new girl seemed to cure it and spirit its memory away.

CHAPTER XXI.

VARIOUS OCCURRENCES.

MR. STANLEY LANCASTER had early made the acquaintance of Mr. Latshaw Aurelius Jennings. That strange attraction that draws kindred souls together had found them out and set their feet a-marching. It happened in this wise: Mr. Jennings was grubbing greasebrush in the lower portion of a field. Mr. Lancaster was riding along the fence just outside the upper portion of the field and at an angle of some forty-five degrees from Mr. Jennings. Mr. Jennings, being seized with a sudden spell of communicativeness and the distance not being great, calculated that by moving straight up the field, he would reach a certain point at the same time the slowly-moving rider did. Mr. Jennings supposed the rider to be his friend, Broncho Charlie, so without hesitation he advanced. When very near he discovered his mistake but of course he would make the best of it. He moved on to the apex of the angle and gracefully saluted Mr. Lancaster. Mr. Lancaster, not to be outdone by anybody, gracefully saluted Mr. Jennings. They were kindred souls who had long sought each other. They introduced themselves and fell to talking; they hung upon each other's words. The blonde beauty sat sideways in his saddle, his right leg over the horn, while he gave utterance to his opinions and his conjectures. The brunette beauty sat on the fence, his high heels behind a cottonwood pole below him, his hat pushed back, and his eyes full of interest. The two gentlemen accommodated each other with their opinions of Hen Hall, Kid, and the Chase girls. They then discussed

Jim Madnau, Mary and Iola. Mr. Jennings had not then met the Chase girls and Mr. Lancaster had not met Iola, but they each recited, with the greatest minuteness, what particulars were in their possession. Their opinions of Jim tallied wonderfully. Jim was slow and would readily submit to have the wool pulled over his eyes; then he wasn't overly agreeable and was as full of fool notions about men and their duty, as a sheep's wool is full of cockle burs. Then the two gentlemen agreed that although he made so free with the boys, that he secretly thought himself superior to most of them. Mary, now, was too good for him in some ways; Jim was able to take care of her in case she became a downright invalid and that was well enough. Mr. Lancaster would have married her himself had it not been for certain reasons; he concluded, after thinking the matter over, that he'd let Jim take her and he'd try to do better. She had been rather hanging after him, and after he had made up his mind he didn't want her he had told Jim he intended to marry her just to hurry Jim up. Mr. Lancaster wanted to get the girl off his hands and he knew that Jim was so furiously obstinate that when he told him that, he'd marry the girl post haste, whether he wanted her or not. And the scheme had worked to perfection. Why didn't he ever visit the Madnaus? Well, he and Jim had had a few words about the ditch, last fall, and Jim harbored spite. Jim was a great fellow to harbor spite anyhow. But he did intend to come over and see Miss Iola. If she suited him well enough, he didn't say but what he might possibly marry her when he got ready to settle down. Then Mr. Jennings told how he believed—he wouldn't have Mr. Lancaster mention it for the world—but he believed he could get Mrs. Madnau yet. She pretended to get mad once in a while, but he could get her in a good humor in no time. He'd let Mr. Lancaster know if she came right out and declared her love. Then they discussed Mr. Lancaster's horse and Mr. Jennings's grubbing hoe; then seeing that Mr. Lancaster was still loth to depart, Mr. Jennings related the story of the Indians and the buffalo wallow, only this time there were sixteen Indians, and the weapon of defense which saved the hero's life was an old needle gun, and the lunch was a pair of ham sandwiches. The story of the bank robbers and the taking of Boniveld followed, only this time Mr. Jennings was the sheriff who arrested the bank robbers, and in addition to the load of fine bird shot received in his shoulder at Boniveld, a girl had

rushed out of a kitchen door and pelted him with raw potatoes, round and huge. He had afterward "got even" with the girl by making her acquaintance and breaking her heart. Mr. Lancaster then related how he had left a large number of girls sore hearted. Mr. Jennings then related the story of the young Indian girl, who for his sake had offered to desert her tribe and the home of her fathers, and come and dwell amid the boiled cabbage and rag carpets of the pale face. But on this occasion he had intended to break the girl's heart; her old red-skinned father had tried to beat Mr. Jennings on a horse trade, and of course he must have vengeance. Whenever people tried to get round him he just up and showed 'em who they were fooling with. He camped right on their trail till he got even with 'em, or ahead, generally ahead.

And then Mr. Lancaster smoothed his long blonde mustache both ways and wound the ends round his fingers and laughed his long, smooth little laugh, and looked out over the parks and down the valley till his eyes gazing nearer looked across the field and fixed themselves on Madnau's house. Mr. Jennings's eyes rested there a moment also. Mr. Lancaster again gave vent to his little laugh, but there were traces of nervousness in it; it was less liquid and flowing than it had been in the old time. He gave Mr. Jennings good day and rode toward the hills.

Mary treated Lat with great courtesy during the week following the breakfast-table episode. He decided that her anger arose because she herself had not been the fortunate lady who received the kisses heretofore mentioned. He therefore resolved to tell no more love stories for a time. He would sing, and would tell stories of adventure, for all women love bravery. It may as well be admitted that Lat was giving much of his time to thoughts of Mary. He had never allowed such a trifle as the fact of an admired woman being married to stand between him and his courtship. Then Mary did not receive his attention so favorably as his lady friends usually did. She was the game difficult to hunt that so fascinates the practiced hunter. Whenever he congratulated himself that he was progressing, she took one of her tantrums. Sometimes he doubted if she knew he admired her or even cared. Sometimes he even thought she was content with that Jim Madnau! The idea, anyhow, of a woman marrying such a man, when such a chap as himself would be along in a few months!

Her face, which at first he had thought only ordinarily pretty, had now impressed its image upon his mind. The beauty of the unusual and slightly irregular featured face possesses a rare advantage over its symmetrical and perfect fellow. The latter shows its greatest advantages to our first glance; the former has surprises;—there is study; there are things to be learned; a fascinating volume is opened to us; we will feel the curiosity desire until we have read it through at least once; we may find it so absorbing that we must read it again and again—must hold it before us during our entire lives. The other cloys us by repeating only what we at first perceived. The homeliest among us are more fortunate than he who unintentionally shows the best that is in him to the casual glance. It is our duty to look our best, just as it is to the advantage of the fascinating book to bear a persuasive title. But woe to the popularity of either book or face in which there is naught of interest beyond the title page.

To be considered beautiful a thing must be beautifully considered. Mary was beautifully considered by Jennings because he admired her. We cannot see the little faults and imperfections of those we love, and we love them because our sight is thus shortened. Had Mary been aware of this favor she would have conscientiously labored to set it aside; but because she did not know of its existence she unconsciously fanned it into flame. She allowed her moods to make no difference in her treatment of the other hired men, but Lat always received the full benefit of her mind's changes. When out of sorts because of ill health or household annoyances, she hurled at him neat and biting little sarcasms, and made amusement for the whole table over his unprotected head; then when her humor improved she would repent her unladylike behavior and conduct herself toward him with the most considerate kindness. She could readily see that Hen and Kid shared her dislike, and the latter often came to her rescue when she was berating Mr. Jennings with all her might. These cross fires were productive of much amusement to Hen and Iola, but Jim disliked them. He feared that should Jennings lose his temper he would fearfully punish the young and slender Kid at the first opportunity.

One day at dinner, after Mary's nerves had been severely subjected to the Bertie Herron test, Lat obtained the floor. He told how on one occasion a herd of fifteen thousand head of cattle had stampeded in his direction. The leaders of the

herd had him down before he knew what he was doing, and the rest were coming at full speed. He lay flat on the ground, his face toward the advancing multitude, and "turning both his six shooters loose at 'em, turned 'em aside" and kept himself from being crushed into a jelly. They all ran past, but not a hoof was set upon him.

Jim wriggled uneasily in his chair.

"How did you know there were fifteen thousand head, Sammie? Did you count 'em as they flew past?" asked Kid.

"I knowed the herd."

"Say, Sammie there's a Bible story that beats that 'un; you ort to read it," said Hen.

"I've read the Bible; what's the story about?"

"It's the story of Ananias and Sapphira."

"Well, I don't jest remember how it goes; I've read it, though."

"You ought to have been a soldier, Mr. Jennings; you should not waste your military strategy on herds of cattle;" said Mary, with a very sweet look.

"I've been a soldier, Mrs. Madnau; was in the Kansas State Guards six months. It was when they was lookin' for the Indians to break out."

"Indeed," answered Mary. "Perhaps it was while you were in the service that this story got started: A chief went to the Indian agent and tried to buy some rifles; the agent suspected they were to be used against the whites, so he asked:

"Do you want these guns to kill the soldiers with?"

"No," answered the chief; "want gun to kill cowboy; kill soldier with a club."

Lat blackened; he was now confident that the lady not only did not return his affections, but that she desired to make him ridiculous in the eyes of Iola as well. His face was of purplish hue, and even his finger-nails seemed to be bounded by darker semicircles. He flashed a menacing look at Mary, and said angrily: .

"I'd jest like to know why it is that you're always ready to say somethin' that's throwin' off on me?"

Mary concluded it was time to change the subject. Jim was pressing his boot warningly against her toe. Iola looked frightened. So in very sweet tones she began to discuss a question which had frequently been touched upon at table before—the theory that persons sitting or standing near to-

gether are apt to have, to a certain extent, similar thoughts.

Lat, still angry, took up the ball.

"I've noticed one thing," he said, decidedly; "I've noticed that no matter what I think or say that you've always got something to say that's derogatory to my character." This sentence was finished in a much more civil tone than the one in which it begun, for Lat caught sight of Jim's face, and saw that the slow-going gentleman was becoming aroused. Jim opened his lips, but Mary pressed his foot. She wanted to fight her own battle. She looked coolly at Jennings, and said:

"What you say is only another proof of my theory; your thoughts are generally derogatory to your character, and whenever we meet the line of sympathy extends to my mind and if I speak my thoughts at all, they must necessarily be uncomplimentary to you. If you want my opinion of you to improve, take action by thinking of nobler things." Then she smiled, reached out her hand for his milk glass, filled it and handed it back with queenly grace.

Jim still looked wrathful, and Mr. Jennings remained silent.

"Mary, Mary," pleaded Jim, as soon as he could find her alone, "what made you say that?"

"What makes him yarn so?"

"But practice self-control, Mary," he pleaded, folding his arms round her.

"There is nothing I admire more than self-control," she said; "and nothing I like better than to see it give way at the right time; but I'll be good, Jim—I declare I will. I'll bite my tongue half off before I let such a thing happen again."

For several days after this episode Lat spoke to Mary only when doing so was well-nigh unavoidable. He was aroused at last. The one thing he could *not* endure was to have his veracity and courage questioned in the same breath. He mentally decided to turn his attentions toward Iola, and let the heart of the unappreciative Mrs. Madnau go unbroken. But Iola was cold save when Mr. Jennings assisted with the supper-dishes; and Mr. Jennings swore dire oaths to himself and the lonely greasebrush, that not a dish belonging to the Madnau household would he wash until he received from said household the treatment due a member of the Jennings family. One evening just before the men came in to supper, Jim advised Mary to smooth over matters for the

obnoxious hand. He feared Jennings would leave, and he very much desired to retain him until after the first hay crop was cut, at least. So Mary watched for Lat, and meeting him alone, gave him a few words of embarrassed apology, telling him it was natural for her to war with any one who would war with her, and begging him to overlook past rudeness. Lat graciously made terms; he beamed good-will to every one at supper, and after the meal was over washed dishes in a manner to delight the heart of any miss of eighteen. He forgot all his past troubles with these irreverent ladies, and in the bliss of restored favor his ready tongue acknowledged no restraint.

"Where did you learn to wipe dishes so nicely?" queried Iola.

"Well, when I was down in the Territory workin' for m' uncle, I cooked most of the time, and the other boys rode. M' uncle didn't care for the money; he was so anxious for me to stay with him that he paid me eighty or a hundred dollars a month."

"But you didn't have regular dishes, did you?"

"No; tin dishes. But I tell you the boys was particular. I jest had to make them tin things shine."

"You ought to have saved lots of money."

"But I didn't, though. We boys all carried lots of style. I used to wear an eighteen dollar hat for everyday, and a pair of boots made to order that never cost less'n nineteen or twenty dollars. My hair was long then—come clear down over my shoulders; used to keep it braided in long braids. Then I was always killin' rattlesnakes, and I used to skin 'em and paste their hides around my boot-tops, and around my hat-crown, and on my saddle skirts and stirrup leathers."

"Well—you must have looked peculiar."

"Well, I guess you'd a thought so. One time four of us come up out of the Territory to Quinine Center; we didn't let our folks know we'd come, but we jest went to a barber's and got him to trim our mustaches and unbraid our hair and oil it, and then we went to the skatin' rink, rattlesnake skins and revolvers and all. Well, everybody else jest got off the floor and looked at us four. I was flyin' along when my partner slid right agin me. My rollers flew up, and down I went right onto one o' my revolvers; it took me right in the side here, and like to a made me sick. But I took off my cartridge belt and both my guns and hung 'em on the wall, and then I jest more'n flew round there. Well, they was a feller that had a show there that night, and he come and

hired all four of us fellers to join him. We went, but I only stayed six months."

"Why didn't you stay longer?"

"Well, the fellers in the show was a set of stuck-up dudes and I had to lick 'em all round about once a week to keep 'em from slurrin' and abusin' my three friends. I don't think they was a day in them six months that I didn't have a fight or two. I'd have gone on the stage as a reg'lar actor if it hadn't been for the trouble I had then."

By the time the dishes were washed the other men had come in from their feeding. Mr. Jennings had not been talking much for several evenings past, but now he began to make up for lost time. He told over the story of the buffalo wallow, with the trifling alteration of the wallow itself being an abandoned dugout, the Indians being twenty-three in number; the weapon of defence a Sharp's carbine, and the refreshments four doughnuts, which his best girl had stuffed into his pocket just as he left civilization for the lone frontier. Mary desired to caution him lest he should eventually tell the story with himself defended by only one lone blasted firecracker, but she refrained. If he wanted to defend himself from wild red Indians with peas loaded into a pop-gun, and subsist meanwhile by chewing the braids of his raven hair for the oil which the barber had placed thereon, what business was it of hers? Was there any reason she should raise a domestic cyclone because thereof? But for fear she would express her sentiments, she invited him to sing. Yes, he would sing. He believed, now, that he was getting used to an instrument again; that he could sing with an accompaniment. His oldest sister used to play the organ for him.

And Mary, greatly admiring the music-loving family who kept piano, organ and violin in the house—almost all the Jennings family played the violin—seated herself at the piano. Mr. Jennings sang a stanza of "Drifting Apart," in the key of "D." Mary played in the key of D, also. The gentleman, being a confessed lover of variety, started the next stanza in A. Mary scrambled to A. The remainder of the production was rendered in G sharp, and Mr. Jennings received the praises that were showered upon him with kingly grace. After being restored to favor he became so attentive to the ladies and so ready to admire all they did, said or sung, that Iola alluded to him very confidentially to Bella Martin, as "Rattlesnake Lat, the Knight of the Kaw Plains."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE COWBOY AS PHILOSOPHER AND NOVELIST.

THE second literary evening at the Madnau's opened, figuratively speaking, with a flourish of trumpets. Mr. Lancaster came and brought Lucy Chase and his pleasant little laugh. He shook hands warmly with Rattlesnake Lat and smiled on the general company. He called Jim "Jimmie," in a very sugary tone, and assured Mary that he had not seen her looking so well since her arrival in the state; he told Bella Martin that the pink geranium at her throat was very becoming, ha, ha, ha, te, he, he. Upon being introduced to Iola, who was irresistible in some new and costly finery, he bowed before her, even as the vassals of King Solomon before the Queen of Sheba. Broncho Charlie, Mr. Ford to-night, brought Sarah and Emma Chase. He was speedily relieved of the latter, however, by Mr. Latshaw Aurelius Jennings, who came and sat beside her and told her how much she resembled a very beautiful lady who had at one time enjoyed the privilege of being his best girl. Miss Emma was very much flattered, and gazed upon the high forehead and the arched brows, and the short upper lip with the most intense admiration. Mrs. Hogan was attired in her one black silk, and Mr. Hogan had a wonderful pink and blue silk handkerchief round his neck. The Hopkinesses, who had slighted their invitation to the first entertainment, were now present in their best attire. Mary, in a perfectly plain white dress, with her hair in a dark coronet, was in sharp contrast to the gorgeous Iola, the bedecked Bella and the beribboned Chases.

There was much preliminary talk in low tones. Gus and Kid looked calmly on, while Iola and Bella were being admired and flattered by their friends the enemy. Mrs. Hopkins assured Mrs. Hogan, in her thin, quavering voice, that she was having much less trouble to get her butter to come, now that the cows were getting a little new grass. Mrs. Hogan answered that she was not making much butter now. Mr. Hogan asked Jim when he intended to turnout the stock he

had been keeping up for winter feeding. Mary assured the two old ladies that she found housekeeping much pleasanter than she expected to. Penobscot Bill assured Broncho Charlie that Sammie Jennings was one of the most admirable gentlemen he had met this side of back yonder.

After this conversation had proceeded for sometime, Mary sent Iola to the piano to play while the crowd sung some familiar songs, thinking in this way to bring their courage to the front. The singing done, the reluctant crowd drew straws for turns. Hen Hall came first. Without hesitation he began :

“**THE PIONEER.**”

“ It ain’t no fine flourishin’ yarn that I’ll spin for you folks; but I can somehow see a p’int to it, and maybe you will. And then it relates to one that was dear to me in a time that’s long gone past, though I can mind everything like it was yesterday ; for somehow, when we’re out on a journey, even if it’s the journey of life, we find the landmarks of the startin’ scenes hangin close to our minds.

“ I once had a friend named Joe Keasely. Him and me was boys together, and he was a stirrin’ kind of a chap ever sence he was a toddler. Well, Joe come to me one day, when we was both about eighteen years old, and he said he believed he’d strike out. I ain’t as old as some people, but it’s been a long while sence I was eighteen. I may jest as well tell you the war was jest over. Joe and me had volunteered ‘long toward the last, and done a little soldierin’—jest enough to fire our blood a little.

“ Well, Joe thort he’d strike out. He’d been to St. Louis, that even then was a big town, and there he’d seen a lot of poor people livin’ crowded together in little board houses that wa’n’t half big enough for ’em. He didn’t like to see people corralled up that way, and he got the idea that he ort to strike out, and kinder open up new country for houses for ’em. He said they needed more range and more room to grow. They wa’n’t no railroads across the plains then, so Joe didn’t take no palace-keer. He took an ox-wagon and two guns, and plenty of fillin’ for ’em. They was purty plenty of Injuns then; but Joe hadn’t lost any Injuns, and consekently wasn’t huntin’ any. He wasn’t afraid of no Injun ; but he wouldn’t ‘a’ killed one, nohow, that wasn’t tryin’ to rope him or some other critter in.

" When he started out his friends all commenced tellin' him how he hadn't better go. They couldn't see no use of his venturin' out beyond where his fathers had ventured. They told him he'd be lonesome, and meet dangers and discouragements; and that some people 'ud make light of what he was doin', and others would undervalue it, and nobody would appreciate his work. Lots of people would say the lands he was explorin' wa'n't fit for settlers nohow; and others would say he was a fool for strikin' out that way, when he might settle down and git rich. But Joe said that unless people once in a while went beyond where their fathers had ventured, that he couldn't see how the world was goin' to move on; and that if, twenty years from then, a few people was owners of homes and forehanded, with plenty of range for their little kids to run over and kick up their heels, that he wasn't goin' to care for nobody's criticisms and lack of appreciation. He wasn't workin' for thanks. The critters of the futur that he was tryin' to benefit would be happier, whether they ever thanked him in words or not. He said he didn't mind bein' chased by Injuns or chawed by grizzlies a little, if he could save some other critters from bein' chased by creditors and chawed by hunger. He said the sight of kids runnin' barefoot through snow and slush bit him deeper nor a mountain lion could if he was wounded and cornered. He said that if, by takin' a little sufferin' and a few taunts and flings, and a little ridicule on to hisself, he could save others from so much sufferin', he was willin' to make the break.

" Well, Joe struck out. He sent letters home whenever he could find a returnin' wagon. Even after he'd got clear out from everybody, he'd write letters, and go and stick 'em in the bark of trees along trails, askin' anybody that come to try and git 'em East. So his folks heard from him off and on, every once in a while. The letters went on to tell how he was killin' grizzlies and mountain lions, and pizenin' coyotes, and gettin' away with rattlesnakes and varmints gener'ly, and makin' the West a safer place for folks to live in. He was all alone, for he was out in a part so thick with varmints and redskins that even the trappers fought shy of it. He was gittin' along with the Injuns first-rate, and tryin' to persuade 'em to git along with the whites as long as the whites didn't cheat 'em too awful bad.

" But finally his folks quit hearin' from him. He'd been away from home four years then. I'd been gittin' ready to

come West too, so I thort I'd hunt Joe up. I told mother, and she put up my things for me. I struck out, and after I'd been goin' about six weeks I struck Joe's trail. I kept goin' till finally I struck a cabin. I knowed 'fore I got there it was Joe's cabin, and that Joe wa'n't in it. I'd run up agin' some Injuns that Joe'd taught a little English, and they guided me there, and told me how I'd find things. They'd ben there, and had give Joe decent burial, accordin' as he asked 'em to. They was a letter in the cabin for his folk and one for me, to be give to the first trapper the Injuns saw. I broke mine open and read it. Joe said he was sick from exposure, and thort his time to cross the range had about come. He said he'd ben sort o' happy in spite of his loneliness and trials, and that he didn't want no cryin' and cavortin' about him and his fate. And he said he wished people 'ud quit killin' Injuns, and go to tryin' to文明ize 'em. He thort people ort to save all the human critters they could for happiness, and confine their killin' to grizzlies and mountain lions, and snakes, and things that kills off human bein's and makes 'em insecure and unhappy. I took a hatchet I found in the cabin, and went out and chopped out a kind of slab, and cut some sentiments on it with a knife, and set it up at Joe's head, and then I went away and left him there alone. I've travelled around a little in my time, and when I'd see big monuments of men that in some way or 'nuther had widened humanity's field, I used to wonder if any of them big carved stones was pressin' down on nobler hearts nor Joe's. The life of a pioneer ain't no bed o' roses; but in every walk of life, or departure in reason and thinkin', there's got to be a certain amount of pioneerin' done."

Jim sat next; he told:

“THE ORIGIN OF A LAW.”

“The scene of my story is laid on the southern coast of Asia, and the time a thousand ages ago. A large number of people lived on this coast. Their houses, with but one exception, were in trees, built of bark, wedged in between the limbs. The exception was a cave, walled up in front with rocks and mud. The tree people looked down on the cave man, and called him a big feeling upstart who was too proud to walk in the ways of his fathers. The tree people insisted that in addition to being a departure from time-honored

custom, that the cave house made things too easy for the women. What was the good of women, if not to climb trees, loaded down with spoil for their lords' dinners ?

"The cave man, whose name was Chucklehead, had furthermore outraged the community by having skirts made for himself, Mrs. Chucklehead, and their young daughter, Saucy Eye. Mrs. Chucklehead made these skirts of bark; they were short, and very becoming; but the remainder of the inhabitants, who went skirtless, roundly disapproved of them. The natives expostulated with Chucklehead, and told him that if he went on living in a walled-up cave and wearing clothes, he would not only waste his time and bring ridicule upon himself, but might possibly lead a few of their children astray, and thus bring disgrace upon the entire community. Of course he never would have many followers, because people never would train themselves into making walls to live in and putting on clothes. It was against reason, and people would never do it. But he might lead a few rattlebrains astray, and get them to following his example, causing them to be looked upon with quite as much disfavor as himself.

"The maidens reasoned with Saucy Eye concerning her skirt. They begged her to cease wearing it.

"‘Why, Saucy Eye,’ they said, ‘the time will never come when people will wear skirts. The idea is ridiculous. It’s without precedent. It’s against our religion. It will never be the custom to wear clothes—pa says so, and grandpa too—and you’ll just be laughed at and perhaps murdered. And then people are just as far advanced now as they’ll ever be. They’re good enough as they are ; let them stay so and don’t be making a commotion. Then they fell to abusing the cave house.’

“‘I’d like to know,’ said a pert miss, ‘if you think people will ever be silly enough to follow your father’s example ? Why, if they go to walling up caves to live in, first thing you know they’ll use up all the loose rocks there are, and then where will their children get rocks to build with ? They’ll have to come back to living in trees. Don’t you see ?’

“‘Yes, and they’ll use up all the rocks so we won’t have anything to fling at each other when we get into a fight,’ said another.

“‘And then it’s such disrespect to our forefathers,’ said a third.

“Saucy Eye, unable to answer all these weighty arguments, ran into the cave house and shed bitter tears, wiping her

bright eyes with a brown, hairy, but well-shaped hand. She not only held on to the skirt, but added to her costume a hat formed of tamarind leaves pinned together with thorns. Her beauty was greatly enhanced thereby, and while the other girls openly scoffed they secretly envied.

"Now Saucy Eye being young, independent and pretty, had more lovers than the correct and staid misses who held to the old order; for the fact that a man disapproves of a woman and her opinions, does not prevent him, as long as she is charming, from falling in love with her to the entire forgetfulness of the young lady who servilely strives to humor him. The two of these lovers who received most favor were near neighbors. One was called Weaver, because during the previous rainy season he had woven a coverlet of sea-grass to wrap himself in and so keep off the chill. The other gentleman was young Lighthead, whose father lived in a very large banyan tree, thus making his entire family very proud. Saucy Eye was a little divided in her own mind, but the ability to braid sea-grass almost turned the scale in favor of Weaver. Might he not one day weave her a sea-grass skirt, still handsomer than the bark garment of her mother's fashioning? Then too, Weaver had once said that he intended to help his wife hunt the family food. Her mind was almost made up. Then again, she had often seen Lighthead watching his image in the water; that half disgusted her. The more she thought, the more she thought she must choose Weaver.

"One day she went out to hunt some shell-fish for her dinner. Just as she was taking some out of the water, Weaver came up. He had adopted the Chucklehead costume, minus the hat—of course one must allow the ladies a few extra follies. They had a very pleasant conversation, Saucy Eye told Weaver how bad the snakes were around the cave house, and how her father had to keep putting mud in between the rocks to keep them out. But how much better the cave was than the trees; so much less climbing! So much more convenient! And then when her father got old he could crawl into the house. Now when old grandfather Lighthead got too old to climb up into the banyan tree, and no one would help him up, he had to sleep on the ground under the tree, and one night a hungry lion ate him up! Then Weaver exacted from Saucy Eye a promise of strict secrecy and told her how he had a plan for a rock house all walls! No cave at all! He explained to her how he could build three walls of rocks and mud, and build the corners together, then break off boughs

and put over the top. He had never heard of such a thing, but he believed it could be done. And Saucy Eye was so delighted with the prospect that she asked Weaver to take a bite of the shell-fish she was eating. Weaver was so complimented by this new courtesy that he forgot to wait till she took it from her mouth, but stooped and took a large bite of the portion that protruded from her red lips. Thus the kiss was invented. The experiment pleased them so well, that they hastily swallowed the shell-fish, and began to make the most of the novel discovery. Presently Weaver told her of still another plan of his ; it will be readily seen that Weaver was a rustler. The secret now divulged was this : During the last hurricane a large tree had been blown down. Weaver had often noticed logs floating and he believed he could hollow out a log and get into the hollow, and go over to those green trees across the water yonder ! So after months of hard work he had cut off roots and tops with a sharp stone, and had hollowed the trunk. He had covered it with boughs and brush when he was not working, and when he saw anyone coming. It was now all ready to drag to the water, but it would require four people to get it there. Saucy Eye was so delighted that she put her last shell-fish into her mouth and rushed to Weaver. The invention was again honored, and the couple hunted some more shell-fish. These devoured, Saucy Eye went to call her parents. They came, and the wonder was soon afloat with the lovers as passengers.

"But Weaver found that he could not make the craft obey his wishes. It floated where it would, without the least regard to his preferences. He had brought two huge clubs along to beat off sharks, and when he struck at a shark and cut the water, the secret was revealed to him. If one club improved things, why not two ? He seized the other. Then he laughed and shouted. Saucy Eye longed for another shell-fish. It came near being an unlucky day for shell-fish. The two watchers on the shore shouted in company and the hubbub brought Lighthead to the scene. Now Lighthead is the villain of this romance. He gathered a huge club and in ambush waited. The lovers decided to visit the faraway trees some other day. They landed. The envious Light-head, glutted with jealousy, rushed up behind Weaver, and brained him with his club.

"'There, you miserable skirt-wearing, cloth-weaving, boat-inventing dude, take that,' he shrieked. ('Dude' was even then a term of dire reproach.)

"Saucy Eye fell upon the body of her lover, and wept and moaned piteously. The elder Chuckleheads, knowing their inability to punish the young and strong Lighthead, ran to the individual who, because of his ability to whip every other man in the tribe unless they doubled teams on him, considered himself, and was considered by others, chief. It was the custom of these people to approach the chief on their knees, so that if the old gentleman happened to be in a kicking humor they would not be subjected to so hard a fall. On their knees the Chuckleheads approached and told their story. Lighthead and Saucy Eye had followed, and now the whole tribe came rushing up to the chief's tree, taking care to fall on their knees when at a proper distance. Now there was no law against murder, and no one in that tribe had ever been punished for killing a fellow being. Besides this the chief had a great regard for the residents of the big banyan tree.

But a painful incident had that very day happened in his own household; one of his wives had in a moment of undue nervous tension brained her infant son. The wife being out of favor and the babe a favorite, the chief felt that action ought to be taken. He conceived the idea of a general law against murder. But this, while punishing the offending wife, would also punish the admired Lighthead. But if the wife were punished and Lighthead let go free, would not the tribe see that a premium was placed upon the slaughter of young men? And the chief had a grown son who was unequalled in finding a certain kind of root that was his father's choicest tidbit. What if some one would kill that son? He decided it was best to establish the edict at once and to execute the offenders immediately, regardless of the logic that denounces the *ex post facto* methods. He called upon the offenders to arise and defend themselves. Lighthead was very self-confident.

"'I'm not to blame for killing Weaver,' he said. 'He let me kill him. Why didn't he take care of himself?'

"'And it was right for me to kill my baby,' said the lady. 'He let me kill him. Why didn't he take care of himself?'

"'But,' said the sobbing Saucy Eye to Lighthead, 'Weaver didn't know you were going to kill him. Why didn't you tell him and give him a chance for his life?'

"'Why,' said Lighthead, swelling with indignation, 'if I'd told him, he wouldn't have let me kill him. He'd have

either fought me off or run away. I'd have been a fool to tell him I was going to break him all up. I'd been cheated out of the fun of killing him, then. A man mustn't always let his exact intentions be known.'

"'Well,' said the chief in a loud voice, 'I'm angry with you two individuals for killing my subjects.'

"'I'm sorry!' chorused the two offenders; for they knew the chief well enough to be sorry when he got into a heated mood.

"'I'll make you both sorrier,' he said. And then in a solemn tone that has been imitated more or less by judges since that time, he added:

"'I decree that with a club you shall both be brained till you are dead. The circus will take place at sundown, this evening. And all others who kill shall be killed.'

The shocked and astonished crowd moved away to discuss. The new law had no friends save the Chuckleheads, though all were careful to keep out of hearing of the chief while they stated their objections.

"'Why,' said one old woman, 'we've got one law now that says we can't run a family out of a tree and then keep the tree. We'll have laws so thick next that we can't stir for 'em.'

"'Why it takes away our personal liberty,' said a tall man. 'I'd like to know what there is to live for, if I can't amuse myself killing off the people I don't like.'

"'And then it's without precedent,' said a young philosopher.

"'But what beats me is the absurd idea of the murderer being to blame,' said a fat man, laying off wisdom with his hands. 'Now if I want to kill a man, and he isn't smart enough to keep out of my way, it may indeed be his misfortune; but how is it my fault?'

"'And then it is putting the dignity of legal protection on a set that are too trifling to protect themselves,' said the tall man.

"'And it won't prevent murder. There will be more killing done under the law than there ever has been before,' said an elegantly formed middle-aged individual. 'And it will be done in secret, and every kind of a trick will be used to hide it, too. O, its going to ruin the tribe,' and he sighed sadly.

"Chucklehead here arrived upon the scene and suggested that even if the law did not wholly prevent murder that it would render it unpopular and hold it in check; but he was laughed to scorn.

"The heavy grief, together with the unfeeling criticism of the tribe, and the overdose of shell fish, proved fatal to Saucy Eye, but her life was not in vain. In less than five summers all the ladies of the tribe wore both bark skirts and tamarind leaf hats. A monument was eventually erected over the dual grave of the lovers, and the people began to look upon the braining of their occasional murderers as their rarest pastime."

Kid drew a small roll of paper from his pocket and explained that he had no regular story but had written some thoughts which he would read. The themes treated were,

"GOOD PEOPLE AND PAD PEOPLE."

"After all that is said concerning the difficulty of distinguishing the good people of this world from the bad, the rules are very simple.

"Good people belong to our church, or are very closely related to people who do. Then they always belong to our political party and hurrah for our man. They think just as we do on all the leading questions. They tell us confidentially what blockheads the people who differ from us are. They come to visit us and praise the eatables, and tell us what bad cooks, gossips, and financial managers our neighbors are. They have ways of thinking to which they closely adhere, so that when we have once learned their opinions we will never be in danger of running against them.

"But how different the bad people! They stick to their own church and seldom come near ours. They haul off with the opposite political party and yell like mad for the wrong man. They have the audacity to form opinions without consulting us, and even though they know we do not agree with them, they openly give utterance to these obnoxious ideas. They do not hesitate to command and even associate with the people that do not suit us at all. They seldom come to see us, and when they do they do not gush us to death. Then there is no counting on their opinions. They have a provoking way of changing them a little from time to time. They call this moving on with the times, and it exasperates as fearfully."

Mr. Hogan suggested that a song would now be a welcome change; so the hostess sang one of her own poems:

SADDLE DREAMS.

To him who asks of the hill breeze
 The blessings of rest and of health,
 A saddle and light stepping broncho
 Become the completeness of wealth.
 Over the wild hills I gallop
 Through the waning afternoon,
 And regret the shades of evening,
 As they gather all too soon.

The soul can but feebly imagine
 The seclusion the wild range hath,
 For not even a cowboy's sombrero,
 Has shadowed my rock, beset path.
 I have threaded the gloomy canon
 With its driftwood legends of flood,
 Where the stealthy and merciless puma
 Leaves his trail bright red with blood.

At my broncho's resounding footsteps,
 The wild cat starts from her lair,
 While beating the clouds above me
 The eagle hangs in mid air.
 I am all alone with nature,
 And while I muse on her charms,
 She steals away my senses,
 And I dream within her arms.

The goddess of mountain has vanished,
 With her pinon and cedar decked train;
 And mounted on snow-white palfrey,
 I defy the Armada of Spain.
 And then as I ride in triumph,
 Through city, through hamlet and town,
 I press my hand to my forehead,
 To lighten a jewel decked crown.

Next I sit in the groves of old Athens—
 To the council is Pericles gone—
 I have given to him of my wisdom,
 My eloquence burns on his tongue.
 Then quickly the scene all changes;
 Beside me the wild sea roars;
 I bind on the arms of my Hector
 And send him away to the wars;

And while my own tears are falling,
 I soothe the boy at my knee;
 But chide that the guilty Paris
 Refuse to set false Helen free.
 Then on my throne at Palmyra
 I bid my warrior braves
 Prepare for the Roman Legions
 My fertile plains for graves.

Then next on the field of Monmouth,
I stand by my bleeding lord,
Filling his post of duty,
Undaunted by bullet or sword.
Next I fly to the plains of the Volga,
Made fearful by war's alarms,
And rescue a sinking kingdom,
With the gems from my neck and arms.

And then in warm, dark beauty,
On the banks of sun-kissed Nile,
I rest in a windowed palace,
While myriads court my smile.
I aimlessly float, half dreaming,
In my barge on the river's breast,
While the breezes of evening soothe me,
Bringing my wearied soul rest.

Then far away fly the illusions,
The glory, the crowns and the thrones,
There are left but myself and broncho **Kate**,
Galloping over the stones.
And with never a thought of longing.
For a palace by river or sea,
I am thankful for saddle and broncho,
And the hills for a race-course free.

Iola explained that her story was not original ; it had been told her by some one. Here Gus Waite looked peculiar. However, she would try to clothe it in original language and borrow naught but facts.

"THE RACE AT TAMARACK."

"It was so much the style in Tamarack to be a bad man that a man who was civil was looked upon as no man at all. In consequence of this state of affairs Texas Frank, Whiskey Bill and Bug Johnson were the chief social lights, and, as the popular phrase went, "ran the town."

"No one knew why the town had been named Tamarack unless it was the man who named it, and he, poor fellow, had been hung for horse stealing before he had time to communicate his reasons to any one. The great X., Y. & Z. railroad across the plains had entered town three years before and it then seemed that the future of Tamarack would be a brilliant one. But alas ! The three years had gone by and the town still consisted only of the homes of a rough class of cattlemen, a post-office and general store, and three saloons.

"A good sized but rough, uncouth, unpainted frame house

stood about half a mile outside the closer cluster of houses, with a well beaten path extending from its front door into town. As one stood at the door of this house there were but two points of interest—the shallow river with its low banks unshaded by tree or shrub, and far away in the west the rising swells that indicate the approaches to the Rockies.

"Adown this path one August evening passed a young woman dressed in what appeared to be the carefully husbanded attire of by-gone better days. A costume of black silk and velvet, frayed and worn, but well brushed and neatly fitting, was in some degree painfully like the accompanying face with its weary, faded look, and its discontented expression. She looked strangely out of place among the rough creatures loafing about the post-office, whither she walked daily for her newspapers—her only solace. She was the daughter of Tom Hay, a gambler of fallen estate, who had come West to make a fortune at his trade and found so many superiors that he was constantly kept poor. At one time in the smile of fortune, he had been enabled to keep this only child at a good boarding-school for some years, being obliged to take her out at last because of returning poverty. At this school her training had been good and she had learned in addition to considerable book lore a thorough contempt for her father's profession and friends.

"The father being thoroughly 'down in his luck' was now warmly encouraging the attentions of Bug Johnson, a gentleman who immensely enjoyed the felicitous title of 'The Terror of Tamarack.' Johnson was wealthy, influential and thoroughly coarse; no less desirable suitor could have presented himself to Louise Hay. The girl knew her father's intentions, and, like the doomed criminal, sought delay in every way possible. She willingly kept house for her father and quietly and patiently sat alone listening to the dreary howl of the coyotes through the long hours of the night until his return from the saloons. The vigils were weary, but she had no wish to break their tedium by becoming housekeeper for Bug Johnson. However, she saw but poor prospect of escaping; her father was determined and she knew of no better prospect than his choice.

"When she arrived at her own door she was surprised to meet her father. He had a young man with him whom he bluntly presented to her as a new hand. He had bought some cattle of Johnson on time some two weeks before, and this person was to look after them.

"The weary Louise scarcely gave him a second look, but proceeded to set out some cold food for supper. Her father hurried back to town; he was so absorbed in his gambling that breakfast was the only meal he usually ate at home.

"After Louise had seated herself at table she for a moment studied her companion's face. He was not like the Tamarack men. He was not weakly or insignificant-looking in the least, but he had the appearance of a student; while not at all handsome, his face and person had many redeeming traits. She entered into conversation with him.

"'Have you ever been in Tamarack before?' she asked.

"'No, never.'

"'You have friends where you came from, I suppose?'

"'I have a mother; that's all.'

"'And how will she get along alone?'

"'Well, she has a little house and does sewing. I'll send her money as I get it. I'm trying to get through college —go to school in winter and work at whatever I can find to do in summer. I've arranged to enter at the beginning of the second term and graduate in the spring. I can do that by studying hard.'

"'It's so disagreeable to be poor.'

"'Well, I never saw anyone who particularly desired poverty, but then after all it has its advantages. Wealth is apt to make people lazy.'

"'Did papa say how long you were to stay here?'

"'He said he'd keep me as long as I gave satisfaction.'

"'I want to tell you one thing about papa. He is a little hard to suit. He is very particular about things. You must bear with him patiently.'

"'I can only do my best.'

"Then after a little pause he said, glancing at the papers:

"'I see you read.'

"'Yes, those are my papers. I'd die without them. I often have to sit here alone till two o'clock. The coyotes howl like packs of fiends, and the interest in those columns is the only weapon with which I can fight the depressing effect they produce.'

"'We might read together. We can read the papers and then I have a few good books in my valise.'

"'O, that will be delightful!' she exclaimed, and the weary look fled, and left her bright and enthusiastic.

"The new hand found the papers to be of a high order. He read with ardor while Louise put away the supper things.

When he had finished the first article, Louise said quietly:

"We had better not read or talk much before papa. He will not like it."

"He looked keenly at her, then asked:

"Are you always alone of evenings?"

"Not always. Sometimes papa brings company.' Her tone lost so much of its life and her face became so dejected that she revealed more than she intended. He made no answer but went on reading. Hay came in at eleven o'clock, and then the company dispersed. As Louise habitually looked to every turn of fortune for escape from her impending fate, she could not close her eyes until she had breathed a prayer that the stranger might in some way prove a source of rescue.

"In the morning the new hand entered the kitchen just as Louise was putting breakfast on the table.

"What did you say your name was, young man?" asked Tom, running his fingers through his long, stiff hair.

"My name is Harris—Simon Harris."

"Where you from?"

"This state; about two hundred miles east of here."

"You've rode after cattle before?"

"Yes, sir; I've been riding more or less for four years. Usually work all summer and part of the fall and spring."

"Well now, I'm willin' to pay good wages to a man that'll work, but I don't want no shirkin'. Then there's my gal. She's done spoke for, and I won't have any cow-punchers talkin' to her and gittin' her dissatisfied."

"Papa, I can take care of myself. Breakfast is ready," spoke Louise sharply and with flashing eyes.

"Yes, yes, gal, but it's always well enough to have an understanding. No offense meant, young man. But you see—"

"Papa, I said breakfast was ready."

"Yes, yes; so'm I. Come ahead, young man."

Tom occupied the breakfast era in explaining to the new hand where he would be apt to find the cattle feeding, and the nature and amount of the work he was expected to do. After breakfast he took him to the little stable and started him off on the only horse in his possession. Then he re-entered the house. "Lou," he said, "I want to talk to you about Bug. He wants to know right off so he can build."

"O, Papa!"

"But you'll want a home of your own some day, Lou. I won't live always."

"But let me stay with you while you do live. After that I can teach school or sew."

"Nonsense! Bug wants you and I told him he could have you; now say when, and be done with it."

"Papa, I don't want to marry a man that I hate!"

"Well, I'm not goin' to turn as good a feller as Bug away. So if you don't set the time, I will. I ain't got much to keep you on; you'll have to take Bug. I've got to go now,' and he put on his hat and sauntered down the path.

The day passed wearily enough. Johnson was to be there to supper in the evening, and the morning was consequently spent in preparing dainty dishes; for Hay insisted that Johnson be lavishly entertained. When pauses came in her work the girl found herself gazing anxiously over the wide plain in the direction taken by Harris. He had been bidden to come home for instructions in the evening, and at about six o'clock she saw him approaching; with every bound of the galloping horse her depressed spirits rose. But before he entered the house her father and lover were there.

The supper was eaten with much coarse mirth on the part of Hay and Johnson. When the meal was concluded and the dishes put away, Hay sent the girl and her lover into the parlor.

"I want to give this chap here some ideas about the cow business and I don't want no lovers round botherin' me," he said with a heavy laugh.

But Harris was so disturbed by the wan, appealing face that disappeared beyond the closed door that the 'cow business ideas' made but little impression on him. He felt that she was in trouble and longed to help her. Morning came and he had no word with her. His task for the day was a hard one and he did not get back till late. Louise was just returning from her walk to the post-office. Having picketed his horse near the path, Harris turned and walked beside her to the house. Once inside the door she sank into a chair and groaned; turning toward him a face so blanched and miserable that he begged to know if he could do anything for her.

"Nothing, unless you'd kill me. Oh! Oh!"

"Miss Hay, I'd help you if I knew—'

"You can't! Nobody can! Papa has promised me to be married to that wretch the day after to-morrow."

"Why is he in such a hurry?"

"It isn't a hurry. He's been telling me for six months to

get ready, and now he's set the day himself. I'd rather die.'

"'Did you father intend to have much of a wedding?'

"'He intends to have a big drunken spree, just as he always does when he gets a chance. He gave me fifty dollars to buy things for my wedding, and I've a notion to take the money and run off.'

"'Where would you go! What would you do?'

"'I'd go East and try to get work.'

"'The East is over-crowded now. Wage earners have a hard time.'

"She set out his supper while he sat in a deep study. When Louise took her seat, he drew his chair to the table and asked if Johnson was to be there that evening.

"'No,' she answered. 'I told him I had some sewing to do and would be too busy to see him.'

"'Does he appear to suspect that you dislike him?'

"'No, he is too conceited for that. He was treating everybody to-night, and my name was being tossed about among the drunken loafers like that of a prize horse. Oh! Oh!'

"'Has your father a regular time to come home?'

"'He never comes earlier than ten and is often as late as two.'

"'It will never do for you to go away alone.'

"'Then do you advise me to stay?'

"'No, I will tell you. I will go with you if you will allow me, but we must be married. If you are unhappy I will give you a divorce.' This speech left him nervous and darkly flushed.

"Her only answer was a wondering stare.

"'Of course it is folly for such complete strangers to talk about loving each other,' he went on. 'The object now is to save you from a wretched fate. I am very poor and our lot may be very hard. But as your husband I can protect you; and if you want your freedom you shall have it. If we learn to care for each other, all the better.'

"Again she only stared.

"'You would be taking a great risk,' he said. 'For all you know, I may be worse than Johnson is.'

"'No, that is impossible. The man who saves me from such a villain cannot be bad. I will take the risk and try always to remember how you have burdened yourself for a stranger. It will be a simple business transaction with all love left out, but do not think for a moment that gratitude is missing.'

They were both over their embarrassment now and ready to laugh. They fell to talking in a lively manner and began to become warmly interested in the narrative of each other's little past adventures.

"Well, are you brave enough to go to-night?" he asked.

"To-night, if at all. Johnson comes to-morrow night."

"The train goes east at eleven I think."

"Yes, but it does not stop; we will have to flag it. It is past nine now."

"Then you had better get ready. How much money have you altogether?"

"About eighty dollars, I think. I will count it. Yes, eighty dollars and a few cents over. I had thirty dollars before Papa gave me the fifty."

"I have twenty. We will be quite rich. I regret, however, that it is necessary to take your father's money."

"It is not his; it is mine. Papa has been allowing me money for keeping house for him and all this is of that allowance. Even the fifty dollars is money he had owed me for some time."

"So much the better then."

"Where will you take me to?"

"I live in M—— City. I think I had better take you to mother."

"Very well; I'll get ready. And oh, while I'm gone please write a letter to papa and tell him I'm so sorry I can't do as he wishes. And tell him—" but her voice became tremulous and she left the room with the sentence unfinished.

In about half an hour she returned in hat and cloak and carrying a small valise. After a few minutes' preparation on his part they closed the door behind them and started down the path. Then as suddenly as if he had been a spirit, her father appeared before them, beastly drunk and foaming with rage.

"What the —'s this?" he roared.

"Papa, be quiet; I need to buy some things; I'm going down to the village," said Louise quietly.

"By the —, you aint," roared her father as he fumbled for his revolver.

