



"THE CLOSEST SHAVE."

"But what with going like lightning, and having the load well over to the upper side, she buzzed by that wagon, with two wheels on solid ground and two in the air, and, before she had time to upset, all four of 'em struck bottom again, and the trick was trumped."

BRAVE HEARTS.

A NOVEL.

By ROBERTSON GRAY.



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BRAVE HEARTS.

CHAPTER I.

THE HOME STATION.

I WRITE of a time when the railroad had not yet spanned the continent, and reduced the overland journey to one of the most commonplace and comfortable that can be found in the world. No doubt the Pacific Railroad is a great institution. If that part of a certain Scripture which says, "many shall run to and fro," has any logical connection with the other part, which says, "and knowledge shall be increased," then this great institution will certainly increase knowledge. Meanwhile it is producing some other effects, not altogether welcome. It has introduced, for instance, the pernicious practice of trans-continental travelling with babies. In the good old times babies had to go round by the Isthmus; now they make music in the Pullman cars. And there are a good many of them; for a whole generation of pioneers is engaged in going home to visit the old folks in the East, and taking its infant jewels along for exhibition.

Another effect of the railroad has been to break up the wonderful stage-coach system of a few years ago.

It is true that people continue to travel all over the Inland Basin and the Pacific coast in stages. Probably, taking into consideration the numerous side lines which connect the railroad with old and new settlements and mining districts, there is more "staging" done than ever. Some lines still remain that are long enough to revive the memories of overland travel, — as, for instance, the line stretching from Salt Lake northward into the heart of Montana, soon to be superseded by the Northern Pacific Railroad, and partially, at least, replaced by a narrow-gauge road over its own route; or the California and Oregon line, fast melting away before the encroachments of railroad-building at both ends. California, Idaho, Utah, and Nevada have their long stage-routes still, over which the traveller may pass day and night, without pause, for many weary hours. But the glory of the stages is departed. The great house of Wells, Fargo, & Co., successor in the business of Holladay and of Butterfield, has sold all its coaches and horses and stations; and the country is full of these second-hand articles, woefully deteriorated by the lapse of time and the hands of those destructive fellows, Wear and Tear.

The coaches used by "Wells Fargo," as this house is popularly called, were made in Concord, New Hampshire, and carried to California by sea. The excellence of their workmanship, once a blessing, has become very nearly a nuisance. They are like the celebrated one-horse shay, except that the happy day has not yet arrived when the oldest of them will drop to pieces, past mending. Upset a hundred times, weather-beaten

beyond recognition of their original war-paint, absolutely decayed as to inside tapestries and brocades, with their glass windows smashed, and their leather cushions pounded into most incompatible hammocks, these stanch old vehicles continue to roll their daily and nightly courses as regularly as the stars; and there is no sign as yet of the giving out of their "running-gear," — that is, their wheels, axles, and thoroughbraces, — the hopeless collapse of which is the only warning which would move the present managers of stage lines to substitute less venerable and more comfortable accommodations for passengers. Horses, on the other hand, are mortal, and have to be renewed; but, what with economy in buying and economy in feeding, and the reverse of economy in driving, we have chiefly a race of half-starved, over-worked "bronzos" and "mustangs" in place of the sleek, stately, and spirited teams of the last epoch. Be it understood, therefore, that I write of a period when Concord coaches were new, and stock *was* stock, and the stage-driver was of some account in the world.

I think, as I write, of many a weary and many a jovial mile travelled in those good old days; of adventures and hair-breadth escapes; of catastrophes gloriously achieved; of mad drives down the steep grades; of sound sleep in the "boot" under the driver's seat, or night-beguiling conversation by the driver's side beneath the friendly stars; and chiefly of the lonely way-stations, where the horses are changed in mid-wilderness, while the passengers walk around the coach to stretch their legs, and the solitary hostler inquires con-

cerning the last fight in the nearest town a hundred miles away, or wants to know when that there grain is coming along that the division superintendent promised to send, for, if it don't come, he will have to begin on corn and bunch-grass, which will be playing it pretty low down on the cattle.

The home stations were more ambitious in their arrangements. There the coaches were frequently changed, and the drivers, always. There the passengers took their meals, and not seldom some, who had found the fatigue of continuous travel day and night too much for them, stopped twenty-four hours to recuperate their strength. The home stations were likely to be adorned with the presence of woman, possibly, in faded and sad or ugly and stern specimens, but still a blessing and a pleasant variation of the masculine monotony of the rest of the route. The station-keepers were often men of strong, eccentric character, worth studying. Indeed, almost everybody one met in those days on the Pacific slope was worth studying, since only people with unusual motive-power of some kind in them found their way to such remote regions. Usually it was the desire for money that had floated them to the diggings or stranded them all along the road; but this desire took many forms and sprang from many sources. One perpetually stumbled upon persons whose secret reasons for their choice of a residence were as inexplicable as whims to those who did not know their history.

Andrew Campbell, otherwise called, in respect, "Gentleman Andy," and in irony, "Handy Andy," was one of

this class. He kept the home station twenty miles west of Knucklesville, a mining camp in the foot-hills of the Sierra Nevada. Knucklesville, by the way, got its name from the first settler, whose *sobriquet* of "Knuckles" was fairly won in a knock-down argument. For a considerable time the camp maintained the significance of this title; but the fist business does not come naturally to the inhabitants of a democratic country. They prefer a method of warfare in better accord with the equality of man. So, old Knuckles himself was shot through the middle of his six vertical feet, which knocked him entirely off his two horizontal feet, and removed both him and the fashion he had set from the population of Knucklesville. The slayer was a keen and cool young fellow named Harrison Howe, *alias* Hank, whose claim, it was said, the old scoundrel had "jumped." Hank was tried by an improvised jury, which, after hearing from him the single fact that the deceased was a "jumper," — that is, one who occupied by stratagem and then retained by violence the mining grounds of other claimants, — declared that it did n't want to hear any more, and was with difficulty persuaded by the judge, who mingled rather freely in the deliberations, to alter its first-intended verdict of "Served him right," to the more decorous but less distinct and sincere "Died a natural death by the discharge of a pistol." This was more like the result of a coroner's inquiry than like that of a trial; but form was of little account, and everybody understood what the jury meant when, instead of finding one fellow guilty, they simply found the other fellow dead.

Mr. Howe will appear again in our story. Knuckles has gone out of it, and even the map knows him no more; for the inhabitants of Knucklesville, when they wanted to "attract capital" to their mines, changed its vulgar name, which looked disgraceful in a prospectus or a stock certificate, to Goldopolis, a classic cognomen which, like the famous English poet of similarly auriferous title, "touched nothing that it did not adorn." Goldopolis it was at the time of our story; and anybody who said Knucklesville was known at once as a foe, and probably a partisan of the still unregenerate camp of Dead Man's Gulch, which hated its more ambitious rival, and tried all sorts of mean tricks to undermine its prosperity and win away from it the post-office, the express office, and the daily stage. Dead Man's Gulch had, indeed, for a season or two, produced the more gold; but Goldopolis fell proudly back on its undeveloped quartz mines, which were "certain, with capital, to pay the national debt." Paying debts with capital, while it lasted, and then not paying them at all, was a method of management not uncommon in those days — and since.

But the most important and permanent advantage possessed by Goldopolis was the Grade, an expensive and difficult piece of road-engineering, executed in the flush times when the diggings were new and rich, and freight and travel were enormous. "Dead Man's Gulch might blow as much as it liked; it had n't got a grade, and it could n't afford to make one; and it was n't likely that the mail route would be changed to such a rugged and steep cañon as led up to the Gulch,

just because a few fellows up there had 'struck it rich' in the gravel. Let 'em bring over their gold-dust and carry back their goods and liquors on jacks." So said the Goldopolitans; though occasionally one of them, attracted by the rumors of new discoveries, disappeared from town, and was soon heard of as a resident in the Gulch, and a furious Gulchite.

But Wells Fargo paid little attention to these debates. They would not lightly move their line from the ancient route; for besides the Grade and the unexpired mail contract, there were all the stations, and particularly the far-famed Campbell station, which could not be moved nor replaced in a hurry by an equally attractive one.

Campbell station, or "Andy's," was really a pleasant ranch. The house, a long one-story affair, looked as if it had once been short and thick, but had been pulled out to accommodate increasing needs. A piazza, extending along the entire front parallel with the road, was, like the building itself, constructed of wood and whitewashed. From this piazza, half a dozen front doors gave entrance to different apartments within, one to the kitchen, one to the big sitting-room, one to the bar-room, two to bedrooms for travellers, and the sixth to a hall which ran through the house and communicated with domestic domains, of which the public saw nothing, — the apartments of the family. Then there was a stock-corral, or what would be called in the East a barn-yard; and there was a barn with the great stables of the stage line, and beyond these, along the swelling upland and stretching down towards the broad plain, there were, at the time of

this story, fields of yellow grain-stubble (for harvest was over), dotted with the dark shining green of scattered oak-trees, while only a little way up towards the east began the forests of the foot-hills, and behind these rose the crests of the Sierra, still patched in the early autumn with the remnants of last winter's snow. On the other side of the road from the house the ground fell rapidly, and a hundred feet below flowed a stream, turbid with the traces of the gulch-mining above. At this season it was narrowed to an insignificant creek, though it carried all the waters of the mining camps I have mentioned and several others; but when swollen by winter rains or thawing snows, it poured tumultuously out from the mouth of its precipitous piny cañon, half a mile above the station, and sometimes raised its tawny flood half-way up the bluff on which was Campbell's ranch. More than that it could not do in the wettest season. Campbell brought a small part of its water from a point in the cañon by means of ditch and flume, to supply his establishment and to irrigate his vegetable garden.

Enough, for the present, of the station. Let me say something of its regular and transient inhabitants. Andrew Campbell was, of course, no native of the Californian soil. There were scarcely any natives in those days but Indians, "Greasers,"—that is to say, Mexicans,—and babies. Nor did any of the frequenters of the ranch know or care where the station-keeper originated. It was a tacit maxim of politeness—one of the few but rigidly observed customs which constituted the etiquette of the coast—not to inquire into any man's past his-

tory. What he had been or done since he left "the States" was his character. If he had been "run out" of Calaveras County by a vigilance committee, if he had killed a man in cold blood down at the Bay, if he had "gone back on his pardner" when they two were attacked by not more than four, if he had been caught cheating at "poker," or if he was suspected of horse-stealing, it might go hard with him. But neither his virtues nor his crimes were exempt from that unwritten statute of limitations which rubbed out his life before he crossed the Plains or the Isthmus, and left him a clean slate to write a new life upon. He might be an exiled prince or a runaway sailor, a fugitive from tyranny, or a fugitive from justice, or a fugitive from matrimony: it was all one to his neighbors, who granted him a corner of the oblivion in which they had comfortably ensconced themselves, and did not even think he had a secret, much less attempt to worm it out of him. Some of them, it is true, having brought clear consciences with them and left loving hearts behind them, talked occasionally about "going home" when they had "made their pile"; but those who never indulged in such allusions were not accounted strange.

Andrew Campbell was not one who talked of going home, or took pleasure in any allusion to "the States" and their society. He avoided the subject with a nervous timidity which, anywhere else, would have attracted suspicion; and the interest which he took in the permanent improvement of his ranch indicated that there he meant to stay. Gray but not old, and bent but not feeble, he

seemed to be perpetually deprecating the criticism of mankind. The quiet virtues of temperance, industry, patience, and peacefulness he possessed in full measure. Courage, too, he had shown in several critical instances; once, when he throttled a mad dog in Knucklesville with his naked hands; once, when he pulled a half-drowned Chinaman out of the gulch, during a freshet. But courage in words he had not, nor ambition, nor enterprise. In fact, he was, for some cause or other, what we call a broken-down man; and sundry manly qualities, probably never very strong in him, had been, by that unknown cause, utterly crushed out of him. Only two things ever roused him to throw off his burden of secret sorrow, — his fiddle and his daughter. These he loved; and these gave him an amount of local influence and reputation which his weak personality would not otherwise have commanded. The fiddle was celebrated for many miles. As he played it, it bewitched the heads and heels of all listeners; and bonny Kate Campbell "corralled" their hearts with less trouble than it cost her to corral the docile kine or the unanimous sheep of the ranch. But I must take breath and begin again to speak of bonny Kate.

CHAPTER II.

MISS KATHERINE CAMPBELL.

ANDREW CAMPBELL'S daughter was at first appearance strangely unlike him. What he lacked, she possessed, — brightness, decision, the consciousness of power, and a hopeful faith in man and Providence. Only by watching father and daughter more closely, could one detect the strong resemblances and the deep sympathy which united them. They were both refined and intelligent; though Andrew Campbell, gentleman, shrank from contact with his fellows, while Kate Campbell, gentlewoman, was alike fearless and friendly to all. Perhaps he had once been more nearly what she was now; yet it certainly seemed unlikely that any misfortune could ever break her high spirit as his had been broken. It was not often that the keenest observer could divine from any glance or word of hers, that her life was devoted to the comfort, consolation, and protection of her father; though everybody knew that, in her cheerful, steadfast way, she was doing the thing of which she seemed unconscious. Her fresh, smiling face, glossy black hair, and blue eyes with long dark lashes; her trim, small, active figure; her little hands, browned but not hardened by her busy life, in doors and out, — spoke no special capacities of heroism; nor did the quaint and

rude expressions of the dialect of the country, which came freely from her lips, when she chose to employ them, indicate that she was a sacred person to be set apart as better than common folks. Of course the miners and teamsters worshipped her. They would have done as much for a girl not half so pretty and wise; for in those days girls were scarce. But they looked up to her with special admiration and respect, because she combined so much good-nature and good-fellowship with real delicacy and propriety. Old Knuckles had early expressed the general sentiment when he said, "That there girl of Handy Andy's can just see any girl on the Pacific coast, and go her ten better, and rake in the stakes, and never show her hand. Back 'em right down, sir, every time!"

But you will know Kate better, if I sketch for you a scene in the great sitting-room of the station. It is evening, and the room is lighted, partly by the flame of a roaring fire in the capacious fireplace, partly by candles, distributed here and there, as they are needed. One of them dimly illuminates a table in the corner, where a party of rough miners are playing cards, with some gold coin and more gold-dust as stakes. In the middle of the room another candle stands upon a table, on which are well-worn copies of newspapers, an odd volume of the Patent Office Reports, and another of the Agricultural Reports. Half a dozen stalwart fellows are gathered here, crowding as close as possible to the light, and reading whatever they can get hold of in the way of literature. Still another candle lights another corner,

just beyond the fireplace, where Miss Campbell sits patching, darning, sewing on buttons, and otherwise repairing garments which have seen their best days, but still hold out bravely against the assaults of time. A circle of men is occupying chairs in front of the fire, and discussing with much shrewdness and ignorance all questions in heaven or earth. The young lady sits behind one end of this circle, and frequently joins with vivacity in the conversation. Just now the topic is one which does not interest her. An enthusiastic inventor from San Francisco is explaining the principles of his new contrivance for "saving all the gold" that may exist in any material whatever, — mud, water, gravel, quartz, or sulphurets.

"You see," says the San Francisco chap, sweeping with glittering eye the spell-bound circle, "the great obstacle, gentlemen, to gold is *impurities*; and my process is calkated to re-move impurities. Show it to you in the patent, — 'Whereas, etcetery, etcetery, re-move impurities.' Jest what I told you. Now, how do we re-move impurities? Jest the way they come there; that's the whole science of this matter. This 'ere gulch gold's got impurities — come there by water; take 'em out by water. This 'ere quartz gold's got impurities — come there by fire; take 'em out by fire; re-move them, gentlemen, and what then? Show you in the patent, — 'After the impurities is re-moved, the gold re-mains.' Now my machine can be used with fire or it can be used with water, jest accordin' to circumstances."

Here a burly son of Erin, who has been listening quietly and looking into the fire, removes his pipe from his mouth and says, "No, bedad, that's just what the gowld won't do, my boy. Sure it's as bad as the pigs in the owld counthry. Av ye remove the dirt, ye can't kape the pig."

The San Francisco man waxes warm at this, and pours forth a torrent of scientific information which overwhelms, without convincing, his sceptical hearers. Meanwhile, one and another member of this and other groups in the room strays to the work-table of Miss Campbell, sits down unforbidden in the chair opposite her, and enjoys a pleasant bit of conversation. As the only woman present, she is felt to be a luxury which it would not be fair for any one to monopolize.

"Well, Kate," says one comer, "did you find the white cow?"

"You bet!" responds the young lady, displaying her white teeth with a merry smile; "found her half way up the Grade, tumbled into one of poor Knuckles's old prospecting-holes. Lucky she didn't go over the other edge of the road instead. It would have made beef of her, sure."

"What's that about going half-way up the Grade?" interjects another; "you'd better look out for yourself, Kate, around in these lonesome places. The road-agents* have opened a branch somewheres about here, and they're just doing a contract business. Busted old Uncle Billy's sluice-boxes the other night, and cleaned

* Highway robbers.

all the quick* out of the riffles, and went through three Chinamen the same night, on that very Knuckles Grade."

In reply to this friendly warning, the fair maid merely showed the handle of a silver-mounted revolver, and, without taking the weapon from her pocket, remarked coolly, "We don't go shopping alone. There's six of us!"

But these Amazonian utterances were as foreign to her general behavior as they were to her appearance. There was nothing particularly dashing in her looks or ways. Quiet resolution and self-poise, or what "the boys" called *savey*,† were expressed in her bearing, but womanly sympathy and helpfulness were equally her characteristics. Even the miners' slang, into which she had fallen so easily, did not obliterate an air of refinement, inherited from days when she had moved in good society, — days which, for her father's sake, she resolutely put behind her and banished from her thoughts.

It was out of her power to prevent entirely the two border vices of drinking and gambling at the station. But somehow there was comparatively little of that sort of thing in her neighborhood. The bar-room did not communicate with the sitting-room. If anybody wanted to take a drink, he had to go out along the piazza, and enter the domain of Bacchus by an independent door. And there were no facilities furnished for regular orgies.

* Quicksilver, used to collect and amalgamate the gold washed in the sluices.

† *Savoir faire*; gumption.

People inclined that way were much better accommodated at Goldopolis, or the Gulch. The company at the station was usually more quietly disposed, and satisfied to gossip and smoke (with an occasional walk along that piazza), to listen to Andy Campbell's fiddle, and to look at his daughter's face.

On the night I have been describing, however, there was a party playing poker in the corner, towards which Miss Campbell's eyes repeatedly wandered with a look of mingled distrust and dislike. The silence of the players, broken only by the laconic jargon belonging to the game, indicated that the stakes were high; and the idlers who from time to time strolled up to the table and watched the progress of the game saw clearly that three of the group were losing considerable sums to the fourth. These three, after a while, were seized with a simultaneous thirst. The monotony of losing made them dry; so they adjourned for a recess to the bar-room, leaving the cards dealt, face down on the table, and the coin and dust in heaps. It was perfectly safe; safer indeed, in that crowd, than if the money had been under lock and key in a less honest neighborhood. If any man had tampered with it, he would have been roughly handled by the company. Even a professional thief would have let it alone, under the circumstances.

The winner did not accompany his companions to the bar-room, but rose from his seat with an air of indolent indifference, and sauntered across the room to where Kate Campbell sat. It happened that at that moment no one else was talking with her; and Mr. Harrison Howe,

with his pale face, close-shaven chin, heavy mustache, clean linen, and quiet tones, dropped into the vacant chair opposite her with the air of one who had a special right there. It was curious that he talked excellent English to her, without a trace of slang or rudeness, though he could curse on occasion among the men with a cold-blooded ingenuity and fluency that shocked even the average gold-digger. Still, a fine gentleman he always was; temperance, self-control, and reserve were part of his stock in trade; for he was a gambler, and for the sake of this profitable vice, he sacrificed, after the manner of his profession, the unprofitable ones. Many a gambler of those days and regions, if he had arrived of a Saturday afternoon in an innocent New England village, would have been asked to preach. But this would not have happened to Mr. Howe, by reason of his heavy mustache. How slight are the outward differences between saints and sinners!

After a deliberate look at Kate, who bent assiduously over her work, he drummed lightly upon the table, displaying by accident a white hand with a diamond ring, and leaning forward, said in a low tone, "Miss Campbell, I have the honor to wish you good evening."

"Good evening, sir," replied Kate, without lifting her head.

"Have you considered the little proposition I took the liberty of making this afternoon? It was unfortunate that you were interrupted, as you were about to give me an answer."

She did not look at him; but she cast around the

room a furtive glance, which assured her that nobody was within hearing. Mr. Harrison Howe had chosen an unlucky time to renew the interrupted conversation; for this roomful of hearty friends was a protection, without being an embarrassment, to his antagonist. Perhaps he had not quite expected to find her an antagonist. His manner had an air of power, not of hostility. But a shade of darker feeling crossed his face as she replied in a low, but distinct voice, "Your proposition, Mr. Howe, was made once before, and declined. You had no reason to expect a different result, when you met me alone upon the Grade, and persisted in repeating what I did not care to hear. The fact that the stage came by, and that Steve took me up and gave me a ride home, was fortunate for both of us. If it had not happened, I might have given you some angry words."

"Then you are not so angry now?" he queried quickly.

"I give you the same reply in substance now as I would have given you then; your proposition is declined."

"But I would not have let you off as easily then," he murmured; "you should have heard me further." Here for the first time she looked straight at him, with a slight dilation of eye and nostril, which made him hasten to add, "Miss Campbell, you misunderstand me. I merely mean that I had, and still have, something to say that will probably lead you to change your decision. Your father —"

Kate faced him, glowing with concentrate wrath.

"You are going too far, sir! I do not know by what means you have gained my father's good opinion, but he will not control mine. You have twice asked me to marry you, and I tell you, now and always, No! And if you persecute me any more, I shall inform my friends."

With this she turned her head slightly, indicating with a sweep the friends referred to, — that is to say, everybody. This was "too many" for Mr. Howe, who knew very well with what executive power public opinion would set about the protection of its favorite. Already one or two had noticed Kate's flushed cheek and earnest manner, though they had not heard her words; and one called out across the room, "What's up, Kate? Don't you take any more of Hank's lip-currency than suits you!"

"Nothing's up," replied Kate, with instant self-control. "Mr. Howe and I have had a little argument, that's all. A sort of two-handed euchre, you know, Tom; quite harmless and rather stupid. There are no stakes. I never play for stakes."

Her laughing reply quieted curiosity; and no one heard Mr. Howe's significant whisper, as he rose to return to his friends who, with "whistles wet" and "main-braces spliced," in other words, having drunk their fill for a time, had come back to the poker-table, and were now vociferously commanding him to make haste and "ante up." He responded to the call with easy indifference, only pronouncing a few words for Miss Campbell's private ear. "No stakes," he said, "except a father or so. Say, for instance, a father in State's prison!"

The arrow evidently struck home; but she took the wound bravely. "I do not understand you, sir; and your friends are waiting for you."

"You understand me very well, my dear Miss Campbell," he replied with cool insolence; "and I shall have the pleasure to repeat and explain my little proposition to-morrow."

So saying, and waiting for no rejoinder, he returned to the eager card-players, and was soon imperturbably absorbed in the tactics of the game, while the place he had just vacated was filled by Andrew Campbell himself.

"Fine fellow, that Mr. Harrison Howe," said he, with a sort of timid eagerness. "A very fine fellow, Katie; so gentlemanly —"

"A gentleman gambler and villain!" exclaimed the daughter; and then, pitying the wretched, helpless look of her father, she added in a gentle tone, "I cannot bear him, father; he is a bad man. *Are you really in his power?*"

Poor Andrew Campbell could not be frank and fearless, even to his own daughter. "O no, no," he said nervously; "only, I wish you would be kind to him — for my sake."

Apparently much to his relief, a distant whoop from the road was heard at this moment, and he started up hastily, saying, "There comes the coach!" The sound produced a general stir among the occupants of the room. Everybody arose and crowded toward the door, except the poker-players, who remained, unheeding at their game.

CHAPTER III.

THE STAGE-DRIVER.

"STEVE's ahead of time to-night," remarked one of the miners.

"A feller can't help bein' ahead o' time," responded another, "with a down grade, 'n' a full moon, and Andy's station at the end o' the road. You bet yer life, Steve hain't no call to be late, under the circumstances!" And the speaker winked at the retreating form of Kate, on her way to the kitchen to prepare for the supper of the expected passengers.

A moment more, and the head-lights of the coach were visible from up the road; and with much clatter and raising of dust in the moonlight, the six horses came tearing down, all on the run, and were suddenly pulled up by means of reins, brake, and a vociferous *whoa!* in front of the door. The driver wound the reins around the brake-bar, stood up in his place, and said cheerily, "Well, boys, what's the good word?"

"Got any passengers, Steve?" asked Andrew Campbell, peering into the stage.

"Not a soul, but I left three scaly specimens near Lije Pickering's, half-way down the Grade. What in thunder did those fellers want to get out there for, I wonder! Asked one of 'em, and he said they were out a prospectin'."

Mighty curious way to go prospecting, five in a heap. Give me one pardner, that I can freeze to, and nobody to interfere till our claim is staked out, — hey, boys? But here's your express-box, Andy. The dust must be coming in lively from the Gulch; these boxes are getting too heavy to be handy; and the stuff don't come from Knucklesopolis, that's certain. The water's so low up there that they can't mix drinks, and all the boys are taking their whiskey straight. There's some talk o' cleaning out the saloons, and pouring the lick into the creek, so's to fill up the sluices. But we can't trust anybody to carry out *that* plan, — hey, boys?"

While rattling off this good-humored nonsense, Mr. Stephen Moore vigorously extricated from the boot under his seat a heavy wooden box, bound with iron, and fastened with a padlock, which he passed down over the wheel to Andrew Campbell. The latter, on receiving it, lugged it away into the bar-room, from one end of which opened a small express office, where it was his duty to compare the packages in the box with the list on the express bill. During this performance the door of the office was locked.

The driver meanwhile descended from his seat, bringing his flat leather "pocket," which contained the way-bill of passengers and freight, to be turned over to the driver on the next route. He paid no more attention to the horses than a railway conductor pays to the engine. He had brought the stage in, safe and early; the rest was the hostler's business; and that official had already unfastened the traces, and left the animals to walk in

docile procession to the stable. This they did, while the moon illuminated their shining, steaming sides, until they escaped the range of her rays, and entered the domain of the dim lantern, which swung from the middle of the stable ceiling.

Steve exchanged more special and personal greetings with the members of the group, most of whom he seemed to know; and the whole party, pervaded with a certain disappointment at the lack of new tidings and new faces, returned to the sitting-room. Here the driver pulled off a huge overcoat, made of yellow blanket, which reached to his heels; proceeded to a small sink in one corner, which bore a tin basin; replenished the basin from a pail close by, and, plunging his head into it, scrubbed, puffed, and gurgled in an extraordinary manner for several minutes, after which he arranged his hair, with the aid of a pocket-comb, before a small cracked mirror which hung above the basin, and at last rejoined the company, with an air that plainly said, "There, now I feel respectable, and ready for supper."

The change produced in his appearance by this unwrapping and ablution would have surprised an observer not accustomed to the disguising effects of the dust of really dusty countries, like California in the dry season. A moment before, his dimensions, complexion, and even his features, had been scarcely distinguishable; now he appeared a stout, active young fellow of perhaps thirty years, with a clear red-and-brown cheek, keen gray eyes, and short, curly, brown hair.

His face was shaven, leaving a mustache and goatee, of peculiar form, much affected by stage-drivers, and scarcely to be described intelligibly, save to those who, having seen it, need no further description. It consists in leaving the whole beard under the chin and jaw, as far as a line drawn obliquely downward and backward from the corner of the mouth. Steve's beard was faded somewhat by exposure to the weather, but it became him well.

Supper was not yet announced; for the stage from the west was still expected. Stephen Moore crossed the room to take his seat before the fire, but paused as he observed the group of card-players. Howe was by this time a heavy winner, and the rest were losing in proportion. Two of them greeted Stephen with friendly but careless nods; the third pulled his slouched hat a little farther over his eyes, and seemed to avoid notice; the fourth, Mr. Harrison Howe, gave the stage-driver the cut direct, and remarked quietly that he would "raise that, twenty dollars." But Stephen's quick eye took in at a glance the situation of affairs, and particularly, as a very important element in that situation, the tip end of an extra card, dexterously concealed under Mr. Howe's cuff. His glance, lifted from this interesting object, met the glance of the gambler. A second before, the latter had affected not to notice him; now they glared silently, and knew one another intimately.

In after-times, when this story was related in the cabins of the Sierra, the narrator used to say, "Ye see, Steve, he was as brave as a grizzly b'ar, but he was

smart too. What he did n't know was pretty lean tailings,* and not worth pannin' out. He was n't goin' to interfere di-rect with a desp'rate man, an' get a quarrel put onto him, an' hev a hole or mebbe six holes made in him, all about a game, whar he warn't noways interested. He warn't on the fight, to *that* extent."

Whether it was this sort of wisdom, or a sense of humor, or a sudden whim, that moved the stage-driver, his first words seemed to afford relief to the detected Howe, and to establish at least an armed truce between them. "Hello, Hank," said he; "passing the time agreeably, are ye? Ye'll have to shut down on that, though, if ye're going to ride guard over Wells Fargo's box. They ain't over-fond o' having their messengers play poker. Ye're looking pale, too; these gentlemen 'll have to excuse ye; and I'll take yer hand, just as the game stands. Give ye a chance to change your luck, — hey, boys?"

Two of the players eagerly accepted the change as a providential turn of the tide which had been setting so strongly against them. The man in a slouched hat muttered that he "wanted to stick to the lead he was on"; but Hank rose promptly from the table, and resigned his place with alacrity. The stage-driver insisted on a new deal, and the game began again with vigor, and with much more noise, thanks to his running accom-

* Tailings are the refuse sands from sluices or stamp-mills. When sufficiently valuable, they are treated again, to extract the gold, silver, or amalgam which they may contain. Gold-tailings, like auriferous earth, may be tested by washing small quantities in a pan, or "panning out."

paniment of jokes and exclamations. Howe walked away and seated himself before the fire, with the cool indifference of his tribe. His game was up for that occasion, he well knew; it was of no use to get angry about it. On the contrary, it was his best policy to take things cheerfully, and avoid, if possible, any immediate exposure. If Moore should at any future time accuse him of the crime of cheating at cards, it would then be easy to give him the lie — or kill him.

The bad luck of the stage-driver was amazing. He lost repeatedly, but that seemed only to increase his enjoyment. After every loss he bet still higher, and "bluffed" with invariable bad success. The two victims of Howe's skill speedily perceived that they had only to be bold, and win; for when a man is known to be bluffing (that is, betting high on a poor hand in order to frighten the other players) he is certain to be "come up with." But Steve bet and lost, and bet and lost, calling out to the discomfited Howe across the room, "Tell you what, Hank, I'm glad this is your pile, and not mine. Fact is, it's thawing away faster'n the Mikosmy* ice, that time the ferry boys bet with Sol Redwood."

"Let's have that story, Steve!" cried several voices; but Steve protested that he must attend to his game, which "needed doctoring." With all his carelessness, he kept a wary eye on the man with a slouched hat, and so managed affairs that the latter did not share in the good luck of the other two. But the matter was not alto-

* The current popular pronunciation of the name of the Cosumnes River.

gether in his control; and it happened at last, under the rules of the game (which need not here be particularly explained), that the sullen player, who had waited long for his chance, at last obtained it. The stakes were higher than ever. Steve had risked the last of Howe's winnings, and professed to expect to "rake down the pile, or bust"; when the stranger, instead of retiring from the contest, and submitting to lose the small amount he had thus far risked on his hand, suddenly overtopped everybody with a bet of great amount, and defiantly produced another bag of gold-dust. Hope fled once more from the faces of the two players, who saw themselves about to lose again all they had regained. Even the stage-driver hesitated for a moment, undecided what course to pursue. Then he said coolly, "Don't you put down your money, my friend, till you look at your cards again — *all of 'em*. We don't want any mistakes in this game."

The man paused; and at this moment Harrison Howe arose from his seat, and passed with an indifferent air behind Steve's chair. "No use betting against *that* hand," he said carelessly, and so low that no one heard but Stephen and the unknown player, who thereupon, with a muttered oath, said he believed he was mistaken, returned his dust to his pocket, shoved his cards hastily into the heap of discarded ones on the table, and adding, with ill-assumed ease, "That lets *me* out," left the table altogether. As he passed Howe, the latter whispered to him unobserved, "You fool, in another minute you would have had him counting the aces in the pack."

Steve paid no further attention to the couple, but pro-

ceeded to lose all the stakes in a most exhilarating manner; and then, rising from the table, remarked, "Well, that beats all; Hank'll have to play for me, some time, just to make things even. Why, there's Kate! now I shouldn't wonder if I'd kept a lady waiting."

Kate stood in the doorway, and said supper was ready. There was no use in delaying it longer for the up coach. So Stephen, secretly delighted at the prospect of supper with no other company than the attendance of the fair hostess (the rest having had their evening meal two hours before), followed her into the spacious kitchen. They were no sooner out of the room than she turned upon him in reproach: "It is too bad, Steve; you promised me that you would not gamble any more, and now you are just as foolish as the rest."

"Well now, Kate," replied the stage-driver, "don't crack your whip before your leaders are hitched up. I was only a-turning the tables on my beloved friend, Mr. Howe. You see those two sharps had aces in their boots and sleeves till you could n't rest; and if the boys had found 'em out, there'd 'a' been shooting, or worse. Maybe somebody 'd 'a' danced in the air with his boots off, right in front of your house. There's trees handy. But I don't like that kind o' thing, not along the road; it scares hosses, and sets 'em to shying and backing and fooling generally. No more don't I want shooting around *this* shebang. It spiles the furniture and fixin's, and gives folks unpleasant idees about the house. Now shooting on a claim is another thing. It doubles the

value of a piece o' ground to have a fight over it, to say nothing of the way it clears up the title. Besides, even if I was inclined to draw on one o' those fellers (an' there's no use in denying that I do feel that way about Hank Howe), I had n't a show to-night; left my six-shooter, like a fool, on the seat of the coach. Handy for road-agents, but no use to me just when I might 'a' wanted it. A man ought to go heeled,* if he expects to have dealings with Hank Howe and *his* crowd."

As he spoke, he had seated himself at the table, bountifully spread with the solid viands which the ranch afforded, and with those delicacies which the precious art of "canning" has made so common in all the West. The high cost of freight, hindering the transportation of bulky and heavy articles, but permitting that of many of the mere adornments and superfluities of life, led to strange contrasts in the dwellings of the Pacific slope. Rudely constructed furniture, ceilings of cotton cloth, and unpainted floors, marked the habitations of people who wore rich jewelry and silks; the finest French wines and Cuban cigars were sold over rough counters in log-houses or tents; and upon tables furnished with tin for crockery were piled the products of all lands, from the ginger and citron of far Cathay to the macaroni of Naples, the oysters of Fairhaven, and the bananas and oranges of Mazatlan and Los Angeles. Never again, perhaps, will society so nearly realize the famous Gallic aspiration, "Give me the luxuries of life, and I will dispense with its necessities."

* Armed.

But Stephen, accustomed to this phenomenon, gave it no thought. As he prepared to attack the mutton stew which formed the citadel of the repast, he paused in his reckless talk, and said in a changed tone, "Now, really, Kate, you ain't down on me, — are you?" Then, perceiving she had partly relented, he added in his former strain, "You see, I would 'a' brought that six-shooter in, if I had known you preferred it."

She shuddered at the thought. "No, no!" she replied, "don't say such dreadful things. But you have n't told me why you went and gambled."

"That 'll make a good story," chuckled Stephen. "It was about the neatest thing on Hank Howe that ever *he* struck. I just let him see that he was found out, and says I to him, 'I'll play your hand, Hank, just as it is'; and he behaved very quiet and gentlemanly, you bet. So there I sat, and I showed 'em poker. The two boys from the Gulch were about cleaned out when I took a-holt; and you ought to have seen how they freshened up! Hey, boys?" ejaculated Steve, forgetting that no boys were present.

"Well, I allow it took about twenty minutes to lose Hank's pile. But that pardner o' his like to have spoilt it all — the blame fool! — trying to win the money back. Hank was too smart to let him, though. So the Gulch boys have got their money again; and you see, I have n't really gambled any, Kate. It was a put-up game, you might say two put-up games; first Hank's, and then mine! But mine rather laid over his. Hey, boys?" And Steve plunged into his supper.

Kate seated herself opposite him, and watched him for a few moments with an abstracted gaze, leaning her two elbows on the table, and holding her chin in her hands. At last she broke silence. "I want to talk to you, about father — and so forth."

"Now's your chance," responded Steve, promptly; "the passengers are aboard, and the agent says, Time. Drive on! But it's all right about the poker, ain't it? It was a put-up game, you know. Hank could see that, when he came down, then an' thar. But he's figuring to get even, somehow."

"Yes, yes," interrupted the girl, impatiently; "it was all right, I suppose. Just like you, at any rate, getting into other folks' quarrels. Not that I object to that, Steve," she added half sadly; "for the fact is, I want you to give me a lift in my own affairs."

"A free ride, just as far as you like," vehemently interjected the stage-driver; adding, under his breath, "I wish it was for the whole everlasting round trip!"

But she paid no attention to his outburst, and continued calmly, "I have nobody but you to go to, Stephen; and somehow I think you can do something for me. That Mr. Harrison Howe has been talking to father and frightening him; and father seems to be on his side; and — and so it's two to one, which is n't fair."

Stephen read more in her faltering tones than in her vague words, and, laying down his knife and fork, looked steadily into her face. "Do you like that feller?" said he.

"I hate him!" she replied, passionately.

"Now, don't you say that," returned the driver, with whimsical philosophy; "if you hate a fellow, you'll think a heap too much of him; and particularly you can't play agin him and win, unless you keep cool, and take it easy. What's he driving at? Let's hear the whole story, Kate; no use trying to tinker a coach with the thoroughbrace broke. Have her into the shop and overhaul her thoroughly, or else pitch her off the grade and done with it."

"He has asked me twice to marry him," said Kate, desperately, "and father says I must be kind to him."

Stephen ruminated grimly for a moment, and then remarked with solemnity, "Well, so you must; you be kind to him, and I'll take charge of the hating business. No, I won't hate him neither; but I'll spoil his little game, and I'll run him out of camp, as sure as my name's Stephen Moore. What sort o' holt has he got on the old man, Kate?"

"I don't know; he said something to me about State's prison," replied Kate, evasively.

"Well, now, it ain't my gait, you know, to go asking unnecessary questions, and it don't make the difference of an old horseshoe to me, anyhow; but, Kate, was the old man in any kind o' scrape—dead broke, you know, down on his luck, under a shadder—when he left the States?"

She looked at him with evident pain and embarrassment; but she scorned to hide her glowing cheek. It was Katherine Campbell's way to face the worst. "I have promised my father," she said, "never to speak of

the past. But, O Stephen! he *is* a good man. Do believe that, and don't give us up. We have nobody but you, and you have been like a brother to me."

"Brother be hanged!" replied Stephen; "I ain't much in the brother line. Kate, could n't you give me a little promotion on that? I ain't fit to be your husband, though I have improved since you took the reins; but if such infernal smooth scoundrels as Hank Howe are prospecting around, I don't see why I should n't have a show. Marry me, Kate, marry me!"

She seemed nowise agitated by this sudden proposal; her mind was too full of its anxiety concerning her father. Evidently the power which Howe had gained over him was more alarming to her than its possible results regarding herself. "Don't make me drive you away, Stephen," she said; "I cannot lose a friend, and I cannot take a husband. Besides," she continued, more cheerfully, "you have n't considered. You want to help me, and you think that is the shortest way. You have n't thought of marrying anybody until this minute. We will go back, won't we, to where we were before?"

"What, and say it all over again?" quoth Stephen, with not altogether sincere gayety. "I don't know but you're right, Kate; I had n't thought o' marrying before, though it sort o' seems as if I should n't think o' much else from now on. But I'll turn it over. There's plenty o' time to turn over things on the box. Anyhow, it sha' n't make any difference between us. Brother ain't much, but it's better than nothing. And when you are ready

to 'begin again,' as you say, I'll 'pop' again, — hey, Kate?"

"And will you help my father?" she asked earnestly, intent on that point, and ignoring all else.