Harris had no weapon save a large pocket knife; this he flourished in the old man's face while he seized Louise with his free arm and hurried her down the path. The horse he had been riding was picketed near. He trotted forward. Harris seized the rope and cut it free with one stroke of the

knife. Then he sprung upon his back and dragged his companion up after him, just as a bullet whizzed past his ear. They were soon out of range of the old man's badly directed shots, and the half mile to the village was traversed almost at a flash. They avoided the central part of the town, but went directly to the little depot which stood about half a mile east. The building was dark and deserted. They dismounted and gave the horse his liberty, tying the rope about his neck so that he need not step upon it and trip himself.

"He will go straight home," said Louise.

"Then they stood in silence for a time. Far away in the distance gleamed the approaching headlight, still miles and miles away. Harris started nervously and said :

"O, I have no matches! This train does not stop unless it is flagged."

"I have some. I remembered," she said, as she took a bundle of newspapers from under her arm and began to twist them into a torch. There was a long silence while the headlight grew larger. Then there came the sound of a tremendous uproar in the little village.

"Listen!" said Harris.

"Men shouting. Do you suppose papa can have got to the saloon yet?"

"It must be. It is getting louder. They are coming this way."

"O, what will we do? You have no revolver."

"If they get here before the train does, get behind me. I will do the best with this knife. But keep courage. The train is nearly here. Give me the paper and matches."

"Here they are. But let me stand in front of *you*. They won't shoot me. O, I see them coming! I will never forgive myself if I cause your death."

"And I will never forgive myself if I fail to save you," he said, as he stepped upon the track and swung the blazing torch to and fro.

"On came the train, promising escape and safety. Nearer surged the drunken crowd, presaging death to the man and life misery to the woman. The angry voices sounded high above the dull roar of the train. Louise heard her name fiercely called. She turned and clutched her companion's arm."

"Forgive me! Forgive me!" she gasped.

"Courage. The train is just here."

"The now gradually slackening pace of the train was still

faster than the approach of the drunken crowd. It passed them by and ran up to the little depot. Before it was fairly still the pair were upon the steps. The brakeman helped the girl as Harris followed with her valise.'

"' Anyone else ? ' he asked.

"' No ; we are all,' said Harris, with forced calmness.

"' What's all that yelling about ? '

"' Drunken row.'

"The man signalled and the train moved on. It glided past the little depot and was out upon the open plain before the enraged crowd reached the platform.'

"' Go in and telegraph to Boneset ! ' roared Johnson to the operator. But the latter had been indulging so freely in wedding whiskey that he was entirely unable to do so. So all that could be done was for Johnson to kick him about the room, which he did as well as his own drunken state would permit. The great social event of Tamarack had failed.

"Harris and Louise were married at the breakfast station. They are now teachers in a city school, and their cheerful faces augur aught but unhappiness.

"Old Tom Hay has been laid to rest. Bug Johnson has squandered most of his property but he is still 'The Terror of Tamarack.'

Mary now called the crowd to the piano. They must sing some enlivening songs. This done, Lat Jennings cleared his throat and delighted the company with the description of

"A COWBOY TRIP."

"Now, this that I'm goin' to tell you about happened once when the fellers put up a job on me and got me drunk. Never was drukk but twice, and this was one of the times. I was about twenty-two years old. Me and a lot more cowboys was in town. I had on a full buckskin suit with great long fringe on it. Had a hat with a brim eight inches wide, and then I had my two gold-mounted six shooters and a cartridge belt chuck full. Well, first thing I knowed I found that me and my partner was on the train with through tickets to Cincinnati in our pockets. At first we didn't hardly know what to do, but come to think I had an uncle livin' in Cincinnati, so we jest concluded we'd go on. Well, as soon as we left the Kansas line we had everybody starin'

at us and it was that way all along the road. Well, when we got to Cincinnati and got off the train, we started down street, and first thing we done we met the police. We told 'em all about how we'd come to start the way we did, and they laughed like everything. We give 'em our revolvers and they told us to go ahead and have our fun. We went on down town, and before we'd gone two blocks we had all the little boys in town follerin' us. The women all had their heads stuck out of the windows and the men all stood watchin' us as we went by. When we went past the photograph gallery the artist came out and asked us to go in and have our pictures took, and said it wouldn't cost us nothin'. We went in, and after he'd took us in about half a dozen different positions he give us one of each kind and then let us go. We found a hotel and went in and fixed up our togs, and then we went and called on my uncle. Well, I thought his eyes would pop out of his head. But after he got over his astonishment he took us round to see all the big men, and they took us in and introduced us to their families. Well, that trip did me good. Though I've already explained to you that I didn't set out to go in the start—the boys put up a job on me and got me drunk—yet I was always glad I went. I never saw such a pleased set of people in my life as I saw watchin' me and my partner in that town."

At the conclusion of this story Kid threw an enormous paper wad which took effect in Gus Waite's right eye. Gus, either better humored or less injured than was Philip of Macedon once upon a time, took the incident with extreme good-nature. He had been near the exploding point before, and this was too much; he burst into a loud fit of laughter, in which the volatile Iola and the fun-loving Bella joined, greatly to the horror of Mary, who feared every moment that it would be necessary for her to go off on a similar venture also. She resolutely swallowed her hilarity and made a few pointed remarks in a somewhat uncertain tone upon the impropriety of young people laughing at the antics a cat might perform in general society. Quiet and confidence having been thus restored, Bella explained that she would tell one of her mother's stories. Mr. Hogan spoke his approval of this; he declared that Mrs. Martin's stories always had a point that was worth remembering.

"THE CAGED TERRIER."

"There was once a lady who kept a pet terrier in a never-opening cage. She found in his bright eyes and beautiful glossy coat something to admire, to entertain her during her idle hours, and in the creature himself something to berate and scold when she got out of humor with the world.

"This lady was greatly annoyed by mice. They came out into her room, raced through her cupboard and over her food, nibbled the corners of her choicest books, kept her awake at night, made nests of the love letters she had received from her now dead husband, cut her clothes, and made her life a burden.

"'Let me out and I'll drive them away,' pleaded the terrier.

"'Dear me,' answered the lady, 'if you were free, you'd be worse than the vermin.'

"'No, no; I hate mice. I can run fast. I would drive them all away.'

"'But you'd get your clean coat soiled, racing about.'

"'I think not, dear mistress. Room gives people more chance for cleanliness than do close quarters.'

"'But you won't look well racing after mice. I'm the person to drive 'em away,' and the lady seized a broom and made a terrible hubbub. The mice ran out of her way and under chairs and boxes where she could not get at them. She congratulated herself upon her success and sat down to sew. Then the mice all ran out again. The lady was much annoyed.

"'Please let me after them,' pleaded the terrier.

"'No, no, dear; but since they are so bad I'll let you reason with them.'

"The terrier reasoned. He tried moral suasion. With tears in his eyes he explained to the mice that they were doing wrong, and ought to change their ways. But the mice frisked about and laughed in his face.

"'O, if I was out of here awhile I'd make you run,' spitefully exclaimed the terrier.

"'Try a crusade,' said the mistress.

"Then the terrier prayed and sang and shouted and sobbed and wailed, but all to no avail. These performances only made the mice saucier, and the terrier more anxious to get out.

"'You don't go at things right,' exclaimed the mistress; 'why don't you organize?'

“The terrier organized. He drafted an elaborate set of whereases and resolutions, setting forth in plain, strong language the wrongs the mice were committing upon his mistress's possessions. He threw a copy of these to the mice, but the mice chewed it up and threw the fragments in his face.

“‘Draft a stronger list,’ said the lady.

“The terrier drafted a stronger list. He did not throw it to the mice; he threw it to the lady. It consisted of just one resolution, and read:

“‘*Resolved*, that I be let out of this cage.’

“‘Why do you insist on being let out of that nice cage?’ demanded the angered lady in a high key.

“‘For three reasons,’ answered the terrier. ‘First, because you have no right under God’s Heaven, save that mean old right of the strongest, to keep me here; second, because in this cage I suffer a thousand privations and inconveniences which you, being free, cannot understand; third, because if I were out I would clear out those mice.’ And the terrier laid hold of the railings of his cage and shook them as if he were determined to gain his freedom, or wear out his life in the effort. The lady continued to offer objections, but the now thoroughly enraged terrier answered only by shaking his bars and barking furiously. The lady at length became so annoyed by this din that she, with a great deal of reluctance, much scolding, and many predictions of evils to come, opened the door. The little terrier ran out and caressed her as ardently as if his liberty had been willingly granted. Then he stretched his long confined limbs to bring back the strength that inaction had sapped. Then, half timidly, he started toward the mice. They showed resistance. This enraged him. He bounded forward and rejoiced as he felt his gathering strength. The vermin fled in rout; he following in triumph. He ran into dark corners, under boxes and chairs, behind cupboards and trunks, dragging out into light his lifeless victims, and causing his mistress to exclaim in astonishment that she never would have believed there were so many. And when he had done he ran to his mistress, again caressed her, and though he never after would submit to be put back in the cage, he remained her trusted friend and helper all his days.”

Gus Waite, sitting next in the semicircle, told the story of

"THE STRANGE SOMETHING."

"My imagination once travelled along to where an excited group of men stood talking. In their midst lay a curious object, by no means repulsive, but new and strange. It had a great many corners, and looked as if the average person would need to be careful in approaching it, lest he would run against one of those sharp protuberances.

"It lay flat upon the ground because no one had the courage to pick it up. Some few did mention shouldering it, but there were always objections. One man said that his father, were he alive, would disapprove. Another feared that his political party would give him the cold shoulder. A third would like to give it a lift, but there was a clause in his religious creed that did not coincide with this curiosity. Another feared that lifting it would shut himself and wife out of the first circles and exclude them from the high teas, lofty coffees, ante-Lent balls, New Year receptions, leap-year blow-outs, fancy-dress balls, crazy suppers, pink teas, theater parties, clambakes, and grab-bag socials of the cream of society. Another would not risk it because one of the corners stuck out in such a way as to hit his selfishness whenever he approached. Another feared that one particularly sharp corner would come in contact with his long established habits. Another hesitated because a certain protuberance would partially close the entrance to his pocket-book.

"A great many of the assembled declared that under no circumstances would they shoulder it. They laughed quietly and assured each other that it was supremely ridiculous. They never would have believed that such a thing would have been gotten up. It would never become popular because no respectable person could ever be found to champion it.

"'Are you going to talk about it?' asked A of B.

"'Well, that depends on the crowd I'm with,' answered B. 'I shan't mention it to my wife.'

"'I'd hate to have my boy hear of it,' said C; 'he's a little apt to run off after new things, anyhow. Of course I could train him back in time, but he might give trouble for a while.'

"'Well,' said D, 'it's not my boy I'm worrying about; it's my girl. Girls are getting to think now that they ought to know everything. I'm afraid my girl, if she'd hear of this, would get to running after it, and then, like as not, she'd never get married.'

"I went forward and examined the curiosity. As I stooped over it in idle curiosity, trying to count the prints of the kicks it had received, I was pushed aside by a resolute looking individual who quietly but firmly raised the wonder upon his back. The crowd shouted in derision as the resolute looking individual moved off. As he lifted his burden a little higher, showing to all eyes good points they had not previously admitted the existence of, I saw what the strange thing was. It was a new idea."

Mary, sitting next, began :

"MY AUNT ELLEN."

"My reputation as a child was bad ; I do not believe that I would be guilty of any exaggeration were I to say 'very bad,' and looking back now with the sober weight of twenty-two years upon me, I can readily see what a trial I was to my relatives.

"I was left an orphan at babyhood, and have no recollection of any parents save my Uncle Jake and my Aunt Sallie. These two excellent people had undertaken my bringing up and so good, kind and faithful were they, that so long as I remained with them I never felt the loss of the father and mother of whom death had robbed me ; and I still believe that if my other relatives had left me alone with them that my childhood might have been happier and my reputation need not have suffered as it did. But as the motherless chick is scolded and pecked at by every hen in the barn lot, so also is the orphan child pursued and harried by almost every member of the family. My case was no exception ; it was not that my relatives wished me any harm—Oh, no ; it was an intense desire for my reform and salvation which actuated them all. They believed that only the most earnest methods would rescue me from both spiritual and temporal ruin ; and judging from subsequent developments, I fear that some of them even neglected their own children on my account. Of all the toilers in my behalf, Aunt Ellen and grandma were the most tireless and faithful. In addition to large and well assorted bundles of good advice bestowed upon every possible occasion, each one insisted upon taking me into her home for a few weeks, every now and then, to see what she could do towards holding me back from the destruction which was imminent.

"Grandma was a strong patron of industry; she believed that all little girls should wash dishes three times a day. I was not lazy at any time and like many other children found my muscles supplied with unusual energy when away from home. I was willing enough to wash dishes, but they were unfortunate in my hands; the attraction of gravitation was certain to prove too much for me and the dishes would drop and break. Now there was a strong idea regnant in grandma's bosom and an equally strong one in mine. Grandma believed in crockery preservation, and I was a resolute advocate of self-protection. Grandma used her walking stick and pear tree switches to enforce the former idea, and I adopted the expedient of hiding the pieces and telling fibs in support of the latter. Then grandma had an orchard, and how I did love to climb trees; my dresses would catch and tear and then there would be more fib-telling and whipping. My reputation for veracity was utterly ruined.

"Grandma at last having well-nigh denuded her pear trees of their smaller and more pliable limbs on my account, told Aunt Sallie that there was no hope for me and that she, for one, would wash her hands of me.

"But Aunt Ellen still tried; she still insisted that I should spend an occasional week at her house, and endeavored to impress upon my mind that association with her children might soften my rugged temper and teach me truth. With Grandma my want of veracity was my worst fault, but with Aunt Ellen the case was reversed; my habit of telling falsehoods was of course bad; but association with her children might cure me of that. But 'that terrible temper' would certainly land me in deep and stinging disgrace—the gallows for aught she knew, unless she was unusually active—and keeping her word, especially concerning whippings, I became quite reluctant about accompanying her. Aunt Sallie at last came to my rescue and took a firm stand in my favor; she decided that I should visit round no more. Dear, good woman! she knew that the child who was being brought up by everybody could only come to sorrow and disgrace.

"‘Ellen,’ she said, ‘Mary is a good girl when she is with me; she neither loses her temper nor tells falsehoods. I intend that in future she shall stay with me.’ How I silently blessed Aunt Sallie and resolved, way down in the depths of my wicked little heart, to be a better girl! But Aunt Ellen was stupefied; it was the first time that her mild, kind-hearted sister-in-law had ventured to oppose her, and for the

moment she was more surprised than angry. When her astonishment had sufficiently passed off, she proceeded to argument; she protested earnestly and indignantly, but her arguments availed her not. When she found that Aunt Sallie was firm, she assured that lady that all the weight of my future disgrace must rest upon her; she insisted that she, herself, was the only bulwark which had stood between me and ruin all these years, and now that her influence was thrown aside, hope was at an end. Still she would do her duty as near as she was permitted, she would talk to me whenever opportunity offered, would tell her children to watch over me at school and let her know when I misbehaved; and would send the teacher word how to get along with me.

"All this would she do, but responsibility for my future disgrace she would not shoulder.

"After this interview there was some coolness between my two aunts, but not sufficient to prevent Aunt Ellen having plenty of opportunities to advise and instruct me.

"Uncle Jake was very careful about my schooling. He was not wealthy and felt it his duty to leave the little which he had to a crippled brother. So he wished to provide me with a good education in order that I might be able to support myself. Our village boasted an excellent graded school and a young but thriving college, which in a four years' course gave good, practical training in mathematics, science and the lighter classics. I was a persevering student and entered the college when quite young. Tom Carver, the son of Aunt Ellen and Uncle Bluecut, and the individual whom I had so ruthlessly slapped in my impetuous early youth, was a member of my class. He was a bright boy, two years older than myself, and I thought it quite strange that he had permitted me to overtake him. But he had probably followed his mother's example of worrying about my evil nature and had paid more attention to that than to his books. I, however, had so many faults of my own to trouble my mind that I was ashamed to give either time or attention to those of other people; so I had nothing to do but to attend to my studies and to my own business, which no doubt accounted for my progress.

"Even after the class had entered the senior year, Tom occasionally lost a grade on my account. One morning we were required to demonstrate an extremely difficult problem in geometry. The teacher had warned us several days beforehand that we might expect trouble with it; so we had spent

most of our spare time in its preparation. I had studied hard and was confident of my ability to demonstrate it clearly. When my turn came, my voice was full of pride and my demonstration clear and complete. But as I resumed my seat, I caught a glimpse of Tom's face. It wore a vexed and cloudy expression; he began to write and in a few moments threw me a little note. This is what it contained:

“My Sweet Little Cousin: In that demonstration, your voice assumed a decidedly brusque and masculine tone; I have noticed it occasionally before. Please try to correct the habit.

“**TOM J. CARVER.**”

“When Tom was called upon his face still wore the vexed expression and he failed in his demonstration. It was too bad. I was clearly to blame and Tom himself took occasion to tell me so as he passed me on the road home. It was discouraging; do my best and it seemed as if I could not prevent my behavior being a source of continual trouble to my watchful affectionate relatives.

“The days wore on until commencement. On the final examination Tom took a grade a fraction lower than mine. He told me afterward that it was the scarlet ribbon about my throat which unsteadied his mental equilibrium on that occasion.

“‘My dear little girl,’ he would say, ‘mother always said that your bad temper would ruin you; but in my opinion you have several other faults which, if not so bad in themselves, are more dangerous. One of these is your habit of wearing bold colors. Young ladies cannot be too careful about preserving their modesty.’

“As Tom was somewhat loose in both the theory and practice of his own morals, I was rather impatient of such advice from him, but a little reasoning reconciled me. If he was continually worrying about me, it was his time which was being wasted—not mine. And before I again leave Tom, I must add that both he and my cousin Archie were looked upon by the people of our town as being liable to make misstatements in regard to the most commonplace affairs. People were not agreed in their opinions as to whether these misstatements were due to defective memory, wilful intention to misrepresent, or to the most unrestrained play of startlingly vivid imaginations. Now I will give my theory; in my early visits to the home of Aunt Ellen, misunder-

standings often arose, and pitched battles were sometimes fought. These affairs were of course duly described to Aunt Ellen by her children. Tom and Archie, being possessed of a good flow of language, were generally selected by the mother as spokesmen. Their narratives were accepted without question, while mine were branded as infamous falsehood. Knowing from both observation and experience that children are apt to exaggerate, especially in their own favor, I fear that this early reportorial training, together with the easy credulity of Aunt Ellen in regard to all they related, might have had something to do with forming that lack of accuracy in narration for which Tom and Archie are at present celebrated. Another proof of the heavy burden I was to my relatives.

"It may be inferred that after I had graduated, that my relatives would have withdrawn their surveillance and allowed me to proceed in my own way with the life I was entering. Not so. Far from it. Aunt Ellen said that now that I was going into society my temper would need closer watch than ever; it would never do for me to fly into a passion at a party, and disgrace the entire family for all time to come. Grandma sent me word not to tell lies to the young men. Cousin Nora assured me that I needed to acquire polish, and that without it I would never get on in society. Tom warned me to cast aside my hoydenish ways. Uncle Bluecut advised me to be very careful in my choice of words, and not to mutilate the English language in my usual style. Archie requested me to be more careful about what he was pleased to call my 'attempted wit.' Kate felt it her duty to keep my male friends cognizant of my evil ways, so that they might not be deceived. Nellie was a dear, good cousin, but she worried both herself and me into the fidgets over my lack of style.

"So with Aunt Ellen as guardian of my temper; grandma, grand caretaker of my veracity; Nora, polisher of my polish; Tom, inspector-general of my morals and manners; Uncle Bluecut, regulator of my English; Archie, lord-lieutenant of my wit; Kate, lady protector of my gentleman friends; and Nellie, provost-marshall of my style, it will be readily seen that I was well looked after.

"I shall never forget my first party; how I had dreamed over it; what an event it was to be—and what an event it did prove to be after all!

"On the eventful evening, with glowing cheeks and flutter-

ing heart, I dressed myself in my entire graduating outfit, minus flowers. I wanted a small bunch of geraniums at my throat, but Tom had previously requested me to wear none. ‘They might not hurt some girls, Mary,’ he had said, ‘but your manner is a little too free anyhow, and you cannot be too careful.’

“The party was at Judge Blinkers. I walked thither with my cousins, and received enough excellent advice to rescue all the wayward girls in Christendom, if advice would only do that. Arrived at the house, we girls went up to the dressing-room to rearrange our toilets before entering the crowded parlors. I had dressed with the usual hurry and carelessness of seventeen, and when Nellie came to inspect my costume, she found that my collar was slightly awry. Nellie is the paragon of perfection in our family, and I must admit that she is a most excellent girl. But in all her girlhood she had had the record of my faults so thoroughly rubbed into her mind that she was inclined to exhibit impatience in regard to them. So she, being in a hurry to join the merry throng below, took hold of my collar and gave it a violent jerk. This had the effect of pulling the twist out of my collar, but it also broke my collar-pin. Nellie bade me learn to dress myself, and hurried downstairs with the other girls. I was left alone in my misfortune—and what misfortune is greater than that of an incomplete toilet at a party? In vain I tried to make the ruined bauble hold the lace together; then I sadly put it into my pocket, and going to the glass, took a few pins from the paper and endeavored to subdue the refractory collar. It was of no use, it would not look right, and I was just getting ready to cry, when I heard a knock at the door.

“‘Come in, I said.

“It was tall, handsome, blue-eyed Ned Blinker, my sometime idol among my classmates, aged eighteen.

“‘I’ve looked all over the house for you, Mary,’ he said; ‘we are getting ready to play charades, and you are chosen as leader of my side; come on.’

“‘Oh, Ned! I’ve got my collar-pin broken, and I can’t go down at all,’ I answered.

“‘Pshaw! Just tie this round your neck, so the bouquet will be where the collar-pin ought to be,’ and he threw me a ball of tube roses, put together with fine wire and tied with a long white satin ribbon. ‘I made it for you this afternoon,’ he went on; ‘mother was awful mad about those white

flowers, and said I had spoiled her whole 'green-house. But I didn't know she'd care till I had them pulled. Now you look as well as if you had on twenty collar-pins. Come on.'

"And holding Ned's arm, I tripped hastily down the stairs and into the merry crowd.

"We had splendid charades. We played 'Benediction,' 'Saxony' and 'Liverpool' to the satisfaction of every one. Then we had 'cross-questions and silly answers,' 'consequences,' and all the parlor games which so delight young people just out of school. At last, tired and happy, I sat down alone in a corner and fell into a gleeful reverie, from which I was aroused by Tom.

"'Mary,' he said, almost savagely, 'I think I requested you not to wear any flowers.'

"'Oh, Tom!' I said, almost breathless at the tempest which I saw gathering, 'these were given to me after I came.'

"'Who gave them to you?'

"'Ned Blinker.'

"'And you, of course, permitted him to tie them round your neck.'

"'No, indeed I did not. I tied them on myself.'

"'Mary, I remember what grandma says about you too well to believe that.'

"'I don't care whether you believe it or not, but it's the solemn truth!' I shrieked.

"'Mary, you are a sad one; you will surely come to grief,' he said, as he went out of the room to tell Kate, Nora and Nellie of the episode.

"Alas for the joy of the party! It was all swallowed up and annihilated by the misery which ensued. That bouquet of tube roses surrounded me for the next three weeks with an aroma of dread a thousand times more pungent than the perfume of the blossoms had been sweet; and finally, through Tom's imagination and Archie's loquacity, it became the cause of Ned and I not speaking to each other for nearly a year.

"When the summer was over I went into the country to teach school, spending only the vacations at home. But notwithstanding my absence from town for so much of the time, my relatives still suffered on my account. One very sad catastrophe which attended one of my visits at home was as follows: Kate had, after almost despairing of getting a lover, succeeded in securing the attentions of Nat Johnson

one of Archie's boon companions. He was considered, in our set, as being somewhat light-headed, but Kate was satisfied, and so of course the world ought to have been. Things looked very favorable; Nora was deeply interested as to what was the most polished and refined behavior for her under the circumstances, and Nellie was wondering what she would wear.

"But my evil star was in the ascendancy, and when I came home to spend the Christmas holidays I unintentionally made mischief. All the young folks of our set were at the great Fowler reception. I knew nothing of the bright hopes which were springing up in Kate's heart, and by some untoward accident I became involved in conversation with Nat. We talked long and gayly; we laughed, we played checkers; and last, but not least, Nat peeled and quartered my orange for me. It was not until Jim Smith came for me to help him in a comic duet that my gleeful hour with Nat was over. Then Kate obtained possession of him; there was a brief but earnest conference between them, which ended in Nat hastily drawing his hat down over a pair of eyes in which fright and horror were plainly discernible, and rushing from the house. The friendship between them was broken, and from that time on Nat carefully avoided Kate, her brothers and sisters, myself, and all the persons who were unfortunate enough to be related to me. At the time, I was completely shrouded in wonder. What had I done to offend Nat? What had Kate done? But it was two years before I knew the truth; not until Ned Blinker and I had agreed upon terms of peace did I learn what had passed between Kate and Nat on that eventful evening.

"Nat had confided the whole affair to Ned. Kate, fearing lest her youthful fancier might make the mistake of admiring me, had told Nat my entire history, and had taxed the English language as much as truth would possibly permit in delineating my faults. Nat was a timid young person, and was suddenly beset by an awful fear. If one member of the family was so violent, so fearful, so dangerous, might not the bad qualities extend in some degree to other members? If one was so utterly bad, was it possible for there to be one of the same family, however distantly connected, with whom life would be safe? Nat declared that he was now afraid of all the Carver clan, and that he proposed to keep well out of the way of all of them.

Not long after this unfortunate event, Tom attended the

great, world-renowned, and only Humpty-Dumpty collection of twenty-seven unequaled stars, which electrified our village for one night only. My ardent but inexperienced cousin became so enamored of the thick-set young lady in sky-blue tights, that he abandoned home, friends, and profession—the law—to follow the Humpty-Dumpty show. The last heard of him he was married to the above-described young lady, who had obtained a divorce from her second living husband in order to grasp the honor of becoming a Carver. Tom had gone upon the stage, and was astonishing the public with a new and progressive style of cross-heeled clog-dancing.

"When Aunt Ellen learned that the *danseuse* had become her daughter-in-law, she sadly wiped away a tear, and remarked that she did not understand it at all; she was sure that no one had tried harder than she to raise her family right. 'Perhaps it was the bad example of Mary.' Then I thought that had my aunt bestowed a part of the watchful care with which she had sheltered me upon her son, that the result might have been more satisfactory to her. But I had learned the wisdom of silence in the presence of my worthy aunt; I refrained from offering any suggestions, and feeling that it was the young lady of the sky-blue tights who was badly married, I stole away to shed a quiet tear of sorrow for her unfortunate lot. Archie's imagination and loquacity continued to augment themselves at the expense of his industry. Uncle Bluecut had long cherished the idea of educating him for the ministry; but after Deacon Powell, Elder Snodgrass, Judge Blinker, Captain Jones, and a few others came to him, individually, collectively, and in detached groups, to demand the origin of certain sensational stories circulated by Archie, in which the above-mentioned catalogue of gentlemen figured conspicuously but unfavorably, my uncle gave up the hope of Archie flourishing in the pulpit, and decided upon a line of mercantile training. Archie obtained a situation in the grocery house of Mr. G. W. Smith; in this line of business he had a good opportunity to exercise his imagination as well as his conversational powers in praising up wilted cabbage and strong butter. Archie seemed to have found his vocation, and all looked promising until a small sum of money was missed from the cash-drawer. Uncle Bluecut paid the amount, and succeeded in keeping the affair out of the papers. Aunt Ellen had again recourse

to her tears; she again spoke of the evil influence of 'that child Mary.'

"It was then that memory came to me, bringing up a childish visit to Aunt Ellen's, when Archie had thrown the entire wardrobe of my rag doll into the cistern, and had taken from me and eaten the whole of a splendid pear which had been given me. I had flown to Aunt Ellen, and with tears and sobs told the story of my wrongs. She had answered that Archie had served me right. And now I thought that perhaps this little seed of encouragement to dishonesty might have produced the bitter fruit which my aunt was tasting.

"Nora had in the meantime become so polished that the young gentlemen seemed to feel themselves too coarse and common to approach her; Kate, in the frequent recital of my faults, had acquired a goodly amount of sourness and sarcasm, which, as we all know, tend to keep admirers at a distance; Nellie had sacrificed so much of her girlish warmth of heart to her collars, cuffs and flounces, that she was no longer the lovable creature whom all our school had worshipped as a goddess of every-day goodness.

"As Ned Blinker began to pay me very devoted attentions, Uncle Bluecut's entire family began to labor to save him. My uncle himself first gave the judge a friendly talk; Aunt Ellen next called upon Mrs. Blinker, and proceeded to warn her of the dangers thick about her; Kate talked to Ned like a sister; and the whole family enjoined upon the washerwoman the necessity of telling my full and complete character to the Blinker hired man. Mrs. Blinker was reputed to possess the finest display of china and glassware in town, and to be very particular about it. So, as grandma had always leaned toward my cousins, Aunt Ellen applied to her for her assistance in the family emergency. Grandma accordingly called upon Mrs. Blinker, and took with her the ruins of an elegant berry-dish of hers which I had broken some ten years before. She had kept these ruins all these years, and had exhibited them to her callers with such persistency, that the annihilated berry-dish had become quite as celebrated in ourtown as is Bunker Hill monument in Boston. Grandma now became eloquent upon the subject of my havoc among crockery, and told Mrs. Blinker that Kate had never been known to chip a dish or to tell a lie. Mrs. Blinker shed bitter tears at the prospect, but declared that it would be useless for her to interfere.

"But about a year before I came to Colorado I discovered in Ned so many similarities to Tom and Archie Carver, that we again became hostile toward each other. Aunt Ellen has written me one letter since my marriage, begging me not to let my temper cause a divorce."

Penobscot Bill sitting next and being required to tell a story, favored the company with his reasons for leaving the halcyon fields of back yonder. These reasons may be briefly stated as follows: Bill, one night after a hearty supper of warm biscuits, fried bacon, pepper-sauce, pickled onions and mince pie, dreamed of going out to sea in a wash-tub with a broom for an oar. A storm arose and the voyage became somewhat exciting. This caused Bill to make use of his triple-plate snore. His brother of the cut and shoot tendency tried to wake him, and while Bill was in a half somnolent state the brother of the pugnacious disposition had drawn from him the full story of the voyage with a full set of charts and compasses thrown in. The next day the brother undertook to make light of both Bill and the voyage. Bill objected to this. The brother assumed a still more hilarious front, and then Bill went on the war path. There was considerable fist display, in which the brother, having suffered more or less, agreed that if Bill would wait a few minutes, he would go and get his revolver and shoot him. The brother started for the house and Bill started for the Wild Woolly West. This is not the language employed by Bill but these are the leading facts. The others declined to relate. Lat Jennings now became so talkative that Mary, fearing he would recite the story of the buffalo wallow or exhume the legend of the Quinine Center bank robbers, sent the young people into the dining-room to dance. She herself played the piano. Having amused themselves with "cheat or swing" and other enlivening figures for some time, they were called in to note the proximity of the clock hands to twelve. For the next fortnightly meeting the entertainment was to be a story told by all. The first narrator was to carry the story to a difficult point and then leave its fate to the next, all agreeing to keep the different parts of the plot in reasonable harmony. Mary greatly feared lest Penobscot Bill and Lat Jennings would rush some undesired features into the story; but she resolved to keep quiet and await developments.

CHAPTER XXIII.

EXPERIENCES.

THERE are certain kinds of flowers that attain their perfection slowly. They consist of so many petals that though they unfold several new ones each day it is many suns ere they stand fully in bloom. Mr. Latshaw Aurelius Jennings was a *ranunculus acris* of this sort. He unfolded slowly. His glories came to the front by ones, two and threes, and thus saved the beholder from being blinded by viewing them all in one gorgeous panorama.

In addition to a very large number of new histories of heart-broken girls, and girls who had been deterred from bringing breach of promise actions only because of a shortage of witnesses, Mr. Jennings revealed the presence in the neighboring mining camp of Cedar Ridge of two kindred souls. One of these was Mr. Lem Harcoot, a gentleman who had shared the childhood gambols of Mr. Jennings, and on several occasions had stood between that gentleman and the irate fathers of the maidens whose hearts the latter was ruthlessly crushing. The other individual was Mr. Clarence Henri Ellsworth, the son of the widow whom, after the death of the mother of Latshaw Aurelius and seven other interesting offspring, the elder Mr. Jennings—Mr. Wilson Jennings—had led to the altar. Clarence Henri Ellsworth, the step-brother of our hero of the short upper lip, was the eldest of a flock of five who delighted the heart of their mother by their great beauty and unsurpassed mental and physical prowess. Mr. Jennings had much to say of Clarence Henri. He was in some few respects more remarkable even than was Mr. Jennings himself. He was one of the most celebrated boxers of all times, if he only had a mind to go forth and display himself. He was a regular knocker—a genuine hard hitter—a man who struck straight out from the shoulder and made the fire fly every time. He was so personally charming that all the ladies who had escaped Mr. Jennings's toils had been heart-wrecked by him.

Other remarkable adventures on the part of Mr. Jennings kept coming to light. While he was but a youth, a gang of

fierce Kansas wolves, all athirst for gore, had chased himself and his little sister up a tree, and standing in a howling hungry throng below, had kept them there all night. Rescue had come with the morn and the world was not robbed of this valuable young life.

Then he had had quite a number of adventures with rattlesnakes. He often repeated these stories, owing to snake stories being in general demand, and the oftener he repeated them the more phases they assumed. Then on one occasion since his arrival at man's estate he had crawled through a window ten inches square and so escaped from thirteen villains who were endeavoring to destroy his bright young life and three policemen who desired to arrest the bunch. After the second literary evening he went occasionally of evenings to see the Chase girls and Bella Martin. Emma Chase gave him much encouragement and was his defender against all who might attack him. But aside from his favor with Bill Hammin and his industry he was not popular at the Bar Eleven. Though Mary now treated him with respect and Iola strove to hide her contempt, he often heard remarks from Kid and Hen that were not to his fancy. But he now counted upon Mary's favor, and with this he was satisfied. One evening after he had become pretty certain of Emma Chase's esteem he sidled up to Hen Hall in his usual careless stride, stepping directly upon one of his feet, and said in a loud whisper:

“Say, Hen, did you know I had a new girl?”

“*Did you know I had a sore toe?*” roared Hen.

“Why, I didn't know I was doin' that, Hen.”

“Well, you'll know it if you ever do it again. You can spend yer time makin' trouble for the women folks, or somethin' that can't take its part, but if you go to foolin' round me, you'll find somethin' that'll strike back.”

Lat roundly apologized and went out to the barn lot. Without answering him, Hen went into the house. Mary, having heard so much of Hen's pacific nature, was surprised at his choler.

“You do not appear to like Mr. Jennings;” said she, quietly.

“I like Hankum,” said Hen quietly.

“Well, Mr. Hall, I for one wish Jennings would leave here, even if he is a good hand. His very presence makes me uncomfortable. I'm often afraid he's done something terrible and is here in hiding.”

"He's never done nothin' that required courage. I don't doubt he's been up to lots of sneakin' meanness though. Women are his game—women and other critters that he ain't afraid of."

"He's liable to find some women one of these days that he'll be afraid of," said Mary with flashing eyes.

"He's a selfish maverick. He considers the whole world jest a range fer him to run over and hunt what he likes. He bellers and blows about what he can do and then when he sees anything bigger nor he is comin' he'll let down his horns and stampede. I've seen sech cattle before, and I tell you I like to see 'em run off the range. Huntin' victims is the cussedest bizness there is. They ain't one of us here that couldn't find plenty of victims if we'd only go to huntin' 'em; but when we make the mistake of doin' that our hides aren't fit for nothin' but shoe leather. Blind as humanity is, it does harm and makes misery enough when it does the best it can. But when it gits to spendin' its time huntin' people that for some reason or other ain't got sence enough to take care of theirselves, its gittin' mighty contemptible. Sech people are jest cow thieves workin' on human timber. They run into the human herds and sneak off all they can coax or drive, generally selectin' calves, cause they are young and easy fooled, and run 'em away from peace and content into the eat-off ranges of misery and sin. And if they ever do come back, they're so thin and poor they can't take care of theirselves, and the sleek, fat stock runs 'em off again. I tell you, Missus, sometimes I think it's almost a pity people ever ris to the amount of intelligence that enables 'em to be so mean. I've seen people in my time that was jest as indifferent to sufferin' as so many dumb brutes. The most of people, Missus, is so human that they forget to be humane. They may take offense at a lick they see some critter give another with his hand, and never take no notice of a blow that blasts a critter for life. Well, I must go out and give them calves some hay."

When he had gone, Iola said :

"Mary, do you believe many women would ever fall in love with that Jennings ?"

"It is just as Mr. Hall said, Iola. By making ourselves sufficiently low and then hunting, we can all find victims. I believe that is Jennings's trade. Of course I do not believe his representations, but I know from his move-

ments that he is a professional flirt. But why do you ask ? Are you in love with him ? " she asked, with a smile.

" The idea, Mary ! But I tell you one thing seriously : Emma Chase is."

" What makes you think so ? "

" Why, I was talking to her yesterday. She could talk of nothing else. She is dreamy and restless, and starts when his name is mentioned."

" Well, I'm sorry for her. He will never think of marrying her ; and if he were to marry her to-morrow, he could only make her miserable."

" But, Mary, do you not consider him rather fascinating, after all ? "

" In some ways, Iola. He is good-humored in the main, and is, when he watches himself, a delicate flatterer. His self-confidence, though ridiculous to the reason, is very pleasing to the eye and the artistic sense. The self-contained suavity even of the professional libertine would in some ways be delightful if it could last, but it cannot ; the picturesque, high-rolling waves of old ocean are separated from each other by troughs correspondingly deep. These men who present themselves in such god-like humor to the women they wish to deceive, are bound to have their intervals of churlish pettishness or worse. When these men do marry, their wives realize the full truth of this. But it is not unusual for the inexperienced to accept as pure gold the brass that is readily rubbed into brightness and as readily tarnishes again."

" But villains ought to be thoroughly disagreeable so that they would warn us. In reality, they are often thoroughly charming."

" Jennings is not thoroughly charming to me. His kindness of manner is all that saves him from being thoroughly ridiculous. I have learned to read all his little tricks and understand all his little games. He gives flattery because he desires that flattery be given him. Still, what you say is true. The most thorough criminals are often the most charming people. This is not because there is any necessary link between charm and criminality ; it is for two other reasons : one of these is that charm of manner, like beauty of person, is often inborn ; this charm begets for its wearer indulgence, preference and favor from the cradle forward. The wearer is by these caresses of fortune strengthened in his caprices and weakened in his ability to resist his more

selfish nature ; he thinks only of self and self-gratification, and thus remorselessly tramples upon the rights and enjoyments of others. The other reason is secondary : he sees that his charm of manner begets him favor and victims, and he consequently augments this pleasant front in every way possible, so that thereby its effect may be augmented. Now look at Jennings from a careful standpoint ; he is coarse, vain and illiterate ; he is, by his own confession, heartless and insincere. Yet his beauty of person, his charm of manner, his ready flow of entertaining talk, and the unquestioned acceptance that is granted every man, stranger or not, take him into good society and beget him the favor of pure-minded girls."

"Why are you so sure he will never marry Emma Chase ?"

"For many reasons. A professional flirt marries only when there is something to be gained. There must be great wealth, great social position, or some other inducement. Then the male flirt prefers that his wife be a prude. He has followed so many women who were not prudes that he has lost faith in the sex. His love has all been expended long ago. He does not ask a wife to receive his love. A plain woman who will not attract men, who will look well after his house, bring him property or position, and take excellent care of his children, will suit him best. If his old longing for the society of the fallen return, he will not hesitate to seek such society. Emma Chase, as one of so many children, could bring him but little property. She has no other qualities that he desires ; she is simply a light-hearted girl, such as he has often amused himself with."

"Don't you believe he will ever fall in love with any one, Mary ?"

"Perhaps he may. There is one type of woman that I believe could make him suffer. A woman of rare personal charms who would attract his fancy and then maintain a resolute independence, arousing his hunting instinct, and keeping forever just out of his reach, could amply avenge the innocents he has duped. The more selfish the individual, the greater is his ability to suffer at defeat in a matter of deep desire. Jennings may meet some one who will even up all his little flirtations."

"I've a notion to try it myself," muttered Lola.

"Do not risk it. The man in any such contest has so many advantages that naturally everything is in his favor. The woman who plays such a man must have age as well as

experience. She must be all strength, independence and determination. Of twenty women who might begin such an enterprise, nineteen would weaken under the flattery, and consent to tamely love, thus earning contempt where they started to hunt devotion. Like Bella Martin's terrier, surveillance, restriction and captivity have sapped our strength ; we must—most of us at least—acquire liberty and accustom ourselves to it, ere we become capable of holding our own with men in any of the contests of life."

"Don't you believe a cold, haughty woman might make an impression on Jennings ? "

"No, indeed ; a cold woman never has been loved yet. Love is warmth. Jennings may marry a cold woman and probably will, if she has the adjuncts I mentioned awhile ago, but he will be far enough from loving her. A man who has distributed his love among so many women is less desirous of warmth in the nature of his life-mate than is the one who is saving all his affection for her. The latter wishes to believe that the woman he chooses is capable of filling his life with bliss. The young libertine looks upon marriage as a bore ; the young *man* looks upon marriage as a state of bliss ; the libertine, if he marries at all, does so from policy ; the *man* marries to enjoy and honor love."

"But if Jennings would find the kind of woman you mentioned a while ago and marry her, would not he keep on loving her ? "

"If she were a diplomat of the loftiest order, if she resolutely maintained her independence, refused to pet him and insisted upon being petted, kept him continually half-jealous instead of allowing herself to exhibit the slightest uneasiness or concern, she could keep him delightfully servile ; otherwise she would soon become as uninteresting to him as a cast-off coat. But the game would not be worth the candle, Iola. The love of such a man is no compliment to any woman."

"But why do you make such hints, Mary. How are you certain that he is so bad ? "

"Study human nature, sister. I have dismissed my blind credulity of late and gone to employing reason. It has done me good. Try it."

A few days after this, Jim brought home a magnificent side-saddle for his wife ; she had been using an old one belonging to Mrs. Hopkins. Jim had selected one of the regular "cowgirl" variety. These saddles are gotten up for

service as well as beauty, and are particularly fitted for rough and dangerous riding. They have long double strings of leather hanging from either side from which cloaks, bundles or lunches may be suspended. Mary had seen a few cowgirl saddles since her arrival in the state, but nothing so pronounced as this. Instead of buckles or sewing in many places where buckles or sewing would have been possible, heavy buckskin thongs were in use. Mary declared that the saddle was all elegance and strings, and that she would not appreciate it if it had one string less. Her childish delight produced such an effect upon Lat Jennings that he declared that if he thought he could make any one so happy he would buy a saddle, himself. Penobscot Bill remarked that though the saddle did very well he had seen "lots nicer ones back yonder." When Lola sighed because she had no such institution, Gus Waite, who of course was present in the evening, took an inventory of the article and inquired its cost. Kid sang several pleasing and appropriate couplets concerning equestrianism and field sports generally, while Jim employed Hen Hall to hold the saddle up for him while he pushed Mary against it and tied her up in the cinchas, latigo straps, tie-strings, et cetera, and then put the stirrup strap round her neck. Mary was a good saddle woman before this. She now accompanied her husband on many of his range trips, took risks where risks were possible, and became quite as confident and proficient in the saddle as Broncho Charlie himself. Her husband was also giving her lessons in pistol shooting. She had done badly at first, but the fact of Kid rolling on the ground and laughing at one of her bad shots, and the boasting of Lat Jennings concerning his proficiency at marksmanship, aroused her. She at last received Jim's assurance that if she kept on improving she would eventually rival even the peerless Texas Ike.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE COWBOY AS ROMANCER.

THE third literary evening at the Bar Eleven began much as did the second. The same persons were present with the happy addition of Texas Ike and five of his seven satellites. These gentlemen were much delighted with their reception, and insisted upon all the Bar Eleven crowd attending a ball

to be held at the Circle Bar on the coming Friday. The Circle Bar could not offer a very large number of comforts, but it would overflow with hospitality. Jim, knowing one of Texas Ike's weaknesses, took him aside and informed him that whiskey was not appreciated by the ladies of his family. Ike assured Jim that there would consequently be no whiskey at the ball.

And should the gentlemen wear their store clothes, or all come in their colored shirts, chaps and spurs?

"The colored shirts, chaps and spurs, by all means; and we ladies will dress in our best as a contrast!" exclaimed Mary.

"And we'll all take something nice for supper," exclaimed Bella.

"Will the men wear their revolvers?" asked Sarah Chase, who was mortally afraid even of an empty cartridge belt.

"O, yes, let them wear them, but have it understood that none of them are loaded," said the romance-loving Mary.

"And the men must dance with their big hats on," said Iola.

The gentlemen acceded to these terms and the company story began. When it was concluded it was so esteemed that the crowd, declaring it should not be lost, voted that Mary set it to rhyme. During the next few days she did so and the story is thus presented. The only obstacle to the full enjoyment of all was the conduct of Mr. Lat Jennings. It would of course be supposed that a creature of so ready an imagination would have found his chief glory in such an opportunity for imaginative play; but life is full of surprises. When Mr. Jennings's turn came, for some mysterious reason, perhaps because the character of the hero did not please him, he utterly refused to relate. It was of no use to try to move him. Mary suggested that he work in one of the charming romances of which he seemed to possess so many. But all was useless. Mr. Jennings drew up his short lip and sat silent, while the story was continued by others.

It was decided that since the narrating party were better informed upon cowboys than upon any other class, the hero should be a cowboy. The scene must of course be that land of mountain, hill, cave, and romance, Colorado. It having been agreed that a wild and mysterious cave be the immediate arena, the story proceeded.

THE ROMANCE OF PERILOUS CAVE.

THEME.

We will tell you now a story of a knight in chaps and spurs,
 Whose record as a vaquero no dark dishonor blurs;
 We will tell you all the story of his labors and his pains—
 His trade was riding round-ups, and pulling bridle reins.

SCENE.

The Centennial State with its wonders of highland,
 Its far reaching parks and its picturesque hills,
 Where the rarefied air and the generous sunlight,
 The spirit of health and of beauty distills,
 With its cloud embraced peaks in their snow and ice tunics
 Where frost-laden wind sprites unceasingly rave,
 Conceals 'neath high rocks near its hill-broken center,
 A dark, gloomy cavern called Perilous Cave.

THE VISITING PARTY.

(Gus. Waite.)

To this dark cave one September day an Eastern quartet came;
 Their minds athirst for knowledge hunted scientific game.
 They were all well schooled in Latin, and in Greek and algebra,
 And for them the Euclid forty-seven was merely baby play.

They could give you Roman history since Remus was a boy,
 And the story of the wooden horse that fixed the fate of Troy.
 They knew that Grecian Homer was a poet grand and true,
 And that the fuss at Granicus antedated Waterloo.

But those were not the only facts that stored their mental cup,
 They were skilled in the great American game that is known as
 seven-up.

Two ladies and two gentlemen composed the party brave
 That rode out that September day to visit Perilous Cave.

The fairest and most learned of this erudite quartet
 Who hunted scientific facts was Delia Somerset;
 A maid of queenly bearing, who came of lineage high,
 With the spirit of her Mayflower kin in a dark and flashing eye.

THE COWGIRL SADDLE.

(Mary.)