"I can't drive when I don't see my leaders, say nothing of the wheel-horses," replied Steve, laconically; "but I'll do my best. If the old man gets in a scrape, I'll do my level best. And as for Hank Howe, I'll settle *his* bill. No, you needn't look scared; no shooting, if I can help it. But whatever I do, will you trust me, Kate?"

"Always; and will you trust *us*?" said she, with an emphasis on the plural pronoun.

"You?" replied Stephen, rejoicing in the convenient ambiguity; "yes, I'll trust you; give us your hand on it."

She stretched a little brown hand across the table, and he swallowed it up for an instant in his mighty paw, and let it go again. It was no lover's caress; only a "good square promise" of mutual faith, after which Kate left the table and the room, and Stephen made rapid work with his supper, to atone for lost time. A man can talk to himself, however, if not to another, while his mouth is full; so the stage-driver's supper did not prevent him from a lively inward monologue, which found unintelligible utterance, or none at all, according to his varying mood. To a listener inside of him, it might have sounded somewhat as follows:—

"She's pure gold, every grain of her. I ain't so sure about the old man, though. Always thought there was

something wrong about Gentleman Andy. Too much manners, and no *savey*, and no fight. He's been dead broke, some time or other, and never got over it. Kate thinks he's innocent: what's the use o' thinking that? It's no good being innocent, till somebody says you're guilty. Let a fellow call *me* innocent, now! I'd give him an inside seat in the ambulance! Innocent! look like it, don't I, — hey, boys?" and he chuckled till he choked.

"Kate rather shied off about the marrying business. Served me right; I had no call to come down on her that way, with six in hand, and the brake all loose, and she busy looking after the old man. But she wasn't flustered much; she got out of the way as easy as a chicken. You never can run over a chicken, if you drive your prettiest. They take their time, and always have exactly enough, — one hundred per cent, and no tailings. That's Kate, all over; only she don't flutter nor squawk.

"Can't quite see into that Hank Howe's hand. If I've got to play him, I'd like to hold the cards. But he's got 'em all, so far. If I could get a purchase on him somehow, I could pry him out; but while he keeps dark he's too many for me. What ever put it into the head of that agent up at 'Opolis to make *him* a messenger to guard the company's treasure-box! I never had a coach robbed under *me*; don't want any better messenger than my six-shooter. When that agent told me this morning that there was danger on the road, I just laughed in his face. But he stuck to it; and says he,

‘Mr. Howe is a reliable man; he went down to Andy’s a day or two ago, and he’ll come back with you, so as to ride guard alongside o’ you on the next trip down. We are going to send a big lot o’ dust.’ I did n’t like his speaking of it, even to me; and I told him so, square. But he said the responsibility was with him; and, for that matter, if there’s such an almighty lot o’ dust, I’d rather have a guard, and so give my mind to my business. But there’s no call to talk about it; and I’m afraid there’s some deviltry agoing; that Howe is in it sure, if there is.”

This meditation was interrupted by the distant whoop of the driver of the up-coach, and the sound of many feet hastening out to the piazza. The scene had no special attractions for Stephen; and he made no movement towards joining the crowd, but concluded his supper while the stage drove up to the station, and the passengers and driver dismounted, entered the sitting-room, and made their hasty toilets at the corner wash-stand. As he rose to leave the kitchen the door opened, and three persons entered to take their seats at the table: to wit, the driver, a heavy, good-natured, and taciturn fellow; Mr. Johnson, an affable stranger; and Mr. Philip Russell, of whom the reader will presently hear further.

Steve exchanged a word or two with the driver, who responded to his questions that the boys were all well along the road, and that these were the only passengers *he* had; perhaps there’d be some more going from Andy’s.

“Nobody that I know of but Hank Howe,” growled Stephen. “He’s coming down as guard to-morrow. Much freight?”

“No, light load.”

“Then I might as well hold on here till after midnight. I can fetch it into town in five hours, easy, grade and all; and the coach don’t go on from there till after breakfast. This is the best place to do your waiting in,—hey, Bill?”

Bill nodded gravely, and “went for his grub.”

CHAPTER IV.

SUNSET.

SINCE the days of Horace, it has been the duty of the author to plunge "into the midst of things"; though Mother Goose has clearly shown that by so doing he may scratch out both his eyes,—which I take to be a figurative expression, signifying the sacrifice of clearness in his narrative. This interpretation is confirmed by the remainder of the experience of the wise man in the bramble-bush, which declares, as plainly as words may do it, that the author can only repair this damage by jumping into the midst of things again,—to make one confusion clear up the other.

The reader must share this violent exercise, involving in the present case no less than a back-somersault across the continent; since it is absolutely necessary, apropos of a personage introduced in the last chapter, to set forth who the young man is, and why the young man went West.

The Fall River steamer was well on her way. She had moved majestically down the Hudson, rounded the Battery with stately grace, swiftly traversed the East River, between the spires and masts of two great cities, threaded the narrow channel of Hurlgate, and finally, bidding good-by to the land, turned her prow to the

far sea-horizon, and began to lay her course by faith, instead of sight. It was a summer evening, and the boat was crowded with passengers, to whom the cool breezes of the Sound were a welcome relief after the heat of the day in the brick ovens of the city. The sun, which had been a pitiless inquisitor all day, seemed to have changed his character as soon as the steamer started, and to be bent on pleasing the public. For their amusement, he had set ablaze all the windows of the houses on Brooklyn Heights, tipped with lustre the rigging of the ships and the wrinkled waters of the river, and dropped purple shadows on the distant Jersey hills; and now that all these objects had been left behind, he was preparing, out of the simple materials of cloud and sky and evening breeze, a panorama of celestial splendor.

This sunset is part of my story. It would in all probability never have been so but for the circumstance that nearly all the passengers had forsaken the deck for the superior delights of dinner in the hold; so that two young persons, seated by the flag-staff at the stern, found themselves in comparative solitude. They were not romantic above their fellow-men; they had dined already, and candor compels me to add, (though who does not know it is a bad habit?) that one of them was smoking. Let it be said at least, in mitigation of his sin, that he was smoking a particularly good cigar, and that his companion had requested him to do so, because she liked it; from which skillful use of pronouns it will be inferred by the penetrating reader that one of

these persons was a young man, and the other a young woman.

Given, a summer evening, two such companions, and a sunset for sole third (with a cigar to keep the young man quiet and contemplative and platonic), and we have all the elements of an interview most interesting to the parties. Wherefore, as I said, the sunset is a part of the story.

All along the western horizon lay a bank of smooth gray cloud, behind which the sun had already sunk, and through which, in a few zigzag fiery fissures, his beams glowed redly. A little distance above this bank a second layer of cloud made a horizontal division of the heavens: above it the sky was silvery blue; below it, apple-green. In the blue sky were rosy clouds; in the green, as in a translucent ocean of unfathomable peace, floated islets of purple. The dividing horizontal belt was of delicate dove-color. (Just the color, by the way, of the young lady's travelling-dress; but this is an impertinent interruption. Only such comparisons will occur to the mind, you know, even on the most romantic occasions; and one must be true to nature!)

But the most extraordinary display was in the west-sou'west. There the cloud-masses had shaped themselves into a colossal arch, standing in such a position that one column, nearest the beholder, was dark and leaden, while the remoter side was lit into a rosy lustre by the oblique rays of the hidden sun. Through this arch could be seen infinite depths of celestial green, and above it was the celestial blue. A host of clouds were

drifting from the south, as if to enter this gate. The foremost ones had nearly reached it; their advanced fronts were shaped as by some breeze blowing out of it, against which they were flying, with garments far-trailed behind; and the sunlight reaching through it flushed a thousand of these angel-heads with unutterable, ethereal beauty. Hopelessly dull must he be who could look upon this marvellous display and not think of crowned and white-robed angels trooping through the shining gate into the glory of heaven!

Alas! before the foremost angel passed the portal, it crumbled and dissolved, and his eager flight was stayed. A moment more, and the whole celestial company was swallowed up in mist. The sun went down entirely, and only the red after-glow remained, a pensive memory of so much splendor.

The two companions had not spoken a word during this scene in the sky,—a proof that they both appreciated its loveliness and understood each other. In the company of a mere acquaintance, one is bound to demonstrate one's artistic sensibility by saying, at least, "Oh!" or "A-a-ah!" or possibly as much as, "What a lovely bit of color!" or, "How exquisitely those hues are blended and contrasted!" It is so easy for silence to be misunderstood. But in this case there was no such danger or necessity; for these persons knew each other intimately, and loved each other dearly. In short,—for I hate mystery,—they were brother and sister, and their mutual affection was all that such a relationship implies when both parties are refined, sympathetic,

intellectually mated, though not too similarly educated, "in tastes alike and in temperament unlike," as some one has finely said; and, last but not least, when no distracting attachment to somebody else has taken possession of the heart of either. Undoubtedly, the strength of their love and admiration for each other had done much to keep both heart-whole. Philip Russell had looked on many a fair face without finding in it a soul that attracted him; and now, in his twenty-fifth year, he was accustomed to say, with the rashness of youth, that he never would marry until he could meet a woman as beautiful and wise and gentle as his sister. As for Alice, she carried her brother's image in her heart, and said nothing about it; though she certainly did secretly measure other men, not much to their advantage, by the standard she had created in sisterly exaggeration of his excellences.

It must suffice to say at present of Alice Russell, that this young lady had brown hair, brown eyes, a transparent complexion, regular and delicate features, and a prevailing air of refinement. She was beautiful, as those women are who might be more so if they thought it worth the trouble. What a French modiste and milliner, careful protection from sun and air, tight shoes, indolence, and coquetry, might have done for her, I tremble to reflect. Under such influences, she might have been a belle. But she would wear eye-glasses, because she wanted to see; and she would play the piano, and spoil her hands (on the middle finger of one of which, moreover, there was a little callous spot, just

above the pink nail, which indicated an unladylike devotion to the use of the pen); and she would take long walks in large shoes, which everybody knows is ruinous to the feet; and instead of smiling, she laughed, which did n't suit her style so well; and finally, she could n't manage sentimental small-talk, for she was really sentimental. On the whole, I suppose we must say of her, with Madame De Velours (at whose select establishment she was *not* educated), that she might have become, under proper instruction, a fine lady, and have made a sensation in society; but she had thrown away her chances, and, what was worse, she did n't care. In a word, Alice was a "girl of the period," but of the Boston type. This variety is particularly precious to brothers, as the other and more celebrated variety is not.

Philip did not closely resemble her in person or in mind. As I have said, their temperaments were unlike, and this difference extended to their features. He was a strong, healthy, good-looking fellow, with tawny hair and gray eyes, full of fun, superficially irreverent and *nonchalant*, but profoundly honest, sincere, and independent. Like many young men of the period, he concealed his earnest feelings with a mask of indifference or jest, — a practice which, bad as it may be, is much better than that from which it is a reaction, namely, the disguising of an empty soul in the garments of commonplace. Alice understood him well enough to sympathize with all his moods, and to feel the deeper thought beneath the lighter tone. Though she was two years his junior, he looked upon her with reverence as

well as with chivalrous tenderness, for at twenty-three girls are more mature than their brothers; and Philip felt that Alice was already a woman of rounded and well-poised character, and not likely to change; while he was, in spite of his mustache, not quite a man,—only a college graduate, with unknown life before him, and not perfectly sure either of his beliefs or his powers. They had been making a visit in New York, and were now returning to their home at Bayport,—a pretty cottage, which they had inherited in common from the dear old sea-captain who had died, a widower, but a few months before, leaving his children the homestead, with an income that amounted to comparative wealth for two, and with the greater legacy, bestowed upon them while he lived, of a thorough education. With heroic self-denial, he had foregone for years the delight of their companionship, dwelling alone in the consoling hope of their return; and then, after a few brief months of happy reunion, Captain Russell was called away, and obeyed the call without a murmur. On his death-bed, he talked with his children in the hearty, unaffected way which always marked him. "I'm glad I did n't know," he said, "how soon my time would come. It would have been hard to give you up for so many years. But it's all right; the good times we were going to have are only postponed. Not in this house, as we expected, but in the mansions yonder. And your mother will be there."

Thus it came to pass that Philip and Alice, having lost the only parent whom they could distinctly remem-

ber,—for their mother had died a dozen years before,—were all in all to each other. And now I return to take up my story where I let it fall, and have been hunting for it ever since, namely, in the vanishing glow of the sunset.

Philip threw his cigar overboard, and watched it disappear in the churning, sparkling wake of the steamer. Then he broke silence.

CHAPTER V.

WHY THE YOUNG MAN WENT WEST.

"I HOPE all that glory means something more than layers of air and degrees of refraction," said Philip.

"You *know* it does!" indignantly replied Alice. "You are not so — so shallow as to deny the inner meaning of beauty."

"How I do delight to hear a young lady call a fellow 'shallow'!" rejoined Philip, with indolent sarcasm. "Pray what is 'shallow,' and how 'deep' are any of us? However, I will confess that I believe there is something in beauty more subtle and spiritual than the mere accidental arrangement of proportions and colors. Only, I believe it with a special part of my soul, which may be liable to delusions."

"Pray, what part of your soul is n't liable to delusions?" said Alice, mockingly. "If you want to know what is 'shallow,' revise your last remark!"

"Fair being," responded her brother, "lay down these weapons which beseeem thee not. Indeed, Alice, if you take up the sarcastic end of the conversation and leave me to do the sentimental, we shall make a sad business of it. Now, I had a thought, an unspoken thought, and you have gone and strangled it. Let us be serious."

"You know very well, Phil, that when you begin to

be serious, you always make fun of everything. Try to be funny, dear boy, and the solemnity will come of itself!"

The perversity of the young lady seemed only to deepen the determination of her brother to commence an earnest talk. Indeed, it was her keen perception that something of the kind impended which led her instinctively to shrink from entering upon the unknown and dreaded current of a conversation with Philip. She knew that he must soon decide upon his course in life; she feared that he had already decided, or, what was still more perplexing and disturbing, that he wanted advice from her. But, driven to bay by his evident determination, she faced him at last with a serene earnestness, in answer to which, without further preface, he plunged into the subject so near to the heart of a young man, namely, himself.

"It isn't the meaning of beauty that troubles me specially, Alice, though that is one of the hardest nuts that philosophers have to crack; it is the meaning of everything. I don't mind telling you, because you are one of the rare people who can sympathize without agreeing, that I am so racked with sceptical thoughts and moods as to be quite demoralized. It takes the motive-power out of my life. Of course, I could go to work and earn my living or yours, if that were necessary, but it is not necessary; and I have always felt that a man of education and leisure is called upon to do something more than incidentally to set society the example of industry and good-nature and virtue. If I

only felt settled myself, I should like to instruct my fellow-men in some way. I have thoughts enough, Heaven knows, but I don't feel sure of any of them; and I do not wish to imitate those writers who practice on the public, and perpetually recant in their last editions what they propounded in their first. You know how I used to talk about becoming a minister, that is to say, a preacher; for I never hankered particularly after the sewing-societies and old-lady teas. But I don't see how honest and intelligent preachers can endure the burden of their lives, set as they are to declare and illustrate dogmas, many of which they must outgrow. If there is an unchangeable truth, what is it? I ask Pilate's question, I know; but I am in earnest about it, as he was not."

"I don't believe Pilate meant anything so profound with his question," said Alice. "It always seemed to me nothing but a contemptuous repetition of the Saviour's words, 'I came to bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.' And these referred, I think, not to the whole truth and mystery of life, but to the moral truth of our relations to God and our duties to one another."

"Well," continued Philip, "I don't mean to talk theology or philosophy, though my head is full of both; for I have been so much interested in these things as to read furiously, for the last year, everything on all sides that seemed to offer any solution. Probably that is one reason that I am so unsettled in mind. And men are just as bad as books. Every one has his own creed and

his own words and phrases, with their conventional meanings; you can't get within a mile of understanding him, unless you begin by believing just as he does. I am sick of traveling round and round in a circle, and coming back upon my old tracks every time. I want a compass or a polar star."

"Perhaps I do not quite understand you," said Alice; "but it seems to me that you are complaining of something that is universal. Did you not tell me once that no two persons saw the same rainbow or the same sunset, but that each had his own picture in his own eye? If it is so with sunsets, why not with all truth?"

"An unlucky illustration, Alice; for color is purely a subjective sensation of our own. If there were no eyes, the whole universe would be dark. Now, is truth a phantasm like that?"

Alice smiled as she said, "You remind me of the time when I stood as a child before the mirror, and vexed myself because I could n't, by any device, see how I looked with my eyes shut! But indeed I do not think you have any occasion to lament if you find that spiritual light, like physical light, must be seen with eyes. 'What care I how fair it be, if it is not fair for me?' I'll tell you, Philip," she continued, with a levity that seemed a little forced, "what is the matter with you. You are too young; you must grow older. You have n't seen sunsets enough. After a while you will get used to them and believe in them."

"What a dear old saint it is!" cried Philip. "Where did it get its vast experience of life?"

"Darning stockings for a dreadful boy—a son of mine," said Alice, archly; and then, with a sudden change of tone, like a cry of pain, she continued, "Dear Philip, it must be said; I have thought of it so much and feared it so long, but I know it is right, and must be. You ought to go away from home. I shall be sad enough without you," she added, vainly attempting to hide her gathering tears; "but I should be more unhappy still to think that you were wasting the strength of your life for lack of what a change of surroundings might give you. You know father used to say a man could n't understand the world till he had seen the other side of it."

"Well," said Philip, "where shall we go?"

Alice shook her head as she replied, "No, not together; that is, not yet. I hope we shall go abroad some day; but that is not what you want now. You have had too much of books and of men whose characters are formed by books. It won't help you any to exchange philosophies for guide-books, and conventional talkers for conventional travelers. As for me, I can spare you, because I love you and have faith in you!"

It was plain that the dear girl had prepared this little speech. She went bravely through it until the end, when her delivery became exceedingly imperfect, and for an instant her voice disappeared, like the head of a swimmer, bobbing up and down in the water; but she caught at the final clause, which seemed to give her fresh strength, and so made a steadfast close.

Philip took her hand in token of sympathy. Kiss

her, as he wished, he could not; for the deck was by this time peopled again with promenaders, and how should they know she was his sister? But he drew closer to her, and murmured, "So this is what you have carried on your mind! My darling sister, how can I take advantage of your self-sacrifice? Yet I will own that the same thoughts have crossed my mind before. Sometimes it seems as if, by breaking away for a while and coming in contact with a ruder society, I might gain a healthy reaction from this morbid condition. I feel like Hamlet, without the tragic horror that affected his wits. The time is out of joint; and what is a young fellow, just out of college, going to do about it? Certainly, some practical experience of life would have been a great thing for Hamlet. And I'll write you long letters as often as you like; and won't it be pleasant when I come home again?"

Evidently his trial was over already. Hers had just begun. She nestled at his side, laid her head on his shoulder, and spoke no more, but let him rattle on, like a child in anticipation of its first journey.

"Shall I tell you, Alice? My friend Morton, who is proprietor of a daily paper, you know, sent for me only the other day, and wanted me to go to the Pacific coast and write him a series of letters for publication. He offers very good terms,—so good that, if I stay a year, I shall save enough, with our regular income, to enable us both to go to Europe afterwards. In fact, it is such a capital plan that I wonder I did not propose it to you myself."

"I know all about it," said Alice, faintly. "Mr. Morton told me himself, and gave me many good reasons for your accepting it, and I promised to make you."

Then Philip saw the whole extent and bearing of her unselfish advice, and his exultation was almost quenched at the thought of her suffering. But the refusal to leave her that sprang to his lips was checked by the thought that what she had said was true and right and wise. It would, indeed, be better for him to brace himself for the work of life by breathing for a while a keener and fresher air.

So they sat side by side and gazed into the lingering glow of the sunset, now so deeply associated with their thoughts of the future, since one of them was to journey alone towards its gate of gold. Slowly it faded from the sky, and behind them rose, untroubled and serene, the silver moon.

CHAPTER VI.

TWO LETTERS.

THE statistics of the Post-Office demonstrate that a huge portion of that interchange of thoughts and feelings, commands, desires, inquiries, and advices, which constitutes a civilized life, is carried on by means of letters. Strike out the Post-Office, and what is life? Steam enables people to leave one another; electricity helps them to frighten one another with sudden tidings; it is in letters that they console, consult, converse with one another. How can the story-teller, aiming to give a true picture of times and manners, leave out letters?

Here are Philip and Alice Russell parted by fate, — he to enter on a new and active career; she to wait and watch, and possibly to weep, for him in womanly and sisterly fashion, but each to remain most dear and powerful in the other's soul. It would be foolish and false to depict his stirring adventures without tracing through them the silver cord of her influence, or to set forth her quiet life as a cloistered seclusion, severed from his busy one. Hence, I must insert somewhat of their correspondence. But I spare my reader the letters which Philip wrote for his friend Morton's daily newspaper. The humorous description of sea-sickness; the gorgeous

account of the tropic splendors of the Isthmus; the complimentary notice of the captain and the ship of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company; the rapture about the Golden Gate; the glow of statistical fervor over the population and prospects of San Francisco; the dilate description of the wondrous climate, the enormous fruits, the golden treasure (both in grain and in alluvium and quartz), possessed or produced by California, — all these attracted comment in their time; and Philip made a book of them subsequently, which was a very readable book, in spite of its alternate gushing eulogy and satire slightly overdone. I shall not quote those letters; but it must be remembered that Alice read them with intense interest, regarding them as really addressed to herself. This was, indeed, what Philip had said of them, in excusing himself for replying with such brief private notes to her full and free epistles. She wrote untiringly; and he could not but reply under the disadvantage of fatigue. Either he was physically exhausted with travel, or he was tired of the topics which he had just been elaborately treating for the public. But Alice understood him thoroughly; and their correspondence went on, as many of their conversations used to do, with long speeches on one side, short ones on the other, and perfect sympathy on both.

Here is the letter he received by the first steamer after his arrival in San Francisco:—

BAYPORT, September, 186—.

MY DEAR PHILIP:— The note you sent back from Sandy Hook, and the one you mailed from Aspinwall, (I wish they

would call it Colon, as the Spaniards do; of course, Mr. Aspinwall deserves to have that, or any other place, named after him; but when I think of brave old Christopher coming out of the East with his quaint and clumsy caravels to stumble on the shores of a new world while seeking a new way to the old, I feel that his name should remain on the place which has really become, at last, the gate to Cipango and Cathay. Now wait, while I unravel this sentence, and get ready a verb that will agree in number and person with my subject, and in mood and tense with my object!) gave me much pleasure. You needn't apologize for short letters; I would rather have them from you than long ones. Think that over, dear boy! It has a great many meanings; and one of them is this, that I can read your sketches of travel better in print than in your very literary handwriting. The typographical errors, of which there are not many, are as good as conundrums. I fancy I should like to learn type-setting, not in order to set type, but merely to understand better the mistakes of the people who do. These substitutions and upside-downs and queer transpositions, so different from mistakes of the pen or the tongue, must have their reasons in the peculiar operations, of which I confess my notions are very dim, but which printers must perform thousands of times before ever I get a newspaper.

Your description of Colon was splendid. Mr. Morton sent it over to me, marked, and I wrote him a note on my best perfumed paper, with the anchor crest, to thank him. I think I can see the lazy, one-story town galvanized into activity by the arrival of the steamer; the shining black stevedores; the stately, shabby orange and banana women, trailing their long skirts in the street; the little Columbian soldiers, staggering pompously under arms: but here I am, describing it all over

again to you! You would say, carrying coals to Colon; but I scorn such college jokes! Confess, dear boy, that was very like one of your worst.

That trip across the Isthmus must be like a dream of the tropics; it is so short and swift, with an ocean journey at either end. Perhaps you do not know that the few lines you added about that and about Panama were in time for the steamer, and so got published with the rest. What a wonderful old town Panama must be; how different from anything we have in America! Of course, I mean the United States when I say America; it is very funny to think of those foreigners down there calling themselves Americans too.

I suppose it is a foolish criticism; but it seemed to me as if you represented all the poor and ignorant people very accurately, so far as outward appearance goes, but without any reference to their souls, that is to say, their real selves. Does it not trouble you — I am sure it does trouble me — to reflect that they have cares and responsibilities and fears and sins, and to wonder what is the meaning of it all, — as you said, you remember, that sweet, sad, sacred sunset night? I confess, your philosophical difficulties do not touch me; but I do shudder when I think of "the world that lieth in wickedness." It does not make me doubt the love of God, for that I surely know; but it makes me marvel at the "hiding of his power." I know that you could not write such thoughts as these in your newspaper letter, but did you not feel them? Were the natives of the Isthmus and the priests of Panama merely picturesque to your eyes, or were they also pathetic to your sympathetic heart?

But you will want to learn something about my occupations and welfare. There is little to tell; you know the programme so well. Old Mrs. Vane chaperons me about, when

I need any guardianship. Her son Francis has just returned from Paris, and Isabella has made a brilliant *début* this season; though, properly speaking, the informal way in which one slides into society at a watering-place is not a *début*. Isabella will make a success; they all say so. It is wonderful how she holds her own in conversation with everybody. Even the learned doctors and professors are bewitched by her pretty vivacity. The other day, she was over at our cottage, and spent the afternoon with me. Francis Vane and Mr. Morton (who is here, taking his editorial vacation of two weeks) came in to tea. Nobody else, — except Aunt Margaret, who listens to modern conversation, you know, with a puzzled look, as if we were all talking Chinese, and then comes out suddenly with something that is quaint and odd, and goes to the bottom of the matter, after all.

I wish Aunt Margaret had always lived with us; it would have done her good, and us too. She is so placid and quiet in her way of looking at all these questions that seem to me new and strange. It seems just as if she had heard it all before, somehow, or at least recognized old friends and foes under the new disguises. You know, when father went off to sea, she stayed with grandfather alone at that quiet country parsonage of Southfield; and he lived to be so old that, when he died, she was old herself. It was quite hard for her to come here and abide with me, giving up her lonesome life. But I had the west bedroom fitted up with her own furniture, and all grandfather's books put on shelves along one wall; and she feels quite at home there. She must have been a wonderfully learned woman in her day. Distinguished people used to correspond with her, and there was nothing she did not read, up to a certain time. But newspapers and modern books she has never got used to. "Old friends for me," she

says, smilingly, and reads over again the theology and philosophy and history and romance of a generation ago. But I must write you more another time about Aunt Margaret. What I meant to tell was about our tea-party.

Francis Vane, you know, has been staying in Europe for some mysterious purpose, — to perfect his mind and manners, I presume, and prepare him to be a broker in Wall Street, which is what he has determined to become. He is certainly polite and pleasant, but not earnest. I mean, you cannot make out from what he says that he has sincere belief or interest in anything. Now you, dear boy, have your way of teasing and mocking people. In fact, it is the way almost all men talk nowadays, at least to women; and Aunt Margaret says, "Bless you, child, it's nothing new." But then I know you have something deeper, and I can see through your surface-talk. Perhaps I could do the same by Mr. Vane, if I cared enough for him to try. As this is not the case, he sometimes irritates me.

Well, there he was; and Isabella, with her gushing sentiment and gushing humor and gushing sympathy; and Mr. Morton, as good-natured and cool and outspoken as usual. So you see we made quite a varied party. Francis told us a number of amusing stories about his travels, and one in particular, an adventure that happened to him in trying to cross from Mantua to Florence, while Garibaldi's army lay between. They stopped him as a suspicious character, and sent him under guard to Bologna, where he was detained several days, though not at all confined. But, because he was an American, some Red Republicans rescued him by the simple expedient of going to the police-office and getting his passport, which the authorities did not like to refuse. So the next morning he went off comfortably enough in the dili-

gence. There was very little in the story, but his lazy indifferent way of telling it kept us on the *qui vive*. You never know what to expect from these tantalizing *nonchalant* people. At any moment, they may out with a thrilling incident.

"What a commonplace end!" exclaimed Isabella. "You never have any real adventures, Frank; you are always getting into the beginning of a scrape, and then getting out in the most ordinary ways by the railroad or the diligence!"

"Like the Dutchman," said I, "who, when he saw that the ship was about to sink, took his hat and stepped ashore; though, on second thought, that was certainly not commonplace."

"Taking the cars or the stage," remarked Mr. Morton, "is as truly romantic as mounting a red roan steed and escaping at a gallop. The times and manners have changed; but — pardon the originality of the observation — the human feelings are the same. Your brother, Miss Alice, will find romance enough in the free life of the West. And as for Frank's Italian adventure, I dare say if he had embellished it as he might have done, and as many a traveler would have done, he could have made it thrilling enough to suit Miss Isabella."

The allusion to you, dear boy, brought tears into my eyes, and reminded me, moreover, that you had left a box of cigars in the sideboard. So I told the gentlemen, if they would adjourn to the piazza, we would keep them company. It was a little chilly, and Aunt Margaret stayed in-doors; but Isabella and I put on our shawls, and the gentlemen their hats; and the beautiful aspect of the harbor and the island, under a full moon, made us loath to go indoors. Francis did not talk much for a while; he had had his innings, he said, at the table; and so the other three of us had the talk to ourselves.

"Mr. Morton," said Isabella, "what do you suppose is the reason of the habit of travelers to exaggerate their stories?"

"The same, I fancy," replied Mr. Morton, "as that which makes clergymen so dogmatic in the pulpit. They are not liable to be interrupted or gainsaid by their listeners. Moreover, the listeners themselves, in both cases, are partly to blame. We enjoy both sermons and travels in proportion to the 'strong situations' they involve, whether of doctrine or adventure. When the Reverend Doctor guides us along the dizzy verge of Responsibility, the precipices of Fate and Will being on either side, or brings us face to face with scientific Infidelity, which he destroys triumphantly at a blow, we feel a calm satisfaction, not found in humbler expositions of mere duty, or plain meditations of sin and repentance. Why did the Reverend Doctor spend so much time and money in a theological education, if not to have thoughts and words out of the common line? And so we feel about travelers. We rate them, often, according to the wonders they have seen. If a man is to circumnavigate the world only to find that it is full of ordinary people, trying to earn a living, with occasional thieves and savages trying to steal one, what is the use, we think, of all his trouble? He must bring home strange curiosities and marvellous stories, or he is a mere bag-man, and we will none of him. But of course we are angry when his big stories are disproved. We are like children, eager to hear of giants and monsters; but we are not half so willing as children to enjoy the wonderful, without demanding that it shall be indorsed as literal. They are willing to be amused; we want to be deceived."

"Don't *critics* sometimes exaggerate?" said I, pointedly.

Mr. Morton paused a moment, and then replied frankly, "Yes; always, I am afraid. We put a magnifying-glass

over the subjects we examine, to see them more clearly; or, perhaps, we also exaggerate to suit the public taste. For we bring our wares to market, you know, like other manufacturers; and we must do something to gain the attention of the public, or all our labor will be wasted. But I confess that I was carried away by the critic's most dangerous temptation, the desire to be epigrammatical; and, as some one has remarked, injustice is the essence of an epigram."

"Well," said Isabella, "I suppose your theories are all very fine; but I like to hear new things, and old things in new ways, and I don't believe it is necessary to be commonplace in order to be true. I am sure, Mr. Morton, you said as much yourself, when you told Alice that her brother would find romance enough in the West. But it is a privilege of critics to contradict themselves; I think a critic is a person who is on both sides at once."

"Miss Vane," said Mr. Morton with a bow, "*that* is an epigram."

But I have run on so long, that I cannot find room or time for more of the conversation. Isabella and Mr. Morton kept it up, after that, in a very lively manner, getting less and less sincere, I thought, as they went on. In fact, it was a pretty sort of game at talk, and I got very tired of it, so that I was even willing to accept Mr. Frank Vane's company, and walk down to the "Belvidere" at the foot of our lawn, and look at the moonlight on the harbor and the Sound. I had reason to be sorry for this step, when I discovered that Mr. Vane considered it "the correct thing" to be sentimental in the moonlight. I endured it as long as I could, for politeness' sake, and then I told him frankly that I thought he had mistaken my capacity to appreciate his compliments. He pulled his mustache at that, and ejaculated, "By Jove!

now that's another epigram, Miss Alice. Very neatly put, that was. Awfully severe, though. You mustn't be so severe on me, now, really."

"Well, I won't," said I, changing tactics suddenly, "for I want your opinion on a matter of business."

And with that I asked him what he thought of those railroad bonds, you know, and whether we had better sell now, and get into something more solid and certain, or hold on for a better opportunity. I was surprised to see what a change came over him. He has n't really gone into the stock-broker's business himself; but he was a clerk for a while in his father's office, and he has plenty of friends among the members of the craft. When he began to talk of business, he dropped his indolent airs and his affected sentiment, and I really felt awe-struck by the clear and rapid way in which he handled the case. He had recently heard that very road discussed by the knowing ones; and he was able to tell me why the bonds were now being quietly bought up, and by whom. It is part of some great scheme for through lines, which I will not stop to explain. When I spoke afterwards to Mr. Morton about it, he looked very much interested, and said he had suspected as much, and had half determined, as our agent, to keep the bonds awhile, though they have been so long unprofitable. But I don't mean to fill my letter with business. Mr. Morton may keep you posted on that matter, if he chooses. All I wanted to do was to note that Mr. Vane grew positively enthusiastic on the subject, rising at last to this height: "When you're interested in a railroad that runs east and west, hold on; some fellow will want it some day, as a connection. But the north and south roads are nothing but feeders, — except, of course, the big ones."

"Well, Mr. Vane," I said, "*you* have certainly come pretty

near an epigram this time. I am really much indebted to you for your clear advice, which has made many points plain to me; and I think we shall get along famously together, if we confine ourselves to matters on which we are both in earnest."

He did not attempt any reply, but sauntered at my side, in a sullen sort of meditation, back to the house. Isabella and Mr. Morton rose as we approached, and we all went into the house together, and had some music.

Dear boy, we missed your flute and your tenor, and one of us missed *you*, with all her heart.

ALICE.

It took Philip a good while to read this letter, although it was not written with that graceful illegibility which young ladies are apt to affect, nor was it hair-lined and shaded in the abominable Italian manner, nor criss-crossed like a palimpsest, after the fashion which our grandmothers adopted when postage was high. Alice Russell wrote what I call a truly lady-like hand; that is, she took as much care to save her correspondents from unnecessary trouble in making out her meaning, as she would have taken to speak distinctly if they had been present. When will people learn that mumbling and shouting and incoherence in pen-and-ink are not polite?

Philip's reply to this letter was dated from San Francisco, before he went up into the mountains. Here it is:—

SAN FRANCISCO, October, 186—.

DEAR ALICE:—It is almost worth while to be separated from you, for the sake of getting such letters as the one I

received yesterday. It was like one of our rare, long talks, with this drawback, that I got no chance to put in my oar, and this great advantage, that I can repeat the enjoyment of it whenever I choose, by pulling out the letter and reading it again; whereas, the best talk does evaporate, unless we catch it in the ink-bottle.

I wish I could pour out my soul to you in reply. But in the first place, the work of writing for the press exhausts me somewhat, in the line of mere description; and, in the second place, I am too much bewildered by crowding facts and reflections to wish to ventilate at present, even to you, my deeper feelings. Sometimes I feel that, in this land of action and enterprise, I shall find a key to the mysteries of life and thought. It is more likely that I shall get interested in so many ways as to forget or lay aside the reflections that used to trouble me. But while I have you in my heart, I shall not lose the consciousness of a higher life than that of material endeavor and achievement. Don't let go of me, Alice; I would rather not try to stand alone.

Remember me to the Vanes. Isabella is charming, — don't I know that? She was the toast of the Sophomores before she got out of curls and short dresses. You judge Frank, in part, too severely; what you say about understanding him better if you liked him better might be turned about, and presented to you, horse foremost, with some justice. As for his compliments to you, he can't go too far for truth, because he can't half appreciate you; so I am inclined to accept his inadequate efforts as sincere.

I wish you could get better acquainted with Alf. Morton. He is one of the best fellows alive; and if you knew him as I do, you would n't call him merely "good-natured, cool, and outspoken." But there is no use in beginning that theme

again. I have said all I could about it over and over again. It is a pity he is our financial agent and my employer; I suppose you two talk so much business together that you have enough of each other without touching on friendship. Why did n't *you* have more to say in the conversation you reported so well in your letter? You can talk better than Isabella Vane. If you once get started on one of your enthusiastic outbursts, you'll carry Morton along with you, and no mistake. Take him on the late war, now; that topic would just suit both of you. My brief experience of it, you know, bringing me neither gore nor glory, and being ignominiously shortened, at the first end by the circumstance that I was too young to go in earlier, and at the latter end by the termination of the war itself, did not leave me with much stuff either for enthusiasm or for eloquent reminiscence. But Morton has a large fund, if you only draw on it. Of course, you can't get him to tell of his own performances at Fredericksburg or Cold Harbor; you would n't know from his ordinary manner that he had ever commanded a regiment in such awful battles as those two; but if you stir up the subject, you will see in his eye that he was there; and once in my life I got him to talk about it, — really hold forth, you know; take the floor all to himself for an hour. It was the grandest — Well, I won't make a fool of myself by trying to write Morton up into your good graces. If you don't like him, you don't; and if I don't like your not liking him, I can't help myself.

For my impressions of San Francisco, see the letter I send to-day to the paper. It is indeed a wonderful city; but its precocity may fade out, as that sort of thing so often does in children, after a few years. Of course, there is some limit to the kind of progress known as "rise in real estate"; and

then the character of the city's prosperity will depend on its moral and intellectual condition, which might be called more truly its "*real estate*."

I am chiefly sorry to leave so soon the Bay and the Golden Gate. When we arrived, it was fortunately late in a glorious, cloudless afternoon; and as our stately steamer passed the Seal Rock and Lime Point, and swept around towards Yerba Buena and the city wharves, the whole sea, to the far horizon, glowed like molten gold. The narrow entrance to the harbor was sharply defined by the bold shores, dark against the sunset. As we looked back upon them, I could not realize that you were thousands of miles away. Sunset always makes me think of you. So do the stars. So, in fact, do most things.

I shall start for a tour in the gold-mining districts to-morrow. A fellow by the name of Johnson is stopping at the Occidental, where I am, and says he has some business at a place called Goldopolis, and will "put me up" to the ways of the country, if I will go with him. I don't know his business; but he is a pleasant companion, and respectable; and as I have no particular destination, I think I shall accept his offer.

You might as well remember me to Isabella, and by all means to Aunt Margaret. I have seen her a few times in my life, at the old place in Southfield; after what you say of her, I wish to know her better. These restful people are true blessings to mankind. You will be one of them, my child, — when you are old enough.

Ever fondly thine own,

PHILIP.

CHAPTER VII.

SOL REDWOOD'S ICE.

AFTER the brief conversation with the terse and hungry driver of the up-coach, related in a former chapter, Stephen Moore returned to the big sitting-room prepared to make himself comfortable until it was time to start on his return trip. Hank Howe and his confederate in the poker game were standing on the porch, where the moonlight clearly showed them engaged in deep conversation. This circumstance was not unnoted by Stephen, who, making some remark about a possible change of weather, stepped to the door, already partly open, and suddenly threw it wide open, as if to get a good view of the sky. His manœuvre accomplished more than he had any reason to hope; for, although the two men instantly dropped their voices, his quick ear overheard the fellow in the slouched hat addressing his companion, not as Hank, but as Jim. This circumstance was made more suspicious by the evident irritation of the latter at being thus named. Although no word of their talk could be caught, it was plain from the dumb show of their looks and gestures that Mr. Harrison Howe was giving his friend a piece of his mind, doubtless accusing him of criminal carelessness in the way he handled proper names. Finally, the culprit having been

reduced by the power of sarcasm, cool self-possession, and really superior knowledge, to a suitable penitence, Mr. Howe appeared to give him some message or directions, which he received with attention, and immediately walked across to the stable. A few moments later, the clatter of a horse's hoofs was heard on the road, and Mr. Howe entered the sitting-room alone.

Meanwhile Stephen had returned to the interior of the room, where he was assailed with cries of, "Now give us that story about Sol Redwood's ice." Most of the petitioners had heard the story, and wanted it again.* But the stage-driver pointed to an individual who had silently entered a moment before. "That's Lije Pickering's story," said he; "nobody but Lije can tell that story when he's around."