When this party called at the barn of Jake Lunn,
 The ladies' light saddles were all out but one.
 But said Jake, "Here's a saddle that beats all the rest;
 'Tis a new cowgirl saddle, 'The Pride of the West.'"
 Said Delia, "That saddle for this trip is mine;
 I'm hunting new wonders; it's right in my line."
 When Jake brought out the saddle the maid raised her hands,
 So astonished was she at its strings, straps and bands,

Its sky-blue buckskin seat with soft cream silk ornate,
 Its two horns on the near side to steady her weight,
 Its stirrup with thongs of stout leather entwined,
 And the long tapadaro that lay off behind,
 The stout tree 'neath the cushion so soft and so full,
 All lined with a sheepskin unshorn of its wool,
 Its latigo straps so yellow and long,
 Its wide cinchas strengthened with interlaced thong,
 The long, flying tie-strings that hung 'neath the seat,
 And the short leather skirts with their border so neat.
 The strange handsome thing was enough to appall,
 Because for the right hand there was no horn at all;
 For the ladies who range Western hill, vale and plain,
 Consider the hand-hold constructed in vain;
 In side horn and stirrup they find a sure brace,
 That despite maddest prank keeps them safely in place.
 So Delia's fair cheek was with wonder aglow,
 This big cowgirl saddle astonished her so;
 And when she was mounted and ready to ride,
 This big cowgirl saddle filled her with pride,
 Her fair, piquant face bewitchingly smiled,
 For this big cowgirl saddle with joy drove her **wild**.

THE ARRIVAL.

(Jim.)

In the course of an hour or an hour and a half,
 After many a jest and occasional laugh,
 The party arrived at the cave.
 Then they quickly began to talk and discuss
 Of personal fear, and that started a fuss,
 For all wanted to be thought brave.

For there lived an old story about this same spot,
 That would shake the strong nerves of nobody knows what:
 'Twas a story of bears and of blood.
 It was said that one time in the dark long ago,
 At least two years before for aught that I know,
 A handsome young cowboy had stood,

At its dark, dismal mouth, looking searchingly down,
 When he found himself hemmed in by bears fierce and brown.
 Then he wondered how he would escape,
 For he feared that the bears had decided to lunch
 And that he was the tid-bit they shortly would munch.
 Things had taken on quite a bad shape.

But a cowboy is naught, if not reckless and brave;
 He turned him about and leaped into the cave,
 The dark cave that all feared to tread.
 And one of the bears so fierce and so brown,
 Mad at losing its prey quickly followed him down;
 And the rumor sped on to ranche, post and town,
 That the fearless young cowboy had doubtless gone down,
 To dwell in the realms of the dead.

Now our party all feared that the bear brown and fierce,
 Was still in that cave, all waiting to pierce
 Their flesh with his teeth and his claws.
 So they almost decided that science could wait,
 For that cave's inner history, until the fate
 Of the bear and the cowboy some wise man would state;
 For each individual felt that his pate,
 Was dearer to him than learning's great cause.

But Delia the fair from her saddle leaped down ;
 She lighted a candle and tucked up her gown;
 No faith in bear stories had she.
 The others protested that neither had they
 But they would not descend; they decided to stay,
 In the healthier air of the September day,
 And guard the cave mouth, and quietly play
 Seven-up, which Americans frequently say
 Is the happiest game in this land of the free.
 So Delia descended, smiling and lone,
 To study this wonder and hunt rare bits of stone.
 No fear of the cavern disturbed her calm mind.
 The light in her hand and the rope round her waist
 Were the weapons with which she the gloomy depths faced.
 Rare wonders she hoped soon to find.

The party without lingered long at their play,
 Till fierce hungry bears came and chased them away ;
 But fair Delia returned to them not.
 Her saddle and horse they took back to Jake Lunn
 And then to wear mourning all sadly begun;
 They took the train East ere the set of the sun ;
 With the wild, woolly West they declared themselves done ;
 And they never returned to that bear-haunted spot.

WITHIN THE CAVE.

(Bella Martin.)

Fair Delia walked far down a long gloomy incline
 That led from the dark, narrow mouth of the den ;
 And then all abruptly she paused in deep wonder,
 For she saw that she walked in the dwelling of men.

The walls that gleamed out 'neath the flame of her candle
 Were adorned with stone carvings most lifelike and rare;
 They were portraits of men and of nature's fair creatures,
 The elk, deer and pronghorn, the bison and bear.

While in deep admiration she stood contemplating
 A neatly drawn sketch of a tall, turbaned Turk,
 A sound that convinced her of soft flowing water
 Made her glad she had chosen discovery work.

To the cold doubting world she now soon would discover
 Subterranean cities, rich, cultured and grand;
 With their huge restless millwheels and dense populations,
 And their myriad ships crowded close on the strand.

As she turned and walked onward these things to encounter,
Thinking only of city and populous town;
She found a steep step she could scarce have descended,
Where a hand reaching out gently lifted her down.

The light of her candle flashed out on the stranger,
Revealing him heavy and homely, but kind;
All clad in a garment of dark hairy bearskin—
He was hardly the cit she expected to find.

Then she said : “Good, kind stranger, lead on to your city;
This deep buried land fairly fills me with awe.”
But he answered, “Fair lady, down here is no city;
We are here to escape the fierce bear’s hungry maw.

“I was the first man chased into this cavern;
I was here a full year all weary and lone;
Then two mendicant Turks lost out in the mountains,
Were driven by bears to this refuge of stone.

“The last one to join us in this lonely dwelling
And news from the great world to cheer us all bring,
Was a blameless young cowboy of elegant stature
To whom we all loyally give the name ‘King.’”

THE QUESTION OF SUPPLIES.

(Kid.)

Wild beasts of every description
In those mountains had their lairs,
But none were so highly obliging,
As the kind and obliging bears;
Lest the cave men should suffer from hunger
And perish one by one,
They organized a committee
To see what ought to be done.

They decided that two of their number
Should go down twice a year,
Fall into the cave and break their heads,
And furnish these men with cheer.
For the bears in their inmost consciences
Had felt the tooth of remorse—
They had chased the lost men into the cave—
Like good bears they repented, of course.

The men contentedly feasted
On bear meat fried and stewed;
And voted by heavy majority,
That bear meat for fodder was good.
They all took turns as chaser
To chase each other about,
For bear meat’s friend dyspepsia
They desired to put to rout.

Of the skins of their benefactors
 They made garments of cut most rare;
 And clothed themselves in bear-skin
 So that their skin be not bare.
 And the short and thick-set gentleman,
 Whose name was Jonathan Jones,
 Informed the beautiful lady,
 That for lamps they used the bones;

 With the cavities filled with bear's oil,
 And wicks from their own old clothes,
 Mr. Jones explained that the light thus made,
 A goodly distance shows.
 The entire wealth of the cavern,
 Was an outcropping coal bed found,
 A vein of gold and a living brook,
 And the bears that bi-yearly came round.

Then Jonathan Jones led the lady
 Past the brook with its muffled roar,
 To where earnestly playing seven-up
 Sat three of this wonderful four.
 They were seated on large, smooth boulders,
 Their table a huge round stone.
 They leaped up at sight of the lady,
 Almost as if reason had flown.

But Jonathan Jones to the rescue
 Explained her presence there;
 And stated that she was not running,
 From an evil-tempered bear.
 They very politely welcomed
 This addition to their band;
 They called for a new deal all around,
 And bade her take a hand.

THE INTERVIEW.

(Penobscot Bill.)

The handsome and stately King,
 With locks like a raven's wing,
 Proposed the very first thing,
 That the crowd at large form a ring,
 And let him and Mister Jones fight,
 With all their concentrated might,
 To see which had the best right
 To this creature of beauty and light.

For the lady had captured King's heart,
 Old Cupid had sent forth a dart,
 That gave him a terrible start,
 And left a most horrible smart,
 That could only be cured by the bliss,
 That this most bewitching young miss,
 Could impart in a warm bridal kiss.
 King admitted the truth of all this.

The lady indignantly said
 That a cowboy she never would wed;
 Jealous Jones then declared that her head,
 Was level; and he would stand by her till dead.
 Then King told the lady he'd give her one chance
 To escape being party to his life romance;
 They would play seven-up. If she won she might dance
 In the joy of her freedom. But if he, perchance,
 Were winner, his life she must share;
 They would speedily pair:
 And he'd make her aware,
 He had plenty of gold of a fineness most rare.
 They would rush past the bears with their fierce hungry frown,
 And build them a dwelling in some thriving town,
 Far away from the range of the bears huge and brown.
 They played, and he won. In a swoon she sank down.

THE RECLUSE.

(Hen Hall.)

It chanced that in a tunnel near,
 Unknown to all save King,
 There dwelt a pious hermit
 Who noted Fall nor Spring;
 But lived in contemplation
 Of the sins and woes of man,
 And in mourning the injustice deep
 That has reigned since time began.

In the vaquero's heart-battle
 His thought to the hermit turned—
 He would hasten and ask if unholy
 Was his passion flame that burned.
 Then he stooped o'er his chance-won lady,
 And lifting her slender form,
 He pressed her head where his warring heart
 Was beating its maiden storm.

As his brain reeled in contemplation
 Of the wealth within his arms,
 With shouts to Heaven he vowed to keep
 Her from Earth's ten thousand harms.
 He owned himself coarse and unholy
 Beside this woman divine;
 But never had he felt such strength
 To combat fate malign.

In the throes of a new-born passion
 That links Earth with the skies,
 Love's twenty thousand voices
 He felt in his heart arise.
 All Earth became a vast cavern
 Peopled by these alone;
 There was left a single ambition—
 A single field to be won.

In the frenzy of brain-racking fever,
 Like the mad triumvir of old,
 He would mart the vast world for a woman,
 And count it most happily sold.
 So adown a darksome tunnel
 He bore his chance-won fair.
 While his three companions followed
 To the hermit's cell of prayer.

And here he told his story
 And pleaded the lover's plea—
 He would barter a year of possession
 For all eternity.
 And in his deep despairing
 He wafted a prayer above,
 That clan and caste might pass from earth,
 And naught remain save love.

But the hermit uttered remonstrance,
 And bade King consider well,
 That before there could be a just union
 The lady her mind must tell.
 The lady recovered her senses,
 And with gasping and weary sigh,
 Told her lover that her reluctance
 Must hold forever and aye.

But before King reluctantly freed her
 He grasped her resisting hand,
 And swore the vows of a husband—
 Then turned and fled from the band.
 As he left them all standing in wonder
 At his wild, despairing flight,
 He turned about and shouted
 To that lady of beauty and light:—

“To the Pan Handle wild I am going
 To lash out my aimless life—
 The heartwrecked, despairing husband
 Who can claim no woman as wife.
 And remember, cruel lady,
 When friends prove false and cold,
 That the love of the one you are scorning
 Will never in life grow old.”

CONCLUSION.

(Iola.)

When the lady saw King speeding out of her sight
 She felt that the wall lamps were losing their light.
 She feared that the man whom she rudely had spurned
 Might all of her days into romance have turned.
 His absence preached loud of his myriad charms,
 And well she remembered the strength of his arms;
 For though of Hellenic not a word he could speak
 He had easily carried the weight of her Greek.

Might not caste be a mere brain myth, then, after all,
 And love heaven-sweet for a vaquero tall ?
 Musing these things she sat for a wearisome hour,
 Her heart calling him back with first love's awful power;
 Then she turned and fled back to the mouth of the den
 Quickly followed along by the wondering men.
 No wild beasts lingered near, but the shadows of night
 Were driving to westward the last beams of light.
 The men and the maid to the valley came down
 A night march to make for the neighboring town.
 Mister Jonathan Jones gave Delia a part
 Of the gold that King left, for a little life start.
 King having discovered the wonderful lead,
 Delia felt that she justly might ownership plead;
 For her husband had sworn in his vows to endow
 Her with all of his goods. She received his wealth now,
 And purchased a horse, man's apparel, and spurs,
 And quite disregarding society's slurs,
 Was off ere the morn for the wild grassy land
 That is known as the Pan Handle plain, broad and grand.
 Her mind on her lover, forgetting her Greek,
 She sped o'er the valley and rounded the peak;
 Till she left the wild hills and rode down to the plain
 Where seldom come clouds and more seldom comes rain.
 At the isolate ranche and the trading post lone
 She paused to inquire if her lord past had flown;
 But not till the mid plain she rested upon
 Did she get any word where her husband had gone.
 She paused at the camp of a round up to dine,
 Feeling spirit and heart in weariness pine;
 The rough men were kind to the worn stranger boy,
 But their soft ministrations brought her no joy.
 Had the friend she described to them travelled that way ?
 He had rode on their range, they said, many a day;
 And he was so sad, and silent, and drear—
 They hoped this new friend might his gloomy soul cheer.
 Delia rose from the mess and looked out to the east
 Where a horseman advanced like Eolus released.
 As he leaped from his saddle, she threw up her hand
 And never was known swifter magical wand;
 The cast-off hat and wig revealed feminine charms—
 wealth of dark hair rippled over her arms;
 Then strength swiftly fled, and she weakly down-sank ;
 On the tall, waving grass of the sunny creek bank,
 Calling out to her husband with sighs and with tears
 And vowing to love him through all coming years.
 He knelt by her side while the joy in his heart
 Bade tears from his eyelids begrudgingly start;
 And the touch of his lips as they pressed her browned cheek
 Was sweeter by far than rare volumes of Greek.

As the story concluded the crowd broke into applause.
 They insisted that the fate of the two Turks and of the

hermit and Mr. Jonathan Jones be told also, but the narrating party said that the story was the story of the vaquero and the lady, and that having taken the other characters safely past the bears and into the town, the audience ought to be satisfied. After dancing a quadrille or two and playing a game of "Marching to Jerusalem" the crowd dispersed, all the young people agreeing to be present at the Circle Bar ball. Owing to the hesitation most of the young people showed when asked to help entertain, no more literary evenings were planned for the present. The pleasure of dancing would be tested for a time.

Bella Martin remained over night with Iola. When the sitting-room was empty of all save the three ladies—for the two girls had pleaded with Mary to sit up and talk ball dresses—the proceedings therein were quite undignified. It was undignified in Mary to refuse to talk ball dress, and spend her time in making light of the Knight of the Kaw Plains. It was undignified in her to get possession of that gentleman's tan colored hat, stick the band full of playing cards, put the hat well on one side of her head, and then sit down and tell over the story of the buffalo wallow, the history of the enamored Indian maid, the legend of Boniveld, and the tale of the bank robbery at Quinine Center, rising every now and then to expectorate into the fireplace, and carefully imitating all Mr. Jennings's movements. After the stories were done it was undignified in Bella to snatch the hat from Mary's head, shake the playing cards over Iola, then kick the hat all about the floor, in which pastime both the other ladies assisted with a will. The ladies were indignant because Mr. Jennings had shirked his part of the story-telling and they took this undignified way of avenging themselves. It was undignified in Jim to get up and lock all the doors to the sitting-room, thus imprisoning the noisy party who murdered his sleep, and crawl into his bed chamber through a window. It was undignified in the ladies to raise one of the sitting-room windows and push Mary out so that she could dip pans of water out of the flume and douse her lord through the bedroom window until he consented to open the prison doors. It was undignified in Jim when he rose to open the doors, to rush out, seize his wife and, carrying her out into the yard, dip her head into the flume. It was undignified in Hankum to become so angry at the screams of his beloved mistress as to bite his master's heels. It was undignified in Kid to come down-stairs to learn which por-

tion of the house was on fire, and to assist Jim in soaking the ladies' heads in the flume. In fact all these performances were so very undignified that the less said of them the better.

CHAPTER XXV.

AT THE CIRCLE BAR.

THE long, low adobe building at the Circle Bar was as light as a dozen tallow candles could make it. A huge fire of piñon burned bright in the long fireplace. On the dark, smoked walls were several gun racks where lay at rest as many rifles of as many makes. The rude furniture consisted of three wooden chairs with rawhide seats, six or eight rough boxes, eight saddles lying on the floor and a set of plain, rough cooking utensils. One of these boxes was the cupboard, another the table. Behind a curtain at one end of the long room, the curtain put up expressly for this occasion, were concealed two bunks. It might be therefore inferred that four of the Circle Bar outfit slept in the bunks while the others made pillows of their saddles and beds of the floor. The supper was a thing of the past and the rough floor was clean swept. The dogs were barking furiously, and Texas Ike and his seven satellites were out helping their lady guests out of their vehicles and off their horses. In at the open door came Jim and Mary and all the Bar Eleven outfit, Bella Martin and the Chases, Broncho Charlie, Gus Waite, Stanley Lancaster, four young ladies from Aspen Creek, Jere Herron and wife, the Greggs, and all the cowboys far and near who had heard of this wonderful ball; and last but not least the two Talbert boys from Milroy City; they were in the most elegant evening dress and formed a decided contrast to the cowboy-costumed company. The ladies were shown the retreat behind the curtain, whither they retired to lay aside their wraps. They emerged gorgeous as the roses of June. All the misses by a preconcerted arrangement were in white decked with glossy, bright-colored ribbons. Mary wore the costume which her husband liked best—black lace over scarlet silk. They seated themselves upon the saddles and upon spring seats which the gentlemen had brought in. Mary selected the saddle she knew to belong to Texas Ike, thus paying that gentleman a

very high but unintended compliment. The romantic Mary, the imaginative Bella and the novelty-loving Iola were in the highest realms of bliss; but the Chases were not quite happy. They had thought all along it would be "nicer" for the men to dress up; so they waived the companionship of the vaqueros as much as possible and sought the smiles and attentions of Clyde and Harry Talbert. The violins began to play. Jim led Mary, Kid selected Bella, Gus Waite chose Iola, Lat Jennings escorted Emma Chase, and the first set was formed. Texas Ike and Sarah Chase, Penobscot Bill and one of the Aspen Creek girls, Stanley Lancaster and Lucy Chase, and the Herrons, made up the second. The Talberts had brought no partners and so of course could not dance in the first quadrilles. The merriment rose high. The rough, though picturesque attire of the men, contrasted oddly with the splendid costumes of the ladies. Mr. Lat Jennings was so happy that in swinging the ladies he became so demonstrative that Iola requested Gus Waite to tell him that his presence was much needed in the lunatic asylum. Gus, not grasping the idea that she was jesting, employed his long legs to cross the set and his brevity of speech to give the message to Lat. Lat informed Gus with a visible shortening of his upper lip that no one but a girl would dare to talk so to him. Gus requested Lat to step out of the house as soon as the quadrille was done; he then returned to the much disturbed Iola, who was already repenting her hasty speech; she was fond of novelty but she did not want a battle fought on her account. Lat however was so engrossed with Emma Chase that he forgot to step out and hunt up the warlike Gus. Iola frantically begged her partner to never so take her at her word again, and the young and inexperienced Gus consented.

Mary danced with Texas Ike, with her old lover Stanley, with Penobscot Bill, with Lat Jennings, who tried hard by his thousand gracefulnesses to bring her to repentance for her marriage with Jim; and presently with Gus Waite, who flourished his long legs so vociferously that he caught his spur in her long lace over dress. She hastened as soon as she was free to the curtained retreat to loop up the lace, and by making it shorter save it from spur rents. While all alone here, engaged in the adjustment of her dress, standing close to the rough wall, she caught the sound of two voices outside. One was that of Texas Ike; he was saying in deep distressed tones :

"I don't believe it, Stan ; I can't believe it."

Then she heard the voice of Lancaster say, his sentence followed by his now contemptible little laugh :

"It's just because you're so good-hearted, Ike ; that's all. You see, I've been watchin' him, and I know it's so."

"I'd be sorry fer his wife," said Ike brokenly.

"O, well ; it 'll teach women to fight shy of these fellows that hold themselves so stiff," and again came the laugh.

"I've knowed stiff fellers that was as good as any," protested Ike.

"O, you've got to look out for the precise fellows. Now he was always hintin' round that he wouldn't do the way the other boys did. O, he 'll get his deserts, one of these days ; see if he don't," and this time the laugh was smoother than ever.

Mary was ghastly white. Though not a name had been mentioned she felt that her household was menaced. The conversation *must* refer to Jim, who else would Lancaster talk of in such fashion ? With a sudden sickening she pressed her ear to the wall, but she heard nothing further. The men had moved away. She went out into the room and sank down upon a convenient saddle, looking as in a dream, to where Iola stood talking with Harry Talbert. She saw Jim in close conversation with Hen Hall and Jere Herron. She repressed a sudden impulse to cry out to him and warn him. Just then Ike and Lancaster entered. She turned such a horrified look upon them that both men started. Ike came forward, closely followed by his companion, and inquired if she were ill. She asked him to call her husband. The air was close and she must walk in the yard for a time. Jim came, wrapped her cloak about her, and supported her on his arm as they walked about the yard. And when she warned him he laughed, of course. What man would not ? He bade her have better ground for her alarms before she permitted them to steal away her quietude. Then he stooped in the dark and kissed her, and led her back into the house, where her returning color, and eyes blinking to accommodate themselves to the increased light indoors, brought a new pang to the heart of Mr. L. A. Jennings.

But the enjoyment of the ball had fled from her, and the remainder of the evening was a troubled dream. The boxes were pushed alongside each other and the splendid viands placed upon the snowy linen the ladies had brought ; but Mary saw all with half-closed eyes. Her whole consciousness

was winging after the two men she had heard talking, trying to make out what the beginning and end of that conversation was, and to convince her mind, as her heart was already convinced, that her husband was its subject. Twenty times she sought their faces; Ike invariably dropped his eyes; but Stanley only gave vent to his little laugh and came forward to tell her how well she was looking. She danced and talked and listened; but when at last, after what seemed ages of weariness and waiting, she found herself in the spring wagon beside her husband, she, blessing the night that hid her weakness, twined her arms round him, and laying her head on his shoulder, fell into a troubled sleep.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE SPRING ROUNDUP.

THE Bar Eleven had now become possessed of a croquet set. The men found time to play on moonlight evenings, and occasionally on Sundays. Now neither Jim nor Mary objected to Sunday croquet playing on the part of their employees. They knew that Lat Jennings and Penobscot Bill, if bereft of amusement, would hunt a saloon, and would do all in their power to take Gus and Kid there with them. Some of the neighbors "made talk," and Jim consulted Hen Hall. Hen told Jim that there had been a time when he had been given to visiting saloons, and that he had always held a lack of means to employ Sunday partially responsible. Hen argued that when homes are made gloomily sombre, and when all innocent amusements are forbidden, as they usually are on Sunday, that the impatient, restless, life-loving heart of youth will stray out in search of amusement. He argued that it is better to keep youth at its weekly work on the Sabbath day than to give it time for recreation and forbid it recreating. He argued that one of the surest methods for combating evil resorts is to keep home always pleasanter than any den of sin. He argued that what was Sunday breaking was Monday breaking; that what defiled Sunday was equally evil on Tuesday; like Jesus, he believed that it was well to do good on the Sabbath day and wrong to do evil on any day; he liked the idea of a day of rest, when men could pause in their daily toil, to spend the time in friendly

intercourse, and in thanking God for the blessings they had received ; and, thought Hen, if some of God's children chose to put their thanks in the shape of making others of his children happy, and in keeping them away from sin and crime, where is the harm ? Is not safe and secure happiness praise, and is not the uncertainty of sin, and its consequent suffering, blasphemy and cursing ? Hen believed that that is crime which brings shame, misery, poverty and suffering to any of God's creatures ; and that that is virtue which puts these things to flight.

Though quite ready to attend church and read over his favorite Scripture passages, he was also ready to take up a croquet mallet and help entertain the young people about him. He argued that while rich blessings are to be found in church and Sunday-school within proper limits, that if the sessions and lessons last all day, they will become so tiresome as to drive away the audience ; there must be recreation as well as rest and study. Of course Hen could have entertained himself very well without any amusement ; he had reached an age and a state of mind when amusement is no longer necessary ; but Hen, poor fellow, could not get rid of the idea that he was to a certain extent his brother's keeper. Could he be happy shut up alone with his Bible, earning a passage to Heaven for himself, while some one was pouring poison into the ears of his boy friends and leading them to waste their toil-won earnings for that which is not bread ? So Hen, believing that people ought to learn to distinguish actual from theoretic crime, took up his mallet on many a Sunday.

And strange as it may seem the Bar Eleven outfit often walked from a heated religious discussion within doors to the croquet ground without. The house was much divided in its creed. Jim, Mary, Iola and Kid argued that science was the most needful thing, and that he who knew most of science would be the truest and most devout child of God. Hen Hall believed that the educating of man out of sin, and the making him more humane and just to his fellow-creatures, was the one question to be studied. His worship was the serving of God's creatures. His talk was so sincere and earnest that ere the middle of summer the first mentioned four had to a greater or less extent embraced his tenets.

"The great cause of this mean injustice," he would say, "is jest blindness. We're mean and cruel 'cause our eyes ain't open to the things we do. We're all more or less blind. If we was made to see and understand the sufferin'

our blindness causes, we'd quit it and go to behavin' ourselves. It's our duty to study how not to cause sufferin' ourselves, and how to check up others that don't know enough to keep from trampin' on the weak. I can think of plenty of folks that has done wonders at settin' free the critters some one else was abusin', who, if they'd jest looked down, would a found that under their own feet critters was strugglin'."

Both Lat Jennings and Penobscot Bill were very religiously inclined—that is in a certain sense. Both were superstitious in the extreme, and both believed that eternal punishment would be visited upon those who died unrepentant, and upon all who scoffed at orthodoxy. They both intended to repent their sins some fine day, be received into the church, and go to Heaven post haste. The people whom they had led into evil ways must of course take care of themselves. It is needless to say that Hen Hall expressed the strongest contempt for the views of these two gentlemen.

Mary much desired to learn Mr. Jennings's politics. The Bar Eleven outfit were, with the single exception of Penobscot Bill, Browbeaters. Bill was a Reactionist and Mary hoped that Mr. Jennings was a Reactionist also. But she was disappointed. She put the question one morning at breakfast. Mr. Jennings fairly swelled with importance; he waved his hand majestically as he answered:

"I am a Browbeater for all I'm worth. My father was the first Jennings that ever voted the Browbeater ticket. My grandfather was a large slave-holder when the war begun. Father went into the army and helped free the slaves. Before the war was over the whole family changed their minds. Yes, I'm a Browbeater jest as far as I can reach."

Mary was deeply disappointed, and although a life-long Browbeater she began right then and there to pick flaws in her party. She remarked that it was time for the Browbeaters, now that the slaves were free, to turn their attention to some other great work—the liberty of women for instance. She and Mr. Jennings then had a lively battle; for Mr. Jennings was one of those gentlemen who in the presence of women believe that women are too nice, good, lofty, sweet, amiable, pretty, clean, sacred and noble, to be polluted with the franchise; and who when talking with men believe that the members of the gentler sex are too — big fools to be trusted with citizenship. Mary was most

unkind, and tore his delicate sentiments and neatly adorned logic to tatters, telling him flatly that she preferred a single grain of blunt common sense to a ton of meaningless flattery. And after this, when the subject was mentioned, he was much more tractable; he believed after all there was something in the question; he would accord it the honor of his close consideration. He made these terms not because he was any nearer to belief in the equality of women, but because he did not like to have his charmer berate him. He liked to study her face when she was dreamy and restful—these outbreaks were advantageous as far as exhibiting her in a new role went—but then he preferred they would not be too frequent—he longed in fact for more signs of capitulation than she had yet displayed.

Man's love for woman is very like his love for sugar; while smacking his lips at her sweetness, he calmly says: "When I have eaten up this supply I can easily get more." Still some brands of sugar are preferable to others; the article which is scarce and unusual specimen—she possessed flavor, and was not so insipidly sweet as is the average brand; she ticketed herself with so high a price that Lat, when in his sober reason, almost despaired. His numerous easy victims all seemed contemptible now. There was ever before his mental eye a vision of sprightly defiance, of restless activity, and of conscious superiority. And as alone with the lonely greasebrush he studied the latter point—thought over her delicate little humiliating thrusts, her raking cross-fires with Kid, her contempt of his attentions, he vowed fearfully to do his utmost to bring her to acknowledge his power. Ah, he had a plan! He would enlist her kindness of heart. He would petition her to teach him to play the chords on the piano. Music and proximity should soften her. Why is it that our anxiety to feel that some one else is more insignificant than ourselves is so great that we will take endless pains to make them so, and well-nigh perform miracles to perpetuate the conditions that keep them so?

Lat began the music dodge that very evening, and Mary was quite ready to assist him, though she did not capitulate so readily as he had expected. When he sat too near her she requested him to take a lower octave; then she roundly scolded him for sledge-hammering the keys, and told him to watch how softly Kid played chords. It was humiliating to

be told to imitate a boy, and to be informed that that boy never made such frightful discords. But since Mr. Jennings saw nothing better than the music he kept on with it. Then all the little wiles possible he employed, such as striking attitudes on the croquet ground, coming down-stairs occasionally in his bare feet to exhibit his shapely great toe, and resurrecting large numbers of reminiscences of his personal prowess and bravery. In fact, he told so many of these that Kid confidentially remarked to Iola that "Sammie would rather tell a lie on six months time than the truth for cash."

"O," said Iola, playfully, "he is a wind. He is a wind, because he blows. Winds are of three kinds—constant, periodical and variable. Mr. Jennings is all three; he is constant because he never stops blowing; periodical, because he blows his old breezes over at regular intervals; and variable, because he never blows them twice alike."

Mr. Jennings furthermore showed himself possessed of a stock of rare witticisms, such as that once upon a time he fell down and came near walking all over himself, or that he greatly feared Hen Hall would at some time open his mouth a trifle too wide and swallow himself. These were dangerously amusing the first three or four dozen times he sprung them upon the Madnau household. But after their utterance became one of his fixed habits, and especially after his echo got to using them, they lost a portion of their pristine charm.

The season being forward, the round up took place in May. The Bar Eleven outfit were eating their last breakfast at home for the present. All would be gone save Mr. Jennings. This gentleman sat volubly boasting of his by-gone prowess as a cowboy. But he had had to pause. Bleeding at the lungs had threatened him. He was never satisfied unless he had the worst horse in camp, and he had been so shaken up in his time by bucking bronchos that he had to be careful. The assembled would never believe, to judge from his robust appearance, how near and how often he had stood at the brink of the grave.

"I remember," said Hen Hall, "a thing that happened once when I was out on trail. I'll never forget it as long as I live. There was a dude right fresh from the East, and I tell you he thought he was a long-horned Texan. He'd been tellin' 'round what a brag cowman he was, and he was just crazy to get in with our bunch and turn himself loose.

He got him a pair of bearskin chaps, and a hat that looked like a circus tent, and a pair of guns—one wasn't enough. He did know a little somethin' about ridin'—could do purty well with a gentle horse for a few hours. Well, I tell you he was a terror the first day out—like to a run his horse to death—and that night he was mighty noisy round the campfire with his mouth, though I noticed he didn't stir around much. I've seen fellers more in a rush to get up than he was next morning, and when he started to ride he wasn't near such a terror as he'd been at first. The third day he pegged along till noon and come in sick. He took off his guns and kicked off them chaps, and rolled into the mess wagon. He got onto the cook's blankets and that started a racket. The cook finally let him alone, but when we boys come in we got after the boss. He had some medicine along to give to us if we took mountain fever, and we got after him to fix up several bitter kinds together and make the dude swallow his feed. The dude took one dose and that cured him. Ridin' wasn't as much fun as it used to be, but it was more fun than that stuff. That feller had got romance enough stored up in his system to last him for years. He was tired of the work, and the grub didn't suit him; got to kickin' about the dried apples, and turnin' up his nose at the bacon. He managed to hold out till we run agin' a little town, and there he drawed his pay and showed us his heels."

Mr. Jennings again showed signs of communicativeness, but Kid obtained the floor. In a nervous tone that ill accorded with the preluding wink he gave Jim, he explained that he had passed a miserable night and was in no sense fit to ride. If Jim had no objections, he would stay at home. Sammie would not be injured by a single day's riding. If Jim preferred, he, Kid, could ride slowly along the outer edge of the scene of action and lend what little assistance a sick man could without running his horse. Jim agreed to this; Kid must be present as a sort of reserve force, but Jim would never require a sick man to ride at full speed over the uneven hills. Sammie could ride Mary's nag, Kate, whose gentle behavior would endanger the lungs of no one. Sammie offered a few objections, but these were futile. His presence was needed and he was consequently mustered in.

With blankets and slickers strapped to their saddles, the party were soon galloping toward the hills. Kid's health

had so far improved that he was able to endure the smart pace of his horse without fainting away. Kate was behaving herself just tolerably well, only; if there was anything she disliked with all the fervor of her equine soul it was a display of over-confidence in her good-nature. Mr. Jennings had displayed perhaps a little too much confidence, and Kate was consequently a little uneasy. The Bar Eleven outfit separated, Hen and Bill moving to the right, and the remaining three to the left, so as to surround and drive out a large number of stock that ran among the hills some eight miles below Dwightmere Pass, and turn them toward the park where the drivers were to meet. Bill was not permitted to know that fun was expected; but Jim whispered Hen that they would do all in their power to save the circus until the outfit again came together.

It had been arranged the day before which way the different parties should ride; and when Jim and his two companions approached the bunch they sought they found Texas Ike and one of his men driving down another bunch from the direction of the Circle Bar. Kate was becoming more and more restless as her rider was developing inward terror and outward bravado. Her quick and surprising turns after fleeing cows kept her rider actively on the alert. His upper lip was shorter than ever and the curl in his hair less perceptible than usual. A few miles down, the crowd was joined by the Talbert boys with another bunch. Here Kate saw fit to become disturbed in her mind, the only perceptible cause being the jingling of a loose medallion on Harry's showy bridle; she, with head in the air and tail horizontal, performed a stiff-legged prance, which, to say the most, was for her a very mild performance. This done, she got one foot in a prairie-dog burrow, and in extricating herself threw back her head and struck the head of her rider, who, from his great affection for her perhaps, at this instant had his arms round her neck. She then pranced a few more measures, not to be disagreeable at all, but merely to suggest to any one who might be in an observing frame of mind that if her humor did not improve, she might eventually approach a crisis. They reached the rendezvous before noon. The drivers had been successful, for a large herd had already been gathered.

Hen Hall presently rode up to Jim in some excitement.

"Jim," he said, "Stan Lancaster has jest come in with

a bunch from Nine Mile, and that heifer of yours is among 'em."

"Which heifer?"

"Why that heifer you bought last fall and never got to brand. She's branded half circle Z O on the left hip, and got a cancelled triangle bar on her right shoulder. Her hair is so long you can't see the brands now, and Stan says she's his; but I know she's the same brute. Will you come and look at her?"

"Yes. Come on, Sam."

Jim had forgotten his intended amusement; he was all sober business now. He galloped to where the disputed animal stood. Stanley was firm in his declaration of ownership.

"Better catch her and throw her and examine the brand. Now's jest as good a time as any," said Bill Cofroth.

"Rope her, Sam," said Jim.

"Rope which?" queried the almost livid Mr. Jennings, as Kate elevated her shoulders a little.

"Rope that red and white spotted yearling heifer, comin' two years old in the fall, that's standin' lickin' her side there, between that roan cow and that brindled calf yonder," said Jim in an impatient and perhaps hasty tone.

"This un," said Hen, indicating the animal with his quirt.

"And look out she don't hook you with them inch long horns!" called Kid.

"Pick up her hind foot!" suggested Gus Waite.

"Don't go at her so sudden; you'll surprise her!" roared Kid, as Jennings rode at the animal on a run, wildly endeavoring to do something, he scarcely knew what, with the abundance of rope he found tangled round his hand and arm. He shook the rope wildly, intending, if possible, to throw it at the animal, trusting some lucky chance would secure her with it, and madly cursing his ill luck. Kate was wildly speeding after the terrified animal, and Jennings was as frantically shaking the rope. Presently it fell to the ground in confusion; Kate caught the tangled mesh with her fore foot; she reared, snorted and plunged; the already uneasy cattle in her vicinity started to bellow and run; Cofroth, Jim, Hen, Kid, Gus, Stanley, the Talberts and Jere Herron set their horses to the gallop to prevent a stampede; Kate, with all four of her legs in their rope prison, lifted her

fore feet until she stood almost as erect as her rider possibly could have done; then she lowered her fore-quarters and gave her hind legs a turn at skywardness, landing Mr. Jennings far away on a thriving ant hill. She then emerged from these comparatively quiet and harmless gambols into a regular exhibition of equestrian gymnastics. She did her best. The shouting cowboys, the running, bellowing herd, the dangling rope, and the loudly cursing Mr. Jennings inspired her, and for full ten minutes she was at the acme of her enjoyment. She rose in the air, turned and came down in an opposite direction, bit her girths, snorted, reared, and foamed, until at last she fell in the midst of the rope coils, leaving the earth about her magnificently ploughed. Jennings was on his feet, trying to approach her for some time before she fell, desiring only to mount again before his fall was discovered. The cattle had now been surrounded and brought to comparative quietude. Kid and Gus rode past Ike, who had seen the whole drama, up to Jennings, who was now busy disengaging the rope. Ike briefly told them the facts.

"Why, how did you get down there, and Kate in that shape?" queried Kid.

"The old hussy got her legs tangled up in the rope, and I had to get off to unwrap it," said the dismounted rider, gloomily.

"Guess you did have to get off, Sammie. Ike saw you get off. He said it was the clearest case of 'have to' he ever saw."

"Well, any man that says I was throwed, lies!" roared the goaded Jennings.

"I'll bring Ike over here and let you tell him so, Sammie," said Gus.

"You let Ike alone. I'll manage my own rackets. But I'll tell you right now that I'll make him take that back. I don't want any trouble with anybody, but I'll jest camp right on his trail till he swallers that."

"Well, Sammie," said Kid, "since we got cheated out of seeing that fun by the cattle making the break they did, I think you'd better do Ike up for our benefit. We'll bring him over and tell him to jump you about being throwed, and all you'll have to do will be to lick him. Agreeable?"

"O, boys, I don't want no trouble with Ike. Ike's a good feller, if he jest didn't talk too much. I never saw anybody I liked better, if it wasn't for jest that one fault. But I tell

you, boys, I sure stayed with her till I got ready to git off. It would take worse buckin' than any she could do to throw me. Why, when I was down in the Territory, I rode one horse that not another man in camp could ride. I got onto him one mornin', and he bucked worse'n a wounded buffalo —jumped over a seven-rail corral twice; but I sure stayed there all the same."

Lat was subjected at dinner to the merciless badgering for which the cow camp is celebrated ; but seeing that he was helpless, he accepted the situation and made the best of things. He joined in the laughter, though with rather bad grace, and tried to even-up matters by telling over the love affairs of Gus and Kid. Thus he succeeded in partially turning the fire ; but ever after this Jim and Ike assured the mess that they had a project for making a fortune. It was to fence the impression on the ground Lat had made in his fall, and charge tourists ten cents admittance fee. Then, when Lat undertook to prove that Gus was perishing for love of Iola, Ike asked him if he was holding a revival when he saw him down on his knees.

In the evening Jim, Bill, and Lat decided to go home. It had been previously understood that Lat was to ride for a day only, and then return to look after the ranche work. Jim would go home every night, so long as he was within ten miles of his ranche, to keep the ladies from loneliness. Bill's horse had become lame, and Jim had none on the range fit for him to ride, while there were several in his pasture that could be used. As the two friends rode along in the cool evening, talking over the events of the day, Jim dismounted and threw his rein to Bill, and asking the loan of one of his revolvers, said that he intended to try his luck at rabbit shooting. Lat also dismounted, throwing his rein over the saddle-horn and telling Kate to follow, which she readily did, now that she was in a good humor again. As he touched the ground, a medium-sized rattlesnake struck at him. He leaped to one side, uttering a startled cry, while Jim seized a rock and killed the snake. Lat mildly reproached Jim for not giving him a chance to destroy his enemy, and having cut off the creature's head, hung the body on the saddle to show to the ladies.

Jim walked briskly ahead, for he saw something that surprised him. It was a lone cow. He did not understand how she could have been left behind. Perhaps she had been running in the mountains, been missed in the gathering, and

was now hunting her companions. He recognized her as he drew nearer. She was one of his own herd, and had been off in the mountains for months. He remembered her by a peculiar droop of the horn. She was wild, and afraid of a man on foot. He went back and mounted, Jennings following his example. He rode as close as possible to her, her wildness preventing close proximity, to examine her brand and be sure. Why, could it be possible? She bore Lancaster's brand—a bar H. Could it be possible that he did not know her? Not know that peculiar horn? Ah, the cross on the H was new and clear, and the bar and the two vertical lines were rather indistinct. He looked stupidly at his two companions. Neither knew the animal. Jim had not remembered seeing her since Bill had been in his employ. He trailed the cow until he learned the direction whence she had come. Then he turned to Bill, and, pointing in that quarter, asked if he knew who had gathered the stock from that way.

"Stan Lancaster," said Bill.

"I know why he left her behind, then," muttered Jim, savagely; and over his face came a moisture, and in his veins a tempest. He rode home in gloomy silence, and with teeth firmly set together.

He did not tell his wife, fearing to make her nervous and retard the hoped-for return of her health. But he rode many days looking for new crosses on bar H brands. He found, during the next three months, more than twenty head to which he and Hen Hall could swear. Kid, who had been in his employ two years, knew six of them. Jim bridled his anger when in the presence of Stauley. He decided to set a trap and watch. The fact that soon after the spring round-up Stanley announced himself a member of the Circle Bar Cattle Company surprised him. He had never suspected the Talberts. They stood high, both financially and socially, in Milroy City. He knew them hard at trade, but he could not but believe that they were ignorant of Lancaster's character. His first impulse was to warn them—his next to watch.

Jim was absent on the round up three days. Bella Martin and the Hopkinesses stayed with the Bar Eleven ladies during this time; the Hopkinesses to look after the young house-keeper and her flock, and Bella to assist in the entertainment of Mr. Jennings. Mary was disturbed that Jim should wear a troubled look when he returned. She began to use her wifely arts to cheer him and draw out his secret. Seeing

that she was worried, he resolutely threw off his gloom, declared that he had not been feeling quite well, and that he would soon be all right again. Then Mary cheered, her spirits rose, and her bloom came back. She was so rejoiced to see her husband cheerful again that she romped over the croquet-ground like a child, played duets with Kid, and cribbage with Hen Hall, and finally summoned up patience to finish teaching Lat the chords on the piano.

The latter gentleman now considered her capitulation only a question of time. He agreed with all her opinions and endorsed almost all she said. When he seconded her music he informed her how her proficiency discouraged him. His own fingers were so stiff from exposure to weather, managing bad horses, pulling gun triggers at Indians and bad men, that he could never hope to make them scamper over the keys with the matchless grace she displayed. And during all this time he was employing every opportunity to convince her what a noble fellow he was—how often he had been tempted to do wrong, and how bravely he had resisted—how bitterly he repented the one or two little mistakes he had made during life—he was not perfect, of course; no one was, and he bitterly regretted that he was not, but ah! he was so much better than some—how often bad designing people, especially scheming women, had tried to rope him in and pollute the integrity which was alike his proudest possession and his greatest charm. His stories now were all on the order heroic; they all pertained to things Mr. Jennings had done for the salvation of the lost and the rescue of the unfortunate. They pictured his love for mankind and his deep desire for the equality of humanity. They all breathed the fact that Mr. Jennings was a disguised philanthropist, and that the load of fine bird-shot in his shoulder was the only obstacle to the growth of angel wings. Mary was getting so much amusement out of this state of affairs, that she did not pause to consider the possible state of Jennings's mind. Indeed, it would have been difficult to convince her that the man whom she had so berated was in love with her. One evening, as he sat alone in the sitting-room, looking ever and anon toward the dining-room door, she ran through the dining-room, picking up her sewing as she ran. Iola shut the door and stood against it.

"Let me through, quick, Iola," said Mary; "I want to rush into the sitting-room and get Horn-blower started on another Indian Territory yarn."

"Mary, you ought to be ashamed of yourself," said Iola, sternly. "You said only yesterday that of all things you despised a married flirt most."

"Who's flirting?"

"You are."

"Iola Fleming!"

"I say you *are* flirting. You may not see it, but I do. And you wouldn't let me flirt with him, either."

"O, Iola, you are just angry because he'd rather tell yarns to me than to come out and help you with the dishes. That's what you are scolding about."

"It's not. It's because it's wrong for you to flirt. You go in there and tickle that simpleton's vanity, and coax him to tell lies, till he thinks you are the most wonderful woman on earth."

"And who shall arise and say I'm not?"

"Well, so far as being a delicate flatterer goes, you *are*. But you ought to be ashamed to coax that fellow to lie."

"I don't coax him. I just listen."

"Good listening is the most delicate and effective flattery."

"Well, Iola, you'll admit it's better than a circus to get him started. I've got to either quarrel with him or let him tell yarns. Jim won't let me quarrel with him for fear he'll leave, and then we won't have any one to run the mower, and we'll miss the sight of his red shirt lighting up the green alfalfa field. You can leave the door open and listen, or I'll tell you the yarn after I get possession of it, whichever you prefer. Ta, ta."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE sunshine was warm on the cottonwood shaded bank of the Gaston. Kid lay at full length on a bed of fine white sand, plucking handfuls of grass from the turf at his right. Gus lay upon the grass plat, his broad hat shading his swarthy cheek as if to keep off another coat of tan. Lat and Bill sat astride a log, cutting figures in its bark. Hen Hall and Broncho Charlie stood near the water's edge, throwing

boulders into the dark and bubbling current ; for the snows on Bernalillo were melting and the Gaston was at its highest. It was a balmy July Sunday, and the cowboys and ranche hands of Frelawna were at liberty. The Bar Eleven men had "trailed up" Gus Waite and Broncho Charlie, and gone down to the river for a bath. Just what was to be gained in the way of cleanliness by a plunge in the muddy fluid is not known—but whatever is to be said of cleanliness there was to be found adventure and sport.

The men had dipped. This was evident, for Kid's light hair stood stiff and bristly ; Gus Waite's straight, black locks were more black and shiny than usual, Lat and Bill carried beads of moisture on their foreheads and in their mustaches ; Hen and Charlie were still barefoot.

There lay upon the entire group the delicious languor that follows the mid-summer bath. There was all desired luxury in the simple drawing of nature's honeyed breath. Things were so harmonious that for a time Kid was bantering no one, and Hen and Lat were not quarrelling. It is at such moments that our faith in our environments rises to such a pitch that whether they be rocks or humanity we unconsciously pour out to them a portion of our inner lives. A magpie stood beside some tidbit which it had found—it looked saucily at the group and boastingly chattered. Lat lazily raised a finger and pointed to the bird.

"Hen, do you know who that bird is like ?" he asked.

"No. Who ?"

"It's like Mrs. Madnau. Look now ; see it raise its head and hold it to one side. See it step off, now, proud as Lucifer. See its shoulders play."

Hen admitted that he saw the bird but not the resemblance. Bill and Charlie immediately acquiesced in the similarity, of course. Gus and Kid did not look up ; had the bird been compared to Iola, or Bella, they would have immediately become all eyes and ears.

"Then," added Lat, "although that bird seems so very friendly, if you'd go to walk up to it, it would redouble its tricks till you got where you thought you had it, and then all of a sudden it would be gone."

"Hum. Is that the trick you've been trying Sammie ?" asked Kid.

"I don't say I *have* tried. If I do try, I don't say she'll be gone when I get ready to take possession. The game sometimes changes its habits accordin' to the hunter. I

gener'ly know my game 'fore I try to carry it off. But I guess I'll take the pretty Iola in."

" You talk like you can get just anyone you want," observed Kid.

" Well, can't I? I've been engaged to twelve girls by actual count."

" And left 'em all?"

" Yes. Whenever I find I can get a girl her charm's gone. I flatter her and kiss her till I'm tired of her, and then I hunt a new one. The women are so blanked servile that a man can't help but get tired of 'em."

" Then twelve girls can thank the Lord for one big run of luck," drawled Hen.

" I tell you, they didn't think so," said Lat, bristling up. " I had a perfect devil of a time gettin' rid of 'em."