The person referred to was a shaggy specimen of the pioneer. He had been a miner in all the districts on the coast, and would probably catch the excitement again some day, and try the fortunes of the pick again. Just now he lived in the half-way cabin on the Grade, and had charge of the repairs and the taking of tolls. It was his practice to drop in at the station of an evening, sit an hour, and then ride back to his lonely home.

He accepted the implied invitation to entertain the company by the somewhat indirect reply, "Any o' you fellows got a piece o' tobacker?" But before he fairly

* Do people like old jokes and anecdotes because of their antiquity, or in spite of it? Strictly speaking, there is nothing new in that line; wherefore that which seems new is likely to be stuff deservedly forgotten of mankind, and no masterpiece.

began, he waited until the stragglers had gathered, including Harrison Howe, Mr. Johnson, Philip Russell, Bronco Bill, and Kate Campbell. Probably he felt, as do all public speakers, a dislike to see people come stringing in, after the performance has begun; which is only less disagreeable than to see them go stringing out before it is over.

The interval of waiting was filled with lively general conversation, eliciting from one and another brief reminiscences of the early days of the coast,—I mean, of course, the early days of American settlement; for whatever happened in California before the raising of the Bear-flag and the discovery of gold is to be reckoned as prehistoric, antediluvian, and as insignificant, except to antiquarians, as the fossil skull of Calaveras County. Practically speaking, the Pacific coast was created in 1849 for the "'49-ers." What little had previously been done by geological forces, time, the Spaniards and the missionaries, was merely in the way of preparation, analogous to the manner in which Eden was got ready for Adam and Eve.

At last Mr. Pickering, taking up one of his big-booted legs into his lap, and absent-mindedly nursing his knee, across which he occasionally sent a neatly directed jet of tobacco-juice into the fire, began the story of Sol Redwood's ice.

"Yes," said he, "of all the queer fellers betwixt Los Angeles and Yreky, Sol Redwood laid over the lot. Some o' you boys must remember him. Used ter live all by himself over back of Murphy's camp, in the woods. Had a

shebang built o' logs and covered with bark, and thar he lived, nobody could find out how. Never had no company, though he was sociable enough, too, if you met him away from home. The boys called him Redwood, on account o' that way o' livin', and because he was the fust white man that ever laid eyes on the Big Trees o' Calaveras. These yer scientific cusses have got a name as long as a tail-sluiice for them trees; but everybody knows they're redwoods. Sol he looked a good deal like a redwood, — ragged around the trunk, and crooked in the arms, and bare on the top. His hair was red, an' his nose was red, an' his eyes was red, an' his shirt used to be red, an' he never wore no hat, no more 'n the top o' Shasty.

"Well, thar he lived, with that dawg o' his, an' his mawl. I judge he got his grub by hunting, an' paid for his other fixin's with the skins. But they do say he warn't such a fool as the boys took him for, an' that he was the fust man on the coast that understood the valloo o' quartz. Used to go everywhere on that mawl, with his rifle an' his pick, an' every time he come to a boulder or a piece o' float-quartz, off he'd git, and hammer away on it; an' that mawl would stand by, ef it was half an hour, till he had knocked off his specimen and put it in the saddle-bag. Then he'd mount agin, an' the mawl never waited for him to say 'git,' but got right along. An' as for the dawg, he got to be the best jedge o' quartz on the coast.

"I never see the old man myself, but his pardner told me a good deal about him: I mean Castello, him they used to call Spanish George. No more Spanish than you

or I be; but he married a Spanish gal, an' took her name, instead o' givin' her his'n."

"No harm in that, — hey, boys?" interrupted Stephen. "Only, if a man drops one name because it don't suit him, — say it's got played out on the road, — and hitches to another, let him stick to that as long as he can. That's so now; ain't it, Hank?"

"Well, that's what Castello did," continued Lije, unmindful of the interruption; "an' he was Sol Redwood's pardner, but not while the old man was able to play it alone on his own hand. But after a while the old man took sick, and Castello was prospectin' around thar, an' he see that mawl an' the dawg lookin' mighty mournful. So he jest pushed for the cabin, the dawg leadin' the way; an' thar he found Sol Redwood so bad with the rheumatiz that he could n't stir. George stayed by him an' give him his grub, an' sweated him, an' rubbed him, an' give him whiskey, an' stewed up one kind o' weed after another, an' give him that; but it warn't no use. In about two weeks the old man died; an' Castello, bein' his pardner, got the cabin an' traps, an' the dawg an' the mawl.

"He said he found about three ton o' specimens around the shebang. A few on 'em had free gold in 'em; but the biggest part was these yer sulphurets, no 'count, as George said. You see, George warn't no judge o' sulphurets; so he flung 'em all away. Anyhow, nobody but Sol Redwood knowed where them specimens come from, an' he died 'thout tellin'. Like as not the old man hed found fust-class mines till you couldn't rest; but he

never let on, an' he never made no sale. What's the use o' findin' a mine, if you can't make a sale?

"Well, George he took the mawl an' the dawg down to his ranch in the foot-hills; but they warn't worth much at first to him. The dawg would n't watch nor drive sheep nor cattle; nor he warn't on the hunt neither, to any extent. He jest run round all day, nosin' about every rock he could see. At first they thought it was badgers or gophers he was a-scentin'; but it warn't nothin' o' the kind: it was quartz. As for the mawl, you'd better go it afoot than ride *her*. She'd stop short at every stone in the road, an' cussin' an' poundin' would n't start her, until whoever was on her back had got down an' hammered that stone. After that she'd go on as peaceable as anybody's mawl. George he had to ride her on the bottom-land, an' nowhar else. Anywhar in the mountains, she'd keep him a gittin' on and off the hull day.

"The worst of it was, that mawl warn't no jedge of quartz. She'd pay jest as much attention to an adobe wall, or a chunk o' common bed-rock, as she would to the biggest nugget that ever rolled in a gulch. But the dawg, he *was* a jedge. One smell of a piece o' barren stuff was enough for him; he'd trot off, as disgusted as any human bein'. An' ef he stayed around, pawin' an' whinin' at a boulder, you could bet yer life that boulder would assay. It might not pan out rich, but it would pan a color, sure. One day the dawg made sech a fuss over a ledge of rocks about twenty rod from the road, that Castello jest made up his mind to go over

thar and take a look at it for himself; an', gentlemen, the gold was stickin' out o' that quartz like the pints on a prickly-pear; an' Castello sold that mine for a hundred thousand dollars."

"Took it mostly in stock," said Harrison Howe, sneeringly; "and the company burst in six months, and the stock was n't worth a prickly-pear."

"Well," interposed Steve, "I don't see as the dog was to blame for that. The company sent up a fellow to be superintendent that did n't know as much as the dog."

Lije Pickering nodded assent. "He was a weed-sharp," said he, "an' a bug-sharp, an' a shell-sharp, an' a rock-sharp, but he warn't no quartz-sharp.* So, after he had fooled away most of the money, they sent up another fellow, an' he was too almighty smart. He got out gold enough; but when he was ready to pay a dividend, he paid it to himself, instead of the company. In fact, he vamosed the ranch with pretty near twenty thousand dollars, an' they never could catch him."

"I remember *him*," said Stephen. "His name was Jim Barlow, — at least, that was what he called himself then; but they say the Vigilance Committee over at Sonora had a better title to him. After all, you know, the first title is the one that sticks in the long run."

Steve had made a random shot, but it went home to the white centre in the consciousness of Harrison Howe; and in spite of the gambler's self-control, the keen, quick glance of his adversary observed the effect it had pro-

* *Anglicè*, a botanist, entomologist, palæontologist, and geologist, but not a practical mineralogist and mining engineer.

duced. The two men exchanged an instantaneous look of cordial hostility, and the stage-driver chuckled inwardly, "I've got a holt on him now." Two other persons perceived, more or less clearly, a hidden significance in this interruption of Mr. Pickering's slow exordium; namely, Kate Campbell and Mr. Johnson. Kate's subtle sympathy told her that her champion had gained some secret reinforcement of power, and she turned upon him a look of thanks which Harrison Howe, *alias* Jim Barlow, noted and carried to the account of revenge in which Mr. Stephen Moore figured as main creditor. As for Mr. Johnson, the mention of the name of Jim Barlow made him almost visibly prick up his ears; and the glance of mutual aversion which he intercepted between Stephen and Howe caused him much mysterious satisfaction. He said nothing; but, protected from observation by his position, a little to the rear of the rest, made a rapid entry in a book which he took from his breast-pocket. At this moment Andy Campbell entered the room, having finished the express business for the two stages in his little office behind the bar-room. Mr. Johnson's roving eyes settled upon him with an expression of inquisitive distrust; and he made another entry in his book. If one could have looked over his shoulder one might have seen under this head only the words, "Mem. Campbell? Talk to him."

Stephen Moore, having accomplished the object of his interruption, disturbed no further the even flow of the main story, which, though it has no special relation to mine, I shall repeat out of courtesy to the narrator. To

quote what suits you, and then skip what does not suit you, may be the correct thing in controversy; but I may have to meet Mr. Pickering again in California, and I prefer not to play any "sharp game" on him now.

"Wal, now, I'm way off the road," said he; "I started to tell about the time the Mikosmy ferry-boys bet with Sol Redwood on his ice. You see, the old man used to come down to the ferry once in a while; for he could n't stand livin' alone as a stiddy diet, and, besides, he used to get out o' whiskey an' powder. Lead he made somehow for himself; had a lead mine, most likely, and run his bullets out of the ore.

"One winter mornin' the boys was all settin' round the fire in the Mikosmy House, close by the ferry, an' Sol was thar too. There was consid'able ice in the river, an' that was rather remarkable, for it did n't usually freeze so fur down in the foot-hills.

"It'll go away quick enough," says one of the boys, 'with this ere sun onto it.'

"Dunno 'bout that," says another; 'ice is ice, 'n' it takes a heap o' sun to thaw ice.'

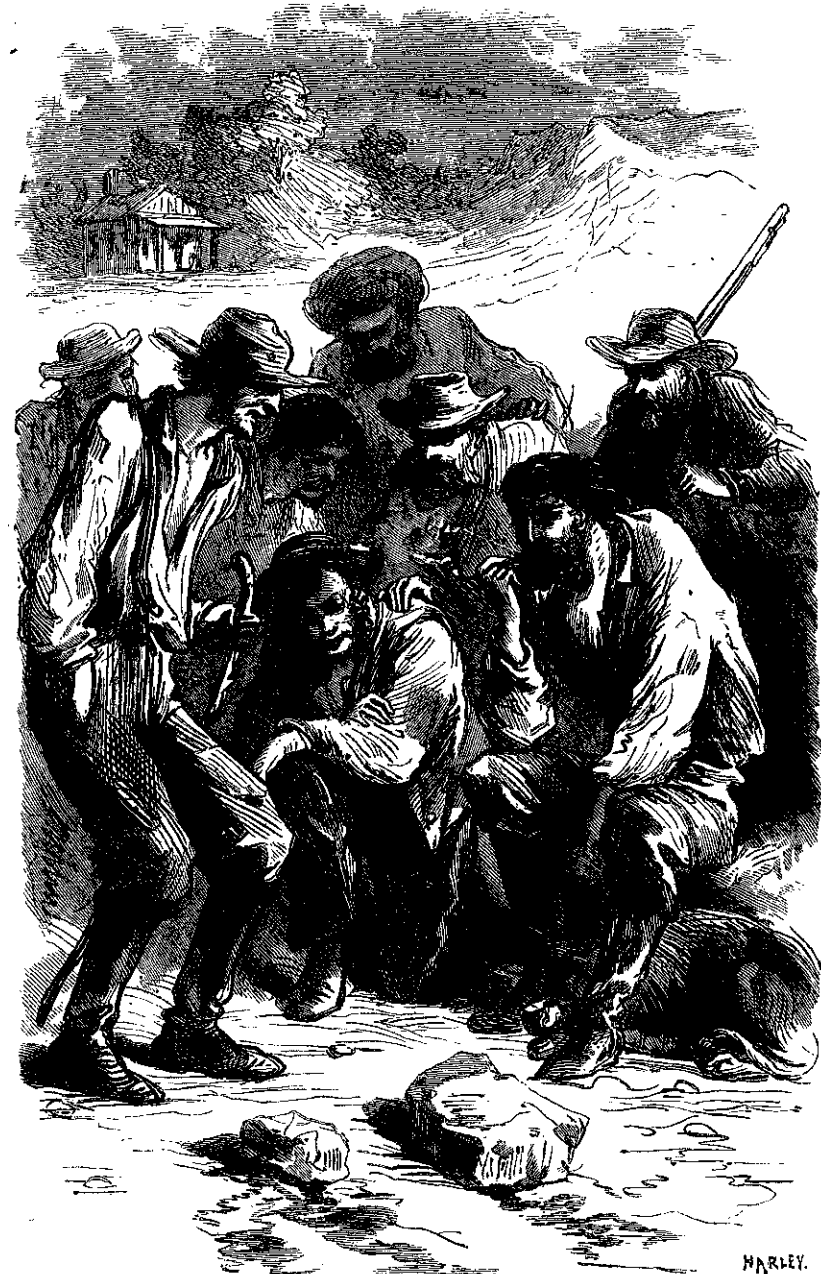
"Thaw yer gran'mother!" says Sol Redwood; 'ef you'd studied nater as much as you hev whiskey, you'd know better 'n that. There's as much difference in ice as there is in anybody; there's warm ice, an' there's cold ice. Now, up whar I live, the ice is cold. This 'ere ice o' yourn won't stand no sun.'

"Well, with that they went to jawin' one another, an' finally they got up a bet that Sol could n't show a piece of ice from the Sy-erries that was any more remarkable

than the Mikosmy ice. An' Sol, he bet that his ice could freeze out any ice this side o' the North Pole. So they agreed that he should pack a piece down to the ferry, an' the boys should cut a piece out o' the river, an' both pieces should be chipped till they hefted jest even, an' set on the side-hill, whar the water could dreen off handy, an' the boys should stan' round an' time 'em while they thawed in the sun. An' the side that took the longest to thaw should rake in the bet an' treat the crowd.

"In about two days down come the old man, afoot and leadin' his mawl, with a pack on her half as big as a Wells Fargo coach. But it was mostly all blanket; and, when they come to unroll it, thar was a chunk of ice, about twenty pound, as clear as glass, an' when you hit it with a pick it rung like steel. The boys had their piece ready; an' they got things in order, an' the show started about two o'clock. The sun come out awful hot, on purpose, as you might say; an' I reckon the crowd thawed some, if the ice did n't. But it warn't long afore the perspiration begun to run off from the ice, an' it was pretty plain that the Mikosmy chunk was a sweatin' the most. Some of the boys pertended to want to see better, an' got whar they could throw their shadders on the ice an' give it a chance to breathe; but old Redwood was too many for 'em; he pertested, an' the umpire decided that the shadders was agin the conditions of the bet. So they had to git out o' *that*.

"About four o'clock Mikosmy weakened so bad that the boys owned up that there warn't no chance for 'em,



SOL REDWOOD'S ICE.

"The sun come out awful hot, on purpose, as you might say; an' I reckon the crowd thawed some, if the ice did n't."

unless a cloud or something should turn up an' give her a show to cool off. But, in fact, she could n't 'a' cooled off; she was too fur gone; an' half an hour afore sun-down she just collapsed all in a heap, like a lump o' sugar in a hot Scotch. An' thar was Sol Redwood, smokin' his pipe as comfortable as a black bear in a holler stump. He warn't worried a bit; his lump was jest as solid as ever, only consid'able smaller. An' when he see the game was his, he took out his pipe, an' says he, 'I'll double the stakes she lasts till ten o'clock.'

"So thar they stayed, and bet on that chunk; an' the sun went down; an' they brought all the ferry lanterns an' set 'em around on the hill; an' thar they stayed an' bet, an' agreed that was the most onaccountable ice ever *they* struck; an' about midnight they give it up, bein' clean played out a waitin'; an' Sol Redwood, he rolled up the piece of ice, about as big as his fist, that was left, an' packed it on his mawl; an', after treatin' all round, Sol started for home; an' says he, 'When you want to bet agin, I'll bring this piece back.'

"Plenty o' fellows that see the hull thing, an' lost money on it too, an' 'll swear to it yet; but as for explainin' it, nobody ever give any better account o' that than old Sol Redwood himself. He always said, 'Whar I live, the ice is *cold*, an' you can't make nothin' else out of it.'" And Lije Pickering shambled out of the room, mounted a "mawl" before the door, and jogged away towards his cabin on the hill.

This story was received with many expressions of interest, and followed with much discussion of thermo-

metric theory. The explanation of old man Redwood, being literally the true one, was, of course, scouted by the sensible minds of the company. It is thus the simplicity of science usually fares among the unscientific. There are no theorists so wild as your "practical men."

Philip Russell listened to the characteristic Western talk with a pleasure not yet outworn by familiarity; and he felt himself drawn towards the jolly driver by a sentiment prophetic of friendship. The impression made upon him by the station-keeper's daughter was perhaps even more remarkable, since she had scarcely spoken a word in his hearing, except the few remarks which she had exchanged, during supper, with the taciturn Bronco Bill and the talkative Mr. Johnson; and these, being more or less affected by the slang of the coast, naturally disagreed with his preconceived notions of a lady's conversation.

The company broke up for a while into desultory talk. A few discussed the reconstruction policy of the government in a manner which indicated clearly enough the different origins and the common ignorance of the speakers. Some rehearsed the latest rumors of big bodies of ore discovered in the Washoe mines, or the fabulous richness of the Black Wax of Humboldt County, Nevada. One man still had faith in the Frazer River country, — grave of many hopes. He thought the disastrous results of adventure in that remote northern wilderness had been merely a "put-up job" on the part of the Bank of California, — the evil spirit of the Western miner's mythology. The teamsters rejoiced over the

amount of land in oats and barley along the Sacramento and the San Joaquin, and prophesied cheap grain for stock, and a good margin on freights, all winter. All turned at last to Andy Campbell, and called unanimously for that fiddle. The station-keeper, nothing loath, produced with reverent care from its case a fine old violin, and, after some preliminary tuning, began to play a lively tune, which set the heels of the assembly in rhythmic motion on the floor.

Presently the stage-driver approached Miss Campbell and said, "Kate, shall we take a turn?" The young lady was usually very ready to assist at an *extempore* dance. Indeed, even on set occasions, it was hard to get more than half a dozen respectable women to adorn a ball-room. Women were scarce on the coast in those days; and good women were scarcer. But there never was a time when the keen instinct of propriety on the part of the rude pioneer population did not shield from insulting associations the innocent. So soon as a virtuous woman took up her residence in one of the mining towns, the line was drawn between good and bad society. Doubtless public opinion permitted men to live on both sides of the line, while it strongly forbade the same thing in women. In that particular, however, public opinion was neither better nor worse than it is in the most enlightened cities of the East; and, at all events, there was a line. It followed that in the assemblies of "good society" a few women had to do heavy duty. Generally they were buxom wives of store-keepers and ranchmen; now and then there would

be a school-teacher; and exceedingly rare were pretty, refined, and educated girls like Kate, who was tacitly revered as a superior being, and whose quiet resolution that she would not dance with anybody who had been drinking, or who in any other way forgot the manners of a gentleman, worked, whenever she was present, an amazing, though possibly in most cases a merely temporary, change in the rough ways which characterized even good society near the diggings. As for people she did n't know, she would n't dance with them at all; and it required a considerable apprenticeship of sobriety and cleanliness to get upon her list of favored partners, among whom Stephen Moore undoubtedly held the first place. It should be added that the citizens of Goldopolis had assemblies where these refinements were not known, and that few of them came so far as Gentleman Andy's to enjoy his superior fiddling and his superior daughter's society, in lieu of the baser delights of hard drinking, gambling, and fighting. Yet occasionally some would make the pilgrimage who could appreciate good music, or who had not forgotten their mothers and sisters. To these were added the teamsters who frequented the road, and habitually made forced marches to stop the longer at Campbell's, "and rest the stock." These outsiders would sit contentedly around the borders of the room, and watch the favored few who had lady partners. It gave their weary limbs the pleasure without the fatigue of the dance.