" Well, that don't signify," said Kid. " They were probably old, wrinkled hags that thought it was better you than nobody."

" No, they wasn't old wrinkled hags, either. They was all fine girls. Law, they's nothing in this world that's so plentiful and so easy got as women. They're so d—d servile that they'll take any kind of a kick, and are always standin' ready to marry anybody they can get. They'll marry anything that wears pants. They're easier to get than Texas cows. You've got to have twenty-five dollars to get a Texas cow, but a man, no matter what he's done, can get a woman with a little soft talk."

" They're not all cheap," said Gus.

" They're nearly all cheap," persisted Lat.

" Say Sammie, why don't you try a little of your soft talk on Mrs. Mad; I've seen your eyes follow her once and occasionally," said Kid. " A little of your soft talk and a few kisses from that adjourned *sine die* upper lip of yours might get her to leave Jim and fly with you."

" A woman that would leave as good a man as Jim would need lots o' punishment," observed Hen.

" She'd get that if she followed Sammie," dryly observed Gus, with the cool courage of nineteen.

Lat threw a piece of turf at the venturesome boy, laughed, and rolled his long under lip warningly. Then he spoke again, anxious to keep the question whirling:

" Now, I say that when a person invites kickin' he needs kickin'. Women are so weak as a class that a man knows he has all the advantage over 'em he wants, and consequently

he can't and don't respect 'em. Now every girl I was ever engaged to would lose all her independence—if she ever had any in the start—inside of a month. She'd act just like I was her master, and the only spirit she'd ever show would be that of weak and sickly jealousy; then of course I'd despise her. And I never saw but one or two married women that weren't either spiritless slaves, or weak, irritable scolds."

"I suppose Mrs. Mad is one of the exceptions," dryly observed Gus.

Then Kid said:

"I don't deny that the women, a good many of them at least, are weak; weakness has been taught to them and in fact almost forced upon them. I know they'd be better treated if they were more independent. If they insisted upon more rights they'd get more. Their lack of independence is the fault of their subordinate position, and they feel it better to yield than to struggle. It is easy enough to receive the treatment of a slave; all one has to do is to act the part of one. To be feared and hated one must play the tyrant; but to be loathed and scorned he must play the slave. The minds are few, and deeply philosophic must they be, in which pity for the servile can rise above the scorn which that servility invokes. But we men are largely responsible for the weakness of women; and then, after all, the women are no more servile to men than men are to custom."

"Well, if the women would be independent in spite of everything, the men would like 'em better," said Broncho Charlie. "Now the men go on and preach about how straight-laced the women ort to be, and yet they don't never like the straight-laced women. They'll let the stiff, goody goody ones go, and run after the ones that's half full of independence and devil. Now, straight as Jim is, he'd never a married any woman but the one he did; he could a got several girls on the crick here if he'd a wanted 'em, but he didn't; Mary Fleming is a kind of a rowdy at heart, and Jim knowed it. Then if she is sassy, she's mighty nice about it; when she makes light of you she does it so skillfully that you somehow feel complimented that she took any notice of you at all. Now she won't never need to be jealous of Jim, 'cause she keeps him so well entertained he hain't got time to think of any other woman. Not long ago they were out ridin' on the range, and they didn't know I was in sight. She had her horse pretty close to Jim's, and all at once he

threwed his arm round her and jerked her over and kissed her, jest like they'd been two young people."

"And what did she do?" eagerly asked Bill, with his mouth open a little wider than usual.

"She hauled off and slapped him at first; then he kissed her again, and that time she laid her head on his shoulder and give him all the chance she could."

"Don't that give you the old-fashioned shakes, Sammie?" asked the merciless Kid.

"Mrs. Madnau used to have lots of admirers," continued Charlie.

"And have they all quit her?" asked Lat.

"If they have, she won't miss 'em; she's just lately got a new admirer that makes up for all she's lost;" said Kid, as he rolled a bowlder right in the direction of Lat.

Lat colored. "Look here, Kid," he said, "you're too fresh. Now, jest because I said Mrs. Madnau was fine looking and independent, you needn't think I'm going to make a fool of myself."

"No danger of that *now*, Sammie," retorted Kid as he turned a somersault and began to kick sand into the river. "But you've got the Fleming fever and you've got it bad. You see I know all the symptoms. I watched Jim Mad and Stan Lancaster and one or two others through it. But it's no use, Sammie; Jim'll hold on to her now just as he did then. You'll have to let first choice go, and go back and catch one of your discarded dozen before it's too late. Now if you'd been smart, and fallen in love with Iola, like Gus here—"

"Or with Bella Martin, like Kid there—" suggested Gus.

"You might a got yer pick," suggested Hen.

"It's strange what fools people can be," muttered Lat.

"Very strange," echoed Gus.

"Say Sammie," continued the exasperating Kid, "if I was to throw a big rock into a bunch of dogs, I'd know if I hit any of 'em, because the one I hit would howl."

"____ and ____!" exclaimed Lat.

"Now if you're not hit, quit howling;" said Kid. Then he picked up a stone and threw it at the magpie. "There, now, Sammie," he said, "I've sent your charmer away. Fall in love with some one you can catch next time, and look out you don't let Jim know how the land lays. Jim gets ugly sometimes."

"You fellows are havin' lots o' cheap fun, you think, but I

tell you, I've never been left yet. I've seen hundreds of women I could a married, but I've got too much sense. I'm not goin' to tie myself down to any one woman."

" May be you'd like to go to Utah, Sammie, where you could marry up half a county and keep a harem right," said Hen.

Lat became indignant. He sat up and said fiercely :

" Polygamy is barbarism ! I'm no barbarian, Hen Hall, whatever people say about me ! "

" O, polygamy is barbarism, is it ? " said Hen, as he squared around and leaned against a cottonwood. " When a man acknowledges his wives and provides homes for 'em, and expects to take some sort of care of 'em as long as they live, and recognizes his kids and lets 'em bear his name, and once in a while buys 'em some sort of a present or takes 'em out to a picnic ; and where the women can hold up their heads and not feel they're disgraced, that's barbarism. But where a man has two or three dozen unmarried wives strewed round over the country, some of 'em that he's never seen but once and never expects to see again, with his trunks allers packed so he can light out for a new range at the shortest notice, with him huntin' up specialty doctors, with his wives drinkin' to drown their shame and jumpin' into some river to shorten the road to hell, with his kids growin' up to be kicked and slurred and shut out o' decent society and drove into crime 'cause they was born in shame, that's civilization. There's a distinction for you, and by Hell, there's a difference, too."

" And so you believe in polygamy," sneered Lat.

" No ! I don't believe in polygamy ! It's you that believe in polygamy ! I believe in the union of one man to one woman. But I say, if we have polygamy at all, let's have a decent kind—a kind that don't cause so much shame and sorror and misery as ours does. The States is jest about as polygamous to-day as Utah is, and their polygamy is of a long sight lower, meaner kind. A man and woman livin' together makes marriage ; the gosh darned ceremony ain't nothin' but the smearin' over of the law. I believe in a man keepin' his mouth shet about Utah till he gits kinder worthy to wipe the molasses off of Utah's nose. If I had any sense I'd git up a party myself that would give the women a right to protect theirselves."

" The Browbeater party is good enough for me ; " said Lat. " My father was the first Jennings that ever voted the Brow-beater ticket, and he left a slave-holdin' family to do it. If

that party was good enough for him it's good enough for me. I don't expect to be anything but a Browbeater while I live, unless the party tackles this d—d woman question."

"Yes, you're a hell of a Browbeater," roared Hen. "It's the only good trait you've got, and you disgrace that so that tain't no longer a credit. Your father riz up and tackled the evil his generation was called on to fight, and it would be an indication of horse sense in you if you'd do the same. But you won't do that. You'll hang onto your father's coat tails and try to inherit his glory, instead of gittin' out and rustlin' some for yourself like he did. You'll leave the party as soon as it calls on you to give up any of your cussedness, and that'll be the biggest run of luck it ever had. It's been settlin' up other people's faults so far and lettin' yours alone. If you'd been old enough to hold slaves 'fore the war and could a stole money to buy 'em, you'd a had some, and you'd a held on to 'em jest as you're holdin' on to your right to abuse and kick the women now. *Some* party is goin' to right things for the women one of these days, and after it's done that, it's goin' to be the popular party and run the range to suit itself for a while; and the ones that's been fightin' women and decency will have to light out for the ravines amongst the hills. Them that's goin' to be on the popular side for the next forty years might as well be collectin' together and gittin' ready to go onto the trail."

"You three fellers are gittin' mighty stuck on the cause of the women all at once. I wouldn't espouse the cause of such a set," said Lat.

"No, by Jacks," said Bill.

"I don't go in for no woman equality," said Charlie, "but I'd like 'em to have more spirit so the men could have more fun with 'em."

"You fellows," continued Lat, "were talking the other day like every prostitute was a saint at heart, and like some man was to blame for her state. Now I know that thousands of those women go wrong of their own free will."

"Gosh H—I!" shrieked Kid. "Didn't you go wrong of your own free will? Haven't the women a right to do as you do? I know the majority of them go wrong from being tricked and deceived; but if every woman in the United States went wrong of her own free will there'd be mighty few men have room to raise a row. I tell you the way things are now, if I was a woman, I'd go wrong; I'd refuse to do a lick of work for my support, make all the money I could,

swindle every lover I had out of every dollar I could get, spend my time improving my mind and travelling, and live in idleness and luxury. I might be criminal, but servile I'd *never* be."

"O Kid," said Hen, "I'd be sorry to see the women do like that, no matter how much the nation underrates 'em. In my mind good mothers is the nation's only hope."

"The nation! Tell me what the women owe the nation? The nation don't value *them* above the coyotes in these hills! Its constitution even accords them the silent contempt it bestows on the brutes. They haven't a voice to protest if the men should vote to exterminate them all. Look how during the late war the noblest and best women of the nation slaved for the nation. Thousands of them stayed at home, put in the crops, spun and wove, knit and sewed, did their own work and the men's work too, putting themselves uncomplainingly to the meanest drudgery. Others got up fairs to raise money; others went to the front, risking their lives as spies, nursing the sick, gathering the wounded out of the battle trench, washing stiffened, clotted blood from the wounds of those they hoped to save to still further serve the nation, toiling in a burning climate under only a canvas screen, breathing the effluvia of fever and small-pox, singing to cheer hearts breaking under the anguish of war's despair, writing the last words to the feeble father and mother in the far distant home, catching the last prayers of the dying and composing the rigid forms of the dead. And ever since that fearful time the women who were then at the front—the very women who served most faithfully then—have been asking the nation they served to give them the citizenship it extended to the blacks. And what have they received but ridicule and refusal and scorn? The nation has continually bade them, when it noticed them at all, go back to their homes and attend to their domestic duties. The chief employment of every tyrant in every age has been to dictate what was best for *somebody else* to do. Although the nation gives woman nothing but the home, it will not even enact laws to make that home decent and pure and happy. Let us quit considering the outcome to the nation should the women turn against it, and try to find a *reason* why they should *not* turn against it. Now when a woman can find a man that's willing for her to have decent rights and protection, I say she owes *him* allegiance. But why she owes *anything* to the nation that taxes her without her consent, treats

her as a degraded subject, and places her below the level of the liberated convict, *I* cannot understand. I say let the prostitute demand and insist upon the same respectability that is granted her male confederate. Let there be an end of the system that maintains one class of women solely for vice, and another solely for drudges and breeding animals. If the nation gets uneasy for fear it will run short of citizens, let it either do justice to the creatures who bear and rear citizens, or else let it skirmish around and provide citizens independent of the women. The women have a monopoly on the citizen-producing business if they'd only see it, and I believe in 'em using the fact to their own advancement. Women were made for men's companions in all things; and I say that when they're compelled by law and custom to be anything else, that they ought to raise just as much of a racket as they possibly can."

"O, but Kid, I'd be sorry to see the women all go bad though I've got to admit they're justifiable. It would put things back mightily," said Hen.

"What inducement is there for them to be decent?" queried Kid. "Now here's Lat Jennings. He'll run with prostitutes till he wears out all his affection, and gets sick and tired of women; and then he'll marry some nice girl. She'll slave for him all her life, and nurse and take care of his sassy brats, and clean their dirty noses, and take all her husband's impudence and tyranny, and so be rewarded for being virtuous. He'll have spent so much money on fast women that he won't even be able to buy her anything decent to wear. I may be a blanked fool, but I'll come right out and admit that I wouldn't want any such a reward. I'd rather have what cussedness was to be portioned out to me straight, than to have it handed over to me by a husband. I believe in strict equality even when it comes to cussedness."

"Yes, and then decent people everywhere would be throwin' up to you how low down you were," suggested Charlie.

"They wouldn't be accusing me of being so d—d tame, anyhow," said Kid. "And besides, if all the women were to turn out that way, one would be as respectable as another. There wouldn't be any class to be kicked and slurred and shut out of society and made suffer so. It's just what the women will do, too, if they're not treated better. They're getting too much sense to take their present treatment

always. Now if such fellows as Sammie here would marry the kind of women they run to the dance houses to see——”

“I’d rather go down to my grave,” said Lat, in a heavy, solemn voice; then adding still more gravely: “Even if I was low down enough myself to marry such a creature, I wouldn’t disgrace the family by doin’ anything of the sort.”

“Birth sometimes brings worse people into families than marriage does,” said Gus.

Now it chanced that right here Bill picked up courage to make a remark without any assistance whatever. His remark was, that by closely observing the social workings back yonder, he had discovered that if a woman were just good and “innercent” she would reap all the happiness any woman deserved.

“Innocence never yet protected a creature,” said Gus, shortly.

“Of course it hasn’t; it don’t. It can’t,” said Kid. “What’s the use of talking to people in a language they can’t understand? What’s the good of talking Greek to a Hottentot, showing a pitching broncho a copy of the Bible, or parading innocence before a villain? Power protects. Innocence sacrifices thousands every year. Look at the peaceful Acadians, the unresisting Quakers; did innocence save them? One ounce of determined resistance will beget respect and favor where infinitudes of innocence is down-trampled and scorned. Let innocence indeed remain sinless if you will: but put the sword of citizenship in its hand and the stamp of equality upon its brow.” And Kid kicked a cloud of sand into the river as if he believed he had said a good thing that ought to be followed by some sort of a stir.

Lat rose from the ground, stretched himself and put on his hat. The sun had already set.

“The ground’s gettin’ cold. I’m goin’ back to the ranche,” he said.

“Better cool yourself off while you’ve got a chance,” said Gus.

“Yes, and if you don’t happen to have twenty-five dollars about your clothes to buy a Texas cow, you might go up to the house and give Mrs. Mad a little of your soft talk,” suggested Kid.

“When you get older you’ll have more sense,” retorted Lat.

“Have you got older?” asked Kid, as a parting shot.

The party started up Frelawna in two groups of three each. Hen, Gus, and Kid were in the rear. Hen seemed troubled, and said in an anxious voice:

"Kid, I'd dreadful hate to see the women do the way you said."

"But Hen," he answered, "it would wake the men up and the government, too. Anybody that reasons can see that the home is the only safe training school for the citizen of a republic; and if the women, because of the outrageous treatment they receive, would undertake to break down the home system—and they could do it quick as wink if they'd just make up their minds—the men would see the necessity of making laws that would render marriage clean and sacred. A thinking creature—and such the women are becoming—desires justice just as much as it desires purity. I know that circumstance is to blame for making women servile; but if the women would resolutely throw off that servility and show their teeth, there'd be something done."

"Well, Kid, I hope the men'll wake up before the women git so desp'ret as to try to run the home and marriage business off the range."

"So do I," said Kid. "The state of society I speak of would be a realization of horror so far as the best men are concerned. It would be riot, in which the worst libertine would get most of the petting and love. Women, blindly following impulse and passion, would not pause to study the natures or characteristics of the men who presented themselves, thus accepting the showy, superficial villain who is best at flattering, and turning away from him who has only his unadorned manliness. In the arrival of such a state of society the libertine has nothing to lose, while the *man* will lose everything; marriage is quite as much of a protection to the well-intentioned man as it is to woman; and the man who does not demand an improvement in the present state of affairs is blindly digging the grave of his own happiness and security. Does the well-meaning man, when he refuses to raise his voice in protest of our social system, ever consider what life bereft of family ties, of home memories, of home seclusion and rest, of child-love and wife-love, would be worth to him? In such a state of society, children, if they grew up at all, would grow up in neglect. Even if the government should found institutions for their bringing-up, they would be like incubator chicks that continually hunt mother wings beneath which to hover, and chirp discord-

antly because they can not find them. They would be inferior to home-reared children in individuality ; and in all the annals of human improvement no other trait has done so much as this. We cannot hope that either their personal ambition or their integrity would be equal to those of the children trained by conscientious mothers. But this state of society *will prevail* if justice is not given to women. The thing has got to be settled one way or the other. When women get rid of their servility—and they *are* getting rid of it—they will demand either pure marriage or freedom from all marriage. Now, look at me for an example. In the state of society I speak of, I would stand no chance. I am not a handsome man like that contemptible Jennings yonder, yet I crave beauty and happiness as much as he possibly can. My only hope of possessing a charming woman is in giving her time to learn to respect me for what I am, in convincing her that I'm not quite such a coyote as some others, and in making myself able to support her decently. Since I want her all for myself, marriage is my protection. But simply because this is true, I don't shut my eyes to the certainties of the future."

"Well," said Gus, "the honest person who is denied citizenship is denied everything. I can see no reason why the women should consider the welfare of the nation until the nation considers theirs a little."

"Well," said Hen, "I feel toward the government like I'd a felt toward my father if he'd done wrong. I know that nobody nor nothin' is perfect and that we've all got to improve by degrees. I still love the country, and knowin' it don't allers do jest right makes me want to see it improve instead of makin' me hate it. By all of us gittin' careful stations and ridin' for the center, we'll git things rounded-up, and git the range clear after while. This government may be at fault; but after all, boys, it's the best 'un there is, and I b'lieve its goin' to git better. When they's lots o' rain in June, you can depend on it the fall range 'll be good. Maybe the tears that's bein' shed by so many poor sufferin' critters now will cause crops of blessedness and security to spring up one of these days."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

RAISIN' THUNDER.

SOME of the minor incidents of summer life at the Bar Eleven may be of interest. Iola was, as Kid frequently remarked, getting the East brushed off of her. She developed such a striking tendency to use cowboy slang that Mary often felt called upon to caution her. Mr. Jennings was still throwing out new indications of character. In the scientific and political conversation which was often held at table he failed to exhibit the familiarity with ordinary facts that might have been expected from a gentleman of his rich and varied experience. Having during a religious discussion in which he vowed the most pronounced fealty to the Bible, insisted that the ten commandments are in the New Testament; afterward inquired if the different European notables whom Mary rated so highly were residents of Frelawna; showed himself possessed of a set of scientific theories founded wholly upon his own hasty observation, and agreeing to treat the crowd to lemonade if any of them could find the opposite of his declarations in any reputable book, he led the Bar Eleven outfit to believe that the State teacher's license in his possession was but another result of the silver plate pressing on the imaginative bump. Then no one in the outfit had ever been so strong, but he had at one time been stronger; never so sick but he had once been sicker; never so brave but he had once been braver; never so learned but he had once been more so; never so wild but he had once been wilder; never so lucky but he had been luckier. He caught every possible opportunity at table to tell of his extraordinary good fortune in making and retaining friends. He could scarcely go anywhere that he was not liable to find people who had fondled him in his babyhood, trotted him on their knees when he was a thriving and rosy child of five or six or eight, and who reminded him what a good, lively, bright, independent, noble, intelligent, kind, magnanimous, handsome, truthful, observing little chap he used to be. Kid, and the heartless Mary, now that she could no longer openly quarrel, always had a set of counter stories to offset

these, and mildly exhibit the narrators' contempt. Kid's stories were to the effect that when he met anyone who was intimate with his childish history, the individual was always throwing up to him how in his childhood he was continually sucking eggs, tieing tin cans to dog's tails, stealing out of the house at night to slyly set the dog on his father when he came home, and putting open bags full of live grasshoppers under the sofa when his sister's beau came. And Mary would relate how her old acquaintances would remind her how she used to tell fibs, break dishes, slap Tommie Carver, persecute cats; and last but not least, kneel before the neighbors's apple hills in the dead of winter, diving for apples, sucking her frozen thumbs to bring back life and warmth, and then diving again. They could offer no such white records of their childhood as could Mr. Jennings. All these things continued to fan the flame that was burning in the bosom of Hen Hall. He often left the room wherein Lat was boasting, as if his continued presence there would insure the display of his anger and disgust.

One evening in August Hen found it necessary to go to Milroy City to replenish his stock of clothing. After he had gone, Jim and Mary sat playing cribbage, while Lola played authors with Kid. Lat was telling Penobscot Bill how the fact of one of his best girls presuming to believe slanders which had been circulated against him had caused him to leave the field of his many triumphs, where almost any office in the power of the people to bestow was within his grasp, and come out to Colorado to grub greasebrush, run a mower, and wade adobe mud at twenty-five dollars per month. He sighed and looked weary as he finished the narration. Mary looked up. Perhaps he was lonesome, and wanted to play cards, and this she and Jim were using at present was the only full pack in the house. So she said :

"Mr. Jennings, if you and Mr. Hammin want this deck, you can take it. Jim and I do not care to play. We are getting a little tired of cribbage."

"No, go ahead and beat Jim ; come to think now, I know where there's a full deck. Come on, Bill," and Lat, and Bill hurried away upstairs, leaving the four to a quiet and pleasant evening.

About nine o'clock Hen came in carrying a parcel. Having engaged in a few minutes' talk, he gave his customary good-night and went upstairs. In less than three minutes from the time of his departure, there was borne to the ears

of the sitting-room party a perfect pandemonium of deafening sounds. Groans, yells, shrieks, howls, and curses, followed each other in quick succession ; then came a sound as if a dozen men, mingled with boot-jacks, chairs, boxes, and old shoes, were running, rolling, falling, and tumbling down-stairs, with speed the only thing in view. The stair door burst open, and Lat Jennings, white as a sheet, half-leaped, half-fell into the sitting-room. His hair and clothes bore evidence of rough usage, and playing cards fell in showers from his hands and pockets to the floor. He was precipitately followed by Penobscot Bill, who was also covered with cards and confusion. Last of all came Hen ; his face was livid, and his eyes were rival volcanic fires. Without paying the slightest attention to the occupants of the sitting-room, he kicked and bundled his two victims out of the door.

"Hen!" shrieked Jim, as that gentleman disappeared after the flying.

"Why, Mr. Hall!" exclaimed Mary, as she rose to her feet, white and dazed.

"Oh! Oh!" wailed Iola.

"What's Hen raisin' thunder about?" coolly queried Kid.

"O Jim, go out and stop them," pleaded Mary.

"Not I," said Jim. "I undertook to interfere in somebody else's fight once. Never do it again."

"But they'll kill each other," pleaded Mary.

"O no, they won't. It's probably just started in fun."

"Well, Mr. Hall wasn't in fun; he looked like a tiger," said Iola.

"O, Hen's really too good-hearted to hurt any of 'em; but I'll go out and be ready to bring in the wounded. You and Mary can be getting lint and bandages ready," and Jim and Kid started for the door.

But just then Hen returned. He was still white and angry. Without noticing Jim, he said directly to Mary.

"I'm ashamed, Missus, of raisin' sech a racket in your house; but I've got grievance enough to make me run them two coyotes clear off the range."

"Why, what had the boys done?"

"Well, Missus, you know that little Bible that I've got, that I told you belonged to one as was dear to me?"

"Yes; I remember it well."

"Well, I showed you how I had my fifty-three favorite verses marked with some thin playin' cards I had; I'd jest lately put the joker by that passage that says we ort to love

our neighbors as ourself. Well, I left my Bible upstairs, and them two sneakin' mavericks got it and took them cards out to play poker with, and I tell you I kicked 'em, Missus; I kicked 'em good. It'll take me a week to think jest where all them cards belonged and git 'em back right. As long as them cards was there, I could take some kind o' comfort readin' my Bible—it didn't take me all day to hunt up the passages—but now it's all spilt. Well, it's no use groanin' over it now. I'll jest turn in and try to sleep off my mad. Good-night," and Hen closed the stair door behind him, leaving the occupants of the room convulsed with laughter.

Jim and Kid hurried out to "bring the wounded." The loud laughter of the two was soon heard in the direction of the barn, and presently they returned, followed by the vanquished. The latter were evidently more surprised than hurt. Bill, with wide-open mouth, presented a very pallid face. Lat was sternly silent, and visibly wrathful. Mary and Iola, unable to restrain themselves, leaned on the card table and laughed aloud, Jim and Kid joining. Bill, concluding that maybe after all the affair had its comical side, widened his mouth and indulged in a very doubtful smile. Lat alone was unmoved. He occasionally gave his head an ominous shake and his lips a menacing twitch. When the merriment had somewhat subsided, he went to the door and spat. Then he turned to the company, and said :

"Now I'll tell you people one thing, right here. If it hadn't been for you ladies bein' in the house, I'd have 'tended to that chap. I'd have sure given him something to remember. I'm liable to do it yet."

"O don't, Mr. Jennings," pleaded Mary. "Let it drop right here. Mr. Hall did not mean any harm. It was just because he thought so much of his Bible."

"Well, anyhow, I don't let fellers make as free with me. Of course, though, I wouldn't have hurt him in the house here, with you ladies around."

"Well," said Kid, "I don't blame him. You fellows hadn't any business to take his cards."

Bill acquiesced in this, but as the three filed upstairs Lat muttered dire threats. Mary wore a troubled look. When she was alone with Jim she said :

"Jim, I wish you would reason with Mr. Jennings. I am afraid he'll do something terrible to Mr Hall."

"Don't you be scared," said Jim as he patted her head. "Jennings is an awful good fighter, I've no doubt ; but

then he's a good judge of men, too. When he hunts a man to pitch onto it won't be Hen Hall."

"But he might shoot him, Jim."

"He can't. We boys had him out there target shootin' the other day and he made more bad shots and good excuses than ever I heard of before in anything like the same length of time."

"Why don't you say shooting, Jim?"

"O, I forgot. But you can rest easy about Jennings. If he was as bad a man as he thinks he is, it wouldn't be safe for any of us to stay in the house. It's mighty lucky that some people over-estimate themselves."

Jim now felt it to be his duty to tell his wife that he expected trouble with Lancaster. He had that very day seen one of his cows, one that he found far up in the mountains, bearing a fresh Bar H brand. Not only the cross was new—all was new—showing that Lancaster had set his brand directly over his own. He was bitter, defiant and angry. The game his neighbor was playing seemed so brazen that it well-nigh maddened him. And yet notwithstanding its boldness Lancaster could, for certain reasons, carry it on with surprising security. The similarity of the two brands and the fact that Madnau's cattle for the most part ran in the mountains where they were not so liable to be seen and recognized as if they had ranged in the valley, were two strong points in his favor. No matter what Madnau himself might have known concerning Lancaster's guilt it would be difficult for him to prove much. Still he felt that with what Hen and Kid were prepared to swear to he was safe in prosecuting. Mary then referred to the conversation at the Circle Bar and called to her husband's attention the fact of Lancaster joining the Circle Bar company. She insisted with all a woman's pertinacity that if Lancaster was guilty the Talberts were equally so, and that the Circle Bar was a wicked and dangerous rendezvous. It had come to light that Jere Herron, Pete Gregg, the Jones faction and Uncle Peter Chase were all complaining of missing stock. The neighborhood was convulsed with excitement. And Mary, before she would sleep that night, cautioned her husband to beware of Lancaster. She again told over his heartless threat, assured him that she believed he would fight detection to the bitter end, and refused to rest until he had promised her to take care. In the morning when he was ready to ride she went to a closet and brought out the revolver with which he

had been teaching her marksmanship. She cleaned and loaded it. Then she brought it forward in the presence of the men, saying with a rare smile over a strangely white face,
“Kill some rabbits for me if you get a chance.”

He looked wonderingly at her, but let her fasten the strap round his body.

“Mary,” he said, when the men had left the dining-room, “a cowman hasn’t any business carrying a gun.”

“Not as a general thing, I admit,” she replied; “but the time has come, Jim, for you to go armed. Lancaster and Coffroth are angry about the water all the time, and together with this trouble, you don’t know what they may try to do. If you’d see Lancaster trying to brand some of your stock or run them off into the mountains, I know just what you’d do. You’d get angry, as of course you’d have a right to do, and no matter how much the odds were against you, you’d forget there was such a thing as caution. So please wear the revolver until I give you permission to take it off.”

And what knight, armed in such fashion by such a lady, would have done otherwise than press her to his breastplate and to his lips? And if the knight’s breastplate be a buck-skin shirt, his helmet a sombrero, his greaves and gauntlets of leather instead of iron, his banner the kerchief about his neck, will his safe return from adventure be the less desired by her who bound on his arms?

CHAPTER XXIX.

WAYS AND MEANS.

IT is the generally accepted theory that there is always motive for movement; that the inertia possessed by us all is too great to be disturbed unless some powerful motor be applied. The motors known as hunger, desire, ambition, revenge, interest, emulation, and occasionally even pity for others, set humanity going and keep it restlessly alert. The motor which set Mr. Eph Tompkins in motion was interest. Mr. Tompkins lived near the mining camp of Cedar Ridge. His ranche, though capable of giving himself and family bread in plenty was not sufficiently profitable to please him. His children wanted new clothes to make them look as fine as the children of Mr. Joseph Chams, the principal saloon-

keeper. His wife was not musical, but she had musical aspirations. She wanted a parlor organ so that she could learn to accompany herself when she sang "Nearer my God to Thee."

The motor that started Mr. Albert O. Albertson going was something more than mere interest; it was ambition. Mr. Albertson had once been wealthy; but a career of lively speculating had drained him of most of his possessions save an aristocratic wife and a pair each of sons and daughters. Mr. Albertson frequently assured his friends that he intended his children to be well educated and well brought up. He intended himself always to be and live like a gentleman. He intended to keep his wife like a lady or else quit keeping a wife at all. A man that wasn't capable of looking after a family and keeping up decent appearances wasn't fit to have a family at all, by thunder. Now Mr. Albertson, being of aristocratic lineage and inheriting a pair of beautifully soft white hands, was somewhat prejudiced against work. He often informed his wife that there were enough fools in the world to do all the work, and that the man who was smart enough to watch his chance and gobble up the working man's wages was the real financial genius. Mrs. A. answered that she was glad he had so discerning a mind, and that unless he fixed up some trap to catch the working man's wages she would have to dismiss a portion of her five servant girls, bring the boys home from the athletic school and the daughters from the conservatory. This would not do. Mr. Albertson's children must have education and finery and excursions and sea breezes. So he came down to the mining camp of Cedar Ridge and talked with Mr. Eph Tompkins. Now when two gentlemen, one actuated by interest and the other by ambition, meet, there is apt to be something done. The result of the conversation was that Mr. Albertson leased from Mr. Tompkins a piece of ground that, because of his inability to get water upon it, refused to raise corn or alfalfa. So, as Mr. Hogan said—Mr. Hogan was accustomed to the unrevised version of the Scriptures, and also somewhat given to the use of strong language—Mr. Albertson planted a large dance-house thereon, irrigated with whiskey, and began to bring forth large and thriving crops of Hell. The government institution thus founded according to the statutes in such cases made and provided, began to exchange love and affection in large quantities for dollars on which the little motto "In God We Trust" was deeply stamped.

It was rumored that there were a baker's dozen of male children from the ages of fourteen to seventeen who for a time helped to make things prosperous for the medical fraternity, that a score of foolish women allowed their hearts to be broken, that several matrimonial engagements were broken off, that there was some mysterious invalidism, and that the families of several workingmen were considerably shortened in their feed. But what did these things matter so long as Mrs. Tompkins got her parlor organ, Mrs. Albertson retained her five hired girls and kept her children in school, and Mr. Albertson's finances were inflated? When we come to consider that for every broken-hearted woman, and young man mysteriously visiting a city where highly reputed doctors sojourn, the Albertsons could have a few days at the cooling ocean shore, we can see the reason for such slight sacrifice. It is claimed by some that aristocracy started in fun, but that now that we have it with us we must maintain it at any cost. Then people who object to such institutions must remember that they thereby censure the government; that is a serious affair and they must beware how they approach it. If they happen to be in a fault-finding mood let them turn their attention to Utah, where the cits are all rough; or to New Mexico, where the dark-skinned descendants of Cortez and his Indian wives are universally tough. Why, in the latter abandoned region the benighted Mestezos actually assert that the women have the same right to live vilely that the men have!!! In this land of boasted equality it is well that such a vicious doctrine meet with all possible discouragement.

Now Mr. Latshaw A. Jennings—the A. standing and being for Aurelius—had well-nigh despaired of the capitulation of Mrs. Madnau. He had so often believed that the era was approaching only to find it still hopelessly distant, that he was losing his cheer. He had so long dreamed over her dreamy beauty, and permitted his blood to boil at memory of her fits of sprightliness; had so often wondered whether he might not by some chance knock Jim in the head and fly with the widow, or fly with the wife without the dangerous and risking proceeding of knocking Jim in the head, capturing her with the look of a revolver—for he could never do by its action—that he was in considerable perturbation. He decided to go down to the dance-house on the evening of the grand opening. Here he might perhaps find a lady who for a time at least might lift his thoughts from the heartless, ungrateful and unappreciative Mary. He engaged

the company of Broncho Charlie and then set about talking Penobscot Bill over. Bill informed him that he "used to have a nation big time at such places back yonder," but he feared to risk it now. He knew Jim pretty well, and he wanted to "hold down his job." Mr. Jennings said that if he had no other reason for going he would go just to demonstrate to any who might observe, how effectively he could pull the wool over Jim's eyes. Bill remarked that he himself had once endeavored to obscure Jim's observance by drawing down the sheep-pelt appendage, in regard to a little evening devoted to tarantula tea and yelling. His success upon that occasion had been so poor that he advised his friend to beware. His friend remarked that if he thought he wasn't able to fool such an excuse for a man as Jim Madnau he'd pull his freight for a new range. He furthermore announced to Bill that he had received a letter from his friend Mr. Lem Harcoot of Cedar Ridge, asking him to meet himself and Mr. Clarence Henri Ellsworth at the grand opening. Mr. Jennings would cap the climax by getting the pretty, bewitching and wifely Mrs. Madnau to carry to post a postal card in answer to this. Thus he would roundly humiliate the Madnaus, while they remained in blissful ignorance of the fact that they had been humiliated! And Mr. Jennings actually carried out the postal card plan. The grand opening of the dance-house was to take place on Saturday evening. The presidential campaign was in full operation and the Madnaus, Gus, Iola, Kid and Bella were going on Thursday evening to Milroy City to hear what the Hon. Mr. Tellewquick had to say upon the political issues of the day. The Madnaus were to go in their buggy; the young people in a two-seated spring-wagon. When they were ready to start Mr. Jennings smilingly handed Mary a postal card on which was written a message to Mr. Lem Harcoot, telling him he would meet him according to request on Saturday evening. He read the message to Mary, telling her that he strongly suspected Mr. Harcoot had requested the meeting for the purpose of returning to him fifty dollars which he had upon a former occasion borrowed out of the earnings which by industry he—Mr. Jennings—had gathered, and by economy saved. The party listened to the address of the Hon. Mr. Tellewquick and then set out for home. Upon the return Mary told her husband of the postal card incident.

"Do you know where he is going Saturday night?" asked Jim.

"Why, he's going to Cedar Ridge to meet Mr. Harcoot," said Mary.

"He's going to that dance-house."

"O, Jim, you don't think that, do you? I always believed him bad, but I can't think he'd go to such a place so close here, where he's trying to go into society."

"Well, I've been watching him. That's where he's bound for."

"Then Jim, why don't you warn him and keep him from going?"

"Not much, I won't warn him. I want to find him out. If I thought it was his first trip to such a place I'd be quick enough to warn him, and do my best to keep him away. But if he goes there at his age, it's an old game with him. He's been slinging the angel on so thick lately that I'm going to find out how deep it lays. I won't give him a hint that I suspect him. I'll just give him plenty of rope and see if he can keep from tangling himself up."

"And how will you find out?"

"It'll be no trouble to find out. Men like to give each other away so well that no such secret will keep. Why, his very looks will give him away. When I was a boy I used to work on a farm in New York some. I've watched several sheep-killing dogs come home. They were always too humble and good by half. If Jennings comes to the table Sunday morning excessively polite, agreeing with all you and I say, with a kind of hang-dog look, talking volubly about where he spent his evening, with a slight cold from dancing, and a robust color from beer, eats a light breakfast and tries all the time to convince us what a saint he is, I'll know just as well where he's been as he will."

"And what will you do?"

"Fire him."

"Well, I'll be glad of that. The house will seem rid of a pestilence. The other day Hen Hall told me that he was satisfied from the way Jennings talked that he intended to try to rent part of your ground and marry Iola. Of course Iola would not notice him in such a light, but I do not want him to insult her by asking her. And yet, Jim, I can't help hoping that he won't go to that place. I'd like to find him better than we give him credit for being."

On Friday evening all the men of the Bar Eleven outfit went over to Number Nine, the mining camp known as Bavaria, to see the splendid torchlight procession in honor of

Mr. Wolseley, the Browbeater candidate for president, and to hear Judge Allenton speak. The great length of the program made their return late. On Saturday afternoon Iola, suspecting nothing, for Mary had not seen fit to communicate her suspicions, went to stay all night with a friend who lived near Cedar Ridge. The men, with the exception of Jennings, who had been at work on the ranche, were out on the range and did not get home till late. Supper was waiting. Mary at last told Jennings to go to the table and eat his supper. He agreed to this, saying that he wanted to get over to Cedar Ridge, get his interview with Harcoot over as soon as possible, and get back and to sleep. Having been up so late the night before he did not want to lose another night's rest so soon. He and Mary sat alone at table. Jennings, maybe because he was trying to conceal his intentions for the evening, and maybe because he looked enviously at the bright vision opposite him, indisputably the property of another man, could not control his voice. He talked a great deal, his nervousness increasing as he went on. He was talking of the duties of gentlemen to ladies, trying to convince his *vis à vis* what a model he was. Mary was infinitely amused, and wickedly threw out baits to induce him to still further glorify himself. Never before had he brushed his portrait so carefully. Jim and his outfit came in before Jennings had quite finished his meal. As soon as he rose from the table he hurried upstairs, dressed himself elaborately, donned his overcoat, for the October night was chill, put on a new tan-colored hat which he had recently purchased, and set out. As he closed the door behind him, Jim winked at Kid, thus delighting Hen Hall and terrifying Penobscot Bill; for the latter gentleman was greatly disturbed lest his principal should come to grief. Nothing was said, but yet Bill passed a very uneasy evening. Lat mounted a horse which Jim had consented for him to ride, and meeting Charlie Ford set out for the vicinity of Cedar Ridge.

CHAPTER XXX.

EULALIA.

THE Cedar Ridge dance-house was a long low building, rough-looking on the outside, but elaborately fitted and furnished within. The long ball-room was fitted with a showy, well-stocked bar. It contained a splendid piano and set of violins. On the evening of the grand opening it contained some one hundred and seventy-five men in all sorts of garbs, of all complexions, ages, races and peculiarities. Many of them were laboring men whose houses were never likely to hold chandelier, piano, or any sort of handsome furnishing. There were also present eight women. Their faces were ghastly and unnatural under a thick coat of powder. Their evening dresses were showy and low cut. One could scarcely have called them handsome, for the soul had been crowded back, and only the machinery of animal life was left. But they were such creatures as the men present demanded; that was evident, since the men were paying them great attention.

There was one among them who instantly attracted Mr. Jennings. He pushed his way toward her and began to talk. Her face was exquisitely pretty if the onlooker were only willing to forget the half jaded, half brazen look. Her eyes were of a soft, dreamy black, her face round, with indications of having once been full and sweet. She was almost petite in form, and her raven black hair was most becomingly arranged. She wore a dress of pink crepe, that showed through its elbow sleeves her wax-white arms. She seemed to take but little notice of what was going on about her, and when Jennings addressed her she answered absently in broken English. He asked her to dance and she took her place beside him, in the forming quadrille. Her head swam and it seemed to her as if the sound of the tiresome violins would never cease vibrating in her weary ears. And yet how she had once loved the dance—far away in Canada where Pierre used to bring his sleigh and take her to the neighbourhood balls. But her play and recreation had become her life work now—how heavy the task. Her mind went back to

the old time in dreams, and she scarcely noted what was going on round her. It was too old a scene to attract her attention. She minded the caller, for if she did not she would be scolded by that dreadful Mr. Albertson ; but what did she care who swung her ; who waltzed with her, holding her face close to a coat smelling of beer and whiskey and tobacco ? It was all too old a story. She had minded these things at first but they were now so much a part of every-day life that she endured them until sleep—God-given sleep—or drunken stupor, drove them, for a time at least, away. How often she thanked God for the drink that for a time shut out the life of coarseness, familiarity, obscenity and shame—the dreadful quarrelling of the girls—the frightful cursing of the drunken men. There was a discord in the room—some jangling about places she believed—but she did not inquire into it. Her mind had gone back and she was thinking of Pierre. O, where *was* Pierre ? Pierre, that used to tell her he would stand even between her and the wrath of God. O, why didn't he come *now* ? Why didn't he take her away from this place of which she was so tired ? But Pierre had gone down the great river and out to sea to win fortune. And while he was gone a man and woman had come and begged her to go with them to their house in the great city, and sew and earn money. Ah, here was a chance for her to help out the earnings of Pierre. They would be quite rich some day. With her parents' consent she went with these people. But they had deceived her. They were the dread deceivers the good nuns in the convent had warned her to beware of. Their great mansion in the city was a long log house in a dreary forest. And in this house were ghastly, hideous women who were visited by brutal, drunken, quarrelling, fighting men. She could understand but little of their talk, but she soon found she was expected to live as they did. O, she could not do that. The good nuns had said that lust was a fearful crime and that its votaries would shriek for years in purgatory, and perhaps live out the ages of eternity in the breath of hell's flame. No, she must so live that her soul would rest with God and her eyes meet the rare smile of the sainted virgin and her son. And so she had watched her chance and stolen out into the night—the blessed night that the good nuns said sheltered the Christians who fled from the wrath of Nero. O, why had she not become a nun ? Better dearth of all love than such pollution of love's holy name. And so she fled through the dense woods,

asking no guide save the North Star toward which she ran, crushing twigs under her feet and trying to evade the little swampy pools, starting in dizzy fright at every forest sound, white and chill and wild, with gleaming eyes that ever and anon looked back to see how fast was receding the light in the noisy dance-house behind, until far out of its vicinity she sank down exhausted and half dying, just as the light of morning began to break. She dragged herself in between two huge piles of cut logs, and drew her damp skirts well down over her weary, bleeding feet ; for the stout twigs, and rough, thick-strewn limbs, had well nigh cut both shoes and hose to rags. And as blessed nature was invoking sleep she opened her dry lips, and from her parched and burning throat sent forth a prayer to that dear Jesus who has said that he will succor his believers. And Pierre would come to her rescue ; she would lay her head—her tired, aching head—upon his breast ; he would caress her head with his strong, noble hand, and kiss her sweat-damp hair, and call her his heroine, and praise her determined virtue. And she would feel his lover kiss, and thrill with ecstasy as he pressed her lips again and again. And then would come the wedding preparations—but her weary eyelids closed and her lover came in dream rescue and bore her little form out through the tall trees and back to his mother's door, where the apple trees threw showers of bloom upon them as they passed. And the good old mother kissed her and thanked God ; and set out white bread and butter and cheese and mugs of milk. And she raised a mug to her dry lips to cool with its contents her parched tongue and burning throat, her eyes beaming the while on handsome and stately Pierre. But what was that deep, hoarse sound that drove back the scattered fragments of that dream into wild and awful chaos ? And what those hungry eyes that looked into her own, those foam-dripping jaws, and those dazzling fangs fastened in her dress ? And that was not Pierre yonder dressed in a short brown coat and grinning like a hell-fiend through the bushy beard upon his face. O, was Pierre never to come, and had the dear Jesus forgotten ? She struck at the bloodhound nearest to her, wildly bidding him begone. He caught her hand in his teeth. They slipped on the skin, leaving a blue mark, then closed, lacerating the flesh and causing the red blood to spurt forth ; then as she felt the crunching of a bone, the dull, faint sickness that precedes unconsciousness came over her. With a wild shriek to the dear Jesus, that died away in

a long, low unmeaning cry, such as the tortured muscles call forth after the mind is in oblivion, she went back to that dream ; she lay in ecstasy, drinking in sweet visions of blessed unreality ; she went through her bridal and nursed her first-born before she wakened again ; and while she lay thus what did it matter to her that civilization needed her body to sate the lust of its men, and had sent bloodhounds to bring her forth ? Presently she realized that she was being dragged from some enclosure. She dimly remembered now, hiding between the two piles of cut logs. A heavy voice ordered her to stand up, and when she did so, leaning upon some creature, she knew not what or whom, the voice asked her if she would stay down at the cabin now and behave herself. She opened her eyes and looked round and tried to call events back. No, this was not Pierre. And why did her hand throb and pain so ? And why was it tied up in that old red cotton handkerchief, wet with dark stains ? And what were those two huge creatures sniffing at her dress ? O yes, she remembered it all now.

"I say," said the citizen upon whom she leaned, "are you goin' to stay down at the cabin and behave yerself now ?"

She had looked dizzily down at the two huge creatures with their hungry eyes and white fangs ; she caught sight of the rents and blood that marked her dress, and of her wounded hand. All these were strong arguments. She did not quite understand what the man had said, but she knew from his tone that she was being asked to make some sort of a promise. And whether the promise were right or wrong the arguments for making it were heavy, so she promised. Jerking her unwounded hand away from one of the dogs who in spite of his master's threats leaped at it, she cried out the French equivalent for :

"Yes, yes ; beneficent God ; yes."

Then she had gone back to the dance-house, and reveled by night, and dreamed by day alternately of her old home and of the hell-flame the good nuns had described. But she did not remain here long. Lumberers, like many other men, want variety in their ladies. They must be changed from time to time. Eulalia, along with four others had been bartered for their number of city girls. After a time she began to drift. She was here, now. No matter where she would be next. Just as the world was one great cotton-field to the slave who was dragged from post to pillar for the money he could earn for idle hands, so to her the world was one great

dance-house, never free from tobacco and whiskey smells, where the fiddles wearily groaned forever and ever, where men cursed and talked foully, and where women reveled by night and alternately quarreled and cursed and slept by day. Music and dancing, kisses and love, had all become disgustingly tiresome and vile.

But the jangling about places was becoming louder. She looked up. So many men. And but eight women. And these men so different in rank, too. The young gentleman in the gold eye-glasses yonder would not sit down at table with that drunken miner; yet both were willing to possess her body in common. But the dance was beginning now. She caught her partner's hand and dreamed no more till the figure was done. When it was done her partner addressed her. She looked up, for she could understand some English, now. He laid his hand upon her bare shoulder and clenched his fingers upon her flesh. His hand was foul with dirt and perspiration, and at the ends of his nails were wide black semicircles. She remembered how careful the good nuns used to require her to be with her nails. She did not like her partner's familiarity; then he began to twist his lips at her and breathe beer fumes in her face. There was free beer at the opening, and Mr. Jennings had been making the most of it. Eulalia dropped her eyes. He was not like Pierre, and she cared to look no longer. Sometimes she romped and jested with her partners; but to-night she was not in a playful mood. The dance started and she was busy with her life work until the next pause.

Mr. Jennings was evidently enjoying himself. He, together with Mr. Lem Harcourt and Mr. Clarence Henri Ellsworth, seemed to be running the dancing: Mr. Jennings would go through the figures in a series of long, high jumps, at the same time giving vent to numberless long-drawn yells that echoed throughout the room. As the music stopped he became so full of chaste enjoyment that he began to execute a vigorous little dance all by himself.

"I'm a coyote from the alkali meadows of the bad lands, and this is my night to howl!" he screamed as he jumped up and down in the middle of the quadrille. It was very dignified, and could Emma Chase have seen it she might possibly have been charmed still further. However, he attracted but little of his partner's attention. She had seen such gentlemen and such orgies too often before. Besides, another man had been watching her who fascinated her far more; fascinated

her as the jewel-eyed snake fascinates the fluttering bird. The man was a short, heavy, black-haired, red-faced creature, with short, thick fingers and wide, flat feet. He wore flashy jewelry and greasy, black clothes. Slimy saliva and masticated tobacco were discernible upon his short bushy black whiskers. She knew his look and his smile of derision; she had seen such looks often enough before. She turned her eyes away as did Rebecca from the fagots that were to burn her. Object? She was there to earn money for Mr. Albertson and not to object to anything. The dance was done now, and her partner led her to the bar for her treat. In her broken English she ordered a full glass of raw whiskey. What if the good nuns had said that the dear Jesus did not love drunks? She drained the glass to the last drop and in her reeling stupor half breathed a prayer of thankfulness for drink.

Jennings taunted her for her love of liquor, and in her rising fury she madly cursed him, uttering with what seemed the greatest readiness the most shocking blasphemy and obscenity. He went away, muttering to himself concerning how much worse bad women are than bad men.

CHAPTER XXXI.

DETECTION.

JIM carefully noted the hour of Lat's return. It was three A.M. Jim, not believing that nine hours were necessary to a little interview with Mr. Lem Harcourt, was much confirmed in his suspicions. Mary was so indignant that she declared her inability to treat the man civilly at the breakfast table. He came downstairs late. When he came to the table he exhibited all the signs Jim had predicted. Jim had already asked him if he had been to the dance-house. Jennings indignantly denied his presence there, telling Jim at the same time what a vast number of low, vile wretches he had seen on the road. They had been "yelling, howling, and acting thoroughly like the abandoned creatures they were." Jim told Mary before the company sat down to table to give the accused the benefit of the doubt; he would find out in a few days at most, and he begged her to be civil until they were sure.

The first direct tidings came with Iola. It has already been stated that Iola was a young person of some courage and determination. She had not that delicacy which forbids so many young ladies mentioning government institutions. She galloped up on Mary's saddle horse, leaped off, tied her to the fence, ran into the house and shortly demanded :

"Where's Jennings?" It was very impolite. She should have said "Mr. Jennings."

"In there," said Mary, motioning toward the dining-room, wherein sat the Knight of the Kaw Plains writing a letter to one of his numerous girls. Iola bolted into the dining-room.

"Did you have a good time last night?" she asked sharply.

"Yes, I had a right good time. I went all through the mine."

"The mine was shut up last night."

"How do you know?"

"I was up there. Mrs. Ames and I went up to Cedar Ridge after you passed by their house. The mine was shut up; and what is more, we went all over town; you know it was bright moonlight; and we didn't see Dick hitched in front of any of the stores or saloons. Besides that, I heard that you were down at the dance-house."

"*I was not.*"

"Well, I not only heard that you were there, but I heard a man that knows Dick say he saw him hitched down there."

"Who's been telling you this stuff?" he demanded as beads of moisture showed themselves on his forehead.

"Two of Mr. Ames's hired men." And Iola rushed back into the sitting-room, snatched off her gloves and began to vigorously play the piano. Every word had been heard by the sitting-room party; Hen and Kid appeared to enjoy the situation, but Bill looked the picture of horror. **Mary** went into the dining-room to begin another attack.

"Were you down there?" she demanded.

"No, ma'am, I was *not.*"

"If you were, you might just as well confess. **Jim** will find it out; you may depend on that."

"I wasn't there. If ever man was wrongfully accused, it's me. I'm jest goin' to hunt them two fellers up, and camp right on their trail, and stay there till I either drop 'em or make 'em take that back."

"Well," said Mary softening a little—perhaps, after all,

he was the victim of circumstances; she would like to believe him innocent if possible—"Why were you gone till three o'clock? Jim looked at the clock just before you came in."

"Well, Mrs. Madnau, you know I told you before I went over there that I thought maybe Lem Harcoot wanted to pay back them fifty dollars he owed me. Well, instead of that, he wanted to borrow five hundred more. He's took a notion to speculate in some Bavaria lots, and he wanted the money for that. He asked me to go into a saloon and take a glass o' beer, and I went. We got to talkin' business and drinkin' beer, and first thing I knowed it was gittin' late. But then I told Lem I had my money tied up so I couldn't let him have the five hundred any way, and then I struck for home. Why, Mrs. Madnau, them two fellers couldn't accuse me of anything that would make me feel so bad as this. It's jest givin' me a headache already;" and Mr. Jennings's tones became deep and tremulous.

Mary, Iola, and Jim held a council in the front yard.

"Who told this?" asked Jim.

"Two of Mr. Ames's hired men that were so short of entertainment they had to go down there and watch the dancing," sneered Iola. "I asked them the first thing this morning if Jennings was down there, and they both said they saw a fellow they thought was he; they had only seen him a few times and could not be certain; but one of them said he knew the horse and was certain about him."

"Well," said Mary, "what good does he thinks it's going to do him to deny it the way he does?"

"Why, if he is guilty, he just thinks he'll lie us out of countenance," said Jim. "But let's wait a day or two. I know of two or three fellows that'll blow it on him if he was there. Treat him well till we're certain, Mary."

When the party re-entered the house, Jennings entered such a plea of defense that for a time he scattered the suspicions of all. Even we who most love truth may be deceived by the lie that is reduced to a fine art. A lie is never safe, for it unconsciously disagrees in its different inherent parts. Only truth is or can be consistent. But the determined denial, accompanied as it often is by tremulousness or tears, often causes us, while directly under its influence, to doubt the evidence of our own calmest judgment, even though that judgment be reinforced by the most telling evidence. The impulsive Mary was so overcome by his declarations of nobility, and his grief at the personal injury done his char-

acter, that she bade him dismiss the subject from his mind ; she told him, however, that she must still insist upon a careful investigation ; she must have Jim attend to it at once so that the stigma might be removed from the name of a member of her household. Of course Jennings agreed to this ; he could prove by fifteen or twenty men that he was not present at the dance-house ; he would bring them over that very evening. But Mary received Jim's warning look and told the accused that there was no reason for such haste. It was evident that Jim preferred to investigate in his own peculiar fashion.

Lat drew Jim out of the house and told him how ready he was to go over and set the dance-house on fire ; it was a disgrace to the county and ought to be destroyed ; the only cleansing its lost, abandoned, foul inmates could ever receive must come through fire ; he knew just how it ought to be done ; get a sack filled with cotton-batting saturated with turpentine, have a bag of powder in the center, put a fuse to the powder bag, light the fuse, put the sack under the den of iniquity, and then run. Jim objected to this method ; he feared some of the women might be killed ; he saw no reason why the gentlemanly proprietor who had an office outside, and the male visitors should not be the ones to receive the bulk of the punishment in case any were meted out. But Mr. Jennings assured him that the bad, loathsome, foul, filthy women were the ones who ought to be scorched. And then Jim thought of Mr. Jennings's plan to get possession of his land and his sister-in-law, and could not help but believe that his desire to destroy the dance-house might be connected therewith.

When the men had all left the room, Mary said to Iola :

"Iola, I'm afraid you talk too plain. I know that Jennings, if he is guilty, needs to be persecuted. But it was a little bold to speak out the way you did before all the men."

"Humph ! I don't see why I should be ashamed to mention any place that is approved and protected by law," said the young lady.

"But then society considers such mention questionable."

"I thought you disregarded society and stood for truth, Mary. And besides, if Jennings had heard of me going to any such place, he would have been quick enough to throw it up to me. He'd have humiliated me all he could. I can't see why I haven't the same right he has."

"O you have every natural right, Iola. No thinking

person can deny that. But you must remember that society gives us no rights save such as men prescribe, while the government gives us none at all."

"Then let's take a few. If this government will keep a lot of nasty dance-houses stuck round under my nose, I'll mention them just whenever I please and to whom I please. It's letting mean things go unmentioned and unaired that keeps them in existence. If women would wake up and say their minds they'd get along lots better. And besides, you talk about such places, Mary."

"But I'm a married woman, Iola."

"Well, I'm going to be one some day, and I'm practicing up on independence. I've found out, Mary, that an institution that a woman is forbidden to mention is sure to be a bad one and ought to be voted down. Then the women that wouldn't think of mentioning such a place in general society will run round amongst the neighbors telling what happens there, and reciting nasty jokes, and filthy scenes, to excite the minds and imaginations of children. I'd rather do the way we do; never tell unclean things for secret amusement, but condemn vileness wherever and whenever possible."

"You are right, sister. But what I mean is this: so many men will say mean things about girls when they talk so plain."

"They can't accuse me of equality with themselves, anyhow. And they will like me all the better for my plain speaking, at heart. Now there is poor Emma Chase; she is so in love with Jennings that she'd give him her very soul. When she is talking to him she hasn't an opinion of her own; and yet since the evening he first took pains to attract her he hasn't noticed her much more than he has Hankum." And Iola sat down to the piano, threw back her head, pounded the keys into vigorous melody, and began to sing her own Song of the Mountain Maid.

Mr. Jennings ate dinner with the Chases; he had heard that Lucy was betrothed to Mr. Mopely; it was his delight to see how many engagements he could break, and so he set to work. Poor, loving, cringing, suffering Emma, when she saw her adored turn all his attention to her sister, went into her little bedroom and tried to cry her eyes out.

The wanderer came back in the evening and informed the Madnaus that the beastly slanders that had been circulated concerning him had given him a fearful headache from which he had suffered all day. Gus Waite, who had just

returned from a horseback ride with Iola, remarked that he had been told that free beer was very apt to give people headaches. Mr. Jennings, being tired of Gus's rather free remarks, and being anyhow out of humor with the world, looked at him a moment, and deciding that in one so young and leggy there could not be such a great amount of muscular prowess, decided to wait for him in the barn lot. Gus soon came out to get his horse and start for the Hogan ranche to do up the evening feeding. Mr. Jennings angrily inquired if he had meant to slur him. Gus replied that he had simply thrown out a general hint, and that if it had struck any one he was not responsible. Lat bristled up to him. Gus flourished one of his long legs warningly.

"That's you Jennings ; tackle a boy," said Hen Hall.

"O, let the wind-bag come on," said Gus, squaring himself round. "He's maybe thinking he's caught a spring chicken, and I want him to find out his mistake. I was hatched in the middle of winter and lived through." And the manner in which he began to throw his long motor members about boded ill to any who approached.

Penobscot Bill thought he saw evil coming to his friend. Those long legs would be formidable in the grape-vine twist. With a wild shake of his curls he shouted :

"Keep yer shirt on, Gus ; keep yer shirt on."

"I'm going to keep my shirt on ; and it'll take more free beer than he's got aboard to take it off of me, too."

Hen and Bill petitioned so loudly for peace that they at last prevailed upon Mr. Jennings not to crush Gus. Mr. Jennings told Bill afterward that if it hadn't been for Gus being just a boy he'd have "done him up anyhow."

Gus went home much dissatisfied at the turn affairs had taken. He wanted to make Jennings prove some of his boasted valor.

Now it chanced that Mr. Jennings much desired to exercise his divine right of suffrage. He intended to vote for Mr. Wolseley, the Browbeater candidate for president. He had been for some weeks preparing to register. He must give evidence of having lived in the state six months, county thirty days, and precinct ten. He had received from Mr. Clarence Henri Ellsworth a document setting forth these facts. Jim was to swear that Mr. Ellsworth had sworn, and thus Mr. Jennings might be registered on the coming Tuesday. He came into the house after the misunderstanding with Gus, and taking out the document sworn to by Mr.

Ellsworth, proceeded several different times to read aloud in the empty sitting-room how, "I, Clarence Henri Ellsworth, qualified voter in the town of Cedar Ridge, county of Boneset, State of Colorado, do swear in the presence of the ever-living God, that Latshaw A. Jennings, etc., etc." Then he came into the dining-room where Mary was setting out the lunch, and read the document over to her in a tone that almost made the dishes rattle on the table, asking her if she thought that would take him through. After lunch he seconded both the ladies on the piano; they were kind to him, but not natural. Suspicion gives to our enforced cordiality almost the guise of patronage. Jennings, not just liking the atmosphere, and perhaps fatigued from lack of sleep, retired early. By morning he had recovered his equanimity, and at the breakfast-table laid elaborate plans for the conquest of Amy Chellis, who had just returned to the neighborhood. Kid told him that he would see the conquest of Miss Chellis before he believed in it. He reminded Mr. Jennings that he had been in the neighborhood some months now, and he, for one, had not heard of very many broken hearts. Then, having finished his breakfast he left the house singing:

"Tom Warsaw and his pretty little wife,
Have parted, parted, for life, life, life."

Mr. Jennings hitched up his team to haul in the last crop of alfalfa. He seemed sad, dejected and persecuted. Even his heart-breaking record was disbelieved in. And while he was pitching hay onto the rack, the fates were yet plotting against him.

About eleven o'clock, Bella Martin ran in at the gate of the Bar Eleven, carrying a little valise. Iola was in her room. Bella ran up to Mary.

"I suppose you were looking for me," she said laughingly.

"No, not exactly; but you're welcome, anyhow. Come in."

"Why, I sent you word I was coming."

"Who by?"

"Why Saturday afternoon I saw Henry Steene, who works for Mr. Gregg. I told him that if he saw any of your folks to tell them I was coming over Monday to stay three days. Pa and Ma are in Milroy, now; Pa is under the care of that celebrated doctor; and if you'll let me, I'd like to stay here till they come back."

"Of course you may stay. But did Mr. Steene tell any of our folks?"

"He told Mr. Jennings, Saturday night."

"Where did he see Jennings?"

"At the dance-house. He told me so yesterday. Mr. Gregg sent Steene down there to try to sell some hay."

Jennings was at that moment unloading his hay-rack upon a long rick near the house-yard. Mary bade Bella hunt Iola; then she ran into the yard. All the men were working at the hay, save Hen, who was on the range.

"Mr. Jennings, why didn't you tell me that Bella Martin was coming over to-day?" demanded the investigator.

"I didn't know it."

"Yes you did. Henry Steene told you Saturday night."

"I didn't see Henry Steene Saturday night."

"Yes you did; don't you remember? You saw him down at the dance-house; he told Bella so; and said he told you to tell me she was coming."

"Well, do you believe that?" wildly exclaimed the desperate and goaded Jennings, as he tossed his arms.

"It's what he said," said Mary.

"Well, it's a lie. I tell you again I wasn't there. I can prove it, if you'll only wait till I can bring my men round. It's jest a job they've all set up. I don't see why it is that everybody goes agin me. It's jest what a feller gits for tryin' to be decent." And Mr. Jennings showed such signs of weakening under his afflictions that Mary and Kid exchanged a heartless smile, and the former went into the house. As soon as the load was pitched off, Jennings went to Jim and petitioned him to have the persecution stopped. He was a strangely abused, conspired-against, slandered man. So Jim, though thoroughly satisfied in his own mind, resolved again to give the benefit of the doubt until he himself could see Steene, who he knew would tell him the truth. But at table poor Lat was to be pitied. Nothing was openly said, but the angry and sarcastic Mary, the defiant Iola, the witty Bella and the merciless Kid saw that the sand-blast was well turned on. No caustic hint, or telling innuendo, no well-concealed witty slur or compliment-disguised stab that the ready four could invent, was left in the background. There was not so much as the suggestion of uncleanness in any of these. They referred to the entertaining of angels unawares, to the lofty tone of certain members of the Brow-beater party, to the distinguished honor Mr. Wolseley would

drink in from the support of certain of his supporters, and last but not least to the beauties of truth and personal courage. The more they cross-fired the more radiant became Kid, and the more ghastly became Lat and his echo. Only he who has been charged by the ambushed foe can appreciate poor Lat's situation.

The next morning Lat came to Jim and asked him to go that afternoon to Milroy City to swear him in for registry.

"I will not swear for you till I have seen Steene," said Jim. "If you have been lying to me about this other matter, I won't take your word about how long you've been in the State, nor about anything else."

"You don't have to take my word; you've got my brother's oath."

"Yes, and he may be the same kind of a duck you are; like as not is. I'll go and see Steene this afternoon, and if he says you were not down at that hell-hole, I'll take your evidence and swear you in. But if he says you were there, I'll ask you to pack up and leave here as soon as possible."

"Well, I'll leave here at noon, then. I wasn't down there. If I would go to such a place as that I wouldn't lie about it. But when I find out I'm stayin' at a place where my word ain't believed—where the word of every Tom, Dick and Harry is took in preference to mine, I think the sooner I leave the better."

"But why are you afraid of what Steene will say?"

"Why, Steene don't like me. Him and Pete Gregg has both been workin' agin me ever since I've been on the crick. Steene's jest as liable to say he saw me there as not."

Jim reported to Mary. Mary, still feeling that she ought to be courteous, went out to where Lat stood alone with his team. She hoped that he would prove his innocence, and was deeply troubled that such annoyance should have visited her house.

"Mr. Jennings," she said, kindly, "why don't you stay till evening? Jim is going to see Mr. Steene, and things may turn out all right yet."

"I don't see the good of stayin'," said Jennings with tears in his voice. "It's come to the pass that my word ain't believed. I don't claim to be perfect; I've been wild in my time, but I never mixed with no such society as that down at the dance-house; and this time when I left home, I even left my six-shooters behind. I'd made up my mind I wouldn't have a single thing again me on this trip; and now every-

body's lyin' about me and tryin' to git me down. It's jest makin' me sick. I ain't eat hardly anything since the racket started."

"Well, Mr. Jennings, I hope you are telling us the truth."

"The truth?" (still more tremulously) "I'd like to know why you'd think for a minute I ain't tellin' the truth? Now I admit that I sometimes talk in fun. Even since I've been here—once in a while when we've all been foolin'—I've got off the trail a little, but it ain't a habit of mine. But when I git down to business, why—then—I—talk—facts."

The words came near dying away in a sob. Mary felt an impulse to laugh; then a wave of sorrowing pity for frail, erring humanity passed over her.

"I am sorry, O, so sorry that this has come up," she said bitterly; then she turned and started toward the house. The witty, unfeeling comments of the two wild girls would jar upon her. Jennings had been personally kind to her; had always been ready to do any chores about the house, or to help her in or out of her saddle when Jim was not present. And now she must remember him with loathing, and think of his splendid natural advantages, his strength, personal beauty, and his suavity all sunk in ignoble motives, all polluted with lust and cowardice and lying; after a few steps she turned back. She would make another effort.

"But tell me why you will not stay till evening? Steene is truthful. He may clear you."

"No, I'd better not stay," he faltered. "If Jim goes there this evening and comes back and says that Steene says I was down yonder Saturday night—I—won't—be—accountable—for—what—I'll—do. I've got a temper, Mrs. Madnau, that can't stand everything. I'd—better—go."

Then Mary walked into the house. There was a very quiet dinner table. Lat packed his belongings soon after the meal was eaten, and received the balance due on his wages. He was done with his tremulousness now, and wore a dignified, injured expression.

"Well, I suppose you'll come back and see us sometime," said Mary.

"It's altogether owing to circumstances whether I *ever* come back," he said loftily, as he waved his hand. "When it's come to the pass that my word ain't believed, I think it's time for me to stay away. Now if—" the voice softened, "Steene tells the *truth*, and you people will come to see me as I *am*, I'd like to come back and *stay*. I've liked to

stay here, and the longer I stayed the better I liked it; but I can't stay where other people's word's preferred to mine. Good day, all.'

And the Knight of the Kaw Plains was gone. He took a sad farewell of the men, telling them each in turn how badly the world was using him. Of course he had to give Penobscot Bill a different version of his ill-luck from that he presented to the others, and this rendered it necessary for him to bid that gentleman good-bye in private. As he had previously told Hen and Kid that he frequented houses of ill-repute, it was necessary for him to tell them now that he had previously been joking. On the road to Milroy City he met his bosom friend, Stanley ; of course he told him of his trip to the dance-house and its untoward results. He next met Jere Herron, whom he suspected of leaning toward Jim's opinions. He succeeded so well in convincing Jere of his innocence that Jere came over and gave Jim a friendly talk.

Mr. Jennings sought the solace that is usual with gentlemen of his class when in trouble. By ten o'clock at night he was in a state bordering upon carelessness of earthly cares. A new-found friend endeavored to lead him to a boarding-house. Mr. Jennings undertook to occupy all the sidewalk, which effort resulted in his falling into the ditch at its edge.

"Shesh lemme 'lone, boys. I'm in—hic—heaven now. Shesh lemme 'lone," he softly muttered as he stretched out his feet. But his friends knew that this would not do. They undertook to get him upon his feet, and this started him to kicking. The more they tried, the harder he kicked. They at last decided to leave him there and let him kick to his heart's content. And so the Knight of the Kaw Plains, the hero of the celebrated novel "Choctaw Dick, the Dauntless Terrifier, or, The Wild Scalp-Snatcher of the Plains"; the ex-lawyer, soldier, editor, teacher; the efficient ex-sheriff of Sancho County; the terrible, terrible cowboy from the wilds of Indian Territory, lay in the ditch, kicking mud, water and cottonwood leaves surprisingly high.

After Mr. Jennings had paid his fees to the gentleman who escorted him to the building vulgarly called the "cooler" (where the salon and dance-house flourish, there is the cooler also), he sobered down and sought work. He, after a week of idleness, found employment at shovelling dirt; he found a new and varied supply of girls, also.

CHAPTER XXXII.

INCIDENTS.

JIM was in deep trouble. During the latter days of October he, feeling that the time to watch had come, stationed himself with Hen Hall one day in a dense clump of cedars. The roundup had been delayed and was just now beginning. The two men secreted themselves because they saw Lancaster and the two young Talberts acting mysteriously. The three men were surrounding a bunch of cattle belonging to Pete Gregg, Joshua Hogan, Jere Herron and Jim Madnau. There were also a few other brands represented. Herein were some twenty cows, with calves not yet branded. The three men were trying to separate these calves from their dams. Having succeeded in getting eleven of them out to themselves, Harry Talbert and Stanley Lancaster started them off at a brisk pace toward Dwightmere Pass. Clyde remained, and having scattered the bunch in two directions, drove one bunch into the hills alongside Aspen Creek, and then returned to scatter the others throughout Trelawna Cañon. Jim went to Milroy City that evening and swore out warrants for the arrest of Stanley and the Talberts. The men were promptly arrested. The fall session of the grand jury had just been dismissed. The three men waived their preliminary and gave bonds. Milroy City was in an uproar. Jim Madnau was well and favorably known there. He had a large coterie of friends who were quite ready to believe that he would make no such move without cause. On the other hand the Talberts were rich and influential, and moved in the first social circles. The old gentleman, Mr. J. C. Talbert, his aristocratic wife, their accomplished daughter and their two sons were courted, flattered and feted by society. They all mourned loudly the disgrace that had overtaken them. Society—for the Madnaus were unknown to Milroy City society—sided with the Talberts. There were many street trials and much enlivening discussion.

Jim undertook to tell Jere Herron and Pete Gregg of the scene which himself and Hen Hall had witnessed. To his astonishment he found them unwilling to believe. There

were two reasons for this, but Jim was unconscious of them. There had been more or less dissatisfaction concerning water during the summer, and for that reason Coffroth, Gregg, Herron and Lancaster, while not openly at variance with Madnau and Hogan, were envious and displeased. Secondly, Lancaster had previously gotten possession of them one by one, and cautioning them to secrecy, had told them that all the Circle Bar men were watching Jim. He was getting rich too fast. They believed—in fact just as good as knew—that he was getting away with cattle. His arrest of themselves was simply an endeavor to throw suspicion. And the men, already jealous of Jim, listened to the wily voice of Stanley and half believed. And when the fall roundup was completed and they saw how few calves and colts were running with their stock, indignation augmented suspicion, and the desire to find some one to punish rose to fever heat. Like the gods of the heathen, in our deep anger we ask that the flame of our fury be quenched by blood. The heathen deities do not always insist that they who have blasphemed them be slaughtered. They, so their votaries tell us, insist upon carnage, and by carnage are appeased. How often we find that in the august blindness of unreasoning fury we have sacrificed the noble; while the fiends who would destroy us laugh in security! And then, our madness washed into coolness by the blood already shed, we stay our hands.

The Circle Bar leaders had cunningly separated many of their own young stock from their mothers and driven them into the mountains. Thus they led Texas Ike and his cowboys to believe that outsiders had tampered with the company herds. The leaders knew that without absolute proof against them, Jim never would have sworn out warrants. They felt it necessary to the future success of their enterprises and the maintenance of their good name, to cast all possible suspicion upon those who knew aught to their discredit. With this end in view, J. C. Talbert and his sons, Lancaster, Coffroth and one or two others, called a meeting of their believers and hangers-on at the Circle Bar. Just what passed here was a mystery to such of the Trelawna people as were not present; but it is quite certain that the men came away with black looks. Although all the plotters, save the three arrested men, were as cordial as ever, Jim felt that there was a movement against him. Why, he could not tell; but he guessed that the Talberts were using all their

social and financial prestige to damage his and Hen Hall's evidence; as yet he suspected nothing further.

One morning after affairs had grown worse he went as usual to look after his stock. He never went unarmed now. Before starting he stood beside his horse, holding the hand of his wife as she leaned against the saddle, her right arm flung across it. His brows were knit and his face working.

"I wouldn't care for the trouble if it wasn't for you, Mary," he was saying. "I've been the last few days, when I've thought of the way they're liable to do, half reproaching myself for marrying you, and putting you to such risk of unhappiness."

"O, Jim," she said, as she pressed her face against Dick's mane and tightened her slim fingers on her husband's hand, "don't feel that way. If we'd lose everything we have to-morrow, I'd be happy enough."

"But they're liable to try to get away with me, Mary. They know I can pen 'em, and they're ready to do anything."

"I'd be glad even then that I'd married you, Jim. I wouldn't undo the past for ages of future without you. I've lived ages of bliss in these few months. But O, Jim, watch. They're afraid of you. They won't attack you unless every thing is in their favor. Keep with the other men, and don't let them catch you alone. Think of me and take care of yourself. Don't worry about having married me, but keep yourself for me." And then she convulsively raised her left hand to his shoulder, gripped his clothing, tottered, and still further hid her wet face in the charger's mane.

"Now Mary, don't distress yourself."

"But Jim, I'm afraid I'm a little to blame. I'm afraid Stanley started to be spiteful on my account."

"No, Mary, I'm confident that he's been stealing my calves for two years. I never suspected it till I saw what I did this summer; but since then I've seen two grown animals bearing his brand that I'm satisfied are calves of a fine half-Durham cow of mine. And now I must go." He drew her head out from the long, tangled sorrel mane, and bidding her be strong, kissed her with a passion untouched by vacillating weakness.

"Jim," she said suddenly, "I'm going along."

"No, Mary, I'm going a long way."

"But I'm going."

"No, no, Mary; to-morrow will be better. I don't expect to be home till after night."

"That's another reason. I'll be ready in a minute," and she sped into the house.

Her husband looked smilingly after her, and then proceeded to saddle Kate.

"You see, Jim," she said, as she tied a parcel of buttered bread to her saddle, "they won't bother you if I'm along."

About an hour after their departure, Emma Chase entered the sitting-room.

Iola was glad of this as she was alone; but she soon half regretted the presence of her guest. Emma was peevish, irritable, and moody. She talked illy of people and gazed vacantly at the walls.

"I've heard that Mr. Jennings is gone," she ventured, since Iola failed to mention the gentleman.

"O yes; Jim was going to discharge him and so he left."

"And do you really think he was there, Iola?"

"Why, of course. We found out all about it."

Emma picked the fringe on her dress, while a film came over her eyes. Iola watched her with an aching heart.

"Emma," she said presently, as she seated herself near her, "why do you waste a thought on him? You are white and pure. Don't soil your mind by letting it harbor his image."

Emma did not answer, but her tears fell slowly on her hands. Her under teeth caught her upper lip and pressed it firmly. Her face began to quiver.

"O, Emma," said Iola with a half sob, "don't let yourself think of him."

"What if I can't help it?"

"Fight the thought. Drive it away. You wouldn't marry now, Emma, after what you know?"

"I'd sink into ruin for him if it wasn't for making father and mother suffer."

"O, Emma!"

"I can't help it, Iola. I love him so well I could forgive him anything. I never cared for any one else."

"But what is there about him to love? He is proved false, callous, cowardly and untruthful."

"But then he is handsome and pleasing. He impresses one so strongly with the idea of strength and honor, that it is hard to believe he don't possess them."

"And what will be the outcome of your favor, Emma?"

"Lifelong misery, I suppose."

"But, Emma, it's wrong to love such bad people."

"It's wrong for there to be such bad people. As long as they're kept alongside us, we're some of us as liable to fall in love with them as any. We may suffer for loving them, but we can not always quit."

"But, Emma, there are good men whom it is our duty to love and honor."

"There are not enough good ones to go round. Some of us will have to take bad ones or stay old maids."

"Then let's stay old maids."

"Then people will turn up their noses at us. And besides, Iola, it's natural to love some one and want him to love you. The men have every chance and we don't have any. They can do as they please and take their choice in everything. I get tired of living sometimes."

"Well, Emma, I'd quit thinking of Jennings and try to think of some one better. Why I'd die, Emma, before I'd give up so for any man."

"I expect to die before ever I quit caring for him. I know it's wrong, Iola, but I love him. I'd marry him to-day if he'd ask me."

"But, Emma, he'd be mean to you if he did marry you."

"Well, meanness is easily borne from one we love."

"I don't think so. It would make me hate any one."

"But we are different. You are independent and strong."

"But, Emma, we women *must* be strong, it's our only defence. We are bound to suffer for weakness. Weak people always suffer. People just despise them and don't even appreciate their sacrifices. It's very wrong, I know, but then it's true."

Emma kept on looking down at her hands; her tears still fell. Her face had lost all its animation and was dull and heavy.

"Can't I help you to get dinner?" she asked.

"Yes, if you like. You may peel the potatoes. No one but us two and Mr. Hall will be here. But, Emma, you ought not to tell of your trouble. Most people will laugh at you."

"Well, I don't see how I can hide it. The folks at home all think I'm taking mountain fever. O, Iola, I am ashamed to be such a fool," and then she began to sob.

At noon Hen Hall came home from Milroy City. He was indignant. The cause of his indignation was Lat Jennings, who of course watched every opportunity to communicate with the Bar Eleven men.

Milroy City had recently decided that for the safety of its

other citizens it must to some extent thin out the persons to whom Mr. Hogan referred as "government graduates." Mr. Allen Witherby had been thoroughly educated in the saloons and dance-houses. He had some years previous put into practice the profession he had therein learned by killing a sheep owner and utilizing his cash. For this little freak he had taken a post-graduate course in the penitentiary, the institution made and provided to receive those who are sufficiently diligent in their application to business in the two aforesaid schools. After his liberation he desired still to practice his legally provided profession. He exhibited so much determination in this line—killed several people and plotted to kill a few more—that the citizens decided that they must call a halt. They were willing to be generous, of course. They were willing to do their part. But they at last decided that they could spare no more people for Mr. Witherby's experiments. They decided upon a rope and a telephone pole as assistants to their own genius in solving the riddle of how to check Mr. Witherby's professional inclinations. Now since outsiders often become so vexed at the proceedings of an offensive school as to open war upon its pupils, it is not to be wondered at that the best citizens rose in wrath at Mr. Witherby. And since it is a well-established fact that the less proficient students in a school are often wickedly jealous of their more advanced fellows, it is not to be wondered at that Mr. Latshaw A. Jennings should thirst for the murderer's gore. On a certain evening at a certain hour a howling mob requested the jailer to deliver over his prisoner. They made this request from a distance, and the jailer paid no attention to them. They tried to send one of their number to talk privately with him, but none, not even the hero of the stretching-up of the Quinine Center survivor, would go forward. At last a ranchman who did not belong to the crowd and who had not been howling, agreed to venture. But the jailer was firm. The howling mob retired. Mr. Jennings, after having taken a large supply of beer to quiet his nerves, went to bed and to sleep. At an early hour the next morning a very few men who had no particular grudge against Mr. Witherby personally, but who objected to the style and extent of his education, and who had the safety of the community at heart turned their coats wrong side out and provided themselves with dark lanterns. They had three or four revolvers, a Winchester or two, and considerable pluck. They substituted

pluck for howling, and the result was perceptible. Now Mr. Witherby, having against these gentlemen no personal grudge whatever, still was of the opinion that their wanting to hang a man who had been so well educated in government institutions, was in bad taste. In pursuance of this theory he broke his iron bedstead to pieces, and seizing a portion thereof belabored his assailants therewith. A gentleman who is celebrated among his friends for keeping still until the arrival of a crisis, sent a pistol ball into Mr. Witherby's shoulder as an argument against the use of the iron railing. The crowd then pinioned the offender and started in search of a telephone pole. Mr. Witherby had his doubts as to the future; he had heard considerable concerning eternal punishment, and he had suspicions that for all the good he could parade as a reason for its setting-aside in his case, he might realize it to the full. But he consoled himself with the knowledge that he would in all probability be avenged. The saloons and dance-houses were still flourishing; and might not their efficient graduates arise and slay for the sake of their economy-preserved wealth, the well-meaning cits who were performing the telephone pole tragedy?

Now what exasperated Hen Hall was this: Mr. Jennings undertook in a private conversation with him to pose as one of the individuals who had been hit with the iron railing. He set forth that he had been badly hurt. He was just able to work and that was all. The railing had alighted upon his shoulder in the immediate region of the bird-shot deposit, and had inflicted a very painful though not fatal wound. But Hen must not tell any one—he would get Mr. Jennings into trouble with the grand jury if he did.

Emma Chase went home about three o'clock; after she had gone Hen told Iola of Jennings's absurd pretensions.

Hen sat in the door looking dreamily out to the eastward for half an hour. Then without suspecting that his life tragedy was at hand went out to the work he had set for the afternoon.

There was a range colt to be broken to the saddle. Jim had insisted upon either doing this himself or employing one of the younger men; but Hen was confident; the animal had been broken to lead but was still wild and vicious. With great difficulty Hen saddled him, and after this led him about for a time. He presently ventured into the saddle. The animal started at a mad gallop round the field; Hen had him

near the center of the inclosure, when he mounted desiring to keep as far as possible from fences. There were frightful leaps and plunges. The animal, however, could not unseat his ready and experienced rider. Had he not plunged against the fence all would have been well. But he dashed against the heavy cottonwood rails, falling, and pinioning his rider between his own body and the obstruction. Iola, who had been a terrified spectator, ran across the field to where he lay. The horse, now free, charged madly about the pasture endeavoring to cast off the saddle. Hen's back had struck the fence with great violence and he had fainted. The girl dipped water in the palm of her hand from the ditch outside the inclosure and tried to restore him to consciousness. Seeing her brother and sister ride up to the house, she waved her sunbonnet and called aloud. They were soon with her. In the course of half an hour Hen lay on a bed in the little chamber opening off the sitting-room that was reserved for visitors. Mary insisted on his being placed where she could conveniently take care of him. A physician was called who pronounced the case a very serious one.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE HEART HISTORY OF HEN HALL.

THE pious cowboy lay dying. The open window beside his bed let in the balmy November air, perfumed by the delicious scent of the fallen, drying leaves. There was the plenitude of atmospheric wealth without a touch of frost or a suggestion of chill. The summer was lingering into the autumn. The wan face on the bed was turned to the window as if laving in the garnered sweetness of purity and scent. The fast brightening eyes opened and gazed restfully at the hills. There was a movement of the hand, and a slight sigh. Mary came quickly forward, starting as she perceived the change in her charge. During the five days she had nursed him she had been hopeful, even though the doctor gave her small encouragement.

"Is there anything you want, Mr. Hall?" she asked, breathlessly.

"I've been thinkin'," he said softly, "whether you'd like

to listen to a few words that I've got to say. It's due to you that's treated me so well to know jest what I am."

"I know you to be a kind, tender-hearted man. But if you want to tell me anything, I will certainly be glad to listen."

"It's kind of you to say that. When you call me what you did, Missus, it's because you don't know me. I'm like the hills yonder. They're rough and jagged, but they's a haze hangin' over 'em that makes 'em look smooth. Since you've knowed me I've kept a haze hangin' over me, too."

There was a pause in which Mary looked surprised and pained, and Hen closed his eyes and tried to control the nervous twitching of his fingers. Presently he went on:

"I hadn't calkilated to say nothin' about this here, Missus, till I was sure. But now I *am* sure. I've backed my last broncho and lassoed my last steer. I'm goin' over the range and I want to talk this over with you and see if you think I'll carry the devil's brand over there."

Poor Mary's ready sympathies were afloat. They were flowing out on the tide of her willing tears.

"Go on," she said.

"Well, Missus, I 'low they ain't very many as sneakin' coyotes as I am, though I do know they's some that ain't suffered as much for their sins. I wa'n't never handsome to speak of, but they was a time once when I wa'n't so lean and ganglin' and ugly as I am now. About that time I was ridin' in northern Texas in the Pan Handle. Our herd used to stray over into the Neutral Strip, and of course we'd go over there to look after 'em. They was some little towns jest across the Kansas line, and once we concluded we'd take one of 'em, named Brighton, in. It was my first drunk, and my last. One of the boys, Tom Samp was his name, that was consid'able on the cut and shoot, rode down the street with a six-shooter in each hand. His broncho was goin' at a one-fifty gait and Tom was throwin' lead mighty careless. He didn't want to hit anybody with it though. Somebody had started a gag that Tom had weak lungs, and he wanted to prove 'em off the trail. So he was shootin' for fun, and yellin' to drown the noise. Well, the cits went inter their houses and locked their doors so's not to get et up; then they sent the marshal to roundup us boys. He came down street and saw Tom cavortin', so he pulls his gun on Tom, and says, 'You're my pris'ner.' Tom covered him with both his irons, and says he, 'Not much, Mary Ann; you're mine,

Throw up yer hands.' Well, the marshal was scared out of a year's growth, and he jest backed into the first door he come to; it was a saloon, and they was seven of us in there. The boys tore his star off and put it onto me, and then chucked him down cellar, and locked the door. Then we run the town till nearly dark. Everybody got off the streets and left us in charge.

"Finally I got rid of a big double-barreled yell, and was lookin' round to see how it took effect. There wa'n't no one in sight but our gang, 'ceptin' a purty little gal in a white dress. I saw she was spurrin' straight for me, and I tell you I wanted to cut sticks. But before I could get a move on my broncho she was standin' beside me. She was cryin', and she spoke up and says: 'Say, Mister, you look like a gentleman. My ma's terrible sick and 'bout to die. I wish you'd coax these fellers to cut and run.' Them wasn't jest the words but they was the sentiments.

"I was jest drunk enough to be a darn fool, and says I, 'Gimme a kiss, sweetness, and it's done; not unless.' She commenced to cry harder than ever, and I set there hard hearteder nor any devil. Purty soon she whipped off a brown cotton glove, and still a hangin' her head, held up a little white hand. I snatched it, and then the little bit o' decency I had left commenced to stand up on its hind heels and bray. I couldn't kiss that little hand; I jest pressed it tight, and told her I was the Devil, and passed a few other compliments on myself. I felt better after expressin' these sentiments, so I collected that gang o' men and we lit.

"Well, I quit swiggin' whiskey and took a bath. I got me a new blue flannel shirt with some braided anchors on it, and got me a red and blue hat band; then I went to see that little gal. She treated me like a gentleman, which I wasn't, and I kept on goin' to see her whenever I was close around. Well, one day I somehow asked her to marry me. She hung her head a minute, and then she said yes. O, I never was so happy. I just yelled out. I ketched her in my arms and kissed her till I fell to cryin' tears all over her face. O Missus, she was purtier than an angel.

"Well, I was with a hard lot, and I s'pose that was partly the reason of me actin' the way I did. We may say that ther's no danger of us being influenced by the herd we run with, but if we'll jest watch ourselves we'll find out. If we want to behave ourselves we'd better try runnin' with a civil herd. The boys in camp was nearly all of 'em tellin', whenever

they got out of anything else to talk about, how they'd fooled girls back in the States and left 'em to be shamed and kicked round. I didn't have no sech story to tell and they kinder chaffed me. Well, Missus, 'tain't no use runnin' off on a side trail. If you'll believe me, I listened to them devils till I'd done for that little gal that loved me so well. She come to me one day with a white, scared face, and fell down on her knees cryin' and askin' me to save her and her child from bein' disgraced. But I'd got to be the Devil's own brother. I jest laughed at her and called her a simpleton, and then I left the country.

"Well, Missus, I had somethin' to brag about then, but somehow it didn't seem to satisfy me much. Every time I'd go to tell about it I'd see that little scared face and them rainin' tears, and the more I'd tell the plainer I'd see, till finally when I was laughin' the loudest over it, I'd mighty nigh break up in a scream. Then I got to dreamin' of seein' her wanderin' round carryin' a little shiverin' baby, and then I didn't try to hold down my job no longer. I went to the boss and got my pay and left off huntin' steers to hunt my child and she that before God was my wife. Well Missus, it took a good while. I went back to the town where I'd left Salina, and there I heered that she'd took her child as soon as it was two weeks old and lit out, though the weather was freezing cold. I follererd her to Hartwell, a little town where I'd heered she was livin' a life of sin. She'd gone, but I kept follerin' her. She'd tuck to hard drinkin'—, so the folks told me, and was tryin' to get jest as far as possible from her old home. Every time she'd git a little money saved from her drinkin' and her necessary close, she'd buy a railroad ticket and gether her child and put. I follererd clear through Kansas and into this here State fore I found her.

"O Missus, I'll never forget that night. They's a kind of horror mixed with a God-thankin' joy that wont never wear out. I came into L—— City in the eastern part of this State. They was two dance-houses there. I went to one and inquired for Salina. They knowed her, but she belonged at the other one. It was winter again and the snow blowed in my face so I couldn't hardly find my way. But I kept follerin' up the gangs of men till finally I got there. She wa'n't in. She'd took her child and gone down town 'bout two hours before. They 'lowed I'd find her at some of the s'loons. Then I got on their trail and follererd 'em up till I'd

been to four. She'd been to the last one 'bout an hour before and had got abusive and quarrelsome. The bartender said her child was cryin' too, so he'd pushed her out doors and told her to go home or to the Devil, he didn't care which. I reached over the counter and give that bartender one on the nose that jest made the paint fly. Then I rushed out in the street yellin' like a hyena and cussin' like h—ll. I jest run through the snow, cryin' and yellin', and callin' Salina, and purty soon I fell over somethin'. It was yieldin' like, and when I put down my hand I found it was a human critter. I fumbled in my pocket and got a match and struck it agin my boot, shadin' it from the wind with my hat. Then I pulled away the old shawl that hid the face. I'd found her, Missus; I'd found her! O God! I'd found her!" And Hen started up in bed and beat the covers wildly, while his eyes glared and his face worked convulsively. Mary arose and soothed him into quietude. Then as tears streamed across his livid, contorted face he went on:

"I lifted her up in my arms, baby and all—Salina was a little thing and I had the strength of a giant—and then I run through the blindin' snow to my lodgin' house. I put them two on the bed and wrapped 'em in blankets, and then I rounded-up a doctor. The child was dead—poor little pale, half-starved yearlin' that hadn't never had a decent range to run on, while his old father was livin' in plenty, and the country runnin' over with shelter and feed. We worked with Salina all night, and in the mornin' she was jest barely alive, and she knowed me. And if you'll believe me, Missus, she hadn't a hard word for me, not one. She jest cried quietly when I told about the baby, and said she'd be with him soon. I asked her if she'd forgive me and marry me and she said she would, though it would only be to make a widower of me. I sent for a preacher and we was married right there, with Salina lyin' on the bed too weak to set up, and our little dead yearlin' lyin' beside her.

"I sent out and got a satin-lined coffin—yes, Missus, I that was too low-lived to git my boy a cradle while he was alive, could sneak in after he was dead and buy a satin-lined coffin for him. And then after we'd both kissed him and cried over him, I sent him out to be decently buried. I didn't go, for I couldn't leave my poor, weakly wife.

"Well, a sort of peace come to me then, and I nursed and petted Salina and bought her all sorts of good things, though she couldn't eat much of 'em. She asked for a Bible, and I

bought her the little one I showed you. She'd lay on my arm when I'd kneel by the bed, and stroke my face and kiss me, and call me her savin' angel when I knowed very well I was her destroyin' one. But O, how I loved them days! No livin' man ever said 'wife' prouder nor I did, not even Jim Madnau. But it didn't last. Some folks hunts their joy too fast, but some waits for it too long. I done the last. I waited too long. She didn't live but three weeks after we was married. She died lyin' on my arm and lookin' in my face and blessin' me, and tellin' me to meet her and the boy in heaven. They're runnin' on the Lord's greenest pastures now, and carryin' his brand plain and proud. And what I want to ask you, Missus, is whether you think I'll meet 'em there."

And Mary, blinded by tears, assured him that he was worthy of eternal bliss, and was an example for thousands; that though thousands sin in such manner, almost none atone. He pressed the hand she gave him, and after a time continued :

"Missus, humanity is jest like a bunch of cattle that's bein' drove out of the hills and bresh into the open. They crowd and beller at one another, and the strongest tramples on the weakest. When they git out a little, and git their range widened, and git out of the bresh where they can't see plain, they do better. And I think when humanity gits out of the bresh of ignorance and prejudice into the open range of reason, *they'll* do better."

He sank back and closed his eyes. His breathing was short and quick. Mary watched beside him with aching heart and reddened eyelids.

"Missus," he asked presently, "what time is it?"

"It is six," she answered.

"Then Jim's most likely here. If you wouldn't mind callin' him, Missus. He'd most likely come in quicker if you'd call."

"Why, you don't think, Mr. Hall, that there is anything serious, do you? Let me send for the doctor."

"No doctor can save me, Missus. I'm goin' over the range, and I'd like to see Jim and the boys 'fore I light out. I 'low I'll be off in less 'n an hour."

Mary called Iola. Then she hurried out and summoned the men, who had just arrived, telling them her fears. Jim and Kid came in with blanched faces.

"Don't stand too near the bed," said Mary softly. "He's so short of breath. Let him have all the air possible."

Hen opened his eyes and spoke softly to Jim, bidding him to take care of Princess.

"Why, Hen," said Jim, as his face began to quiver, "you mustn't be talking like this—don't see how the ranche is going to get along without you. You are our right hand, Hen."

"It's mighty kind of you to say so, Jim, but you'll have to git another cowman. I'm goin' to hunt a new range. Your wife thinks maybe the Lord'll give me a job ridin' for him; and if he does, I'll stay right on his range and stick to his herd, though I know I ain't very fit to."

Just then Penobscot Bill rushed wildly into the room.

"What's the matter?" he loudly exclaimed as he shut the door with a heavy slam. It might as well be remarked right here that this was the only time in Bill's history that he was known to shut a door. Then again he exclaimed vigorously: "Is Hen dyin'?"

"O, Mr. Hammin, do please be quiet. And do please open the door. See how Mr. Hall is gasping for breath," gently pleaded Mary. And then Bill opened the door as wide as his own distended mouth—figuratively speaking—and kicked a chair against it, as he hurried round to get a better view of the bedside scene.