But this night was not an "occasion"; and Kate, for some reason, was disinclined to "take a turn." Perhaps

she did not care, in the presence of a fine young gentleman from the States, to expose the worthy stage-driver to criticism; for Stephen's dancing, it must be owned, was something less than perfect. The "toe" of the coast, at that period, was "fantastic," but not "light." Perhaps her reluctance had a deeper cause. At all events, she declined the invitation with an unnecessary blush and a deprecating glance which quite disarmed Stephen's gathering discontent. In reply to her look, rather than her words, he answered cheerily, "All right; what's the use of a friend if you can't say no to him?" and, crossing the room to his seat again, subsided into the position of a listener, allowing the entertainment to remain a concert, instead of lapsing into a ball. Andy Campbell played on, in rapt indifference to his auditors. Whether they danced, or beat time on the floor, or sang, was of no moment to him. He was alone with his violin; and out of his ecstasy of solitude he poured strains of such diverse power as to carry the company through many phases of feeling. Gliding from one theme to another, he now hushed the room to silence by the pathos of some well-remembered melody of home, now woke the echoes of a thundering chorus with some stirring lyric, now brought forth a single voice from this or that famous solo singer of the party, by playing a familiar strain of ballad-music that irresistibly called for words. There was no formal invitation. When the notes of "Joe Bowers," for instance, began to sound, the whole assembly looked with one accord toward the only man present who could sing "Joe Bowers," — an ac-

complishment, by the way, not to be sneezed at, and a tune, by the way, which no instrument but a violin can utter. The singer began at once, from his seat, and delivered the comic ditty in a mournful, yet business-like way, which enhanced its humor. Other ballads followed, very plaintive and sentimental or didactic strains being evidently the favorites. "Weep o'er my Grave," "Farewell, but whenever," "Maid of Athens," "Father, come Home" (a temperance song with as many verses as the clock has opportunities of striking before it runs down), were delivered at length, each by its own proprietor, with whose right to his special *repertoire* nobody dreamed of interfering. But these vocal performances were invariably followed by instrumental pieces played without pause by the tireless hand of Andrew Campbell.

There was, of course, some subdued conversation going on, though not to such an annoying extent as in more fashionable audiences. Indeed, these rough pioneers had learned somehow two lessons which have been forgotten in polished society. The first is, that one should not talk so as to disturb the audience at a concert; and the second is, that if one is really paying attention to the music, a good deal of talking, if it is carried on in suitably low tones, will not disturb one. Those who know these important maxims, here at the East, are mostly Germans.

Philip Russell could not resist the impulse to speak to Kate Campbell under cover of this general occupation of the rest of the company; and Mr. Johnson was equally drawn, it appeared, to a private interview with

Stephen Moore. To accomplish this, he made some excuse to call the stage-driver out on the piazza, from which the two proceeded across to the stable. Thus it happened that Stephen did not witness the earnest talk between Kate and the handsome young stranger,—a circumstance which may be, or may not be, important. Let that appear, as Dogberry says, "when there is no need of such vanity."

CHAPTER VIII.

TWO CONVERSATIONS.

MISS CAMPBELL was drumming on the table in an absent-minded way, and looking intently at nothing at all, when Philip, who had already begun acquaintance during supper, addressed her. His first remark was awkward in one respect, for it was obviously out of place in that locality; but it was so like the beginning of "small talk" in fashionable society that it had the double good effect of making her laugh and at the same time feel that he recognized her as a lady. Perhaps, therefore, he might have done no better if he had opened the conversation with more deliberate tact. As he watched the retreating form of Stephen Moore, he made this somewhat silly speech, "You don't approve of dancing, Miss Campbell?"

"Indeed I do," she laughed in reply; adding in a more serious tone, "it is not so good as better ways of spending time, perhaps; but it is infinitely better than the worst."

"You play the piano," said Philip, blundering away from that topic to one, under the circumstances, still more unfortunate; "I see you are following with your fingers the air your father is playing on the violin."

This time Kate did not laugh, but looked almost tear-

ful as she replied, "I had a piano at home—, I mean in the States; and I was very fond of it."

"It must indeed be a great sacrifice to you to live in this wild solitude, with such rough neighbors and without your accustomed pleasures," said Philip, going from bad to worse, in the conviction that he had before him a pretty and disconsolate creature, who would be glad of a chance to condole with him over her lost delights.

Kate resented the remark, as the flint resents the stroke of steel. She never admitted, even to herself, that she was discontented with her lot; she resolutely declined to consider her devotion to her father in the light of a sacrifice; she had striven, not without success, to adapt herself to new conditions, to make friends and to be useful to her friends, forgiving and seeking to amend their shortcomings; and here was a handsome, impertinent young fellow (no, she could not feel that he was impertinent, for he was so polite, and certainly he was taking pains to be kind) who ventured to assume that she was an unwilling prisoner. She turned indignantly upon him; but he had seen his mistake already, and hastened to add, "Pardon me; I did not mean to imply that you do not find compensation here for whatever you left behind."

"I left nothing behind," she replied, "except such things as my pictures and piano. My home and my friends are here. The wilderness is more beautiful than a tame flat garden, and the rough neighbors have truer hearts than men in fine clothes. It is not the best dressed among them," she added, with a just perceptible

glance towards Mr. Harrison Howe, who at this moment left the house and sauntered toward the stable, "that are the best."

"But you do miss the piano?" persisted Philip, ridiculously in want of something better to say.

"Yes," she answered, "the piano — and the sea."

"Then you used to live by the sea?" he asked, eagerly, catching at this clew to her former history. She looked quickly at him, with the air of one suddenly caught in a snare; but she slipped out of it skillfully, and, on the whole, without embarrassment.

"I have seen the ocean, and wish I might see it again. But I waste no time in such thoughts. If I were at the seaside, I know I should miss my mountains. You do not know the Sierra yet; when you do, you will not wonder that I love to live in its shadow. And when you know these people better, you will find them heroic, if not refined."

Philip was profoundly astonished. Was this the young lady who had just been talking slang with drivers and teamsters? The fact was, she was unconsciously talking "her best" at him; and her best was better than the average of ladies' talk, because she got it out of books, instead of persons. Philip felt that he must bring out his reserved vocabulary. He need not condescend to amuse or console this trim, dark-haired young woman, he must rather exert himself to make a favorable impression upon her. Miss Campbell, on the other hand, undoubtedly enjoyed the opportunity to air her finest thoughts and words, as one enjoys a chance to dis-

play (on a truly suitable occasion, mind; nothing is so vulgar as to display by main force, as it were, and without excuse) one's most ornamental clothes.

So for a short time they "swapped syllables," as the cynics of the coast call the intellectual game of mere conversation; and this second stage of their acquaintance, though it was speedily over, accomplished a great deal towards making them friends. It gave them something in common, which nobody around them shared with them, — a sense of mutual comprehension, of co-equality, of fellowship in matters of syntax and style and conventional sentiment, out of which could easily spring a sense of sympathy.

In truth, it was scarcely more than quarter of an hour before that young novice, Philip, might have been overheard to tell Miss Campbell that she reminded him of his sister Alice, — an absurd proposition, if any one else had made it; for the two girls were not alike in appearance or temperament. Alice was gentler, more matured and refined in thought, but far less practically acquainted with the realities of life. She lived mainly in a world of her own, with her brother, and her favorite poets, and the human race as set forth in books by philosophic or picturesque writers. Kate had no brother to worship; and though her devotion to her father was in reality more sublime than Alice's sisterly affection, she was not conscious of its virtue or its charm. When we love with a rapture of admiration, we usually deceive ourselves more or less as to the object of affection. We idealize, dream, revel in the delight of the love itself, bringing

back the fables of romance, and making them true by force of our own will, as children insist on believing in fairies. But the heart that sees and mourns the weakness of its beloved, and loves steadfastly nevertheless, is more heavenly, if less romantic. One love is the blind Cupid; the other is the clear-eyed, pitiful angel. And the angel knows not that she is fair.

But these two had in common the faculty of faith, and the quality of sincerity, however unlike their developments. Kate would have faced a lion in the cause of duty or of love; Alice would have suffered no less, though she might not have dared or done so much. Both of them could trust perfectly, both of them were profoundly religious in nature; though one was meditative and prone to be mystical, while the other was active and efficient. Alice had her spiritual doubts and troubles, and soared above them on wings of faith; Kate had her earthly troubles and difficulties, and went straight through them, clearing her way with arms of faith. In short, one flew, and the other swam.

It was a glimpse of the truthfulness and earnestness of Kate Campbell's character, afforded by some casual remark, which led Philip to the impulsive declaration that she reminded him of his sister; and that being a theme on which he talked with unaffected eloquence, the conversation speedily drifted out of the realm of fine commonplaces. His glowing eulogy of Alice brought a blush to the cheek of the young lady, who, "putting this and that together," was led to say, "I am not like that in the least, Mr. Russell."

Philip ardently wished to say, Yes, you are; but the influence of her candor — was it candor, Kate, or the desire to hear a certain assertion over again? — compelled him to reply, "Well, I don't mean you are exactly like my sister, but you do remind me of her. I am sure you look at things as she does. You must n't judge of Alice by me, you know; she knows what she believes, and nothing disturbs her. As for me, I have got so confused with speculations about life and duty and destiny, that I don't know what to think about it all."

"Then don't think about it," said Kate, archly. "If I resemble your sister at all, it must be in telling the truth; I try to do that. And the truth is, in my case, that I don't worry myself with things I can't understand. Of course, it is right to do right; and there's a verse somewhere — is n't there? — that says it is necessary to *do* right in order to understand the reason of it."

"But what is truth?" said Philip, bringing out his prize puzzle, as it were, and watching curiously for the answer. He remembered how sentimentally Alice and he had discussed this matter, with a sunset for a text, and the old, old paradox of the subjective and objective for a pervading spirit. He had to deal with a different spirit now.

"I hate conundrums," said Miss Campbell; "truth is a noun; don't make an interrogation-point out of it."

"Do you mean that I must not inquire after the truth?" said Philip, a little startled at this new view of the case.

"I don't mean that you must or must not do any-

thing. But if you mean by truth something truer than honesty and kindness, or sorrow and sin, something — something —

"Absolute," suggested Philip.

Not choosing to admit her ignorance of the absolute (though she might have done so with safety, as all philosophers must confess), Kate neither accepted nor declined the word, but went on: "All I can say is, that I don't believe you could do anything with it if you found it. There was a man here one night with a patent for making something that would dissolve everything else. He pretended it was an old secret, known to the Egyptians or the Arabians or somebody, and he was going to apply it to the quartz mines."

"The universal solvent of the alchemists," said Philip, with a smile.

"Well, whatever it was, he proposed to work such wonders with it, that I asked him at last what he was going to keep it in; and you never saw anybody so embarrassed. The boys gave me three cheers." She indulged in a merry laugh over the recollection, and added, "Now, don't you think, if you found your universal truth, it might be as hard to hold as that universal solvent? I only judge for myself, though, after all; the truth that I believe is the truth to me."

"But then another — I, for instance — might not be able to see the same truth," persisted Philip.

"Very well," said she, letting fly a bolt of sarcasm, and lapsing out of Addisonian into Californian; "it's none of my funeral."

Philip winced a little at this, but felt that the missile, though rough, was neatly aimed. "Ah, Miss Campbell," he rejoined, half earnestly, "you don't mean that you would not instruct a poor fellow who was going wrong?"

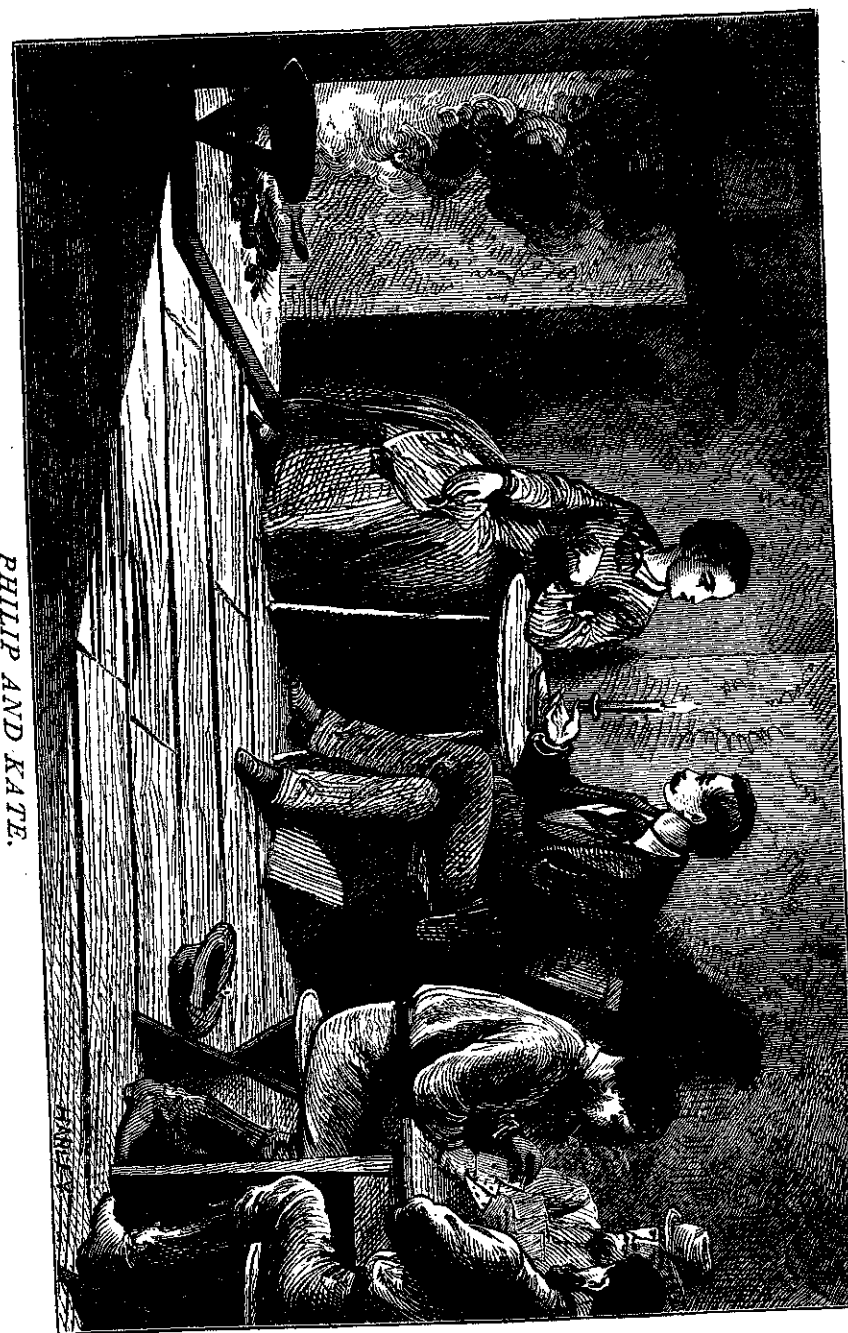
"I don't instruct anybody," she replied, in the same tone, "except the children on Sunday afternoons. As for grown-ups, if they care to know what I believe, I am willing to tell them. But everybody sails his own boat; I have never been able to do much good by shouting out of mine. My Bible may not teach astronomy, but it gives me all the rules I want for navigation. If people prefer to go bobbing about while they study the stars, I am too weak and too busy to interfere."

This was just what Philip had been in danger of doing, — bobbing about, studying the stars; wasting the voyage in preparations. It struck him forcibly that he might sail by the old chart, after all, and probably learn as much about the universe *en route* as he was likely to find out by drifting. His surprise at finding such keen perception and ready retort in this obscure station-keeper's daughter was greater than it would have been had he reflected that the settlers on the Pacific slope were not indigenous barbarians, but heterogeneous samples of the society of the world. And if the reader is inclined to believe the character of Katherine Campbell unnatural or unnaturally located, let him be reminded that nothing was more common, at a recent period, in the communities of the West, than just such incongruities. Moreover, let him consider that Miss Campbell said nothing, after all, that was more brilliant or more profound than the read-

er's own sister might say, if she is a bright, sensible earnest girl, who reads her Bible and the magazines. To Philip, I must confess, it sounded, under the bewildering circumstances, like the wisdom of a new Hypatia, or at least of an Olympia Morata. But these distinguished women are popularly supposed to have been always stately and sublime. Neither of them lived two lives at once, as Kate seemed to do; though a closer study would show that Kate's life was a unit in spirit and purpose, and that she was as truly herself, serene, resolute, heroic, when she walked ten miles after a lost cow, with a revolver in her pocket, or joked and chatted with miners or teamsters in language as picturesquely unfashionable as their own, as when she played fine lady to a fine gentleman like Philip, or taught a handful of ranchmen's children — Mexicans and all — to read and write, or, in the seclusion inviolate of her own chamber, read and read again the few "books that *are* books," which were almost the only remnants of that former life she had so resolutely put behind her.

"Miss Campbell," said Philip, after a pause, during which, in common with the rest of the company, they had listened in silence to the melody of "Auld Robin Gray," played with infinite pathos by Andy Campbell, "I do really, for my own sake, desire to know more of your way of dealing, not with the abstract questions, — I own that you have silenced me there, — but with the practical circumstances of this strange situation in which you are placed. How can you find anything tolerable in these rude men? The sight of mountains and woods is

"How can you find anything tolerable in these rude men?"



no doubt as agreeable and elevating here as it would be anywhere; but does not man spoil for you the harmony of nature?"

"I felt so for a little while," said Kate, "when I first came; but I learned better long ago. My chief experience of the selfishness and cruelty of man was — was not here. All these rough, hard-working fellows treat me kindly; I do not lecture them on their vices; but they know my thoughts, and try to please me. There is nobody to care much for them, except the Catholic priest who comes over from the Placerville district once or twice in the season, and does what he can. Father Ryan is a good man, and his influence is not small; yet I think the boys care more for me, — because, you know, I am here all the time. But the priest and I are on the best of terms; he calls me his little heretic missionary; and I am certain he would give me positive instead of passive encouragement, if it were not for his official duty."

"Duty?" queried Philip, lifting his eyebrows slightly, by way of intimation that a Catholic's duty to hinder a Protestant was of a very dubious character.

"Yes," replied Kate, accepting the logical dilemma without hesitation. "So he says, and I believe him. But I know it is my duty, for instance, to teach the children, because there is no one else to do it; and I have no trouble with Father Ryan. I told him once what I was doing, and that the children were even reading the Protestant Bible, though some of them come from Catholic families. 'Now, Father Ryan,' said I, 'you must help

me, if you can, and let me alone if you can't do any better. I want to keep these children out of the saloons, and away from drinking and gambling and swearing, at least one day in the week. And I want to get up a sort of reading-room for the men, and give them all the innocent entertainment that I can possibly contrive. Whatever you will do to help me, I shall be very grateful for. If you will send me good Catholic books, for instance, or if you will talk to the people once in a while.'

"I wish you could have heard the queer, dear little speech he made. He is an Irishman, you know, and as full of humor as he is of zeal. 'May the blessin' o' the saints light on ye, me darlin'!' he began, 'but ye ought to be a good Catholic intirely, an' sure that'll come in time. It's a perilous thing ye're afther doin', misleadin' the innocent souls o' thim tender children, an' puttin' heretical notions in the heads o' the min. I've no right to encourage ye in yer wickedness. But no doubt ye'll put in a good word, now an' thin, for the thrue Church; an' boy me sowl, the poor crayters is goin' to ruin now, an' ye can't make it worse. Sure, I'm clane tired out fightin' the divils o' dhrink, an' gamblin', an' the loike; an' it's meself 'ud be glad to practice on a lot o' well-behaved heretics, by way o' varoiety. Truth an' they might, by the blessin' o' God, an' the prayers o' the saints, be got into purgatory at laste. It's not for me to say but a heretic might be convarted, — ye'll be convarted yerself, me choild, I'm sure o' that; faith, you've a better show than a dhrunkard or a thafe. I'll be glad

to do what I can to countheract yer bad influence; I'll come an' talk to the boys, an' I'll make some checker-boards (I'm a moighty workman in the carpentry business) to send over to your radin'-room. They'll keep some o' the boys from fillin' their minds with nonsense; an' av ye've no objections, I'll cut the sign o' the cross on the under side o' the boards. An' av I can get any rale good Catholic books, I'll send thim along too; an', faith! it's a pity the young ones should n't rade, — let 'em learn out o' the Protestant Bible, av you must; it's better than nothin' at all. But it's a wicked little heretic ye are, an' I'll write to the Bishop that the haythen are gettin' the upper hand o' me in the parish o' Campbell's Station!'