"You've come jest in time, Bill," said Hen, "to see me 'fore I git mounted and ready to start. It's the white hoss that's come for me this time, boys; and I'll soon be on his back and headed for over the range. And when he comes for you, boys, don't you be afraid to mount him; for I b'lieve he'll carry you all to a better range and not buck none of you off. And tell Lat Jennings when you see him—that I ain't forgot tellin' him once when I was mad that I thought he was the sneakin'est coyote—that ever cheated a steel trap or went unpoisoned;—tell him I was mad when I said it—but I've considered the matter over—like a dyin' man should—and I ain't changed my mind. And now I'm about ready to start—the saddle's all clinched—the latigo straps is buckled up—and the tie strings is all a flyin';—give me your hand, Jim—it'll kinder encourage me to know you're steadyin' me while I'm gittin' my foot in the stirrup and my hand on the reins;—don't be cryin' them tears, Missus;—it's gittin' dark like, and I must git off 'fore the shadows git too heavy in the hills;—put the riata—through the hondo, Jim—and sling it over the horn o' the saddle.—And now good-bye, boys, and Missus, and Miss;—I'm—off—for—over—the—range."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

DEEPENING CLOUDS.

THE death of Hen Hall was a bitter blow to Jim. Aside from his wife, no other person had since the death of his mother occupied so strong a place in his heart. The two men were much alike in their opinions, but widely different in their characteristics. Hen was the more philosophic, Jim the more practical. Hen looked about him and pointed out the errors in existing institutions, while Jim suggested remedies. They had been so much and so long together that Jim deeply felt the separation. His wife did her utmost to lighten his gloom. She walked beside him, saying nothing, but looking and breathing her ready sympathy, holding his hand and casting up a troubled face that dumbly pleaded to be of service. His business vexations were on the increase. He had gone into the mountains and found several of his spring calves—he had learned to know these before they became separated from their mothers—bearing the bar H. Hen, his principal witness, was dead. He, however, resolved to go on, depending upon his own evidence and that of Bill and Kid. He seemed to have lost much of his desire to talk and be gay. He moped incessantly, save when his wife's gloomy face arose to warn him. He must beware of discouraging her.

He distrusted many of his neighbors. They were too kind; too deeply concerned to know just how many beef cattle he expected to feed for the spring market, too anxious concerning his wife's health, and too sympathetic because of his loss of Hen Hall. The neighbors could not altogether conceal the state of their minds. Those are clever actors who are able to shut all the avenues of truth. Many of the settlers on Trelawna believed Jim a spoiler; they had lost their stocks, and Jim's increase in wealth had during his eight years residence on the creek, been remarkable. Their blood was hot, and they did not pause to consider and calculate. They did not throw into the scale the fact that Jim had put into cattle the equivalent of what they had expended for tobacco, cigars, liquors, damaging luxuries and needless wearing apparel. They did not reckon the fact that Jim allowed

not the slightest thing of value to be disregarded. They looked upon his complaints of lost stock as a wicked effort to throw his guilt upon the shoulders of innocent parties. So, blinded by jealousy and maddened by loss, they followed ruthlessly their fellow victim, while the criminals laughed in security. There were more meetings at the Circle Bar, at which the three Talberts made elaborate plans, and at which Stanley talked in a low tone of things he had seen, of the difficulty of proof, and of the necessity of using something more convincing than law, and ever and anon laughing very, very softly.

And Jere Herron, Pete Gregg, Abner Jones, Bill Coffroth, and even old Peter Chase, inflamed to fight their neighbor by the venom their wily, self-constituted leaders poured into their ears, like the bond gladiators of old who were inflamed to fury by noxious drugs so that they would hound their brothers to death, stood ready, mad, eager, servile and unquestioning. They became machines, and handed to their leaders the enginery by which they might be controlled and led and moved. Their minds once fixed, looked not to the right nor to the left. They forgot that the constitution gives every man the right of trial by jury. They asked a sacrifice to their fury; blood must quench its flame. They constituted themselves a court, and on the evidence of the leaders of a rich and powerful company they pronounced their neighbor guilty.

When prejudice has once sealed our eyes, naught can open them save a shock. We, because we can not clearly see, refuse also to hear. Our fellow creatures may be sighing in chains, dying from injustice, breathing malarial air, sweating in unremunerated toil, or shrinking in shame; but what is that to us? We are serving self. We ask that our imperious will be knelt to. We scorn the saint and embrace the spoiler. If we open our eyes we will see the things we have sworn not to see; if we open our ears we will hear the things we have sworn not to hear. Let us sleep a little longer. The awakening will come, parading our shortcomings before our eyes, showing us our victims, our stupidity, our poor, weak claims to humanity, laughing like a fiend over our temptation and our fall. We who scorn reason will meet remorse. Had we not better consider while considering will be of service, than to put on sackcloth for that which can never be undone? Were it not better to pause in the execution of our sovereign will than to carry with us through

life eyes that cannot look into the eyes of another for fear of seeing reflected there a crime-hardened face? Eyes that abhor darkness because they see reflected against its blackness the tragic drama they once witnessed as revolting reality?

CHAPTER XXXV.

LOVE THOUGHTS.

THE Bar Eleven had lost the cheer of its spring and summer. Jim was in a shadow, and Mary moved about in an atmosphere of dread. Iola followed her sister, longing to comfort her, but not knowing how to do so. Kid no longer played chords and sang; he sat uneasily, looking alternately at the different members of the household. Bill, because of the many calamities enacted and threatening, was in a state of ceaseless uneasiness and dread. When Gus Waite came, he and Iola rode horseback or walked about in silence. This atmosphere was so intolerable to Mary that she was in a state bordering on nervous prostration.

"Mary," said her sister, one morning, "why do you let yourself be so miserable?"

The wife tossed her hands, but did not answer.

"If loving makes people so miserable, isn't it wrong to indulge in it?" the girl went on.

Then Mary answered hurriedly:

"No, no, Iola; just as death in the just cause of his country is sweet to the soldier, so suffering for a loved one is infinitely sweet."

"But is any man worthy the devotion you give Jim?"

"O, Iola!" she exclaimed, wildly. "You don't know what you are saying. You must remember that Jim has withstood almost every temptation. He, rich, influential and strong, took for his wife one who had neither wealth, influence nor health. He has given me equality in everything, and seems to study nothing but my happiness. I wish for his sake that I possessed more beauty than Helen, more wisdom than Aspasia, more mental strength than Elizabeth, more talent than Homer, more fascination than Cleopatra. I could lay all my wealth at his feet, asking no throne but

his knee, no crown but his hand, no girdle of splendor save his arm."

"Then, Mary, how can you be so independent? I should think such love would bow one."

"The independence and caprice you see me display are firstly a part of my nature, and secondly the result of study. I will not weaken before my husband less he learn to despise me or look upon me as of light importance, thus destroying his bliss as well as my own. I will give him love, warmth, caresses, entertainment, and assistance whenever possible. Shall I undervalue these gifts by cheapening the bestower? I will try never for an instant to be either insignificant or cold. It is the duty of the woman who has a good husband to cultivate loveliness for his sake. The noble have every right to claim and enjoy the beautiful."

"But, Mary, isn't that view unjust to the plain women?"

"There are few plain women save such as create or consent to their plainness. Beauty is largely a matter of personal control. Feature is far less than beauty, because beauty is far more than feature. Has not your reading convinced you that many of the most fascinating women have had fewest physical attractions? Can you pronounce beautiful the vacant face, the expressionless eye, the meaningless laugh, the automaton voice? Can you call homely the cultured face bearing its wealth of soul-history, its ready, beaming eye, the well-trained, well-timed laugh, the voice replete with intelligence, sympathy, high-souled individuality, and consideration, unknown to prejudice, servility, peevishness and spite? The homeliest woman I ever saw was one who possessed great natural advantages. She would not have been perfectly beautiful in any event, but she might have been fascinating in the extreme. Her features were coarse, but she had a fine form, and eyes that might have been full of expression. But servile to the creed of her church, to the doctrine of a political party that recognized her not, and to the opinions of her father, she was brimful of prejudices that did not afford the slightest tolerance to the views and ideas of others. Her voice became crabbed, complaining, dead, and dictatorial by turns; her face threw out picket lines to call in those who could give the agreeable countersign, and shut out those who dared to have opinions of their own. All pointed to her as a 'good girl,' yet none could or did love her. Her parents were loyal to her of course, but even they could not give her affection and warmth. You

see, Iola, all the blessings we women can reap, we must reap through the influence of men, since they have all the power of bestowing. We must study not only how to make ourselves agreeable to men, but how to retain their favor after once it is secured. The training women receive tends to make many of them cold. Few men will tolerate coldness. The woman who gives her husband most love, interest, and subject for admiration and study, can most readily lead him in the service of herself and sex. Love is so powerful that it reigns where reason and the calmest sense of justice fail. The most conclusive proof of need fails to bring forth a reform until our tears for outraged love have been called out as well."

"Do you believe Gus would be easy to lead in the cause of women, Mary?"

"I doubt if he will need any leading. Both he and Kid are unpredjudiced thinkers. Still, all men are influenced more or less by the women they marry. It is possible for those two boys to marry women, who with the very best of intentions perhaps will cheapen themselves until they convert the love that might be a towering flame, inciting to manliness, glory and ambition; into a feeble flickering blaze that in dying away will surprise all concerned that it ever existed. In that case it is impossible that either should attain his highest possibility."

"And do you think I'd interfere any with Gus's success in life?" asked Iola, as a deep flush mantled her face.

"Why, Sister, what are you thinking of. You are both so young."

"We'll get older."

"And you haven't been acquainted with each other long enough, have you?"

"Delia and King were not acquainted with each other very long."

"O Iola; that was just play. Do not think of following the example of such rapid love-making. It is good romance but poor reality. It might do well enough if all people were without faults; but in our present state I would be afraid of the risk."

"Why, I've known Gus longer than you had known Jim, when you were married."

"But we were so much older. O, promise me, Iola, that you will not think of marriage yet."

"I have not thought of marriage. I just wanted to know if you thought I was too young to be engaged."

"Iola, if you promise to marry Gus and then disappoint him, it will very probably be the death of his ambition."

"And why do you think I will disappoint him."

"You are very young; I am afraid you are too young yet to have received your final heart impression. But if you are sure, I do not object to your giving him your promise. He is in every way worthy."

Jim came into the house to bid his wife farewell. She was nervous and pallid. She walked out to where his horse stood with her hand clutching his arm. She had but little to say, but her drawn face and pleading eyes were enough to unman him. She stood wrapping the saddle strings about her fingers, employing any pretext to keep him with her. She did not ask to accompany him; the morning was raw and cold, and she knew her request would grieve him. He pushed her gently aside, bidding her be brave and strong, then leaped into the saddle. She pressed her face against his body and kissed his leather gloves. He stooped to return her caress, then turned and galloped up the slope; he paused and waved his hat to her when near its crest. She stood still; he was out of sight a few minutes, then he appeared on the rise beyond. She fluttered her handkerchief; he waved his hat. He was at the edge of the belt of cedars, now; she saw him raise his hand; perhaps he was looking through his field glass to catch the expression of her face; if so, she would give him a smile; he was among the pines, she now threw up her white kerchief and he waved his hat again; there, now, he was out of sight, down in the gulch where the quaking aspens grow; there he is on the side hill beyond; a last waving of hat and handkerchief; her eyes are weary with straining after him. she drops them and enters the house.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

TRAGEDY.

IT is not pleasant to contemplate a pack of maddened wolves when in their fury they seize and rend their prey. We turn from such sights, hiding our eyes. When comes the time that we can look unmoved upon them, the time is near when we can help enact them.

The leaders in the plot against Jim Madnau were agreed

upon certain points. They must prevent themselves being brought to trial as things stood, since they knew the chances were in favor of their conviction. They must assure their own employes of Jim's guilt. To bring about the death of Jim was the only way to prevent their own conviction. Since no one of the three, nor all three together dared attack their victim while he was armed, they decided upon a plan to disarm him. They would have him arrested. With this end in view they openly charged him with stealing their stock, and, going to Milroy City, swore out a warrant for his arrest.

Late in the afternoon after he had left his wife gazing after him in the morning, Jim saw the county sheriff approaching him at a rapid pace. Jim was then about fourteen miles from his home and about sixteen miles from Milroy City. He was driving a small bunch of his calves towards the lower country, intending if possible to keep them out of the higher hills. The sheriff read the warrant. Jim felt a deadly sickening at his heart. That there was a plot he was well-nigh certain. But he did not resist the officer as he could easily have done. He felt it his duty to submit to the law. Knowing his danger, however, and thinking of the muttered threats he had heard, he begged to be allowed to keep his revolver.

"If I had wanted to shoot you, I could have done it already ;" he said to the sheriff. " You need not be afraid of me trying to escape. I gave you my weapon without question. But I ask means of defense against my enemies."

"It is not rulable for a prisoner to carry arms ;" said the sheriff.

"Is it rulable for him to be paraded defenseless among those that seek his life ?" asked Jim bitterly.

"I will protect you ;" said the sheriff. "That's what I'm here for."

The sun had set and Jim looked hopelessly at its dying rays. He knew that he and his companion must pass within four miles of the Circle Bar. Both his own and the sheriff's horse were weary. If they reached Milroy City at all, it would be late.

As the shades deepened his heart sank. He felt as if the unseen spirits of his foes were gathering round him. The sheriff tried to engage him in conversation, but with his generous heart swelling for the wife whom he knew would await his coming in frantic misery, he could not summon

courage to talk. He answered only in monosyllables, and finally his companion relapsed into silence.

They passed the vicinity of the Circle Bar in safety. Jim's courage was ever on the alert, but how could it avail him if danger came? The long miles to Milroy City were traversed in silence. The road was rocky and hilly; it was past ten o'clock when they entered the deserted, unlighted street.

As they passed through the outskirts of the town, Jim's quick ear caught a suspicious sound. Then he saw skulking in the gloom at his right a group of approaching figures. He turned to the sheriff and said fiercely:

"If you let me die the death of a dog, may the curses of a dying man and a heart-broken woman follow you always!"

As the words left his lips he saw the sheriff drawn away from his side. Then with his stalwart arms he began to strike wildly to right and left, dealing out fearful blows. Then he heard a sharp report, while a sense of numbness came over his right side. Other reports, and a sense of quick sharp pains; then a hurried re-living of his life, a wild prayer for the woman who loved him, an indistinct murmuring of her name, a roaring in his ears, a confused sense of light and blackness alternately breaking on his eyes, a sense of falling, a low, hoarse cry as the life rushed out of its beleaguered house; then freedom from plots and emancipation from all life's woes.

And his assassins, mad with victory, but yet unsated with triumph, fastened ropes to his body, and thinking to disgrace even his senseless clay, dragged it to the bridge over the Gaston and put it to the felon's shame. And there it was found next morning, stark and rigid, riddled with bullets, the clothing stiff, and the boots glistening with half-dried blood. And those who had plundered the toiler, who had despoiled the helpless, who had riveted the chains on the shamed, came and looked upon this human ruin, and calmly discussed, weighed evidence and judged. Go gather the bones of those who for their crimes have died, and with the bones of those that bigotry, blindness, conspiracy, greed and tyranny have slain, you may cover them from sight a thousand times.

After this occurrence Uncle Peter Chase, Abner Jones, Pete Gregg and Bill Coffroth showed a strong disposition to get in early in the evenings. They slept badly, and often

awoke with a start. On the street in Milroy City, where the greatest excitement concerning the affair prevailed, they did not carry their old-time fearless, self-respecting look. They could not but feel that the people who looked in their faces suspected them as murderers. This was a phase of the question they had not previously thought upon. It was more pleasant to contemplate a coming adventure than to remember a past murder. Then they remembered now, how often Jim had divided his water supply with them, and how Stanley Lancaster had generally found some use for all his waste water instead of letting it come down the ditch to swell their portion. They also remembered that the Talberts, aside from shedding the light of their financial and social prestige upon them, had not directed any dollars into their pockets. They began to think that if Jim actually was guilty it was a pity. But in their conversation with each other they still held that they were right. No man wants his confederate to perceive that he is weakening. In general conversation they refused, of course, to acknowledge the part they had taken, but openly justified the deed. Their wives helped matters along by insinuating against Mary's character. They wouldn't be a bit surprised now, they said, if all the things that were said about her at the time of her marriage were true. They had always suspected, etc., etc. This stab is always ready for the attractive woman the instant her household is shrouded in misfortune. No other is sufficient. When we wish to smirch a man, we accuse him of having taken from some other creature something of value; virtue? No, a man is not injured in reputation by having stolen virtue. He must take money or life. When we wish to smirch a woman we accuse her of having suffered the loss of something; money or life? No, the loss of these will not pollute her. It is virtue that must have been stolen from her.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

WIDOWED.

Gus WAITE and Kid learned of the tragedy early on the morning after its occurrence. Hearing a fierce barking of the watch-dog, Gus went to his window. The night was dark, but he could make out four figures on horseback passing up the road. Now people often passed up this road in the daytime to see Dead Man's Cave, the agate beds, and the peak of Bernalillo. But above the Hogan place there were only two ranches upon it—the Bar Eleven, a short distance ahead, and the Circle Bar, many a mile away. His first thought was that these might be the Bar Eleven men ; but on second thought he remembered that there were now but three men there, and that they were not likely to be coming from Milroy City at that hour. Then there were two white horses. The Bar Eleven had no white saddle horse. He concluded that these were the Circle Bar men. While he was making up his mind, two more passed ; then another two. All the eight ; what could have called them all down to town at once ? He stood wondering for some minutes, then struck a match and looked at his watch ; it was two o'clock. The men were not drunk ; they were too quiet for that ; they all rode past at a slow pace as if anxious to pass unobserved. If they had not been at a drinking bout, what then could have kept them so late ? He could not remember that any ball or entertainment had been advertised. He strongly suspected that something was wrong.

He returned to bed and lay there studying. After perhaps half an hour the dog began barking again. He got to the window just in time to see a horseman dismount and throw his rein over a post. His eyes were accustomed to the dark, and he recognized him.

“ Is that you, Kid ? ” he asked, in a low tone.

“ Yes.”

“ What do you want ? ”

“ Want you, dressed and ready to ride.”

Gus was soon with him.

"What's the matter?" he asked softly, for he did not wish to awake and alarm the Hogans.

"Why, I don't know that there's anything, but things do look just a little off. Jim went out on the range yesterday and didn't get back. Mrs. Madnau would not go to bed, but sat waiting for him. Eight men went up the creek a little while ago. She saw them, and she's just frantic. She thinks they've got away with Jim. She sent me out to see if I could find out anything, and Bill and Iola are trying to quiet her. She wouldn't let me call Mrs. Hopkins, 'cause the old lady's been sick of late."

"What do you think we'd better do?" asked Gus.

"Well we might trail up Lancaster. We might get some light that way."

They were soon moving stealthily down the road. As they approached Herron's house they saw a light; it disappeared just before they were alongside. The dog barked at them, but Gus dismounted, leaped into the pasture near the house, and going up to a saddle horse that had just been rolling upon the ground, rubbed his hand over his coat. The hand came away wet with perspiration. They made quite free with the premises of Mr. Lancaster. They found his saddle horse damp and warm, but with this they were not satisfied. Kid stole into the stable while Gus watched without. He made a little torch of a letter in his pocket and examined the saddle that hung on the wall. He drew off the riata and uncoiled it. There were three places where the dust adhered to it stubbornly. He rubbed these. There was something sticky in the dust that made a dark paste on his thumb and finger. His torch had gone out. He trampled its ashes into the debris on the stable floor. Then he coiled up the riata and placed it again on the saddle horn. Then he went out, fastened the door, and mounted his horse.

"We'd better go on to Milroy," he said, as he finished his narration to Gus.

They reached town just as day was breaking. The murder was already known to many. The two vaqueros took one look at the body of their friend, then Gus hurried back with the news, Kid remaining for the present in town, feeling that some friendly heart should remain near the outraged clay until the forms of law could be complied with.

Gus took his news to Mr. Hogan. The old gentlemen hitched up his spring wagon and went up to the Bar Eleven. His object was to bring poor Mary to his house, where he and his good wife could soothe and nurse her.

"Mary," he said, after he had greeted her kindly, "put on your things and come with me. Harriet's got some things to tell you, gal." And the poor, trembling old man's tone and manner revealed all.

"Yes, yes; I'll be glad to go to her," gasped Mary, as she clasped her trembling hands together.

O, how the bleeding heart in its suffering hunts the ministrations of the mother! If nature has robbed it of the actual, how eagerly it turns to a willing substitute!

In the first hours of bereavement we experience only a sense of shock. We do not suffer then as we do after we have come to realize our loss. Nor can we arrive at this in a short time. The days with their old customs, old customs never again the same, remind us in a thousand ways of desolation.

Mary sat by the stove in the Hogan's sitting-room. She was calm: for after three days of frenzy, calm was necessary. There must come either calm or death, and for death she was not yet ready. There was perfect calmness save for the nervous movements of her clasped hands. Her brain was in confusion. She had whispered to herself many times that she would see Jim no more, yet just now she was treasuring up some thoughts to tell him, when she saw him again, for surely he would come; he always *had* come.

She closed her eyes, and in reverie felt that she was a prisoner in the room; some one was guarding her there; her soul beat at the doors and windows; it was useless; there was no egress there; then she felt herself rising; she rose to the ceiling, beating it stubbornly with her arms, trying to force a passage out; then the wall gave way and she was free. Then she was in her own sitting-room; there sat Jim in the large rocker; he was just the same, only glorified; his smile was always fine, but surely never like that; he was stretching out his arms; she flew to him, but nothing clasped her. She started and looked round wildly, saw the room and its two occupants, gave a little sigh, and was quiet again.

But soon her restless soul was again a-wing. Again she was with her husband. They were galloping over the hills. Thy passed through a belt of piñons. Jim stooped and raised a bough that would have struck her head. "You must kiss me for that," he said. She turned, but only empty air met her caress. Again she started up and saw things as they

were. Then after a short interval they were threading the canon ; she thirsted ; Jim dismounted, curved his hat brim, stooped to the creek, and held sparkling water to her lips ; But only deception met them. Then she sat at the table, filling his tumbler with milk. She practiced target-shooting, listening to his suggestions until she defeated him ; he was giving the revolver into her hand ; she would pinch his fingers now that she had a chance ; but her fingers closed on space. Then calmness fled. These deceptions were too many and too galling. Why must her visions always dissipate just as she was ready to enjoy ? Were those things gone forever, and would they never be reality again ? She leaped up wildly and demanded fiercely :

“ *Is it so ?* ”

“ *Is what so, Mary ?* ” asked the old lady tremulously.

“ *Why, this about Jim ?* ”

“ *Didn’t you see him buried, gal ?* ” asked the old man. Then she sank into her chair again.

“ *Mr. Hogan, what ought I to do ?* ” she asked presently.

“ *Do jest as near as possible what is right, gal.* ”

“ *But is it right for those men to live, breathe, talk, laugh, and enjoy life, while Jim is decaying in the ground ?* ”

“ *I don’t believe many of ‘em will enjoy life. The men on this crick that was in that business will see that scene enacted every day of their lives. They’ll think every acquaintance suspects ‘em, and think every stranger is a detective shadowin’ ‘em, and when they’re dyin’ they’ll feel that rope chokin’ ‘em.* ”

“ *But I don’t believe it’s right for them to be let live. The deliberate murderer seldom stops with a single offense. Those men are liable to err the same way again, kill some man just as innocent as Jim, and leave some woman just as wretched as they’ve left me.* ”

“ *Well, gal, it’s of little use for you to try to prosecute. It’s mighty hard to prove anything against a big and rich gang. It would be hard even to git a grand jury in this county that didn’t hold some of them same chaps or their sympathizers.* ”

“ *But have not I a right to select my own way and time to rid earth of them ?* ”

“ *‘Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord ; I will repay.’* ”

“ *But does he not sometimes select human instruments ?* ”

“ *Well, gal, you might git the wrong man.* ”

“ *Not I. I would be sure first. I know enough of the* ”

agony caused by such a mistake, I would do nothing hastily."

"Well gal, the argyment you brought up a minute ago about clearin' 'em out for fear of 'em causin' more misery and wretchedness, is a better excuse nor private vengeance. But you'd better go to bed and sleep. You look beat out. They'll be other times to talk these things over."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE ESTATE.

ON the next day Mary returned to her home. She had a long talk with the Hogans before setting out. She made her plans for the future and her mind was serene. She went to work at once. She was appointed administratrix of her husband's estate. She set about its settlement with a will. With the evidence of Bill and Kid she recovered many of the cattle that Lancaster had branded. The Circle Bar posed as a deeply injured faction that was having its property sworn out of its hands; but there was a reaction of public opinion against the members that caused them to receive less sympathy than had been granted their old-time complaints. The truth was beginning to show traces of itself. Aside from civil suits to recover her property Mary troubled no one. As soon as she could get full possession of her husband's property she organized the Bar Eleven Cattle Company. She herself was superintendent. Gustavus A. Waite, Charles E. Wentworth and William B. Hammin were stockholders. The men having but little money to put into the enterprise, were to serve without pay for a year, when each one of them would come into possession of an undivided one-sixth of the herd. Mary retained the ranche and the remaining half of the herd.

Mary took Penobscot Bill aside and gave him a good lecture before she would admit him as a shareholder. She finally succeeded in getting him to admit that the drink habit was not a desirable business adjunct. She gave him many suggestions as to his personal habits, and arranged matters so that if he was seen in an intoxicated condition before the year was out he should forfeit all ownership, and receive wages for the time served only.

Now it is sometimes true that an echo reflects idle sounds

only because idle sounds are hurled against it. Improve the principal and the echo improves. Bill had always been unfortunate in his selection of principals. Now when Mary took him in hand, he showed signs of improvement. Seeing that he would always remain an echo, she set about selecting for him a principal suited to his peculiar temperament.

There lived on Aspen Creek a young lady named Maggie Henderson. Maggie's reputation had suffered somewhat, but she was nevertheless the possessor of many sterling virtues. She was of strong will power, was buxom and comely, economical, tidy and industrious. Bill had often paid her attentions, and now Mary suggested, that he go at once and propose marriage to her. Bill smiled at the thought, but said he did not like to marry a woman who had been talked about. Mary assured him that if he himself was spotless she had nothing more to say in favor of the match. Bill went away smiling.

What then was Mary's astonishment when two days after Bill came in with Maggie, introduced her as Mrs. Hammin, and spread out a marriage certificate all duly witnessed and signed?

And the bride worked wonders. Her first important move was to induce her husband to wash his feet, air his boots, and put on a clean pair of socks. She made a rule that he should take a bath every two weeks at the farthest, and should change his socks and shirt at least every seven days. She took a fine-tooth comb and raked the dandruff out of his dust-colored curls. Then she threw her muscular arms round his neck, gave him a ringing smack on the cheek, and told him that she would be the best of wives as long as he was a good husband; but that when he went down to Milroy and got drunk, she would go down to Milroy and get drunk, also. Bill now became the echo of his wife. He attended strictly to business, kept clean, chewed less tobacco than formerly, drank no whiskey, and became so exemplary as to shed much credit on the Bar Eleven Cattle Company. And Maggie rolled up her sleeves and scrubbed the house from ceiling to floor, baked wonderful pies, refused to let Mary do a particle of work, petted and soothed her and tried to lighten her gloom. She took upon herself the heaviest part of the house-work, assigning the lighter duties—including the dishwashing, of course—to Iola. Bill bought her a wonderful black silk dress adorned with jet trimmings; in this she accompanied her neatly dressed husband to

church. The neighbors, after some three months, all admitted that the Hammins were doing well; but they—forgetting that Maggie had made her husband worthy of respect—regretted that a woman of doubtful character should have married so well. Gus and Kid supplied themselves with revolvers, and announced that if they did not take care of themselves and their stock, and withstand the aggressions of the Circle Bar men, it would be because they were not capable of doing so.

About three months after Jim's death everything was in order. Mary made a will with Daniel Hopkins and Joshua Hogan as witnesses. She left all her property to Iola, with the exception of a small legacy to Bella Martin, and another to poor Emma Chase, who all this time was loyal to her, and who was crying herself into endless headaches because she suspected her father as a murderer.

Mary made arrangements for Iola to board with the Martins a year; at the expiration of that time Gus Waite would have attained his majority, and then, if the two young people remained in their present frame of mind, they were to be married. Iola and the piano were consequently taken to the Martins'. Maggie was left at the Bar Eleven to keep house for the three men. Mary spent a few days with the Hogans, earnestly talking over her plans. Then she returned to the home of her Aunt Sallie in Indiana. It was long before the neighbors on Trelawna heard anything of her.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

INTERLUDE.

Do we ever calculate the amount of force required for heroism! Do we place before our eyes the chances there are for resolution to weaken, for discouragement to invade, for fear to baffle, for difficulty to retard, and for custom to defy? Do we think of the pleasures that must be forgone, the delights that must be eschewed, the rest that must be abandoned, the toils that must be undergone, the burdens that must be lifted, the pain that will bring anguished cries?

We bow before the result, but do we sympathize with the labor? We have read the story, but we have not endured the horrors of the wretches who screamed in the well at

Hougomont. We have seen the portrayal, but we were not crushed beneath the surging mass in the hollow road of Ohain. We have been told the tale, but we have not stood for opinion's sake amid smoking fagots. The legend is ours, but we have not fainted athirst in desert sands, seeking to abolish the traffic in human flesh. We who have been spared the horrors of prison, carnage, fagot, scaffold and rack—who have not felt the tooth of persecution and the heel of the oppressor, ask how is it possible for creatures to coolly face worldly ruin, bodily pain, and death ?

No hero is hero born. He is trained to heroism. Some childhood incident awakes him to the miseries of his fellows, or to the injustice meted out to himself. Circumstance inures him to toil. The outrages of enemies strengthen him to resistance. The futility of grief to bring back the things he mourns dissipates his weakness and dries up his tears. His eyes, opened to his own misfortunes, see the misfortunes of others. The teachings of a reason that perceives the need of effort and sacrifice for the general good nerve him to dismiss personal fear, and serve to the utmost. In the achievement he would attain, his individuality passes away ; he values his life less than his hoped-for achievement. His indomitable spirit, he believes, passes to his followers, and will sustain them after he has fallen.

And who shall say that he does not take up with sadness the weapon with which to stab tyranny, and the pen with which to expose outrage ? Can we believe that he does not mourn for the misguided beings whom he slays, inconveniences, or brings to blush ? Can we believe that his final triumph is untouched by thought of his defeated ? Are the glad shouts over the triumph of justice always unmixed with wails that the votaries of tyranny, conspiracy and outrage are men and brothers too ?

CHAPTER XL.

THE DARLING OF THE CIRCLE BAR.

THE Circle Bar men were for the most part a bad lot. Neither the Talberts nor Stanley Lancaster were in the least degree particular as to the character of the men they hired, so long as the men performed the work assigned them. Indeed if their hands had been saints at the time of their em-

ployment they would have had great difficulty to remain so. The older Circle Bar employés not only drank, caroused, and gambled, themselves, but they insisted upon all their companions doing the same, and ridiculed and persecuted them if they refrained. They made it a rule to go to Milroy City for a spree at the close of every roundup, and as often as possible on Saturday evenings. They quarreled among themselves, they sat silent and surly for whole evenings together, then made friends again and proceeded to drink and gamble. When they sang, they sang lewd songs. Their faces could not escape bearing the impress of their characters. Their countenance were hard and merciless; their eyes cynical and steely; their manner an impudent swagger. They had not become so with a bound. They had been going down for years. They had attained their present natures by degrees. A gradual sliding down hill is much commoner than a fall. They had forgotten that there are sweet ties and tender emotions in life. They cultivated their worst characteristics and tried to forget that they had ever had better ones. They were well known throughout Boneset county. When the saloons were in an uproar and the dance-houses particularly noisy, people would say: "O, the Circle Bar men are there."

They had been rough before the murder of Jim Madnau. That event had not improved them. Perhaps its very memory had caused them to handle their lives and destinies with a little more than their former recklessness. In the old days, Mary had insisted on their being invited to the Bar Eleven occasionally, thinking that civil society might have a good effect upon them. Thus she had become slightly acquainted with them all.

A presence was now to come among them that would call out their best natures, appeal to their kindness and sense of romance, and for a time drive their brute instincts to the rear. It was a daring experiment for a woman to come alone into such a crew.

A rehearsal is not pleasant. The play-goer does not ask to see the half-prepared theatre, the daylight on the stage exhibiting the discolored faces of the performers, the shabby, careless dressing, and the air of crude unreadiness. He asks the full panoply of grandeur; the players stimulated to excel by the magic of audience, lights and applause; the carefully prepared faces; the brilliant and appropriate robes, and the stage defying facts to a test of rivalry. The audi-

ence does not ask how long was required for that lady to acquire such mastery of declamation ; it is enough that she possesses it and favors them with it. It is not asked just how, when and where these arts, graces and perfections were acquired until after the play is done. If the play pleases us, we will make inquiries concerning those things after it is over.

Mary Madnau was at the time of her husband's death an expert horsewoman, and was clever with a revolver. She went from Trelawna to Indiana. Her trip there was more than aught else a trick. Her mind was now so troubled that she little cared to see even the relatives she loved ; but from there she could go where she liked, unknown to any of the Trelawna people. She remained with her relatives but two days. Feverish to be in action, quiet was torment. She bought a ticket for a large town near, where she was unknown. Here, unknown to any one—her relatives believed she intended to travel for a time—she succeeded in changing her apparel and identity, and slipping away in the disguise of a man. She believed that her secret would be safer if she shared it with no one. Although she had told her sister and the Hogans something of her expectations, she had not given them minute particulars.

Trembling at the thousand risks she must run. She proceeded to New Mexico and sought employment on a cattle ranche.

She told the ranchers to whom she applied for work just what her capabilities were. She could ride, but was not proficient with the rope. She consented to take less than the usual wages until she became expert in all particulars. She was engaged upon this condition. The society she was compelled to mingle in was not in all instances such as would please the fancy of a refined lady. But society was not now the object of her quest. She was, like Peter the Great in the shipyards of Holland, seeking information and skill. If her mind revolted at the coarseness she sometimes heard, she gave no sign. Her gentleness seemed, if any difference, greater than of old. If the heat of the scorching sun or the cutting blast of a Norther made her suffer, it was her contorted face alone that spoke. The range upon which she rode was fortunately in the foothills where there was more chance for shelter and shade than there would have been on the plains. And as occasionally she dropped in exhaustion from her broncho and lay half fainting in the reviving shadow of the

Manzano range, her mind revised and rearranged the history of an avenging future.

Her greatest difficulty for a time was learning to adapt herself to the style of life that surrounded her. She was at first more afraid of the men than she would have been in her feminine dress. Though to a degree accustomed to men of their sort, for fear of suspicion she was for some days in a never-ending tremor. It was only by continually reminding herself that successful acting was necessary to her life plans, that she could accustom herself to listen without coloring, to their taunts, gibes, foul jests, and shocking profanity. She knew before going among them that what respect and prestige she gained must be the result of diplomacy rather than of strength or skill. She was brave, but was in no sense reckless. The men soon came to like her, but they ceaselessly annoyed her. They wanted her to gamble, and to go to questionable resorts, and to saloons, in the nearest town. She refused to gamble, but because of her perfection at card games of all sorts they forgave her reluctance to bet. Her worst trouble, however, was when the men brought whiskey to camp and insisted that she should drink. She finally announced to them with great gravity that she was under a vow not to taste whiskey until she had killed a certain man she was hunting. This announcement purchased peace as well as consideration for her.

She studiously avoided angering them. Indeed, her charm of manner smoothed things over for her many a time. Knowing that in a hand-to-hand fight she would have no chance whatever, she resolved to keep out of quarrels. For this reason she passed unnoticed many a taunt during the first few days of her residence in the camp; after this the men came to be so pleased with her presence there, her songs and her stories, that they petted and courted her. She was always ready to practice target shooting. No man in camp understood any trick of marksmanship that she was not eager and ready to learn. She soon became so proficient as to astonish them all. She was learning the necessary lessons well. Her life work was in them, and she drove back feminine weakness and nervousness, and applied herself to work and study. Though trying so faithfully to avoid trouble, she was always ready for defense. Save when she was practicing marksmanship with them, her revolvers never left her belt. Even when she rolled her blankets about her and lay down to sleep—sometimes in an adobe cabin, sometimes in

a dugout, sometimes in a tent, and sometimes under the unsheltering stars—her weapons were always with her. It was a wild life, keeping her in an endless state of nervous tension, and bringing her suffering, anxiety and toil. But she had long since vowed to shrink at nothing. It would all be over one day, and then would come rest. Secret and bitter are the struggles that prelude victory and peace.

It was late in July after her bereavement in the preceding November, that Mary applied for employment at the Circle Bar. Her sister would scarcely have recognized her. She had the appearance of a very handsome boy of sixteen. The suffering she had undergone had not given her a look of age; it showed in an expression of weariness and premature thoughtfulness. Her beauty was heightened by its effect. It was as if a beautiful but highly-colored picture was by its exposure to the elements softened in its intensity without losing either effect on the senses or perfection of outline. It is difficult for us to realize how small, how youthful and how pretty the average woman in her early years appears, until we have seen her masquerading in masculine apparel. Mary in her disguise was striking and picturesque. Her hat was black, with a low, flat crown, surrounded by a band of light yellow leather on which were grapes and leaves in dark brown; the brim of extraordinary width threw a dark shadow over her melancholy face. She wore a shirt of light gray, elaborately embroidered in scarlet; black trowsers and the most wonderful chaparejos to be imagined. The last were of light yellow leather, and were stamped with numerous designs of vaquero life, representing the wild stampede, the branding, the expert lasso thrower, and the return to the beloved lady at home; fringe fully six inches in depth hung adown the sides. Her dainty, high-heeled boots, when she had stripped off her chaparejos, showed high tops whereon was stamped, in gilt a vaquero in full chase after a cow. Strapped to her boots were silver spurs with long rays. Round her body was a leathern belt from which depended two pearl-inlaid revolvers. Tied to her saddle was a coat of well tanned shiny black goat leather lined with scarlet cloth. She was mounted upon a well formed chestnut sorrel mustang, with a saddle of the most extravagant Spanish pattern, and a bridle that was rich in ornament. She desired to make a striking appearance. Not a detail of her equipage but was the result of study. She was there to fascinate, and trick men into telling the truth. She knew that while men are

always ready to be jealous of each other, that each one likes to be honored and followed by an attractive boy.

When she applied to Texas Ike for employment, he told her that he did not know just what her chances were. He was of the opinion that another hand was needed, but he could not say positively until he had seen the Talberts. But she was welcome to stay till he learned their pleasure. In the meantime she could help with the riding if she liked.

"What's yer name, boy?" asked Ike kindly.

"You can call me Mose Jones."

"Well, Mose, peel off yer saddle and turn yer hoss inter the corral. You're welcome to yer grub till I see the boys."

And now that Mary has been introduced as Mose Jones, she will be referred to in that character during her assumption of it.

Both Mose and his horse were weary. They had come up from New Mexico on a forced march. The way is long, and the ranches, towns and water courses far apart. There is little protection from either cold or heat. The view is sometimes fine, but often infinitely dreary. No wonder the mustang hung his head and the rider looked worn. Mose turned the animal into the corral and gave him hay. Then he dragged his saddle into the house to serve for a pillow, and untied his pair of blankets and spread them upon the rough floor for a bed. Then he threw himself down and slept heavily for hours. When the men came in in the evening, he sat on a rough box near the door, his face and hands fresh washed, and his soft, dark hair brushed well away from his forehead. He looked depressed and weary. The men gave him a "Hello," and he replied in the same vein. They examined his saddle as it lay on the floor, and his chaps, spurs and hat as they hung upon the wall, inquiring concerning their value and make. Mose answered rather shortly, and did not seem inclined to talk. The force was not just the same as it had been of old. Two of the seven were missing and their place was supplied by a kindly-looking old man with curly gray hair, and by a previous member of the Bar Eleven outfit, Lat Jennings.

"Yer togs looks kinder Spanish," said Griff Henry, kindly.

"I'm from New Mexico," said Mose, shortly.

"From New Mexico? Well, I'll swan. How is things down there, now?"

"Slow."

"Wages bad?"

"Wages bad, and too many Greasers. Whites got no show."

"Yer togs look like you might a been in luck. And that's a way-up mustang of yourn;" said Tom Samp, a short, thick-set, young man with envious gray eyes.

Mose made no answer to the last remark. The men voted him sulky, and soon after several of them collected together out of his hearing to discuss him.

"He's maybe one of them border chaps. They're sulky. They don't want to talk, and don't want you to ask 'em any questions. Act like they want to hide somethin'," said Hank Sands.

"Or else he's stole the mustang and saddle and pulled out from somewhere in the night," said Jennings.

"Great gawks! He's nothin' but a kid;" said Ike.

"Kids is sometimes the worst," said Griff.

In the morning, Ike took Mose out and assigned him work. He did so well and remembered his orders so minutely that on the next day after, when Harry Talbert came out to the ranche, he was permanently engaged. On the next evening after he was hired, the men made a fresh effort to thaw the mystery that surrounded him. Mose had had a hard day, and now with his head on his saddle he lay at full length on the floor. His boyish face seemed under a permanent cloud.

"Mose," said Lat in a bantering tone, "you must have been disappointed in love."

"Well, if it'll do you any good to know it, I have been;" said Mose, tartly.

The men eyed the boy in astonishment.

"Why, you ain't sixteen year old yet, are you?" asked Ike.

"I'm worse'n sixteen."

"You ain't eighteen?"

"I ain't much this side of it."

"Why boy, you can't think you've ben hurt, at your age?" said Hank Sands.

"I ain't been complainin', have I?" asked Mose keenly.

"You'll live to git over it; it's the wounds we git when we're older that hurts," said Lat.

"Ain't countin' on livin' very long," said Mose.

"You ain't lookin' for anybody to try to shoot you, are you?" asked Griff.

"Yes, I am. It's just what I expect somebody'll do, one of these days."

Now the depressed, handsome, childlike, frank and honest appearing Mose was making a strong impression on the hearts of these rough men. Sex may be hidden, but its effect remains. It is said that when the pretty little Marquis De C—— was sent by the court of France in female apparel to the court of Russia as a diplomat, that it was the ladies who fell in love with him. These men began to feel a strange interest in Mose.

"Now look here, Mose," said Ike, "if you've done anything a little out o' the reg'lar, you'd better own up. You're jest a boy, and we'll consider that. We'll stand by you if we can; if it's too bad for that, we'll move you on out o' reach o' them that's after you, and then let you go. We won't blow on you."

"If you stand by me, you'll have to do it without me ownin' up," said Mose, softening his tone.

"Is it the hoss and saddle? Did you clear out with 'em in the night?"

"No, I didn't. I'm down in my luck. I got into a scrape with some bad cowmen. They killed my best friend. I may let you know all about it sometime, but I've told you all I can just now." He rose and went to the door, looking out toward the moonlit pass and taking in long breaths of the exquisite air.

"We'll stand by you, Mose," said Jennings.

"That *we will*," chorused the others.

"Now tell us jest one thing more Mose," said Jennings; "did this killin' scrape have anything to do with the love business you hinted at awhile ago? Tell us that, and then we'll let you alone."

"Yes, it had."

Mose became a hero in their eyes. They lived over their own impetuous youth as they looked upon him. Not daring to ask him after their promise, they whispered among themselves as to whether the lady might have been an American girl, or a Spanish senorita, hoping that Mose would voluntarily answer. But Mose, though he heard every word, paid no attention, thus heightening their curiosity a thousand fold. They formed the wildest conjectures as to the fascinating plot, but not another word could they wring from Mose.

In less than a week the new-comer was a favorite. As

the men became better acquainted with him they had no reason to complain of his taciturnity. He became first tolerant, next communicative, though always silent as to his past, and finally he became friendly. His exquisite dress and bewitching manners soon gave him the name by which he is still vividly remembered in that section: *The Darling of the Circle Bar.*

CHAPTER XLI.

GETTING ACQUAINTED.

Mose had arrived at the Circle Bar on Monday. On the following Saturday evening, four of the satellites, including Lat Jennings, began to get ready to go to Milroy City. It was always necessary for part of the force to remain at the ranche on Sunday, two of them generally riding all day. The others took turns going to Milroy City, or down to the settlements on Trelawna and Aspen.

Now Mose disapproved of laborers and wage earners hanging around the back door of a saloon all day Sunday. He began to try to persuade them to remain at the ranche. He was seconded in this by the arguments of the gray-haired old gentleman already mentioned. This person was one William Everet, who, however, had gained fame as a hunter and frontiersman at an early day under the name of Rocky Mountain Bill. He had had considerable note in his time. He was at the Circle Bar waiting for the hunting season which would begin with the snow fall, and was meanwhile overseeing the putting up of some hay which the Circle Bar men were harvesting for the winter sustenance of their poorer stock. Lat Jennings was also assisting with the hay, doing a little riding occasionally also. Mr. Jennings, however, had a stronger reason than either of these for being at the Circle Bar, the reason being known to none of the men save Texas Ike. It will be remembered that he had been the friend of Stanley Lancaster. Now Stanley's guilty conscience ever feared detection, punishment. Jennings was still on speaking terms with the Bar Eleven men, and Stanley and the Talberts, knowing well his pleasing front and insinuating manner, had employed him as a spy.

"Where you fellows startin' for?" asked Mose, as he saw the preparations,

"Goin' down to Milroy to raise thunder; come and go long," said Jennings.

"After you've worked hard all week, you're goin' to blow in all you've earned in about twenty-four hours, I s'pose," was Mose's answer.

"Well, Mose, we've got to have some fun as we go along."

"Why don't you stay here and have fun? You can have just as much of it, and it won't cost you anything. Then you'll feel lots better on Monday than you will if you lay round the back door of a saloon all day Sunday."

"I s'pose you'll preach to us if we stay, Mose?" asked Hank Sands.

"Anything to suit the crowd."

"Well, Mose, if that's yer lay-out, you might give us a few words right now. Jest git up on that box there, and go to tootin'," said Griff.

Mose, to the surprise of all, got up. He took for a text that part of the fourteenth verse of the second chapter of Ecclesiastes which reads: "The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness." Then without a word that could have offended the most orthodox ear, and still without any touch of piety, he delivered a raking harangue upon the folly of reckless expenditure on the part of those who toil. He set forth at great length the idleness and luxury in which the saloon element is supported by the sweat-dampened dollars of its victims. He explained to the men how they were laying up want, disease and vagrancy for their old age; how they were throwing away in the purchase of these curses the money that might find for themselves comfortable homes. His remarks, merciless and caustic in the highest degree, spared no one; he commended all honest pastime, but scourged without moderation all injurious folly. He sat down after its completion as if nothing unusual had taken place. Everet wore a pleased smile, but only the boldness of the thing saved the others from furious anger. They were half charmed in spite of themselves. After a short and breathless silence, Jennings said in a mocking tone:

"I'm goin' to pass the hat. Mose ought to be paid for that." He threw a leather washer into his hat as a beginning; but Griff Henry to whom he next passed the hat, threw in a silver dollar, thinking to embarrass the forward boy. Lat took out the washer and threw in another dollar,

All the others followed the example, even Everet contributing. To their astonishment Mose quietly counted the money, announced the amount, and put it into his pocket.

"I s'pose you'll pray, now," said Hank, rather discontentedly.

"I don't care to pray, but I'll sing." In a voice full of pathos and by no means without natural advantages, he began to sing. First came some of the sweet old hymns our mothers loved; then Whittier's song to Mrs. Stowe's Eva; then songs of patriotism, echoing and vibrating with love of native land; then several touching old ballads, ending at last with the pathetic and romantic story, *The Dying Ranger*,* his voice sinking with exquisite tenderness on the last eloquent stanza :

"One bright smile of pleasure,
His pallid face o'erspread ;
One quick convulsive shudder,
And the Ranger boy was dead.
We dug his grave both wide and deep,
And laid him down to rest,
With a saddle for a pillow
And the lone star on his breast."

As his voice died away, the bowed heads and concealed eyes of his auditors spoke his success. The candles flickered on the walls. It was late, and the men had lost all thought of going to Milroy City. Mose left the box upon which he had been sitting, and spreading down his blankets, lay down, as usual employing his saddle to support his head.

"Now look here, Mose," said Lat after quite a long pause, "I'd like to know what a feller is to do with Sunday if he don't rowdy a little. A feller can't always be civil. Now when I get older, I 'low to settle down and be smooth. But when a feller's young, he's got to do somethin' with his Sundays."

"If I was boss of my destiny, and had lots of dust," said Mose, "I'd try to do somethin' to settle that point. I believe in a day of rest, and I'd try to fix a way to employ part of it. I'd build a Sunday resort in every town as long as the swag held out. I'd have every kind of good readin' there, and a musical instrument, and plenty of fine pictures. I'd keep the doors open from six in the morning till eleven

* A very common song among the cowboys. I have never seen it in print and cannot give the name of the author.

at night. The place might not suit the notions of some extra pious people, but it would catch lots of strays that have nowhere to spend Sunday, and would take part of the crowd away from the saloon's back door. It's my opinion that the Sabbath wouldn't be broken so often if it wasn't made so cold and brittle and icy and breakable. I know that just lots of kids get started to huntin' mean amusement on Sunday, just because they're shut out from innocent play. I'd rather see kids out playing ball, or croquet, or some other harmless game on Sunday, than to see 'em hid away in some corner tellin' nasty jokes, or cussin' their parents for bein' so hard on 'em."

"That's me," said Everet energetically. "Any means that'll keep kids at home, or near home, on Sunday, is honest means, no matter if it is play. And any means that runs 'em off into bad company is bad, no matter if it's prayin' and readin' the Bible from sunup till sundown. The Bible can be made a curse by givin' it in too big doses, jest as quinine can. And for such as haven't got a home, Mose's Sunday resort is jest the thing. There'd be time then for a chap to go out and hear two sermons if he wanted to, and eat two or three meals, and still have ten or twelve hours of good readin' or clean, sensible talkin' if he wanted 'em. A man couldn't do nothin' *very* bad by startin' such a hunt, no matter what folks would say. He'd draw lots of game into his traps that otherwise would git taken in by them that's huntin' 'em for what they can git for their hides."

Everet now proposed to sing. The men had heard him before, and they expected something racy. "Rocky Mountain Bill" was a character. He had been in the regular army for five years, his period of enlistment expiring some little time before the Civil War. He had then become a frontiersman. When the war began he enlisted in the Second Colorado Cavalry, marched down to Fort Garland with his regiment, then to Santa Fé, taking part in the battles of Apache Canon and Peralta, and being one of the dauntless band that fired Sibley's supply train at the former engagement. He was unpretending and honest, never boasting of his past feats, but telling such things as he believed would interest his hearers with commendable modesty. One of his strong points was an uncompromising belief in women. He had fought hard to give the Negro citizenship. He could see no reason why woman was not as worthy, and why citizenship was not quite as needful to her. The song which

he chose upon this occasion referred to this subject, and was perhaps of his own composition. As he leaned back in his chair and sang, the flickering candles lighting up his gray hair and beard, and his animated face, he made a striking figure. His voice was clear, and every word perfectly distinct. If there were just perceptible traces of spite, the earnest old gentleman may be forgiven for their presence. A little indulgence may be allowed to those who have grown old in their country's service.

▲ COMING EVENT.

'There once was a time in our nation's story
 When the prestige of race was felt full strong ;
 When the white man regardless of morals or mentality
 Steered the old ship of State its voyage along.
 The horse thief, the cow thief, the grub thief, the **sneak thief**,
 And every white thief 'neath America's dome,
 On election day could vote full proudly
 But negroes of all shades had to stay at home.

There now is a time in our country's story,
 When the prestige of sex is felt full strong,
 For good men and bad men of all descriptions
 Insist on pushing the old ship along.
 The horse thief, the cow thief, the grub thief, the **sneak thief**,
 And every male thief 'neath America's dome,
 On election day can vote full proudly,
 But women of all shades have to stay at home.

There will come a time in our nation's story,
 When the prestige of freedom will reign full strong ;
 When the men marching out to shove the old vessel,
 Will take their wives and daughters along.
 The horse thief, the cow thief, the grub thief, the **sneak thief**,
 And every sort of thief 'neath America's dome,
 Will then have to occupy a rearward station,
 And take their turn at staying at home."

The men greeted this effort with tremendous applause. Lat Jennings, however, offered the objection that the Colorado convict cannot vote during the term of his incarceration. Mr. Everet reminded him that he had used the auxiliary "can." By conducting himself properly while in prison, the convict can come out a full-fledged citizen; it is only by insubordination and bad behavior during his imprisonment, making it necessary for him to serve out his entire term, that he can be put down to the level of women. The men found considerable fault with the sentiments expressed, but all declared these to be in no way detrimental

to the rhythm, literary merit, and air of the song. Then Mose was invited to give his verdict. Mose declared that the sentiment had pleased him so well that he had forgotten to search for literary merit. Then the men again fell to wondering what sort of creature this was, who could receive so bitter a love blow, and yet champion the cause of women.

CHAPTER XLII.

HOW THE CIRCLE BAR KEPT SUNDAY.

HAD not it been for one little incident, the Sabbath day would doubtless have been more civilly kept by the Circle Bar men than it had been for many a moon. But that little incident occurred, and the only good that can be said for what followed is that it kept the men away from the saloons. It was a terrible affair, and persons of delicate nerves had perhaps better omit this chapter. All those who read it must bear well in mind that the characters were an untamed collection of bold, bad cowboys. The trouble was flung into the arena with the very best of intentions, too. The men, while eating their breakfast of bread, boiled beef, beans and coffee, got into a heated religious discussion. Mose Jones and Lat Jennings had become so much in earnest as to be a little personal in their remarks. Lat was insisting that he intended eventually to repent and go to heaven, no matter what became of the different ladies he confessed to having started in the opposite direction. Mose insisted that if Lat succeeded in effecting an entrance, he himself would cut the fences of the rival inclosure and bring the inmates over, so that Mr. Jennings could have plenty of congenial society. Things looked dangerous, so Mr. Everet told a story to divert the general mind. He told how he used to make pancakes, bake the underside well done, then shake the griddle until the cake was loosened, then give the griddle a twirl and a twist, throwing the cake up, and after it had turned in air, catching it as it came down. He asserted that once while living in a cabin with a wide low chimney, he had occasionally thrown the cakes up through the chimney, and then rushing out of the house, caught them as they descended batter side down. This story was told not so much for the sake of truth, as for a diversion. It succeeded. The religious war came

to an abrupt close. The possibility of the pancake feat came under discussion. The men had had their breakfast, but they at once began to mix pancakes. They wanted to fry pancakes, and did not care who ate them. Griff Henry soon had a griddle greased, and was on his knees before the wide fireplace, while Hank Sands was piling on batter. The Circle Bar had a wide low chimney ; was not here a fine opportunity to test the feasibility of the pastime ? Mr. Everet gave instructions. Under his directions, Griff succeeded in spreading a huge hot pancake over his hand and arm ; in shaking it off, a large fragment caressed Ike's cheek, causing that gentleman to make remarks which for lack of space are here omitted. Mr. Everet, Rocky Mountain Bill while he was thus engaged, now took the griddle and succeeded in turning and catching a cake in faultless fashion, though it ascended but a short distance above the level of the griddle. He explained that his arms were now too stiff to venture the chimney throw. Hank Sands, seeing that the feat was possible on a small scale, determined upon the whole performance. Having shaken the cake loose, he gave the griddle a sudden and tremendous upward impulse. The cake ascended at an angle of some forty degrees, and coming in contact with the front wall of the chimney at a distance of some four feet from the scene of action, remained sticking there. Those who ran out to see it rise and fall, not perceiving it, came in and looked up the chimney. After well-nigh blinding themselves with smoke, they discovered it, and decided that it might there remain. Just as Ike was baking his cake, Hank's experiment came down out of the chimney and settled upon it, soot and all. Ike lost his self-control and that time the cake did go up the chimney. It rose high, turned in air and began to descend.

"Come out here with that griddle, Ike," screamed the men who were watching its aerial ventures. "Hustle out quick ! She's a coming ! Run ! There now, it's too late."

Lat Jennings then tried. He got the cake through the chimney, but as he was rushing under it with the griddle, he received it on his head. He wildly tore it off, giving vent to no end of extempore eloquence, as with scorched fingers he raked the hot paste out of his hair. Tom Samp, being notoriously short of courage, was more modest. He concluded not to try the chimney, but to just venture turning the cake in the house. He inquired of Rocky Mountain Bill how hard he should throw the cake to insure a nice

turn. The men all assured him that it required a tremendous expenditure of muscled force. His cake struck the ceiling, batter side up, and remained there. The men went on with the amusement, only Mose declining to toss cakes; he was an interested spectator, but his frame of mind did not crave play. By the time the flour sack was half empty and the yard strewn with cakes, the men decided that it was foolish business, fit only for children; but two cakes had been caught—Lat Jennings receiving one on his head, and the dog being saddled by the other.

The men now decided to lasso Mose unless he consented to gather up the cakes. Mose informed them that if there was any lassoing to be done he saw no reason why he should not take a hand. He was not particularly anxious to throw ropes, but he must either defend himself or gather up the debris he had had no hand in scattering. The men hurriedly obtained ropes. It was then that they learned something of the agility and skill of their new companion. They engaged him single-handed and found him more than a match for their most pronounced experts. It was not until by his dexterity he had jerked two of them to the ground that they would acknowledge their defeat.

"Let's double teams on him, boys; he's too smart; let's rope him and then roll him in the crick," shouted Hank Sands.

Now the creek, there, was only a ribbon of water in a wider ribbon of wet sand, but Mose did not pine for even so light a bath. He ran up a ladder that leaned against the barn, and ran to the peak of the sloping roof. The men did not pursue him. They dragged away the ladder and left the boy there, fourteen feet above solid ground. Then they stood about trying to make terms with him. Mose was good-natured, but refused to make terms, until Texas Ike agreed to replace the ladder and act as protector, if Mose would sing *The Dying Ranger* while at his elevated station. Mose sang as desired, and was then permitted to descend.

On the following Wednesday Ike sent Mose to Milroy City with a message to the Talberts, warning him solemnly before setting out, not to get drunk and stay a week. Ike added in an undertone that, however, if he got hold of anything extra good in the way of bitters, he might bring a quart bottle home without doing any harm.

At the post-office in Milroy City Mose found two letters addressed to himself. Both were written in cipher. He read

and answered them. One of these answers was addressed to Joshua Hogan, the other to Iola Fleming. They were dropped in the outside box at a time when there were no on-lookers. Mose accomplished the wonderful feat of getting home the same day he started away. The men crowded eagerly round him, for two large bundles were tied to his saddle.

"What you got there, Mose?" eagerly demanded Griff Henry.

"The collection you fellows took up for my benefit."

Mose unstrapped the bundles and carried them into the house. When they were opened they proved themselves worthy the excitement they had created. An illustrated history of the United States, a splendidly bound copy of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, Longfellow's and Whittier's poems, and Uncle Tom's Cabin; then in paper bindings, *Middlemarch*, *Daniel Deronda*, *Adam Bede*, *David Copperfield*, *Ivanhoe*, *Kenilworth*, *Eugene Aram* and *Vanity Fair*. The men were much delighted. We may allow our surroundings to crowd away our books, but the sight of them is as the sight of long separated friends. For their sake we shake off our coarseness, and show ourselves at our best. The good that is in us struggles forward to meet them; we would, if possible, keep our darker side turned away.

The excitement caused by these books was long-lived. There had been books at the Circle Bar before, but they were for the most part such as half disgusted those who eagerly read them; they left no desire for better thoughts and cleaner lives. They had more the effect of unwholesome stimulants, than of pleasing and nourishing mental food that would forever strengthen and sustain. The discussions over the new books were not carried on in the most correct and staid language, but even the authors themselves would have been pleased to listen.

CHAPTER XLIII.

MILROY CITY HAS A RACE DISPLAY.

THERE had been much effort to get up a race at Milroy City. First a race was proposed, and then races. Effort results in success. If there is failure, it is because of insufficient or ill-directed effort. The races were fixed and announced for a day late in September—the twenty-second. The gentlemen's driving teams, the trotters, the pacers, the runners and the racers were all to be given a chance. But the portions of the program that most interested Trelawna were the cow pony race, and the five-mile cowboy race.

Now the reader well knows that the poor race-horses, breechy cattle, biting dogs and fighting children all belong to Smith, Jones and Robinson. Our live stock, and our race-horses especially, are like ourselves, immaculate. Of course, our horse may have been unfortunate and may consequently have incurred defeat; but that was entirely the fault of circumstances. The horse is all right, and will in the future be crowned with laurels.

One of the peculiarities of the Trelawna cow ponies was their celerity. They were all racers. There was on Trelawna no cow pony so poor but had one advocate. But the confidence of the owner is not the only indication of swiftness in horseflesh; abuse of other horsemen must be taken into consideration. In fact, when a horse is praised by his owner and cursed by other owners, the signs are strong in his favor. Now Kid had a pony that enjoyed both these distinctions. His name was Thundercloud, and he had on several occasions demonstrated his ability to run a little. Kid, being a devout worshipper of Thundercloud, resolved to fit him for the September race. With this end in view he rubbed the beast's bay coat until it shone, fed him scant quantities of hulled oats, bedded him with extreme care, and severely kicked Hankum for chasing him round the barn lot at an inopportune season. Gus shared all of Kid's confidence, and much of his activity. He rubbed the animal's legs with the greatest care, and when Broncho Charlie questioned Thundercloud's virtues and abilities, he offered to knock all that gentleman's teeth down his throat, if he chose

to repeat his obnoxious remarks. If the reader be inclined to cavil at the hasty remark of Gus, let him remember that the reputation of a race-horse was in peril.

Now if there was any practice that Gus and Kid abhorred, it was gambling. They considered it wrong in every sense. They would occasionally bet the lemonade on a four flush or an ace high, but this was only for amusement. They kept clear of saloons, and treated risks with silent contempt. Now Tom Samp and Griff Henry would, when off duty, bet wildly on the merest trifles; when all else had failed they had been known to impoverish themselves on spitting at a mark. Lat Jennings would bet, a quarter at a time, on the number of flies that would be found in durance vile when the Circle Bar molasses pitcher was opened. Ike Bane frequently risked fifty cents on the probability of his inducing Mose Jones to put up a dollar on seven-up. Gus and Kid were unlike these.

But when a man owns a race horse he is like a teething babe; he is not his usual, equable self.

In the five-mile cowboy race, the men were to ride in full costume, change horses every mile, the winner to receive one hundred dollars. The cow pony race was a half mile dash, the winner to receive a purse of forty dollars. In the latter race alone was Thundercloud to run; the Circle Bar and the Rowlock outfit had each entered a string for the former. Now Bella and Iola had no objection to their betrothed lovers running for a purse—that would do very well. But they had a horror of betting. A few days before the twenty-second they met together and the scene which followed was one that all reformers should have witnessed. The girls told over to each other the tales they had heard in regard to the risks of the Circle Bar men. They bestowed upon each other the most conclusive arguments against gambling in all its forms. Bella explained to Iola how a man might, in a moment of excitement, cast away the sweat-begotten earnings of years. Iola gave back the statement that one of the riskers must always lose—there was no chance for both to win. Bella thought this almost a pity; she believed, come down to the strict justice of things, that both ought to lose. Iola insisted that all gentlemen who had any thought of gambling ought to desist, if for no other reason, because such an unholy gang as the Circle Bar outfit indulged to such an extent.

Now Gus, although so averse to gambling, had had some

thought of putting up twenty-five dollars with Charlie Ford, "just to make him shut up his mouth." Kid, also, had thought of risking an equal amount on Thundercloud; that would not be gambling, of course; no risk was incurred—Thundercloud was sure to win—and where there is no risk, there is no gambling. But, after this generous load of instruction which the young ladies had transferred to each other in their presence, who shall wonder that they speedily decided that the purse would be sufficient?

The twenty-second of September was a magnificent day. Kid, Gus, Penobscot Bill and Thundercloud were early on the ground. The Circle Bar outfit came down charged with importance and heavy purses. Mose and Ike remained at the ranche to look after the stock. The men wanted Mose to come down and ride their string in the five-mile race, since he was light, and quick at mounting. But Mose declined, and Griff Henry was installed as rider.

Now the Circle Bar had learned that Thundercloud undoubtedly possessed speed. Tom Samp had at one time, when Kid was in fancied security and secrecy training his favorite, equipped himself with a stop watch and a large stock of caution, and hidden in a clump of bushes beside the road. He went home in a tremor of excitement and carrying a heavy load of valuable information. The incident took place at a time when there was not a single feud between or among any of the outfit. Tom therefore generously informed them all of what he had learned and they all decided to keep quiet. They first tried to trade for Thundercloud; when they found this impossible, they concluded that at any rate they might entrap the unwary and win piles of money. So they maintained a vigorous and silent watch.

At various points round the half-mile track were gathered carriages and saddle horses in considerable quantity. The grand stand was overflowing. Iola and Bella, in the spring wagon with the Hogans, sat beneath their raised parasols and looked expectant.

Thundercloud, his legs well wrapped with red flannel, was being paraded around the inclosure within the ring. The ten ponies for the five mile race, as well as half a dozen trotters, were being exercised, also. Now Jere Herron, not sharing the Circle Bar knowledge in this particular, was full of contempt for Thundercloud. He said that he thought that if that little old cayuse could run he ought to know it. He had been watching him for six months.

"He can run, though, all the same;" said Tom Samp, who was hunting prey.

"But how's he goin' to run? He ain't got any hind-quarters;" said Jere.

"Well, he makes up with his fore-hitters, then," said Tom.

"But I tell you he can't run! He can't run a little bit! He can't even warm himself up! He'll git his eyes so full of dust that he'll go blind! He won't even git near enough to the stragglers to git kicked! I can run off and hide from him, myself!"

"Bet you fifty dollars he's the first horse in!"

"I'll take you up, and bet you another fifty he's the last one in."

Tom then went in search of other prey. Jere went up to Kid and began to pick flaws in Thundercloud's construction.

"Bah!" said Jere. "He might git them fore feet round the track in some less than half an hour, if it wasn't for him havin' to take them hind legs along."

Kid made no reply, but went on rubbing.

"I say, you ain't got the gaul to think that thing can run? Ain't you ashamed to go backachin' round about such a cayuse?"

Gus raised the curry-comb and stared at the questioner.

"It's fine pay you'll git for your trouble," sneered Jere.

At this, Kid turned round, faced him, and said :

"Jere, why don't you save your chin till the race is over? You'll know something then."

"Know somethin' now."

Kid looked over the eleven ponies that had been entered for the half-mile dash. He knew them all save a scrawny old sorrel that was disfigured by half a dozen big, scrawling brands, and that seemed to have sacrificed all the more pliable portions of his tail fighting flies. Kid knew all the ponies save this scarecrow. Bella was well out of hearing, and he was being fearfully goaded.

"You'd better tie a gunny sack behind your saddle to make a pillow for him when he goes to sleep," sneered Jere.

"I'll bet you my new saddle here, against forty dollars, that he's in first; and I want you either to put up, or shut up;" said Kid.

Jere put up, and then moved upon the fortifications of Gus. Gus was more cautious. He bet ten dollars that Thundercloud would not come in last.

Not until the arrival at the track was it finally decided who should ride. Gus was an excellent and cool-headed rider, but his bony frame was heavy. Then Kid, though excitable, had other advantages as well as lightness. For instance, Thundercloud had a fashion of wringing his enormous, unclipped tail like a whip-lash. Now if he should entangle the same in Gus's long legs his equine spirit would be certain to be disturbed, and he would in all likelihood take to pitching, instead of attending to the more serious business of coming in on the home stretch.

So Kid was to ride.

Jere Herron and Tom Samp were the heaviest bankers on Thundercloud. Jere's risks were for the greater part that he would come in last, while Tom's were that he would get around first. Tom had found takers for every dollar and for every dollar's worth of goods he had in the world. Griff Henry was risking some seventy-five dollars. Jere Herron had put the returns for twelve head of fat steers into the mill. Impatiently they waited.

The five-mile race was a brilliant affair. The men rode in full costume, dismounting for the most part while their horses were at a gallop, and springing upon others that were off at a run on the instant. Lat Jennings was helping Griff Henry to mount, and he did this so efficiently as to lose that gentleman much good time. Amid the waving of hats, gloves and kerchiefs the horses were urged twice round the ring, the riders springing off and being hustled upon fresh horses, held saddled and ready by their friends. For a time the Rowlock string seemed losing, but they had reserved their best horses for the last. Amid the wild cheering of a crowd of onlookers that in their excitement stood erect in their vehicles and swayed in the grandstand, the Rowlock rider came in ahead. But Griff had run a noble race; his horse's nose reached the winner's shoulder, and the crowd, feeling that the nervy spectacle called for solid appreciation, made up a handsome purse for him.

And now came the half-mile dash for cow ponies. The preceding display had been so absorbing to the crowd that they looked to be disappointed in what followed. But when eleven fresh, untried, prancing animals were led into the ring, they settled into intense interest. The disfigured sorrel came into the ring bearing a rider clothed in patched overalls of a dirty brown color, and with his bare elbows sticking out of the blue sleeves of a gray shirt.

"What have they got that old plow plug in this race for?" sneered Tom.

"What do you call that crowbait?" demanded Kid of the rider.

"Don't call him at all; he can git thar all right without callin'," said the cool rider.

"What's his name then?"

"Pete."

"Better weatherboard his ribs to protect 'em from the weather," said Tom.

"They can take keer of theirselves," said the rider.

Places were assigned. Pete got third place; Thundercloud sixth. There were three calls of the bell; then the command to go. Pete raised his fore-feet in air, gave a high, long plunge, and struck the track a full length ahead of the leader. Then and there all was decided. Thundercloud also sprang forward. Ambitious and persevering, he did his best; he trailed Pete close, but the fight was lost. Amid wild cheers from the conservative few who had risked nothing, and the initiated who had banked on the plug, and the bitter lamentations of the ill-judging many who had risked their money upon different ones of the losing ten, Pete flew over the home stretch at least three lengths ahead of Thundercloud and six ahead of the foremost of the remaining nine. As usual the unknown horse had taken the prize. Pete was an old and experienced race-horse that had been used of late as a cow-horse in a distant part of the county, his disguise put on for the sake of deceiving the unwary. Kid had lost his saddle. Tom Samp was beggared. Jere Herron had won forty dollars from Kid; he was even with Tom Samp; with other parties he had sunk nearly all the returns for his twelve steers. Kid was filled with bitterness; he knew now, that he had been cheated out of the race; for all professional race-horses had been barred from the cow-pony contest. But it was too late. He dismounted, patted Thundercloud's shoulder, blanketed him, and started to lead him out of the ring. Just as he passed the space directly in front of the grand stand, Tom Samp stepped forward, maddened with his losses and angry at his defeat. His face was white, his eyes like coals. He doubled his fist, struck the beast a fierce blow in the ribs, and exclaimed angrily:

"You — — cayuse, you!"

It may be that Kid had been shaken well-nigh to powder by Thundercloud's long, hard jumps. At any rate he went

off like a flash. He threw the rein to Bill Hammin, and exclaimed angrily :

" You're a —— cur to hit a horse ! Why don't you hit me ? "

Tom was much larger than Kid, but he feared his inability to cope with his enemy's agility. Unblushingly he ran to the fence, where the posts were packed about with boulders. He seized two of these and ran back toward Kid. Kid sprang forward, struck him in the face with his glove, then, while Tom still advanced, he sprang back, doubled up his fist like a ball, made a running charge at his adversary, struck him in the breast with all his accumulated force, and knocked him completely off his feet. Griff Henry ran forward to help defend his friend from his doughty little antagonist. When the trouble began Gus was some little distance off. The crowd was dense, for many men had quickly circled round the combatants. But Gus had, because of the long legs that lifted him above ordinary mortals, a most excellent view of all that passed. While he was elbowing his way forward the battle raged. If the two now engaged—Kid and Griff—had clinched, the former would have been hopelessly at a disadvantage because of his size ; but knowing this, Kid contented himself with running round his antagonist, knocking off his blows, and putting in a quick stroke at every possible opportunity. All this time Tom was following them up, screening himself behind Griff, trying to strike Kid with the boulders, and exclaiming : " Kill him ! Kill him ! Kill him ! " Kid had peeled Griff's face, and about worn out his power of resistance, when they were parted by the crowd, who at the same time took the rocks away from Tom. Men were everywhere shouting ; many of the women in the grand stand were screaming ; Bella and Iola, clasped in each other's arms, were in tears, while Mrs. Hogan was wildly imploring Joshua to go over and restore order. Gus was one of the many who had parted the belligerents. He and Kid now stood forth and gave Tom a very graphic description of their opinion of himself, in which description their language was strong, direct, plain, and somewhat uncomplimentary. Kid offered Tom satisfaction on any kind of a " lay out," but it was plain that Tom did not hanker after satisfaction unless he could have rocks, a revolver, or some other bad weapon to offset Kid's naked fists. Tom backed away, imploring Kid to have mercy upon him, and spare his life ; and promising in trembling tones not to,

in any way, molest him again. About this time the police came forward and instituted their little formalities.

And Mose spent the day otherwise. He and Ike Bane rode away from the low, adobe house at an early hour in the morning. When they separated, Ike told him his plans for the day and the probable hour of his return. Mose watched him out of sight, then turned and galloped back to the deserted house. How many weary weeks had he waited for this opportunity! He tied his mustang, ran into the empty room, and gazed wildly about him. He was alone. The roof echoed to the sound of his footfalls. He turned and began a thorough search of every nook, corner and cranny. He looked into the pockets of every piece of clothing he could find, old or new. He read all the letters he could find, then carefully replaced them. Only one gave him any satisfaction, and that would have scarcely attracted his attention but for the date, which was that of Jim Madnau's death. It bore no post-mark and had evidently been sent by a courier. It had been hastily written, but even haste had taken little from the beauty and perfection of the character. It read:

I. N. BANE, Esq.:—Be down at Milroy any time after eight to-night. Arrangements are all made. Be prompt and ready.
LANCASTER.

He read it with a sensation as of lead upon his heart, then put it back into the pocket of a pair of Ike's cast-off chaparejos, whence he had taken it. It convicted Ike, and how many more he did not know. He must learn. That was his purpose in being at the Circle Bar. He rearranged the clothing and the furniture as he had found them. He came out of the house white and ghastly, but without a trace of tears. He went back to his mustang, laid his head for a moment caressingly against the creature's neck, then sighed, mounted, and galloped away.

CHAPTER XLIV.

EXPERIENCES OF AN OFFENDER.

WHEN Kid was marched away from the race track he felt upon his collar the tension of a mighty hand. It was the grasp of the law. Kid realized at the time that he was held in the thrall of a mighty power, but not until later did he understand the full extent of its offended dignity. Tom Samp swore out a warrant against him for "assault with a deadly weapon with intent to do bodily injury." He employed an attorney, called the trial for the next day, and prepared to make times lively for Kid. Now the short-sighted reader may not at once perceive the deadly weapon. The deadly weapon was Kid's glove. With it he had struck Tom in the face during the encounter. The reader may next insist that the glove was not a deadly weapon; but that is only because he is not acquainted with the resources of law. Tom swore that the glove was loaded; that is, that Kid had, previous to the misunderstanding, stuffed the thumb and fingers full of shot, nails, railroad spikes, machine-shop waste, slag or some other such matter. The law bristled with indignation until it well-nigh burst its standing collar at thought of a youth who could put so much metal, deviltry and evil intent into one small glove.

Kid had employed no attorney. He looked into the dim future and foresaw himself sufficiently plucked by the law, without the aid of the hand of a hungry lawyer in his pocket. So Kid was conducting his own defense. He was very pale, but very resolute. He fully realized that the august personage whom he addressed was a justice of the peace, and he tempered his respect accordingly. He humbly requested that Tom be asked to show the extent of the bodily injury he had sustained. Tom could show none save a dusty coat back and a red eye. Then the justice did a magnanimous thing. He dismissed Kid on the charge of "assault with a deadly weapon with intent to do bodily injury," but held him on the charge of assault and battery, and directed Tom to swear out a new complaint.

Now Kid to this day declares that this is one of the peculiarities of a justice's court in Colorado. He declares that if

they arrest you for attempted murder and find that the charge will not adhere, the justice holds you for assault and battery. If you are arrested for arson and it is proved that you have not arsoned any, the justice, knowing that unless some charge sticks the fees will not adhere, holds you for having, to the detriment of the entire community, thrown a spent match into the river, to the imminent risk of setting an iron bridge on fire. If they arrest you for grand larceny and find that you have not done so, the justice holds you for some other variety of larceny. If they arrest you for assault and battery and find that you are innocent of that, he holds you for disturbing the public tranquillity. There is, so Kid to this day protests, no such thing as escape from some sort of conviction, because if the accused be cleared, the fees must be looked for from a slow paying county, and the court might possibly have to go without its dinner some fine day, or be put to the terrible alternative of going to work. All the splendid civilization of the present day could not break Kid of these opinions.

Now when Hercules went into the Lernean marsh to kill the many headed hydra, he anticipated difficulty, of course. Still he was prepared to face the difficulty, and his heart was bold for battle. But there was one thing for which he was not prepared; that was the crab that came up behind him and pinched his heels. It was so with Kid; he felt that he had had quite enough of toil in defeating the first charge, without being held on the second minus the formality of a new arrest. He saw no reason why assault and battery should be called up to gnaw his heels just as he had vanquished the hydra of bodily injury. But Gus Waite afterwards assured him that there was much reason for trying him on two different charges; by so doing the fees accruing to the functionaries of the august court were much increased.

Kid, notwithstanding the fact that he was in the grasp of the law, made an effort for his life. He suggested that his friend Mr. Waite had a word to say. Tom's attorney asked Gus if he was in very close proximity to the scene of action. Gus replied that others were closer, but that his view was unobstructed. The attorney gave him a contemptuous and withering glance, and with a wave of his hand asked the court to dispense with a witness who had had only a distant view.

"But I saw the whole racket, though," said Gus in a somewhat decided tone.

"Did you? How could you?" sneeringly asked the lawyer.

"By looking over the heads of the crowd." His tone was still more determined, and the attorney consented for him to tell his story.

The attorney put the tall witness to a cross-examination fully commensurate with the dignity of the case. This cross-examination would have passed more serenely if Gus had been more at ease with himself and the world. But the defeat of Thundercloud and the troubles of Kid had to some extent disturbed him. He replied civilly enough to the lawyer, but gave him sidelong glances out of his long, narrow black eyes, that to the gentleman of kid gloves and revised statutes, were exceedingly disquieting.

"Now," said Mr. J. J. Mory, attorney-at-law and notary public, "just tell the jury how hard a blow you saw Wentworth strike Samp."

"O, he gave him a pretty good lift."

"But just how hard did he strike him? Put some intelligence into your answer."

"Well, when Tom picked up the rocks——"

"Never mind that. Tell the court, if you know enough, just how hard Wentworth struck Samp. If you can't tell, illustrate."

"How?"

"Why, raise your fist, and sink it just about like he did."

"Well, all right." Then Gus turned to the lawyer, raised his brown hand, drew up his fist, and before the astonished attorney could back out of his way, sunk it upon his chest, knocking him clear off the rostrum and sliding him along the floor until he lost his balance and fell over a chair, knocking its component parts into the air, and at last alighted, face down on the floor.

Gus turned to the jury and said with awful coolness:

"Gentlemen, that's about the sort of a lick Kid gave Tom the first time he caressed him with his fist. He didn't hit quite so hard with his glove."

Mr. J. J. Mory rose, wiped the blood and dust off his face, and returned to his post. But he ceased to cross-question Gus. He felt no doubt that he had obtained from him all the information he desired, so he proceeded with other witnesses.

Though the attorney ceased to cross-question Gus, he labored heroically to bring in a decision against Kid. Kid

had managed his defense very well—so well in fact that Mr. Mory trembled lest he should clear himself. He—Mr. Mory—became so nervous on this account that he took occasion to inform Kid several times that he,—Kid—knew nothing—less than nothing—far worse than nothing. Now one of the surest ways to crush a man who has proven possession of as much or more knowledge than we can boast, is to assert that he knows nothing. By so doing we not only humiliate him, but also seize the opportunity to pass an indirect and perhaps not undeserved compliment upon ourselves.

But Mr. Mory need not have been uneasy. Kid was well known as a young man without bad habits; then he must of course have money; and by being found guilty, his pocket could be made to yield up fees sufficient to help maintain the dignity of the law. Mr. Hogan afterward assured him that the law seldom attempts to pick down from a plucked swan; it, with its undisputed sagacity, hunts up a well clothed bird. Kid was declared by the honorable court to be guilty of having assaulted and battered Tom. It seemed to the culprit that everybody he came near reached into his pocket and took out a fee. It was just at this time that he sincerely regretted the fact of his having abandoned his idea of studying law; for if he had understood law, who can say that upon this trying occasion he might not have found some pretext for putting his own hand into his pocket, and drawing hence a fee for himself? So Kid, having learned that the defense of one's body is a dangerous and expensive luxury, only to be indulged in by those who have not the wherewithal with which to pay fines, walked out of the court-room quoting to himself a fragment of the constitution concerning the right of the people to be secure in their persons.

Tom was much elated with his victory. So also was Mr. J. J. Mory. The victory cost Tom forty-five dollars—forty dollars for the services of Mr. Mory and five dollars for drinks for his witnesses. Kid had escaped under about the same taxation. But then it must be remembered that Kid had the defeat. But there was one person concerned who, although happy over Tom's victory, was not pleased at the disbursement of the forty-five dollars. It has already been stated that the defeat of Thundercloud had beggared Tom. He borrowed the forty-five dollars from the other Circle Bar

men, and thus the debt was a mortgage upon the earnings of the future.

Now the person disturbed was Miss Amarantha Silvana Huskers. Miss Huskers was Tom Samp's love. She was one of those ladies who are celebrated for their size. She was not so tall as Ike Bane, but she was taller than Tom. But it was not so much her height as her breadth that attracted notice. She was not broadly educated, in the strictest sense, but she was broad. Her shiny red face, her fat, creasy arms, her infantile smile, her gray-brown eyes wabbling about in a sea of red flesh, her squat figure and broad feet, marked her as of unusual appearance, whatever might be said of her attractiveness. Now this lady had a character. Rumor announced that it was a doubtful one, and not even Miss Amarantha's best friends could deny that the lady was exceedingly approachable. But Miss Amarantha was different from Maggie Henderson Hammin. Maggie was always ready to admit with hanging head, when questioned, that considering her past life she had no room to talk about any woman. But Miss Amarantha Silvana not only volubly swore to her own whiteness upon every possible occasion, but was a perfect cyclone of condemnation to other unsteady females. She often stated that she considered Maggie "jest beneath her notice," and even occasionally expressed the opinion that that lady ought to be struck by lightning!

Now Miss Amarantha was much displeased that Tom should lose all his past savings, as well as forty-five dollars of his future prospects. There were reasons for this. Miss Amarantha, after many years' effort to bestow her not inconsiderable personality permanently upon some one, had succeeded in becoming engaged to Tom. Now Tom, notwithstanding his occasional visits to the questionable ladies of Milroy City, was very anxious to wed a virtuous wife; the fact then, that he was seldom sober long enough to take into serious consideration the little reports concerning Miss Amarantha was matter of great moment to that lady. Now Miss Amarantha, in addition to great anger that any one should presume to pummel her beloved, was grieved at the latter's state of pecuniary embarrassment, because the wedding would probably be thereby delayed. Now the lady well knew that delays are dangerous. For who could say, that in the unwedded interval, some hint of the truth might reach Tom, and cause him to change his mind? And then that silk dress she so much desired could have been pur-

chased for forty-five dollars. O well, fate is often criss-cross.

But be it stated right here that the lady eventually realized her bright hopes. She had a widowed father who was quite as fond of liquor as was her lover, and this father was of great assistance to her in the settlement of her fortunes. Old Mr. Huskers warmly approved the match; what if Tom did borrow all his friends poor, and pay out the borrowings for drinks? Might not some of those same drunks find their way to the mouth of Mr. Huskers? The old man saw that if the match waited for prosperity it must wait for aye. He considered that the time to seize a son-in-law was just any time that such seizure was possible. So when he saw that Tom was slow, he took measures to hurry him. He did a wise and politic thing. He began to oppose the match with all his might. He forbade Tom the premises, and informed him that no such excuse for a man as he was, need try to wed the daughter of Ebenezer Huskers. He soon found that he had judged his man right. Tom stole up to the house one dark night in the November following, and having loaded the weighty lady into a lumber wagon, took her to a justice of the peace and had the marriage ceremony duly ratified.

But how often it chances that our sweetest hopes turn bitter ere they are realized. The marriage proved disastrous to Mr. Huskers, after all. He and his daughter had long lived alone in the old gentleman's cabin; Tom immediately after the ceremony, moved in, also. He brought no goods with him; all his belongings he had lost on Thundercloud, but he, himself, became a fixture. Moreover, he sold one of the old man's horses to pay off the money borrowed to pay his lawyer's fee, and his wedding expenses. Still further, he insisted on prolonging the quarrel with his father-in-law. The old gentleman had opposed his marriage and called him an excuse for a man, and Tom did not propose to let such insults drop into oblivion. He made the house so lively for the old man that the latter soon moved out of it, and lived alone in a still older cabin about two furlongs distant. Tom took charge of the ranche, and it became necessary for the old man to conduct himself with extreme modesty when in the presence of his son-in-law.

Kid received some consolation after all. He sought out Bella Martin in the evening after he had been given his liberty by the law loosing its grasp of his collar. He walked from the Hogan ranche, where she had spent the evening, with

her to her home while Gus followed with Iola. And Kid, because his soul was in agony, had held his companion's arm tightly while he told over his troubles. And Bella was weeping silent tears that fell upon his hand. And while he confessed his betting and the result, all the while making wild promises to repeat the mistake never, she drew up his hand and with an anguish-laden sob pressed the tips of his glove to her lips. And then Kid forgot the miseries of the day. The grasp of the law was forgotten in the grasp of love. With arms frantically tightening round an adored fellow creature, and boyish lips for the first time thrilling in a passionate and never to be forgotten kiss, wrongs, persecutions and sorrows melted away. Tom Samp was welcome to his victory, and all who had helped to impoverish Kid might now be remembered without malice. For no matter what the cost, the caresses of love are cheaply won.

And Kid had yet another cross to bear. Tom had, by means of numerous drinks, and by using his influence with one of his lady friends to secure that gentleman a series of secret interviews, made a fast friend of the editor of the *Milroy Howler*. So the *Howler* man, under the influence of one of the drinks, and with the assistance of the newly acquired lady friend, who, by the way, was able to correct the orthography and tone down the literary exuberance produced, and published in the *Howler* an article setting forth that Kid was the original "bad man from Bitter Creek"; that he had been worsted in the fracas, and that he at last had been fined and costed as he richly deserved.

When Kid became down-hearted because of this attack, Gus consoled him by picking out, in the last copy of the *Howler*, a baker's dozen of mistakes in spelling, and a few more in statements of current events.

"Now," said Gus, "if that notice had been in the *Copy Hook*, there'd be some reason for you to turn blue. The *Copy Hook* is supported by a respectable class. Its pen shover keeps a spelling-book round, and I shouldn't wonder if he has a dictionary, too. He don't run round publishing lies and doing the bidding of every tough for the present of a ten cent overcoat. But that short-bodied, long-eared, skim-milk eyed *Howler* maverick hasn't got sense enough to dodge cactus. And Kid, I intend to throw that ten dollars I won off Jere Herron, and ten more, in on your fine. And then the next time I bet on a horse-race I'm going to hire some one to kick me clear off the range."

This was a long speech for Gus to make, but it had the effect of lightening Kid's gloom.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE HISTORY OF A NIGHT.

AUGUST and September had gone. The early days of October were come. The roundup had again been delayed but now it was at hand. On the morrow it would begin.

Mose had become such a favorite with his co-workers that no one of them would have denied him any reasonable request. They were secretly jealous of each other. They watched him out of sight when he rode away in the morning, and waved their hats to greet him when he came in at night. He was the babe of their camp, and they often found themselves moving to caress him. Unasked, they told him their hopes and fears and doubts. He gave sympathy, and then such as had crimes to confess, confessed them. We know not how weak we are until the magnetism of the beautiful and the charming has touched us. Their faith in him was infinite. They were glad that his previous love affair kept him away from the ladies down in the settlements. He was theirs; and they would have hated a woman who would have attracted him. His songs were the opera; his stories, the literary world; his recitations, the theatre; and his feats of horsemanship, the arena. Every man who had anything of importance to tell, told Mose; every man who learned a new card trick, taught it to Mose; every man who had money to lend, pressed it upon Mose. Should not they themselves have known that such favor is impossible between members of the same sex? His very manner softened and tamed them. He could be a tyrant when aroused, and when he became such the men quailed before him. But he was oftener the petted and childish favorite. He looked annoyed at their profanity, and sneered when they told questionable stories. His sneer was not without effect; for that which borders on contempt and touches ridicule is often more potent than reason. In his efforts for good he was always seconded by Rocky Mountain Bill.

He had learned all he cared to know. In probing their common secret he had trampled principle and conscience under foot. He had listened and commended as they gave their confidence. He simply awaited opportunity, now. Happy because he had so far succeeded so well? Perhaps no dungeon ever contained a more wretched being. The intense nervous sensibility was in a state of the wildest and most unceasing action. Pictured horror in a frightful past leaped over the interval of quietude and lapped with sketched horrors to come. These people loved him. Is it easy to kill those who love us, even though they have blindly driven us to desperation? The woman who was hidden in the seeming vaquero could raise her hand without a tremor against the three leaders. But here was good-hearted Ike, who had confessed to firing a bullet into her husband's body. And he had told her how he had suffered over the memory; how he believed now—he was over-persuaded and excited then—that Jim Madnau was a deeply wronged man. He feared the Talberts were deceived by Lancaster; he had had many an uneasy hour, and had heard Jim's death cry a thousand times. But he had declared that he believed his bullet was the first that struck Jim; she decided that he must suffer. And yet for her sake he had quit drinking. Might it not be better to remember that he had been wronged too, and to leave him with his penitence and his memory?

And Griff Henry and Hank Sands had both confessed complicity, while neither admitted regret; but need she hate and punish them? They were poor, blinded creatures, who believed that the blood on their hands was put there in the honest service of their employers. They were not thinkers, and did not pause to weigh their actions, either past or contemplated. She almost felt that she would be satisfied with the leaders. She learned that Lat Jennings had had no hand in the affair. He had been since employed by Lancaster, and did not closely question the wages he pocketed. And he had confessed to her his favor for Mary Madnau, and admitted that at times he felt the keenest self-contempt. There was in him nothing to punish, but everything to deplore and pity. And the citizens of Trelawna who had wronged her were dupes; should one punish the club with which the villain strikes his blows, so much as the villain himself? The wily, scheming, flattering Lancaster, and the two aristocratic, merciless Talberts, and their equally guilty father, were the ones she selected for examples.

And cowardly Tom Samp ; could she soil her hands with him ?

It was the night before the beginning of the roundup. The Circle Bar was running over with men. The room was reeking with tobacco smoke, for at least half a dozen of the men were indulging in the weed. Mose, half sickened by the fumes, sat in the door, with the cool October breeze blowing upon him. The time was when he would not have remained in a draft ; but after to-morrow, how would it affect him ? But suddenly he remembered ; there must be no diminution of his strength to-morrow. There must be no heavy head nor aching eyes. He rose and went to the fire.

Lancaster and the two Talberts were present, so as to be ready for an early start into the hills in the morning. J. C. Talbert would be there by noon of the next day. Ike had just finished reading Eugene Aram ; he sat with his hand shading his eyes. He now and then stole miserable glances at Mose as if he wanted to pour out his wretched soul to him. And Mose looked at him in pity, wondering just what would be justice in such a case. Stanley stood talking to Jennings and the two Talberts, laughing ever and anon, O, so softly. Griff Henry and Hank Sands were shuffling a pack of cards.

"Come and play cut-throat, Mose," said Griff.

"Too tired," said Mose, as he gazed at fearful visions in the fire.

"Say, Mose, you've about quit looking for those fellows that were coming after you, eh, haven't you ? Ha, ha, ha," said Stanley.

Mose looked at him vacantly for a moment, then said :

"We can never tell what's comin', nor when."

"Say, Mose, forget her and be happy, like me," said Jennings.

"Are you happy ?" asked Mose, carelessly.

"Sometimes. But cherk up, Mose, and give us a song."

"What kind of a song do you want ?"

"Something sweet, and not too short, Mose."

"No ; a war song," said Rocky Mountain Bill.

"Give us somethin' sweet and solemn, Mose," said Ike.

"Well, I'll try ; I'm in a kind of a solemn mood to-night. I'm tired. That mustang of mine has got to jumpin' stiff-legged. I used to like this song ; it is called,

THE WIDOW'S DREAM.

I sat by an open casement
 Looking out on the desolate night;
 It was days since the soul of my life mate,
 Had taken its Heavenward flight.
 At the bright, mocking stars I sat gazing,
 As they sailed o'er the blue ether deep;
 Till my unquiet spirit rested
 In the cradling arms of sleep.

Then I threw off my human framework,
 And into the ether above,
 Sailing high amid mystical cloud banks,
 I rose a snow white dove;
 And though I felt the full power
 Of a fresh, unwearied wing,
 My heart so heavily widowed
 Clogged my voice when my bird throat would sing.

The only sounds I could utter
 Were piercing, discordant cries;
 But I heard from a cloudlet near me
 An answering call arise.
 And before I could still my wailing—
 For I knew that voice full well—
 A sound of rustling plumage
 On my fevered senses fell.

And then a soft feathered pinion
 Gave my neck a half embrace,
 A beak sought mine for an instant
 Then I floated alone in space.
 I knew that my spirit husband
 Had given that pressure and kiss;
 That God for one mortal moment
 Had granted me immortal bliss.

Throughout the on-coming ages
 Though I live ten thousand years,
 The caress of that soft pressing pinion
 Will check my anguished tears.
 No more will I be a weak woman
 Bewailing my sorrow in sighs;
 I will gird on the strength of a giant,
 Like a genie my power shall arise.

Like the tiger in wild Hindu jungle
 That stealthily tracks his prey,
 I will hunt the merciless hunters,
 Who stole my mate away.
 The prejudiced wights who despoiled me,
 I will drive 'neath the chastening rod;
 And leave the result of my quarrel
 To the mercy and justice of God.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE DRIVE.

ON the first day of the roundup the Circle Bar men sallied forth. The saddle horses had been gathered the day before so that no man's string need prove deficient. They were brought out now, some bridled and saddled, others unincumbered, led by the horsemen or tied behind the mess wagon.

There was a general air of stringiness about the company—the long latigo straps, the coiled riatas, the fringe on chaparejos, the long tie-strings and hanging quirts. Yet these men looked from themselves to Mose and in their self-esteem, suffered by the comparison. *He* was the beau-ideal of beauty and grace; they felt themselves crude and coarse, and saw in their own equipment little that was attractive and picturesque.