"All this was accompanied with innumerable smiles and nods of good-fellowship; and I was made quite sure of Father Ryan's sympathy by his address that night to a crowd of the boys in this very room. He told them they ought to be ashamed to be outdone by a poor benighted Protestant in good works; and urged them, in the interest of the true Church, to come to my reading-room, and send their children to my school in such numbers as to overwhelm and entirely counteract the heretic element. With real Irish blarney, he complimented me as a 'swate misgoided crayter,' and told them not to let harm come to a hair of my head, lest 'the natest little Catholic — that was to be — on the whole Pacific coast should be spoiled in the making.' The result of it all was that I had a host of friends, and my reading-room, which, by the way, is rather barren of books and papers

just now, has been heavily patronized ever since. Father cannot close the bar, or forbid gambling; but we generally succeed in furnishing better amusement."

While this strange conversation was going on in the sitting-room, Mr. Johnson and Stephen Moore were having a colloquy in the stable. As they entered the long room, with a row of stalls down either side, nothing could be seen by the light of the single lantern overhead, except the shining backs and tails of the horses; and nothing could be heard, save the regular munching and grinding which indicated that the teams recently arrived were now engaged at supper. The hostler had finished his labors for the time being, and was in the house, at work on *his* supper. The two men had the stable to themselves. They seemed to have come to no understanding, as yet, concerning the reason of their interview; for Stephen remarked, as they passed the doorposts, "Well, Mr. Johnson, it's easy to say, 'Come out to the stable'; but you ought n't to segregate * a fellow in this way, unless you have something particular to say to him."

"Exactly," replied Mr. Johnson; "I have something particular to say to you. You have been on the line here long enough to know who *I* am."

"Yes," said Stephen, "I knew you as soon as you came into the kitchen for supper; but you've been

* This word has been adopted by the miners of the Pacific coast, who got it from the lawyers. To segregate mining claims is to divide among the individual owners the ground previously held in common. Upon this literal sense various whimsical figurative uses are based.

away a good while. Have n't seen you afore since —" Here a gesture from Mr. Johnson checked his words.

"No need of particulars between old acquaintances," remarked Mr. Johnson; "I've been looking after a man high and low, East and West, all the time; and I'm looking for him yet. If I could find him now, he'd hear of something to his advantage. His friends want to see him. There's a trifle coming to him, — a snug little country residence." Mr. Johnson chuckled significantly, as if a country residence were something specially funny. "By the way," he continued, "who goes up to-night?"

"Nobody but yourself and the young fellow you're travelling with, and Hank Howe."

"Exactly," pursued Mr. Johnson. "Now I want to have the young fellow ride outside with you, so that Mr. Howe and I can have a little talk by ourselves. He's a friend of yours, — is n't he?"

"Not much, he ain't!" retorted Stephen, promptly; "there's no love lost between us just at present, you bet your life. In fact, it'll be healthier for both of us if you keep him inside; though I judge I've got to have him on the box next trip down, a guarding the treasure." The stage-driver snorted with disgust at the thought, and added more coolly, "But I've no call to quarrel with him so long as he don't quarrel with me or interfere with my driving."

Mr. Johnson did not seem inclined to continue inquiries about Hank Howe, but asked abruptly, "What sort of a man is this Campbell?"

At this moment Mr. Harrison Howe, who had approached the stable unobserved, got into position under the eaves in the dark shadow (which grew momentarily darker as the moon began to disappear below the horizon), and opposite a chink in the wall to which he applied his ear. He was too late to hear any allusions to himself; and what he did hear appeared to relieve him of some secret apprehension, and, at the same time, to afford him satisfactory aid in some secret design.

"Andy's a harmless sort of man," said Stephen, slowly, as if resolved not to give an unjust judgment, "but there's something the matter with him. Andy ain't quite right. He's had a big scare, some time or other, and he can't get over it. Put your hand on his shoulder, and he'll pretty nigh faint away. Kate can discount *him*, any day. She's got the spirit of ten such."

"Nice girl," interrupted Mr. Johnson, "but never mind her. I want to ask you about the old man. If he should be connected with any goings on, now, say with these road-agents —"

"What, Andy?" cried the stage-driver; "nary time! That ain't his gait. They might frighten him into keeping still, or something of that sort; but as for *doing* anything, Andy has n't got pluck enough to go through * a blind beggar. He ain't exactly afeared o' danger, neither; but he could n't do anything if he knew it beforehand and had time to think it over. Anyhow, I wouldn't like to believe that he'd steal or lie; he wouldn't, sure, if Kate was around; but what one o'

* To rob.

these skeary fellows will do when you catch him alone, it ain't for me to say."

Here the dialogue began to flag; and soon after the parties returned to the house, followed, after a safe interval, by Mr. Howe. They entered the sitting-room to find the concert in full progress, and, subsiding into different seats, held no more intercourse that evening.

It is perhaps worth mentioning, that Howe, on his way back to the house, paused at the stage-coach, which stood in front of the stable, its tongue stretched out before it, ready for a new team. A sudden thought seemed to strike him. He climbed up to the driver's seat, and, partly behind and partly beneath the cushion, found a navy revolver. It was the work of a moment to remove the loaded cylinder, and put in its place a similar cylinder, empty, which he took from his own pocket. "The great advantage of these arms," muttered Mr. Howe, sarcastically repeating a line from the manufacturer's advertisement, "is that, being made by machinery, the parts fit perfectly, and any part can be replaced at any time."

Having thus provided against possible accidents, he descended, and returned to the sitting-room.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CLAM-BAKE.

IF the reader expects to find in this chapter a description of a clam-bake, he will be disappointed. The author's experiences in that variety of picnic have led him to refer the pleasure of the occasion to anything but the clams. There is no intrinsic delight in handling hot shells, and pretending to find tough mollusks toothsome. What one should do is, let the clams serve their purpose as the nominal excuse for the excursion, and, looking respectfully at them, seek one's real enjoyment in other edibles, wisely carried along, and in the society of the ladies. This philosophic use of clams is not despicable. It is necessary to break down the stiffness of etiquette by something more than a mere effort of will. An element of actual barbarism must be introduced, in order to put people as much at their ease as savages or spring lambs. Eating with the fingers is such an element; so is sitting on the ground; so is the effect of a sudden shower, which wets people impartially, and abolishes distinctions based on or indicated by clothing, establishing instead the delightful sense of a common humidity and humanity, — and so are clams.

Now, this particular clam-bake took place on the shore of the Sound, not far from Bayport, and was so well-

arranged that the clams, having performed their office of making things sociable, gave way to cold chicken, hot coffee, and other civilized dishes, which were served with spoons, forks, and napkins, and without ants and grasshoppers. Amateur climbing on perfectly safe rocks, hunting for pebbles and shells on the shore, and cosey conversation in sheltered nooks, looking out upon the crested waves, then engaged and divided the company. At this point our interest in the clam-bake commences; and our attention is confined to a single group, composed of people we know, namely, Alice Russell, Francis and Isabella Vane, and Alfred Morton. The two girls, looking sweetly pretty in their scarlet-trimmed croquet-dresses and broad-brimmed hats, sat at ease upon convenient hummocks of the turf, just where it ended towards the beach; and, at their feet, the two gentlemen practiced graceful ways of reclining on the clean, dry sand. This reclining, and looking upwards into the eyes of a fair interlocutor, promotes intimacy, and is to all romantic souls quite the correct thing, though it is very hard (*crede expertum*) on the elbow and the back of the neck. My dear child, if you ever have been offended to see an admirer, at some interesting juncture, suddenly forsake this touching attitude, retract your unjust censure. There was nothing the matter with his soul; but the going to sleep of one arm, one leg, and the whole cerebellum, made him afraid of cerebro-spinal meningitis. You should have borne with him; a brief period of prickling verticality would have restored his circulation, aroused his dormant affection, and made him

ready to fling himself once more at your feet. During the interview which I am about to describe, you will please to imagine Messrs. Vane and Morton as getting up to stretch themselves as often as anatomy requires. In short, apply to them the beneficent motto of the modern photographer, — unknown, alas! to our tortured parents, in the days when they went to be “taken,” — “Wink whenever necessary!”

It was Isabella, of course, who gushed most enthusiastically about the sea. It was perfectly delicious, she said, to see the rollers come in. It made her think of mermaids and the Gulf Stream, and shipwrecks, and everything. “Now, Frank,” she said, with sisterly dogmatism, “you have had some dreadful adventures at sea. You know you have. Tell us that story you told me only the other day, about the time you ran ashore on the north coast of Ireland, you know, — that place with a long name.”

“Ennistrahull,” said Frank, somewhat sheepishly. “Fact is, Bell, I had to stuff you a little there. You would have it, you know, — said I never did tell any real adventures, with danger in ’em; always got out in some stupid way at the end. So what could I do? You teased me awfully. Can’t keep up that sort of thing, though; it’s a big strain on a fellow’s conscience.”

“And you were not shipwrecked at Ennistrahull?” exclaimed Isabella, ready to cry with vexation.

“Awful close shave,” replied imperturbable Frank; “if we had struck, we’d have gone to pieces, sure. Rocks eighty feet straight out of water. But we did n’t

strike. Don’t ask me. I was in my berth at the time, reading back numbers of Harper’s Magazine. Heard some row on deck, men pulling the main brace, or whatever; ran up to see what was the matter. Captain pointed to this ugly black rock, looking over our stern. ‘Nasty place to go ashore,’ says he; ‘and we nearly did it, what with the tide and the head-wind and all!’ So I went back to my berth.”

Isabella was so indignant over this confession that she threw small stones at her brother in a most bewitching manner. Then, suddenly recollecting that Mr. Alfred Morton had been something or other in the artillery, she turned two appealing eyes upon him, and begged for a thrilling reminiscence of the war. He smiled evasively. A man cannot uncork his thrilling reminiscences as if they were bottles of champagne, ready to bubble and froth at any moment. But a look at the shining waters seemed to suggest some past experience to his mind; and presently he said: “My most dramatic adventure, I think, was afloat, and not ashore. The chances of death in battle are vague; they do not seize the mind with a definite grasp. Even when one is frightened, it is a panic, not a reasonable fear; a sort of general nervous commotion or collapse. But once in my life I was completely brought face to face with death, so that I could perceive no chance of escape; and then I learned the difference between fear and despair. I don’t think I felt any fear; but I know I would rather endure a hundred thorough frights than another half-hour of such calm and hopeless conviction.”

It was worthy of note how differently Vane and Morton related their personal experiences. Neither of them was boastful; but the latter was professionally a writer, and, when he began a story, he gave it a suitable introduction. Once well started, he might have been phonographically reported for a magazine. The "midnight oil" gradually saturates a man, particularly when it is accompanied with ink. It should be said to Morton's credit, that he never "took the floor," as Philip aptly described it, without good occasion and strong invitation. Hence many of his acquaintances knew him as a man inclined to silence, and brilliant only with pen in hand. But now he had a sympathetic audience, and a stimulating inward desire to gain credit in the eyes of at least one of his hearers. As he proceeded, even this was lost in the rush of his own memories and the enthusiasm of friendship.

"At the public school where I was educated, until I began special preparation for college, my best friend was a boy a little younger than myself, by the name of Stephen Moore. He was undoubtedly the brightest boy in the school, — quick to learn, full of humor and mischief, a favorite with the teachers, and the recognized leader in all out-door games and enterprises. All the daring deeds I performed in those days were done under the inspiration of his encouragement or example; for I had more pride than courage, and I followed where I would not have led. I have learned since how great is the difference between boldly following and boldly leading or commanding. The responsibility is more oppressive than the peril.

"It was a pity that Moore, having no living relative, and no money of his own, — he was supported up to his fourteenth year out of some charitable fund or other, — could not carry his studies beyond the public school course. He had a real aptitude for study, and, joined with it, or rather existing apart from it, as a separate side of his nature, a love of change and adventure. Either of these tendencies might have become the ruling one in his life; circumstances threw him upon the latter. When I began to prepare for college, my friend went to India, and I lost sight of him. But six years afterwards, who should come aboard our ship at Madras, bound for Singapore, but Stephen Moore, bronzed and bearded, yet as joyous and adventurous as ever."

"Madras and Singapore," cried Isabella, interrupting the quiet flow of the narrative; "how delightful! You never went to such romantic places as that, Frank. O Mr. Morton, how *did* you ever get there? Madras is where the handkerchiefs come from, you know, Alice!"

Miss Russell knew that, and more; but she said nothing, and Mr. Morton continued: "You may imagine that our meeting was a happy one. Stephen had seen all he wished of the Indies, and was easily persuaded to join me on the voyage home, by way of Singapore. We had a prosperous passage through the Straits, and arrived one evening, just as the sun went down. The ship was surrounded by a throng of boats, with Malay crews offering to take us ashore; and Stephen and I, bewitched with the sight of the land, were eager to go. But the captain said that the harbor was full

of pirates, that all Malays were thieves and cut-throats when they got the chance, and that nobody should leave the ship that night. As soon as his back was turned, however, we resolved to go in spite of him; and, beckoning one of the boats under the stern, we made our bargain, in signs and fragmentary English, to be carried to the town. This point being hastily settled, we dropped our travelling-bags into the boat, and speedily followed them ourselves. The Malays plied the oars vigorously, and a few strokes carried us out of hailing distance from the ship. Moreover, the twilight deepened with astonishing rapidity into darkness, and, before five minutes had passed, we were as much alone as if we had been in mid-ocean. 'Steve,' said I, 'I begin to wish we had n't started. I don't like the looks of these fellows. They're a murderous lot, and they know very well that not a soul on board ship saw us leave. What's to hinder them from doing what they like, without danger of discovery? They've got our bags there in the bow, and —'

"'Hush,' said he, hurriedly; 'that head rascal understands English.'"

"At this moment all further remarks were prevented by the behavior of the Malays, who stopped rowing, as if at a signal, and took in their oars, while their leader, a swarthy, stalwart villain, rose and approached the stern, where we were seated. With a sinister affectation of humility, he said, in the lingo common among the sailors of the Archipelago, that it was very hard work, and the men must have double pay. Stephen heard him silently, and left it to me to reply. Realizing

the hopelessness of the situation, I answered, with an indifference I did not feel, that it *was* hard work, and the men should be paid double when they brought us safe to shore. But the Malay rejoined fiercely that they wanted their money now, and advanced, as he spoke, a step nearer to us. The whole crew arose, as if to rush upon us in a body. Stephen started to his feet, and tore up a thwart upon which he had been sitting. I followed his example, and we stood there, brandishing our pieces of board, and determined to sell our lives dearly. The Malays drew their knives, but the foremost of them hesitated to come within reach of our simple weapons; and the curses and eagerness of those behind threw the gang into some confusion. They knew that, in a struggle, a couple of them, at least, would be knocked overboard, probably stunned too much to swim; two strong young fellows like us, though armed with boards only, were adversaries not to be despised. Then the boat might be upset, and perhaps they were afraid of sharks; or the noise of the conflict might bring other parties to the scene, and these other parties might be Malays, willing to gain a reward for revealing the crime they had not had the chance of committing. At all events, there was an instant, which seemed an age, during which we glared at our foes and they glared at us; and the chief active occupation of all hands was the establishment of their equilibrium, for the boat was rocking violently. There was still light enough to show the teeth and eyeballs of the farthest man. Around us the water could be seen for a few yards, and then the

curtain of darkness, through which I perceived, as the last sign of despair, one or two faint gleams from the far lights of Singapore."

"Oh! never mind that," cried Isabella, unable to wait for the artistic development of the story; "do go on! Oh! *did* you get away?"

"Of course he did," said Frank Vane, more interested than he cared to betray; "don't you see him here? Harbor-police came along just in the nick of time."

Alice said nothing; she saw that in some way Morton had escaped, but she thought with sickening apprehension of his brave friend, who had, perhaps, by some fearful, heroic sacrifice, saved him. Her expressive face revealed this feeling, and Alfred Morton's quiet tones, as he resumed his narrative, deepened the dread with which she listened. For Morton took no more notice of interruptions than if he were a book, and people had merely stopped in reading him to utter their exclamations about his contents.

"It was an awful pause," said he, "and my chief feeling, so far as I can recollect it, was a desire to have it over. A child could see that there was no hope of quieting those fellows. After showing their intention so clearly, they would never bring us to the shore alive, to become witnesses against them before the British authorities. There was but one thing to do, and that was to fight, and to die like men. Imagine my astonishment and disgust, therefore, when Stephen Moore, my friend, my leader in early boyish days, my model of courage and coolness, spoke, for the first time since the trouble

had begun, and said: 'It's no use, Alf; I'm going to give these fellows what they want!'

"Are you crazy, man?" said I; 'don't you know that they want all you've got, and that they will kill you afterwards, to cover up the robbery?' As I looked at him in my indignation, his eye avoided mine. He was thoroughly scared. The Malays saw that a disagreement had arisen between us, and pressed forward with curiosity replacing for an instant their savage hate; but a vigorous swing of my board showed them the limit it was not safe to pass, and there was another pause, during which I berated Stephen with the most stinging epithets I could command. I called him a dog and a coward; I told him he should n't touch a shilling of my money to pay these cut-throats with, that he might bear the whole expense himself. In short, I got so angry with him that I forgot, for the time, the absolutely hopeless condition in which we were placed. But Stephen was not to be moved. He said he should pay the men what they wanted, and take the chances. It would n't be any worse, he said, at any rate, than it was already. In vain I told him that it would be a great deal worse; there was a difference between dying bravely and dying like a pig, whether he saw it or not. He prolonged the discussion for several minutes, and at last threw down his board, and, addressing the ringleader of the villains, who had been near enough to overhear our dialogue, he said, 'You understand English; bring me my bag.'

"Several of them must have understood him, for there was a rush after the bag. But Stephen called again to

the ringleader, 'Only you; let the rest stay where they are; they will upset the boat.'

" 'Better upset the boat, and done with it,' I muttered savagely; but my taunt was ineffectual. The Malay brought the bag, and Stephen Moore opened it, and plunged his arm into it, rummaging for his money, while the native bent over him with eager expectation, and I gnashed my teeth in impotent rage and despair. This pause was the shortest, and seemed the longest, of all. I think it pained me more to lose faith in my friend than to let go my hope of life. The disgusting, dreadful scene swam before my eyes, when suddenly, as though a flash of lightning had revealed the vision to me, I saw Stephen, erect, blazing with wrath and scorn and triumph, a revolver in his hand, and the Malay sprawling in the bottom of the boat, where the revolver, dashed into his face after the manner of a fist, had sent him.

" 'Pull for your lives, you liver-hearted scoundrels!' shouted Stephen, in the wild exultation of a Berserker; and the command was obeyed with precipitate zeal. In one minute the whole ugly crowd was tugging at the oars, while Stephen and I walked up and down, batting their heads with our boards to keep up their enthusiasm."

Morton paused. He had lingered over the progress of his story; he was too good an artist to spoil the climax. But, after a moment's silence, Isabella Vane said that was perfectly splendid; and Frank added, "That Stephen Moore must have been a brick. But I

"I saw Stephen, erect, blazing with wrath and scorn, and triumph, a revolver in his hand, and the Malay sprawling in the bottom of the boat, where the revolver, dashed into his face after the manner of a fist, had sent him."

THE ADVENTURE WITH THE MALAYS.



wish he had shot the ringleader, instead of just knocking him down."

"I forgot to mention," said Morton, playing his trump card, reserved for this contingency, "that *the revolver was not loaded.*" To which Mr. Vane, completely overwhelmed, could only remark, "By Jove!"

"What *did* your friend say to you?" ejaculated Alice.

"What did I say to him? I should think you would ask," replied Morton. "In point of fact, however, it was he who spoke to me, though I owed him the explanation. Just as I was about to express my repentance and gratitude, he astounded me by the cool remark, 'You are the best hand in a scrape, Alf, that I ever came across. It is n't every fellow that would have seen my little game from the beginning, and played into my hand as you did. I was dreadfully afraid you would n't quarrel, and I did n't dare to give you any hint while that wretch was within earshot, and watching us like a panther. But you did it splendidly, my boy; if you had n't pretended to be mad about it, we never could have bamboozled these fellows.'"

"Did n't he know, then, that you had been as much deceived as the rest?"