Not so Mose. He looked at his fellow-beings, and in spite of the flame that raged in his soul, seeking to devour them, he confessed their manly appearance and equestrian excellence. He was the child of romance, and none there felt the influence of place, scene, mountain breeze and lively company more than he. Griff Henry had fastened tie strings to his broad hat to prevent its being lifted by the wind; the strings were tied, and Griff had them between his teeth; Mose sat silent, wishing he would remove them, and thus take away all the grossness that remained to mar the pleasant picture before him. When we contemplate leaving a scene it takes on new beauties. As we bid farewell, forgotten sweetness springs into view. We wonder if, after all, we have not made a mistake in preparing to go. Life, now that Mose was on the eve of discarding it, seemed to still retain some charm. The mountain scenes were fairer than he had believed. Surely, life might be sweet, if only humanity were just. He leaned back in his saddle, squared his narrow shoulders, and took in long, deep draughts of the delicious air, thinking how the highlands had given him renewed health, while their inhabitants had given him living death. He looked upon the men around him, wondering how many

of them were nursing heart sorrows like his own—wondering at the blindness of humanity, that, too weak to do aught but injure the different members of its own body, strikes off a finger or lacerates the flesh of a foot, and then cries out because the knowledge of pain is carried through all its nerves.

The men were filing off in different directions, some whistling, some talking, some singing, some silent. Hank Sands and Griff Henry began to quarrel over some trivial affair, and that disturbed Mose's serenity again. Lancaster was mounted on a prancing black horse, his attire faultless, his smile insinuating, his gloves irreproachable, his long yellow mustache hiding the cruelty marked in his lips, and only the dissipation apparent in his face, marring his comeliness. He set off in company with Broncho Charlie. Lat Jennings was mounted, ready to accompany the mess wagon, which Everet was to take charge of. Two patient and diminutive burros were loaded with some extra bedding, and stood ready. Soon the Circle Bar was deserted. The men to the hills and parks, the mess wagon to the camping ground on Aspen Creek, the light-footed, sad-eyed little burros in its rear, had moved away from its vicinity.

Soon the men were out in the wilds, finding a single brute that regarded them with affrighted eyes here; a group of twenty there; a little band, wild as deer or prong-horn, that lifted their heads and tried to elude their hunters, higher up the country; these could only be surrounded and driven down by stratagem. In one of these bands was a fine Texas cow with eagle eyes and a jet-black, glossy coat; her long thin, shiny yellow horns curved, first upward, then outward; beside her ran a sleek black calf. She eyed the men with suspicion, sniffed the air indignantly, then with erect head trotted on, keeping well on the danger side of her offspring. The men gathered these little bunches into a large band, keeping well to hillward of them until they were safely upon the parks. As the men driving the different bunches approached each other there arose a musical chorus of calls and cries that echoed and re-echoed again, like the reverberating of artillery in a resounding and long continued cannonade. The cries fell in phonetic contrast, they supplied all parts, took up all keys, and blended at last, rising above the sound of tramping and galloping feet, like sailor's cries, above the din of old ocean's roar.

“Ho!—Ho!—Ho! Crowd the stragglers! Head the

leaders. Ho ! Flank the left wing ! Turn the right ! Ho ! Ho ! Right the head ! Vamose, there ! Ho ! Ho ! Ho ! Check the advance ! Look out for stampede ! Ho ! Ho ! Hallo, there ! Hoopla ! Bur-r-r-r-r !”

The Bar Eleven men and all Trelawna were now in the drive. The voice of Kid, almost clear in spite of the dust in his throat, rose singing in a rollicking tone that proved him capable of getting amusement even out of that toilsome and dusty march :

“ You four-footed dames for your children look out,
Lest their bones be all broken in stampede and rout ;
For when in wild fury the herd takes the plains,
There is many a mangled form silent remains.”

“ Ho there ! Hoopla ! Stop that cawing, Kid. You’ll scare the wits out of ‘em,” said Gus, as he rode away from the left side to admit a bunch driven in by Lancaster. While the two friends were near together, Mose galloped past them, reining his horse for an instant to say, in a soft, feminine tone quite unlike the one in which he conversed with the Circle Bar men :

Any time, boys, that you see me when Lancaster, Bane, and the two Talberts are present, look out for your lives and your men, for there’ll be trouble.”

He rode quickly away without waiting for an answer. Poor Kid sang no more. The natural buoyancy of his spirits subsided, and in the anticipation of threatened tragedy he was silent and gloomy—tragedy too, in which he was forbidden to do aught save defend himself. Why had not Mary Madnau commissioned him and his friend to avenge her wrongs ? Why had she tied their hands with her commands ? He glanced at Gus. He was sitting silent, with flashing eyes, his dark face darker from a mantling flush. For a moment they regarded each other, and each seemed to read the other’s mind. The white face of Kid and the dark features of his companion telegraphed dire messages back and forth. Impatience, long subdued anger, memory of causeless outrage, struggled to the fore.

“ We have promised. It is her right ; ” said Gus at last.

The men and their herd were soon at their rendezvous on Aspen Creek. It was resolved to brand the calves at once and turn a large portion of the mountain stock—such as were unfit for market—back into the hills. A huge piñon fire was built, branding irons were unstrapped from saddles

or drawn out of the mess wagon and brought forward. There was one long bar brand, one short one, one large half circle and one small one ; it will be readily seen that many of the ordinary brands could be stamped with these ; for instance, the half circle seven, the bar eleven, the bar H, the A cross, the diamond, the half circle triangle, the bar three, and many others, needed, in skillful hands, but these four irons. But those whose brands introduced more unusual forms, such as the rowlock, the nine, the oval and some others, brought their individual branding irons. These were placed in the fire to reach a red heat. Then the men formed a cordon round the herd while Charlie Ford, Bill Hammin, and Ike Bane, being among the most expert lasso throwers, went into the midst with coiled riatas. Bill Coffroth was to handle the irons. Mose was glad to be placed in the cordon ; the branding was not to his taste ; he sat in his saddle with blanched face, listening to the poor creatures bawl, and wondering if there were not some chemical that would stamp an effective and painless brand—even half wishing that his own life might be prolonged until he studied the matter out. He watched Ike Bane catch cattle, wind the riata round his saddle horn, and spur his horse forward and away from his catch in Texas fashion, the brute charging after him, or pulling back, according to its temper and disposition. He watched Bill Hammin back off in California order, his face and his horse's head toward the struggling creature in his lasso's grasp. Charlie Ford was catching their feet and throwing them. O, how well Jim used to do that ! Jim could pick up any foot he selected, without failure and without vanity.

Harry Talbert must have found a lady to talk to, for he was not in camp, nor did he arrive there until after the men were asleep at night. So there was another day of contemplation for Mose.

Ike Bane sat erect in his saddle, his large lips standing a little apart, his long arm swinging the riata above his head, his wrist deftly turning to keep the circle open, while he selected the brute he meant to fetter. His choice fell upon the darling nursling of the sleek, fiery, black Texas cow already described. A light touch of the spur, a quick springing forward of his spirited white horse, a last long swing of the rope, a well calculated underthrow, and the calf was secured. Ike quickly turned the end of the riata round his saddle horn, and galloped his horse forward, while Charlie

Ford caught the calf by a hind foot and brought him to his knees. Bill Coffroth ran forward with the long bar, but as he did so, the maddened dam charged the group. The three involuntarily backed away. The creature had been worried in the drive; she was at all times wild and spirited, and this indignity to her offspring was more than her bovine soul could brook. With lowered head and flashing eyes she was charging Ike Bane. Bill Hammin turned his horse, just as Ike instinctively unwound the rope that secured the calf. Bill lengthened the loop in his riata, swung it round his head, and cast it forward; the long noose caught one of her horns, closed upon it and slipped off. She turned, caught sight of Bill Coffroth as he stood guarding the fire, charged upon him, while Ike galloped out of reach, white and quaking. Mose left his place in the cordon, spoke the word of command and encouragement his mustang knew so well, and cast his long riata from his trembling fingers. The noose passed the creature's horns, and tightened upon her neck, just as she was giving a long and formidable forward plunge. Just then Mose wore no glove; the taut rope in his hand burned his palm, snatched the skin from his fingers, wrenched his arm and shoulder, but did not escape; for he urged his horse forward in the direction of the strain, although as he did so his opposite foot left the stirrup and his light body swayed in the saddle. Then like yellow-haired Custer among his frenzied executioners—the spirit of progress and light defying the brute force of stagnation and darkness—he caught his bridle reins between his teeth so that his hands might be his own for the struggle. Hastily catching the rope in both hands and urging his mustang forward at a run to loosen the tension, he wound it round his saddle horn just as the terrified Coffroth had fallen in his hurry and fright.

"Shoot her! Shoot her!" came from a dozen throats at once. But the brute was in such close proximity to the lassoing and branding group that no one dared fire at her for fear of killing a man.

Mose quickly turned his horse, half choking the cow as he did so. Perceiving in him a new adversary, she charged him. His horse could run but a short distance without running into and stampeding the already terrified herd. But succor came. Gus Waite spurred away from the cordon and brought his horse to an abrupt standstill in front of the infuriated creature, just as Kid, bare-headed, his white hair

bristling, sped in from the opposite side, wildly swinging a rope. Kid caught her round the neck, tightening the rope by galloping away to a point just opposite Mose; she was now held from two directions and was helpless. As she wildly struggled, half choking, her eyes menacing and bloodshot, Gus emptied his revolver into her body, just back of the shoulder. She was one of the Bar Eleven animals.

"Well, boys, I tell you that was a close call," said the white and quaking Coffroth.

Order was restored and the broken cordon refitted. The cow was in fine condition and several of the men prepared to dress her flesh for the camp mess. A little more nervous and cautious than before, they proceeded with their work.

Mose was disappointed because of the absence of Harry Talbert. He wanted his dread tragedy done. Every delay meant more hours of suffering, more eras of fearful contemplation. When night came he rolled himself in his blankets to again be visited by dreams of ghastly realism—to again pray that the morrow might bring reunion and rest.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE HISTORY OF A DAY.

Mose had during his stay at the Circle Bar refused to practice target shooting with the cowboys. They were mystified by this, and decided that he either could not shoot, or else did not want anyone to know just how proficient he was. He also refused to gamble, even for matches. Some of the men declared that he was masquerading for the sake of effect, and was in reality unable to accomplish anything of merit; but when they thought of his horsemanship and his proficiency with the rope, they could hardly retain this idea. He had even succeeded, with a good deal of scolding, in teaching Lat Jennings to throw a lasso with some success. Lat was now riding most of the time, and as he learned something of the business, and gained a little courage, his fear of bleeding at the lungs diminished. So the men finally decided that Mose, though a jolly good fellow, was queer. They learned to accept his peculiarities, and found him charming with them—perhaps because of them.

In the morning, Harry Talbert walked up to Mose's blanket and gave it a good natured kick, calling at the same time for him to rise. Mose opened his unrested eyes and slowly rolled back the cloud from his bedimmed faculties. Slowly the memories of the night came back—the waking dreams of tragedy and the sleeping dreams of horror. He had fallen into a troubled sleep just before day; his limbs were stiff, and his eyes heavy.

"What makes you so owl-eyed?" asked Harry.

"Better rustle, or you'll miss your grub," said Griff.

Mose shook himself free of his blankets, stretched his aching limbs, and stood up. Then he ran his fingers through his hair and went to the creek to wash. He had no dressing to do, save to take a tan-colored silk handkerchief out of his pocket and tie it round his neck. There was no gayety for him that morning. He ate but little, and was silent and nervous. He generally entertained the mess with a lively flow of talk, but now he was quite as taciturn as when he had first arrived at the camp.

"What's the matter, Mose?" asked Ike.

"Nothing. Had a bad night's rest."

"Needn't ride unless you feel like it. Some of the other fellers can git over to Ute Gap, I reckon."

"No, I'll go. I'm all right, and I'm not goin' to lay round and lose my job;" said Mose quietly. After this, he ate a few mouthfuls, then started to saddle his mustang.

"You'd better put your coat on; there's a sharp wind blowin'; and that cloud over Bernalillo means snow one of these days;" said Everet, the camp weather prophet.

"Gosh! Then we'd better git the roundup over with;" said Ike; for no one presumed to question Everet's predictions.

Mose was soon mounted. His face was pale, calm, and resolved. Never before had his appearance been so picturesque. On a recent trip to Milroy City he had purchased a light yellow wool shirt elaborately embroidered in black. He had been wearing this for the last few days. He still clung to the wide black hat, the gorgeous chaparejos, and the showy spur. The black goat-skin coat was still strapped to his saddle. On his hands were long brown gauntlets with heavily fringed wrists. As he rode away, every man in camp was looking after him. He was to ride with Harry Talbert. Mose, seeing that he must be cheerful in order to the more completely throw his companion off his guard, dis-

missed his gloom and began to sing the Spanish air, *Buena Señorita*. Lancaster called after him, saying in a bantering tone :

“ Say, Mose, are you and Harry going to cross Aspen ? ”

“ Yes ; ” answered Mose.

“ Well, you’d better look out ; you know there’s some girls living two miles below the ford ; you’re liable to get sight of them ; better take a club along, hadn’t you ? ”

“ I’m liable to bring one back ; ” said Mose with outward gayety as he and Harry galloped off.

“ Law, if he would get started after the girls, wouldn’t he be a terror ? ” said Jennings.

“ He’s too much in love with himself to care for the girls, ” said the half jealous Lancaster, who, in spite of his admiration for Mose, could not but perceive his own inferiority.

“ But he owns up to bein’ left by a girl ; ” said Jennings.

“ Well, let him learn to pay his account off to some other woman ; ha ! ha ! ha ! ” said Lancaster.

Mose and Harry galloped along, talking easily and good-naturedly. Mose had regained composure and self-control ; only his lack of color betrayed his disturbed spirit. Harry was patronizing him in his usual snobbish manner. They passed the borders of Gray’s Park and came to the shallow ford near the head of Aspen Creek. Harry Talbert was riding ahead, whistling. As they climbed the steep bank Mose reached forward and seized his companion’s revolver from its pocket ; he raised it in his hand, and turning, threw it far down, into a deep, still little pool that stood below, backed up by a thick slanting ledge of granite.

“ What’s that ? ” demanded Harry, turning his horse at the sound of the splash.

“ It’s your artillery, ” said Mose with awful coolness.

“ Well, you’ve played——! ” furiously retorted Harry, as he saw the empty pouch hanging at his side. Then he made a wild dash at Mose. With a low, derisive laugh, Mose held up a revolver.

“ Stand back, ” he said. “ Get off that horse and tie him to a piñon.”

“ What the ——’s the matter with you, Mose Jones ? ”

“ Do as I tell you ! ” But the order was not obeyed. The quaking wretch, his mind teeming with visions of wild New Mexican, disguised robber fiends, drove his spurs into his horse’s sides and urged him to a run.

“ Stop ! ” shrieked a voice in his ear, for Mose was beside

him in an instant, and had touched his cheek with the cold muzzle of the weapon.

"What have I ever done to you, Mose?" gasped the terrified creature as he brought his horse to a standstill.

"Do as I tell you; and if you try to get away again, I'll shoot you through and through!"

Harry dismounted and tremblingly tied his horse to a straggling cedar.

"Stand there!" said Mose, pointing to an open space. The order was obeyed.

"Now, Mose, I don't understand this. I've always been good to you, and as for money, I've only got—"

"I don't want your money, I want your life."

"My life?"

"Harry Talbert, do you remember Jim Madnau?"

"Ye—es."

"Did you ever see his wife?" And Mose took off his hat.

"Ye—es." He groaned as he saw the truth.

"Well then, know that I am Mary Madnau. Do you ask for mercy now?"

"O, Mrs. Madnau, I had nothing to do with it!"

"Will you lie at such a time as this? In less than half an hour you will be giving an account of your crimes before the bar of God. Dare you lie at such a time, you blood-stained fiend?"

The wretched man shook until his knees struck together.

"O, but Mrs. Madnau, I was led into it; and if you only knew how sorry I——"

"Stop! You are lying again. Two weeks ago Ike Bane was telling you how his mind was troubled over the murder, and you told him that Jim Madnau had got his just deserts and you were glad of it. I heard you. Now stand still while I pass sentence on you, and do not disturb me. Your father was the head of the ring that made me a widow. You, and your brother, and Stanley Lancaster, and your dupes, helped my poor Jim to a dishonorable grave; and for it, *you shall die*. You, and your brother, and Stanley Lancaster shall die; and Ike Bane, who fired the first bullet into my husband's body, shall carry a wound that will mark him for life. I heard Ike express regret, and for that reason I will spare his life. Your father's punishment shall be the moaning out of a grief-stricken old age."

"Think—think of my poor mother!"

"Why did not you think of me?"

"O, it was blind rage. Forgive me and I will be a good citizen. I'll do something to make amends."

"Your repentance is that of cowardice."

"O, Mrs. Madnau, I've got a young sister!"

"Jim Madnau had a young wife!"

"Have mercy!"

"Those who have shown no mercy need not ask it. One thing more I must tell you. After I have shot you dead, I shall take this snubbing rope, fasten it round your neck, throw the rope over the limb of that pine yonder, hitch my horse to it, hoist you up and leave you as you left Jim Madnau."

"O God! O God!"

She drew out her watch and said:

"Now you may have five minutes to make your peace with God. At the end of that time I shall fire."

The miserable wretch fell rather than knelt upon the ground, covering his face with his hands. Mary sat upon her horse, the open watch in one hand, the revolver in the other, the bridle rein round her neck. Her face was like marble, and tears were coursing down her cheeks. When the time was up she closed the watch and put it into its pocket. Then she secured her bridle and prepared her revolver.

"Stand up," she said.

The wretched victim struggled to his feet, gave her one imploring look, then hid his face. Carefully she took aim at his breast, and raising her voice said fervently:

"O God, receive the soul of this poor sinner; and, O God, forgive me for what I do." The shot rang out clear and sharp. Harry Talbert sank to the ground. Blood spurted from a huge hole in his breast. His unclosed eyes took on the death stare. Mary rode up to him and looked down. There was no mistaking, life had fled. She lay hold of the rope at her saddle-horn—then loosed her grasp of it.

"Yes, yes; I will spare them the disgrace at any rate," she said, as she rode away.

She urged her horse toward Glen Park, where, by previous arrangement, she was to meet Clyde. Her soul was sick, and so weak and nervous was she that she could scarcely maintain her seat in her saddle. She shook and wept and groaned when she thought of what she had left lying behind. Only the fierce resolution she had nursed throughout that dreadful year supported her. A thousand times she wished she had quietly borne her burden of sorrow and disgrace.

Bereavement was fearful, but what name could be given to the sickening sensation produced by the dull sound of a bullet striking and tearing its dread way into the flesh of a fellow-creature—the leaping blood-stream, and the wildly staring eyes? But the drama she had been so long rehearsing had begun. Should she retract after punishing one, and let others equally guilty go unharassed? The cloud over Bernalillo was spreading. Cloudlets were drawing near it, sinking into it, and swelling its mass. It was charged with a cool, moist wind, that at any other time would have chilled her; but now she welcomed it. It cooled her fever heat of anguish, and fanned into new existence her sinking flame of courage. Riding over a small divide, she saw the man she was looking for. He was galloping over a little rise, collecting together a small bunch of stock. She lifted up her voice and prayed for his soul as she had never prayed before. He saw her advancing. He took off his hat and waved it gaily; she answered. The man admired and trusted her. O, but Jim! Her eyes looked down into his grave—saw the mouldering coffin—the sunken eye-sockets—the shrinking, wasting flesh, and the half-exposed bones. “He shall die!” she muttered, fiercely. She looked up. He was sitting on his horse with his back to her. He was dreamily watching the stock he had gathered, waiting perhaps for her to ride to one side of them and keep them from turning back into the hills, while he started them down toward the rendezvous on Aspen Creek. Why could she not kill him thus? But no. He should know why he was dying. Was it right for him to die thinking of aught else than the dread night horror that had laid waste her life? But she would give him no chance for defense; he had given Jim none. Remembering that for a year she had practised hiding her real self beneath a mask, she summoned all her playfulness. She lifted the riata and made it ready.

“No fooling, now, Mose,” said Clyde, as he shook his quirt warningly. But almost before the words left his lips, the rope was tight round him, binding his arms round his body. Then in an instant Mary was beside him and had plucked his revolver out of its pouch and thrown it away. Without waiting for the astonished man to speak, she drew off a few paces, still retaining her hold of the rope, and said:

“Clyde Talbert, I have just killed your brother. I am here for the purpose of avenging the death of my husband, Jim Madnau. I shall kill you at once, and I shall kill Stanley Lancaster as soon as I can find him. It is useless

for you to beg for your life. You are doomed. If what I am doing seems horrible to you, remember how you plotted against my husband, how you stole his property, how you sullied his name and hunted him down like a beast."

He opened his lips to speak, but she silenced him. What was the use of allowing him to plead for the life she did not intend to grant? It would be prolonging his anguish and intensifying her own.

"I have prayed for you," she said. "My hands are unstained by larceny and causeless murder; my tongue is untainted by perjury. My prayers will be more powerful in Heaven than yours; be content with them."

"But Mrs. Madnau—"

"You did not allow my poor Jim a word. You hunted him down because he interfered with your scheme for becoming wealthy upon the earnings of those whom you could dupe. He was a thriving food-plant, who gave to the less fortunate a share of his aggregated fruits. Your band are the noxious weeds who smothered him out of existence, and where you now flourish is desolation. You are still robbing the small owners on Trelawna of their possessions. Shall not weeds and thistles be cut down so that honest growth may flourish?"

Clyde, believing that Mary was for the moment intent upon her harangue, jerked the rope out of her hand, put spurs to his horse and made a wild start toward camp. It was a chance at least, and was preferable to standing still to be executed. As his maddened horse neared the top of the divide, the rider felt a sudden sharp, cutting pain in his back. Mary emptied one—two—three chambers of her revolver into his body. He fell from his horse without a cry, his right foot remaining in the stirrup, and his body dragging upon the ground. Mary caught the maddened horse by the bridle, checked his wild flight, and soothed him into quietude. Then she dismounted. If she turned the frantic animal out with the saddle upon his back, it would cause him great torture and very probably be his death. He had never wronged her. She stripped off saddle and bridle, left them lying, and gave him his freedom. Then she mounted. She had left Harry's horse at the ford tied to the cedar. He would be released when his master's body was discovered.

She turned toward the camp. It would require some two hours for her to reach it. She put her rein round her neck and re-loaded the empty chambers of her revolver. If she

found Lancaster and Ike Bane in camp, as she expected to do, she would be dead in less than ten minutes after her arrival there, for she was resolved never to be taken alive, and she had no desire to escape. And what would she learn when she explored the dread mystery? In her soul flight would she encounter the spirits of those she had destroyed? Would Jim, with the glorified smile she had seen upon his face in visions, stand upon the threshold ready to welcome her, and show her the delights of heaven? Would she see the father and mother who were but shadowy memories? What would death be like? As the sights and sounds and impressions of earth receded forever, would strains of music usher her into other spheres of action? Would there be rustling wings, and faces bearing the impress of eternal peace? Would the wronged, the down-trodden, the weary, the wounded, the slandered, the despoiled, have their wrongs righted there? Would there be any shut out and wailing? Her one prayer, as these thoughts traversed her mind, was that whether Jim were in oblivion, in woe, or in bliss, she might be with him. For without him heaven would be desolation, and with him Hell would be tolerable. Hell? She had realized that already. Could it be possible that there was another? She smiled at thought of it. Was it possible that God could pursue forever those of his children who through ignorance and blindness had transgressed his laws?

She was calmer than she could have expected to be. The natural horror that would otherwise have taken possession of her was scattering under a sense of justice. The more she weighed the matter, the more thoroughly she was convinced of the right of her cause. The calm that had at first been dispelled by the sight of blood of her own hand's shedding, came, partially at least, back to her mind. She rode on, wondering what effect the death of the two Talberts would have on their family. She wondered whether their mother would still give such grand receptions, and whether their sister, Miss Angy, would still wear such magnificent costumes as to hopelessly bother the reporter of the *Milroy Copy Hook*. Something had come to her ear just after her bereavement. It was the knowledge of a very select and small high tea which Miss Angy had given just after Jim Madnau's funeral. At this party Miss Angy had announced that although her brothers had had nothing to do with the punishing of their enemy, that she for one was heartily glad

that the world was rid of him. Her brothers would not have soiled their hands with such a wretch; but still it was matter for rejoicing that the triumph was accomplished. And it was noted by all present that Miss Angy was upon that occasion very well-dressed, and sweet-mannered, and cheerful and low-voiced. Mary thought of this, and half wished she had not abandoned her idea of hanging Harry. But an instant later her face was red with shame.

"Fool that I am!" she muttered, "because it has become my duty to kill some of my fellow-creatures, is it humane for me to shame their remains? Is it the office of the executioner to mutilate and buffet and disgrace the helpless clay? Did I start on a quest of justice, or on one of small and contemptible spite?"

Then she rode on, debating whether the mother who had reared such a son as Stanley Lancaster was deserving of pity when she was made childless. But after all, could she entirely blame the mother? For all she knew, evil influences over which she had no control might have had much to do with moulding the son. But O, after all, could the mother of such a man be entirely blameless? Could she not have influenced him in childhood to love true manliness, and hate deceit, murder and sham? And Poor Iola, and the Hogans, and Bella, and Gus, Kid, and all her well-loved friends! Iola had assured her long ago that the blow, when it came, would blight her life. She hoped it might not be so. And the two boys and Bill Hammin? Would they do well with the stock? Only the Hogans, the two boys, and Iola knew of her presence at the Circle Bar. Even they did not know that the time had come. She had simply told them that she would select her own time to the best possible advantage. They lived in hourly dread. She had begged the two boys to insist upon their rights, but to use all diplomacy to avoid a conflict of any sort with the Circle Bar men. She desired to be her own avenger.

As she neared the camp, she saw that the men were at dinner. J. C. Talbert, Ike Bane, Griff Henry, Hank Sands, Tom Samp, Broncho Charlie, Lat Jennings, Rocky Mountain Bill, who was overseeing and helping Lat cook, the three Bar Eleven men and a cowboy in their service, and at least half a dozen others, men from Trelawna and Aspen, sat about the fire. The savory roast beef, coffee, beans and potatoes, suggested hunger, and the men were deeply engrossed. The cloud over Bernalillo had broadened and

deepened until its chill breath caused the fire to be appreciated. Lat kept piling on huge pieces of pitch pine. The cloud was a dark one, and the firelight played on the fireman's face, lighting it up and increasing its comeliness. His black eyes sparkled as he saw Mose approaching. He waved his hat and Mose answered. A large herd had been gathered. Jere Herron, one of the Circle Bar men, and an Aspen Creek owner were holding them. Mose rode slowly past them up to the mess. He paused some ten paces from the edge of the group. The men were in a state of abandonment. They were in high spirits, for the year had been a prosperous one. Most of them had arms, but none were taking any heed of them. Talbert, perhaps because he feared exposing a revolver would detract from his dignity as a citizen, had his weapon well concealed.

Mary, in spite of her calm, was very pale. Not even her well-earned coat of tan could hide her ghastliness.

"Hello, Mose! Didn't you find anything?" asked Hank Sands.

"No, not much of anything. Something has happened."

"You look like you had seen a ghost," said Bill Cof-froth.

"Guess I have, pretty near. The two Talbert boys are lying dead out on the range."

"Who? What?" the men began to shriek as they leaped to their feet. This movement was in Mary's favor. In an instant her reins were round her neck and her two revolvers in her hands.

"Throw up your hands, every man, or you die!" she said in a voice so full of confidence and command that every man obeyed. O, what cowards we are in the face of death! The men who were holding the cattle were too far away to hear. She had only the group before her with which to do battle.

"Now!" she said in awful calmness, "I shall shoot any man who moves. Ike Bane, I have heard you express regret for the part you had in the murder of Jim Madnau. You are in many ways a good man, but I must give you a broken arm to remind you of the mistake you made then. I am Mary Madnau."

"O, Mrs. Madnau, kill me, kill me!" pleaded Ike as he saw the truth. "I'm a——murderin' villain. Kill me dead, and then I'll quit bearin' that cussed bullet hit Jim!"

She did not answer, but turned away from him without firing. Stanley Lancaster had started to run. Spurring

her horse, perhaps for the first time in her life, she dashed after him, firing shots into his body from both the revolvers she held. He looked back over his shoulder as a ball entered his back, uttered a despairing cry, turned as if to return the fire, and fell face upward. The maddened horse, rendered uncontrollable by excitement, ran over his prostrate body, crushing in his ribs, and planting a hoof in his face, that laid the skull at the forehead bare. During this time the men had drawn their revolvers, and several shots had been fired at her, one of them entering her left arm. Without a cry of pain she turned toward them and said: "That is all of you that I want. I have avenged my husband's death upon your leaders. I am ready to die."

Several revolvers were raised, but J. C. Talbert shouted:

"Stop! Every one of you! One of her arms is broken. Rope her, and we'll hang her as she deserves!"

And then Charley Ford made a remark which need not be repeated, but it was an unlucky remark for him. It had scarcely been uttered when Mary sent a ball through his side.

"No man will take me alive," she said as she turned toward J. C. Talbert. But before she could fire, the bullets were raining round her again. One had passed through the muscles of her right arm. She grasped the revolver and tried to steady it, but it was a fruitless effort. The weapon fell to the ground. She felt quick, sharp pains in her body. She wondered why blood was running from her mouth down upon her shirt front. She wondered why her horse was plunging so madly, and why she could not lift her arms to control him. She wondered why Ike Bane was crying, and why the cattle had begun to stampede. But there came Jim riding Kate. He would hold her horse and quiet him. There, he had hold of the bridle now, and was putting out his other arm for her. She would sink into it, for she was so tired. How kind it was for him to get there just as she was in such trouble. She sunk upon his arm and was soon asleep, forgetful of the blood on her bosom, the plunging horse, her useless arms, and the running herd.

When Mary began to reel in her saddle, her feet left the stirrups, and her lifeless body fell to the ground. Coffroth, Talbert, and several of their men rushed to the body as if they would stamp upon it. Gus, Kid, and Bill Hammin started forward with drawn revolvers, but Ike was first.

"Let that body be!" he shouted as he flourished his

weapons. "I'll kill the man that so much as touches it with a careless finger! They ain't one of us here but ought to be proud of such a woman! God bless her! I only wish she'd a killed me and give me a chance to pay for my cussedness in Hell! I've been to a few neck-tie parties before, but never to such a one as the gittin' away with Jim Madnau."

"Pshaw! You might let us give her a farewell kiss, Ike, seein' she ain't got no relatives here to do it for her," said Coffroth mockingly.

"Stop, you dog!" shouted Ike. "Shut your mouth, or I'll mash it all over your face! Dog, she saved your dirty life only yesterday! She's kept herself pure, and by the great God she shall be kept so! You touch her, and I'll make you rue it as you never rued anything yet."

"Pugh! You're gettin' good all at once, Ike," said Coffroth.

"I'm jest good 'nough to wipe up the ground with you, and shoot the top of your head off, and strew pieces of you all over this park!"

Coffroth started to raise his revolver.

"O shoot,—you! Nobody's got any strings on you; shoot!" roared Ike as he lifted his own weapons into position. But the four Bar Eleven men disarmed Coffroth, and then stood with raised weapons; for they were by no means certain that the conflict was done. After a good deal of profanity, Coffroth quieted. Although Tom Samp, always ready to strike the unfortunate when he could do so with safety to himself, had emptied his revolver, neither Sands, Henry, Bane, nor Jennings had fired a shot at Mary. They had stood ready for self-defense, but had made no effort to protect the men whom she had shot. Gus and Kid now stood near Mary's body, while Bill and his companion stood back as guards.

"Everybody put up your guns," said Ike. "They ain't no 'casion to fight. We hung a innocent man, and we're punished for it. No 'casion to fight. We'll do what we can for the crippled ones, and bury the dead."

The men put their revolvers away, but were ready to seize them in an instant if there was need. There was a general lack of faith between the rival cattle companies.

Charlie Ford was all this time cursing frightfully. His wound was not dangerous, but was very painful.

"You ain't got nobody to blame but yourself," was all the

consolation Ike would give him. "If you'd kept your mouth shut and not insulted that woman, she wouldn't a put that lead into you. Serves you jest right." So Charlie had no recourse but to swear and groan, and curse Jim Madnau and Mary, and his unlucky stars in general, and the cattle business in particular.

Stanley Lancaster's crushed frame was giving the faintest hints of life—a quivering facial muscle, a spasmodic movement of the left hand, a slight elevation of the shoulder. At the end of half an hour these signs had ceased and death reigned.

Talbert seemed paralyzed by the turn affairs had taken. He sat on a log by the fire with bowed head.

The roundup was for the present abandoned. Parties were sent out to find the bodies of the two Talberts. One of the men was sent to Milroy City to notify the coroner. Two others went down to Trelawna to bring light wagons to remove the dead to their homes. Kid remained at the camp, alone with his former enemies. There seemed now, however, to be no traces of enmity remaining. The men stood about the fire, talking in low tones, while their horses stood grazing about. Only Talbert was gloomy and silent. The bodies were covered with blankets. Had it not been for the groans and revolting profanity of Charlie Ford, as Lat Jennings tried to relieve his suffering, the place would have had all the solemnity of a funeral.

On the next day the administratrix was laid beside the husband whose affairs she had so effectually settled. The grave of Hen Hall was but a few paces away.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

GLOOM.

THE roundup had been taken up the day after the funerals. On account of the threatening weather it had been hurried as much as possible. It was now almost complete. Ike Bane and Lat Jennings had returned to the Circle Bar. The other men had not yet got in. It was late in the afternoon. Ike sat before the low fire, his face in his hands.

His rough hair was unkempt ; he looked disconsolate and worn. The place seemed hopelessly lonely.

Lat stood looking out of the window. His clothes were untidy and ill arranged, as if by their careless appearance he would announce his disgust with life. There was little for him to see when he looked out of the window. The cloud over Bernalillo had grown until it was an army that sent its battalions far and near. The far hills were hidden, and the near ones were obscured by a white haze. The gulches and chasms of the latter were marked by white lines that were just visible through the overlying cloud. Lat gave vent to a long sigh.

Without raising his face, Ike said slowly :

"Sam, I'm kinder disgusted with the whole business."

"I was disgusted long ago," said Lat, gloomily.

After a long pause in which neither moved, Ike asked :

"Sam, do you b'leeve anybody's happy ?"

"I've seen a few. Saw one man since I was out here, I thought was happy."

"Who ?" asked Ike.

Lat did not answer for a full minute ; he kept his eyes riveted upon the gloomy landscape. Presently he turned as if something had stung him, donned a little of his old swagger, and said :

"I don't give a — ; it was Jim Madnau."

"I've heered," said Ike timidly, "that you used ter kinder envy Jim a little, Sam."

Lat made no direct answer but presently said :

"I've noticed that when a feller is always grasin' for everything he sees, that he's mighty apt, some day, to reach after somethin' that hangs too high for him. I'd give anything now, if they'd been a law when I started out, makin' me take my first woman for life. I'd a settled down then, and took care of her and myself, and been civil, and maybe wouldn't a lost all my ambition. As it is, I've run from one woman to another till I want every attractive woman I see, and I despise 'em all as soon as I get 'em."

"Would you a despised Mrs. Madnau, if you'd a got her ?"

"I don't know. When I think of her I can't help but believe she'd a satisfied me. She could be everything ; she might a suited herself to all my moods. But I can't tell. It's mighty certain I'll never know now."

"But if you'd marry some good, quiet, decent gal, Sam——"

"Good, quiet, decent, girl be — ! Advise a feller that's

lived on high wines for years to come down to cold water all at once, and see how he likes it ! I tell you, Ike Bane, I'm mad—I'm mad for women ! I've made myself such a drunkard on the fascinations of women that the whole sex couldn't satisfy me. If I owned every woman that's left in Colorado I'd never be sated. I'm like the dyspeptic that continually eats, and that perpetually hungers and suffers. The government puts the women in our power. It forgets that we have all the natural advantages, and so it gives us all the artificial ones. We glut ourselves—we destroy our victims—we let them as they are dying sap our ambition, manliness, and strength. We—O, I git sick when I think of some of the scenes I've been in!—where myself and the dog gangs I run with left our victims half dead, and left 'em with more scorn and less consideration than the brute male of any class feels for the females of his kind. The more we glut ourselves the more we hunger. We demand nothin' but victims, victims, victims ! We laugh at their helplessness and disgrace, and joke when they suffer and die. We lose every kindly feelin'. We git to be perfect devils. The power to destroy 'em is give us by law when we're too young to reason ; and we git soaked so full of sin before we come to our minds that in most of us reason never dawns.

"I tell you, Ike Bane, I don't think of nothin' but women. I've no ambition left but to destroy women. I ain't done a day's work in years that I didn't expect to spend all my wages over what it cost me to live, on women or some other dissipation. My mind can't form a vision that ain't all women and vice. Every move I make is to better my chances with some woman. And I used to be bright. Used to imagine I'd be a senator, or a great soldier, or somethin' great. Don't I look like somethin' great now ? All I'm good for is to lie to make myself out what I hadn't the courage or ability to be, and try to pull some one else down and make 'em as low as I am. Cowboy ! I tried it, but I couldn't stay away from the women long enough to learn even the beginnin' of the trade. All I could do was to stand behind a bar and fill the cowboys up with whiskey and make 'em worse devils than they already were. And the other men that's here at this ranche ; what do they think about but foulness, and what'll they ever be but vagrants ?

"What's the government for, if it ain't to put destruction out of our reach ? It calls us out to fight for it when it's in trouble, but puts all sorts of — pitfalls out to catch us and

destroy us. Mrs. Madnau used to tell a story about some one chainin' a feller on top of a mountain where vultures eat his liver ; and all the time his liver growed as fast as they eat it. That's the fix I'm in. I'm chained to my nature as I've made it, and it won't let me go. My vices eat me, and I keep on growin' and sufferin'. I'll end it all one of these days. If I'd live a thousand years, it 'ud be jest the same old thing over again, day after day. Meetin' new women and learnin' to scorn 'em, and bein' always filled with desires that can't be satisfied. I've cultivated my passion till it's a cancer that never stops growin' and eatin'. I'm thinkin' of women the last thing at night, and as soon as I wake in the mornin' it's the same old game over again. My mind gethers 'em all up, the good, bad and indifferent ones, jest so's they're pretty, and serves 'em all alike. Talk about whiskey drunkenness ! It's bad, but it's nothin' to this. I've had delirium tremens over women many a time. O, I wish—but it's no use."

"What was you goin' to wish ?"

"That they was laws makin' us stick to our first woman, or else give her an honorable divorce. We'd use judgment in choosin', and moderation in possession, then. O, I've been indulged by the law and my parents till I've got to be the sneakin'est coyote that ever burrowed the plains."

He still stood looking out of the window. Huge snowflakes were filling the air. Even the near hills were now almost entirely hidden. The wind was howling as it rounded the corners of the low house, and was ever and anon lifting little tufts of hay off the stack in the corral. Ike still sat with bowed head. Presently Lat went on :

"The difference in the trainin' of the two sexes is to blame for lots of men's cussedness. Men are filled full of vice and mad imaginin's from childhood. In most cases women have their love and warmth trained out. As things are, they ain't more than one woman in fifty that can altogether satisfy a man. If we could find intelligence, beauty, independence, worth, and warmth in a single woman, we'd be in no danger of strayin' from her. On the other hand, if we were curbed in our youth so we wouldn't be so mad, we'd be satisfied with tamer women. There's somethin' wrong somewhere. As things are now, we don't find satisfaction in lovin' one woman out of fifty, so we demand quantity because we can't get quality. They're nearly all servile ; and we despise the ones that rear our children, do our drudgery, and tamely

submit to our rule or weakly scold at our sway; and scorn those that consent to be our victims. And they train us thus—one sex to be foul tyrants and the other to be contemptible dupes—and then they actually yoke us in pairs and ask us to pull along together! Ha! ha! ha! And we trudge along, scheming knaves on the one hand, and servile fools on the other, the first despisin', the second 'secretly hatin'! And all this in the name of love! O, we despise many things; but most of all we despise the creature we have learned to dupe! It's the result of our nature to love women, and it's the result of our trainin' and theirs, for us to pursue 'em forever and never be satisfied. O, sometimes I think, if I could, I'd destroy 'em all. They tantalize me with their beauty, and when I devour 'em, I find 'em insipid and sweet and tasteless, like a summer apple that is showy to the eye, dead sweet to the taste, that disgusts by its lack of flavor, and lays heavy on the stomach, and angers us because we have eaten it. I say if women are to satisfy men, they must be trained more like 'em—must be their mind companions and heart companions at the same time. The charm of sex will be there still. That will never die. I have loved dozens of women, but I'd have given every iota of their combined love for one caress—one sign of weakenin'—one hour's undoubted favor—from one woman who was all courage, independence, vivacity and charm. I tell you, Ike Bane, I'm mad when I think of her. When I realize that she's no longer on earth, I'm wild because I didn't risk everything. And yet, what good would it have done? She always scorned me. And I used to prefer her ridicule to her indifference. O, how I hate the system that trained this fever in me! Why could I not have been compelled to school myself to reason and self-command? Why could I not have been compelled to take my first? *She*, unless God was kinder to her than either I or the law, is shriekin' in hell! And yet we men, blind fools, forever standin' in our own light, make the system we learn to curse. We deny to the utmost of our power the privileges that would make woman intelligent, charmin', and self-protectin'. We yield' em no advance until they have wrung it from us by the most stubborn fighting. When we marry 'em we demand that they drop everything but idle society and household drudgery, and thus we prepare 'em to receive our scorn. I've seen whole months when I never looked at a pretty woman and honored her with a cleanly thought. I couldn't conceive

that a woman had any other purpose in existin' than to receive my — lust. And yet they say that the —— dens where we train up our devil natures, and that men come out of wishing the whole world was a dive, are a protection to decent women ! O, hell ! Build a smallpox hospital in the middle of a great city and let who will run in and out, and then assert that the den is promotin' the city health ! Build a college for teachin' youth larceny, pocket-pickin', burglary, skillful use of poisons, adept employment of the stiletto, and then assert that the thing is promotin' the public integrity !

"And yet I might have been some one ! I had beauty, natural intelligence, and personal magnetism. Yet I've turned 'em all into curses for myself and those around me. I've used 'em all to destroy creatures that were too weak to git out of my way. I'm a coward, a libertine, a liar, a weakling ; and it's all come jest from drinkin' the madness the government set out for me."

He still looked out. The shades of evening were beginning to gather. He took his chaparejos from the nail upon which they hung. He drew them on and then buckled on his spurs. Then he donned his hat and coat.

"Where are you goin' ?" asked Ike, as he looked up.
"To hell !"

"Well, it won't take you long to git thar, to-night. It's not goin' to be safe ridin', Sam. I wouldn't start now. Git lost."

"Well," said Lat, "I've been on the road for eight or ten years, now, and I'm gittin' anxious to know the worst. So long." He went out and shut the door behind him. His horse stood in the shelter of the stack ; he whinnied pitifully when his master bridled him. Lat patted his neck, threw the saddle upon his back, fastened the cinchas, mounted, and started with hanging head and at a slow pace toward the dangerous and storm-besieged pass. Ike watched him from the window. The snow soon hid him from sight. The wind howled dismally. One hour later the cowboys began to drop in, their mustaches covered with ice, their hands numb and blue. None of them had encountered Lat.

"Why," said Hank Sands, when Ike told his story, "there ain't a house in that direction nearer than twenty miles."

CHAPTER XLVII.**A LAST GLIMPSE.**

THE feud between the rival cattle companies was done. The Trelawna settlers who were concerned in the death of Jim Madnau gradually came to admit to each other the mistake they had made. Nothing could be proved against them and they were never prosecuted ; but they were always suspected, and remained the possessors of an undesired notoriety. J. C. Talbert sold his stock to an Eastern company, who retained the services of Ike Bane, and then retired from business to find what joy he could in his life memories.

Charlie Ford recovered from the effects of his wound and decided that Colorado was too slow for him. He went further west.

Early in the spring Ike Bane came down to the Bar Eleven on a mission for William Everet. Everet was getting too old to longer expose himself as a hunter and trapper. He wanted a position where he could oversee and help with the harvesting of hay. Ike told of the old man's kindness to Mary while she bore the name of Mose Jones ; this went a long way with the Bar Eleven men. Everet was permanently engaged as overseer of all the ranche work. He became the trusted friend of all the outfit, and the especial favorite of the Hopkinises and Joshua Hogan.

Amy Chellis married Mr. J. J. Mory of Milroy City. Her father was left with his cough and his loneliness, for his gossiping wife was but a poor companion. One morning he walked over to Peter Chase's and offered to take one of the girls into his house as one of the family, and leave her a legacy of two thousand dollars when he died. Her duties would be to read to him, write his letters, and be a daughter and companion. Lucy and Sarah paid no heed to the offer, but Emma eagerly begged her parents' permission to accept.

"I can make Col. Chellis a little less lonely and miserable ; " she said. "Then when I get my legacy I will use it to educate myself ; I will use my education to improve women, and make them more independent and self-supporting."

Consent was at last reluctantly given. Emma became an inmate of the Chellis mansion, the trusted daughter of its master, and in reading to him she greatly improved her mind and dissipated her gloom.

On a sunny Sunday morning in May an equestrian party of four were threading the canon. They were Gus and Iola, Kid and Bella. The men looked less boyish than of old. Both had grown; neither were handsome, but both looked sufficiently noble and manly to induce the onlookers to willingly dispense with beauty in these instances. Bella was more womanly; Iola's beauty was softened by a touch of melancholy.

As they rode along at a slow pace the men were throwing up their broad hats and catching them again, meanwhile singing in vigorous tones that made the canon echo again.

THE KNIGHTS OF THE RIATA.

Let the romancing bard sing the bold, fearless knight,
As he lifted his sword in the sham or real fight;
As he dared the proud foe who molested his king,
Or shattered his lance in the tourney's grand ring.

The knights of riata, of bridle and spur,
Are as brave and as fearless as any armed sir;
We shrink not from death on the lonely frontier,
When our presence is needed in battle-front drear.

We know where the savage in ambush waits prey,
And where his dark children with winged arrows play;
We know all the haunts of the prey-hunting beast;
We know where the pumas on bleeding flesh feast.

And think not, who question, our work is all play;
We serve not alone on the sunshiny day;
We must wrestle with storm, and with snow, and with sleet,
Nor ask if such service be bitter or sweet.

We must bear with the dust and the heat of the plains,
And he is called weakling who groans and complains.
We must gallop untiring o'er steep rocky hills,
And yield not a murmur at fortune's gross ills.

And think not the evil that curses a part,
Doth hopelessly stain every vaquero heart;
For close by the evil, the noble and brave
Stand ready to guard, to protect, and to save.

Then let the bards sing the brave knights of old days—
We honor the hand that the long lasso sways;
We are proved one of steady advancement's great powers,
And the souls of those knights were no whiter than ours.

As their voices died away the two girls began, with soft, half melancholy voices, to sing,

THE COWBOY'S LONE GRAVE.

Far up in the mountains, far down on the plains,
On the lonely frontier where no kindly eye weeps;
Where the sound waves vibrate at the cry of the wolf,
There is many a mound where the lone cowboy sleeps.
But though dense be the pinons,
And tall be the pines,
And close be the aspens whose slender tops wave;
Though wild be the mountains—
Deserted the plains—
The dear God knows the place of the cowboy's lone grave.

The howling coyote and the shrill crying eagle
Disturb not his rest as he slumbers for aye;
His faults and his virtues and name are forgotten,
But over his mound sorrow-laden winds sigh.
And though dense be the pinons
And tall be the pines,
And close be the aspens whose slender tops wave;
Though wild be the mountains—
Deserted the plains—
The dear God knows the place of the cowboy's lone grave.

He marched in the van of a home-hunting people,
His blood quenched the fires of the fierce border fray;
Let his evils be sunk in the evils he strangled
And his record of valor pass never away,
And though dense be the pinons,
And tall be the pines,
And close be the aspens whose slender tops wave;
Though wild be the mountains—
Deserted the plains—
The dear God knows the place of the cowboy's lone grave.

THE END.