"At first I thought he did not; but when I attempted to explain, he avoided me so skillfully, changing the subject, and with such a merry meaning in his eye, that I suspected him: and one memorable night, long after, when we lay together in camp by the Rapidan, — he a second lieutenant in my regiment, — we had a long talk

about old times, and I made him confess that he knew I had been completely deceived by his assumed cowardice in that Malay affair. At the time, however, he would not talk much about it, and even made me promise not to mention it. You could n't make me believe *now* that Stephen Moore could under any circumstances show the white feather, or turn his back on a friend."

"You were together in the war?" pursued Alice, curious to hear more of this chivalrous friend.

"Yes; and he saved me twice from death: once by carrying me in his strong arms from the exposed field where I lay stunned by a fall from my horse; and once by a bold rescue, when I had been captured during a reconnaissance by a party of scouts, and was already a mile on the road to the Libby prison."

"How delightful!" cried Isabella; "tell us about that too."

"Not to-day," said Morton; "it is getting late already."

"But what became of him?" asked Miss Stanley, fascinated inexplicably by the character of the unknown hero of Singapore and the Rapidan.

"I wish I knew," replied Mr. Morton; "he was detailed on staff duty somewhere in the Southwest; and I heard that he had resigned, rather than obey an order which he had received. What was the precise trouble, I never could find out; it seemed to be connected with a cotton-stealing operation, and the officer in command succeeded in hushing it up. I am sure Stephen was in the right, and had good reason for his course. At all

events, he went out West, and I lost sight of him. Probably his adventurous spirit has led him into many a scrape since that; but he has courage and ingenuity enough to pull him out again."

"I'd rather hear you tell about him than see him myself," said Isabella. "No doubt he has become one of those horrid pioneers that wear red shirts and big boots, and talk slang, and shoot people."

"I must confess," replied Morton, "that there is danger of that. Stephen had a way of adopting the manners of his associates; drifting, as it were, with the tide. But the spirit of a gentleman is in him, and it would take little to transform him outwardly. If he ever comes to Bayport, you'll find him quite fit for a lion, Miss Vane."

"How grand it is," said Alice Stanley, half musingly, "to have such courage!"

"Indeed, you are right," responded Morton with enthusiasm, "if by *such* courage you mean to distinguish my friend from the ordinary run of brave men. So far as I have observed, courage usually consists in getting used to a danger. Almost everybody is frightened the first time, unless excited already by some stronger feeling. But habit deprives the peril of its mysterious power. One of the coolest veterans in our army is now in charge of a coal-mine; and he told me, not long ago, that his first trip down the shaft, on a cage, made him tremble like a child. It was all he could do to control his nerves and continue his underground journey. Now he feels safer below ground than above. 'There are

only two or three things that *can* happen to a fellow down there,' he says; 'and if they *don't* happen, you're all right.'"

At this moment the seclusion of the party was broken by the receipt of the information that the clam-bake was over, — in other words, the baskets were packed, and the sun was setting, and the dew would shortly fall, and the carriages were waiting, and "Where *have* you kept yourselves? We have hunted for you everywhere, and did n't know but you had waded out and got drowned." This and similar wise and witty observations were received in good part and returned in kind. Our quartette, being people of society, knew how to jump gracefully from the grand serious into the empty jocose, and land on their feet. So, with laughter and chatter, the picnic party gathered itself, counted its noses, to make sure that no flirting or dreaming absentees remained behind, counted its shawls and fans and unnecessary though inevitable umbrellas, stowed itself away in its several barouches and dog-carts, and sped merrily townward with thoughts intent on home and rest, or hotel and "hop," according to the engagements and temperaments of its individual members.

CHAPTER X.

COURAGE, AND OTHER MATTERS.

THE four friends whose fortunes concern us soon found themselves again *tête-à-tête* in the more comfortable, if less romantic, four corners of their carriage; and Alice ventured upon the hazardous experiment of picking up the thread of conversation broken and dropped by the seaside. "You were talking about courage," said she.

Brother and sister Vane scarcely showed a vivid interest in this subject; but they were too polite to protest, and Morton, whose "blood was up," plunged into the theme anew.

"Yes; I was saying that, ordinarily, courage, or at least insensibility to fear, is the result of habit, and does not serve us in the face of unaccustomed danger. Of course, those men who control themselves in spite of their bodily sensations of fear, are courageous in a higher sense, and deserve the greater praise. But I am not speaking of the merit to be ascribed to courage, — only of the physical and mental quality itself; and it is, as you remarked, a grand thing when a man has always full command of himself, body and soul; when nothing paralyzes him, nothing in him needs to be conquered before he can act boldly and calmly. Such courage is only a means to an end; but if the end is heroic, the

means become sublime. And I never knew anybody who was so truly, invariably, wisely courageous as Stephen Moore. Desperation is the mood that lifts most of us up to that level. We shut our eyes to odds and obstacles, and do with a rush great things or foolish things, as circumstances, not we, decide."

"Reminds me of my yellow dog," interrupted Frank, bound to enliven the monologue. "Bought a yellow dog once, — you remember him, Bell, — just on account of his cowardice. Never saw such a dog before or since; big, ugly mongrel, with nothing remarkable about him except that one virtue. He would run from any other dog, no matter how small. Actually seemed to live in fear of his life all the time. Used to go out of the house in the morning by the back way, and sneak along the shady side of the road to the butcher's, where he got his breakfast. Eat! by Jove, how he could eat! — raw beef enough to satisfy an anaconda, or whatever. But it did n't affect his character. Fellows used to come and want to see him, and bet hats *they* had dogs that would run away from him; but when they brought their lapdogs and lady's dogs and King Charleses, and whatever, no matter how cowardly their dogs were, the minute they set eyes on mine and saw how frightened he was, they would get very bold all of a sudden and bark, and away he would go, with his tail between his legs, and would not be seen again until he crept home after dark. Called him Victor, and had no end of pride in him.

"Well, one day Victor started as usual for the butch-

er's shop, and just as he got along in front of the Campbells', out comes Katy Campbell's little silky pup, — with a blue ribbon on him, you know, Bell, — and races down the lawn to the front fence, with a 'rrrow-ow-ow,' as if he were leading a charge of six hundred pups."

"For shame, Frank!" cried Isabella. "You shall not make fun of that splendid Light Brigade. 'Cannon to right of them, cannon to left of them —'"

"Yes, I know," impatiently responded her brother, "blundered and thundered and wondered and whatever, — all the bad rhymes in the dictionary."

"Don't be too sure about the badness of the rhymes," interposed Morton. "There is ancient authority for *hunderd*, — old Saxon *hunderod*, German *hundert*, old colloquial English —"

"*Will* you let me tell my story!" roared Frank, with affected anger. "You need n't fling all the languages at my dog. As I was saying, when thus rudely interrupted, Katy Campbell's poodle, or whatever, runs down to the gate like mad, and Victor puts his tail between his legs and straightens out his back, and away he goes as if the — Light Brigade was after him. Stood on the doorstep and saw it myself. Saw Katy Campbell, too, laughing out of her window. Prettiest little girl in town; used to be spooney on her myself in those days. Gave her that blue ribbon for the poodle. Got a lock of her hair somewhere."

Frank paused a moment to do justice to these tender memories; and Isabella saw her chance.

"Well, as you were saying when thus rudely interrupted —"

"Thank you, my dear; I believe I fainted away. Where, O, where am I? Ah!—as I was saying, her dog barked at my dog, and my dog ran for the next corner to escape the horrid recollection. I think I see her now, clapping her hands and crying 'Sti-boy!'"

"What, the dog? Come, now!" pursued mischievous Isabella.

"Let me alone, Bell; you spoil my story. Victor turned the corner, half dead, apparently, with running and with fright, and out comes Captain Russell's mastiff,—old Ironsides, you know, Miss Alice,—right in the road, '*bow-ow-ow*'! I thought that would finish Victor; but, by Jove! he was so scared about the little dog that he went straight for the big one; and in two minutes old Ironsides went back to the house in a hurry, handsomely whipped, and the most surprised animal you ever saw. Funniest thing in the world! and the funniest part of it was that my Victor was a different creature from that minute,—the most impudent, outrageous cur in town. Could n't be satisfied without a fighting tour every morning. Used to whip all the dogs in the neighborhood before breakfast. The beast was perfectly spoiled; lost his only remarkable quality; and I had to give him away, though I would n't have taken a hundred dollars for him before that day."

All laughed heartily at the sincerely mournful tone in which Frank described this case of canine degeneracy; and then Alice, recurring to his mention of the Campbells, asked what had become of them. "I have heard so much about Katherine Campbell," she said, "but I never saw her."

"They came and went," said Frank, "while you were away at school. Strange affair, their going away. Campbell was cashier of the Bayport Bank, and father was president; so he knew a good deal about it. Father says he would have trusted Campbell to any extent,—a quiet, gentle sort of a man, fond of music and his daughter, and that sort of thing; wife dead; no extravagant habits; pretty little property of his own; no need of money, so far as anybody could see. As for Kate, she was fifteen years old when they came here, and so about twenty when they left. They said her father educated her himself. I know he used to spend all his time, out of bank hours, reading and walking and practicing music with her; and she took the lead in Bayport, I tell you,—Miss Russell not having yet returned from school."

For this half-mocking, all-earnest compliment, Alice, who sat opposite the speaker, paid him with a clever imitation of an affected simper, and a "Why, Mr. Vane; how you talk!" Frank realized with uncomfortable distinctness that he had blundered in saying lightly what he secretly desired to express in all sincerity. Badinage is well enough with all women but one. If you offer *her* a mere compliment, and she takes it as a joke, you have lost your standing-ground. I mean, of course, unless she is in love with you already,—in which case all signs fail, and no one can tell what she will do; but, whatever she does, it will come right at last. There is no art in the mutual-love business; the art is in winning affection. All this Frank Vane had pondered; but,

unskilled in appearing what he was not, he was forever dropping into his careless, easy way, that pleased most young ladies, — and unfortunately did not please Alice.

"It is strange that I did not meet her sometimes, I was here so often in my vacations."

"Yes; but your vacations came at the same time with the cashier's vacations, when he used to take her off travelling."

"I knew her a little," said Isabella. "She was a queer girl, — pretty enough, I suppose. The gentlemen were wild about her, though she never seemed to care about them. That's always the way. But, to do her justice, I don't believe she put on any such airs. I could n't have endured her, if she had. No; she was just the same among us girls; always saying odd things, which she got out of books, I suppose, — and just devoted to her father. She was lively, too; dreadfully quick, sometimes, in her answers; but you never could be sure she would n't turn a joke into earnest, or earnest into a joke. I told her once that I thought she must be two people in one, and she flashed out on me with a laugh, and said, 'Two sides of one soul, my dear; and you can't understand either of them. Don't bother yourself with both!' She was like that to everybody except her father. I think, Mr. Morton, she would have suited your hero, Stephen What's-his-name. He would have the courage, you know, to get along with her moods."

Frank Vane burned to enter the lists against his sister, and combat, in some points at least, what he thought an

unjust and disparaging criticism. But he did not care to expose the details of his boyish dream of love, still less its rude termination. The truth was, that when Miss Campbell first blossomed upon the atmosphere of Bayport, he had fallen madly in love with her, and there had been a period of bliss, during which he experienced the unutterable emotions which bold sixteen is prone to entertain concerning fair fifteen. The lock of hair he affectionately stole, soothing his conscience with the blue ribbon given to the unconscious loser through the vicarious poodle. And, alas! the further truth was that upon attempting, with timid temerity, to kiss Miss Campbell at the gate, he received not a box on the ear, not even a "talking-to"; but she just drew herself up, and looked at him like — like an awfully angry and astonished angel, and walked into the house, leaving him there, dizzy and red and ashamed, to be seen by the stars. It made him uncomfortable still to recall that dreadful moment. I suppose there are occasions in all our lives, the recollection of which is a perennial agony, — times when we made ourselves supremely ridiculous; and this is one leading variety of them. For, by as much as the blissful moment of young love's first kiss is a joy forever, the memory of which has power to stir the blood of age, by so much is the puny and ineffectual attempt of young love in that direction, — but why prolong these harrowing reflections? Frank Vane felt that the less he said about Katherine Campbell in the way of personal reminiscence, the better it would be for his peace of mind. True, she had never made allusion afterwards to the

scene or the subject of his discomfiture; on the contrary, she had met him serenely and cordially, and for several years they had been excellent friends, but "nothing more." True, again, he had ceased to cherish any consuming passion; the flame had gone out under the first bucketful of water thrown upon it. True, finally, he was now, or fancied he was, in love with Alice Russell; and would continue steadfastly thus until he had "put his fortune to the test, to win or lose it all," after which, in case of defeat, he would not by any means be at the end of enjoyment or of activity. But a fellow don't care to have his memory "hanging about the neck of his heart" at all times; so Frank turned the conversation back from Kate to the story of her father.

"You were asking," said he, "what became of them. I don't think anybody knows. You see there was a row in the bank one day, — a forged check, in fact, — and a young fellow named Charley Green found it out. He was a clerk in the bank, and had the paying teller's place for that day, because the teller was away; so he paid this check, — ten thousand dollars, it was. And Green said he handed the money over in fifties to a man he had seen the day before in the cashier's room with Mr. Campbell; so he thought it was all right. But along about noon, when Campbell was gone to lunch, it struck him that it was n't all right; so he comes into the cashier's room, where my father had his desk too, and shows him the check, and tells him the story. 'Nonsense,' says my father, 'the check's good enough; send it round to the signer, and he'll tell you so.' But in ten minutes

back comes the messenger and says the check is a forgery. That put a different face on the matter. 'What made you suspect it?' says my father sharply to Charley Green. 'Because,' says Green, 'it's not written on the same blank as Johnson's checks in general. I paid a genuine one just now, and that set me thinking. This blank, sir, is like the loose ones on the cashier's desk.'

"So they looked on the cashier's desk, and there were no blanks to be found. 'Locked up in his drawer,' said my father, not suspecting anything; 'and very properly. Mr. Campbell is more careful than the rest of us. But we must catch the fellow that got this money. He must be a fool; he can't get away from town by rail for an hour yet, nor by boat until late to-night. You will know him if you see him again. You say you paid in fifties?' 'Yes, sir,' says Green; 'in the new legal tenders just come from Washington, numbered from 13,121 up.' My father told me the story so many times that I remember even the number. In fact, the governor could n't get it out of his head.

"Well, just then in comes Campbell; and my father puts it to him, rather angrily: 'Here's a pretty business, Mr. Campbell; somebody that was here with you yesterday has swindled us out of ten thousand dollars.' He looked awfully surprised when he saw the check; took it in his fingers, and turned it over in a feeble way; glanced up at my father, and said faintly, 'That's one of our own blanks!'

"The governor was so struck with his appearance

as to suspect something, in spite of himself. But he could n't believe that Campbell knew anything about the check. However, he turned suddenly on Charley Green, and ordered him out of the room. 'Don't stand here doing nothing, Mr. Green; but go to the police-office and the railroad and steamboat stations, and do what you can to repair the consequences of your blunder. No matter who forged this check; it was you that accepted it.'

"Green went off, cool enough; he was the coolest fellow you ever saw. Meanwhile Campbell was looking nervously about on his desk. 'I—I can't find those blanks,' said he. 'You have probably locked them up in your drawer,' said my father; 'don't get worried about it. Open the drawer, and you'll find them. But they're no use, anyhow.' The cashier fumbled in his pockets. 'I must have mislaid the key,' said he, in considerable agitation; 'I'll look in my overcoat pocket.' He started for the closet; and while his back was turned, my father took a sudden notion to try his own key. He always said he had no special motive. He was only uneasy, and anxious to do something. Besides, nothing more natural, you know; whenever a key is lost, and a trunk, or whatever, wants to be opened, every fellow's sure to pull out his keys, and try every one of 'em, if it's nothing but a watch-key. So he took the key out of his own desk, and tried it on the other. Fitted first-rate; drawer opened,—and there lay a pile of new fifties; and he saw in a minute that the number on the top bill was 13,121. It made him sick.

"While he stood looking at them, as if they were ghosts, poor Campbell came back from the closet; and when he laid eyes on the bills, he threw up his hands, and fainted dead away. My father caught him in his arms, laid him on a sofa, and locked the door. Did n't try to bring him to; fact is, the governor was so flustered, he was glad of five minutes to think. Could n't well doubt the man was guilty. There was the money. He picked up the notes, and run 'em over with his hand mechanically. One of these old bank officers, that has worked his way up from a clerk, can't see a pile of notes without itching to count 'em and straighten 'em out. But he was a good deal startled to find there were only a hundred of 'em. Five thousand dollars,—only half the check. Must inquire after the rest, you know, for the interest of the bank. If he could get all the money back, he thought he would n't be hard on Campbell. Perhaps he had n't done it, after all, though the circumstances and his behavior were awfully against him. Pretty soon he sat up, and looked around in a frightened way till he met the governor's eye. Then it all came back to him; and he put his hand to his head, and gave a groan. He was regularly used up, and no mistake,—not a bit of spirit left in him.

"Well, my father told him it was a sad business. Here was half the money, in the very bills paid out that morning. The matter required explanation, and Mr. Campbell's position and character—no, reputation—entitled him to every opportunity to explain it before any public exposure was made. Of course, the directors

could not compound a felony; but, upon restitution of the amount lost, they would, no doubt, be inclined to believe any justification or excuse consistent with the extraordinary facts. The governor says he never pitied a man so in his life. Poor fellow! he only raised his head once, as if to speak; but he could n't get out anything but 'Oh, my daughter!' and the best thing was to tell him not to answer a word then, but go home and think it over. At that he got up, and staggered to the closet for his hat and coat. White as a sheet, — only spoke once, — 'Think it over!' says he. 'It will kill me. It will kill Kate and me. Explanation! My God! I have n't got any explanation!' So he opened the door, and tottered away. He always had a quiet, stooping kind of walk; but this time he looked a hundred years old.

"Next morning he did n't come to the bank, and my father was a little afraid he had let the man off too easy. Ought to have kept him at the bank, or had him watched. By Jove! when they sent to his house, he was gone, and Kate too, and nobody has heard of them since. There was an envelope left with the servant, addressed to my father. Nothing in it but a deed of the house and lot, made over to the bank. The next neighbor said he had called there in the evening, and Campbell got him to witness his signature. The other witness was the milkman. Neither of 'em saw the contents of it; neither of 'em saw Kate; both of 'em noticed that Campbell was ill, — had a headache, he said, — and sent 'em off as soon as he could. The property netted

the bank six thousand dollars, — my governor bought it, in fact, to hold it in trust, as he said, till the truth came out, — and that was the end of it. The affair was talked about in town, but the facts were not very well known; and most people believed that Andrew Campbell was innocent. Of course, the directors knew better, or thought they did. But my father had his doubts, and, on the whole, he took Campbell's side, to the day of his death. Many a time he went over the story to me, and said there was some mystery in it that he could n't make out. And, strange enough, another man who always stood up for Campbell was Johnson, whose name was forged. He was agent for some county or other, getting recruits to fill up the county quota; and the money was for bounties. Mighty keen man, Johnson; and, after the matter had quieted down, he went to my father, and got him to give up the check. 'I'm going off West,' says he; 'and some of these days I may get at the truth of this affair.' So away he went, and nobody has heard of him; and in a month or two Charley Green went West, and nobody has heard of *him*; and father died without being any wiser on the question; and I'm a director in the bank now, and *we* are no wiser. It's certainly a strange story, and, for my part, I incline, and always inclined, to believe Andrew Campbell was innocent of the forgery. I could pick a hundred flaws in the circumstantial evidence, — except as to Campbell's behavior. If he was not guilty, why did he faint first, and then make restitution and run away?"

"I am inclined to agree with you," said Morton, "that the man was innocent. The fact that the accusation overwhelmed him proves nothing; and his restitution should have shown everybody that he was not a criminal. If he had been guilty, he would have taken the first opportunity to get away with his plunder. He would have transferred his house long beforehand to another owner, to secure it against legal proceedings. As for his behavior, it is merely an instance of a familiar thing,—the lack of presence of mind,—cowardice, if you will; a state of the soul corresponding to the physical paralysis that sometimes overwhelms men on the edge of precipices, though their footing may be perfectly secure if they only keep cool. It is not the degree of danger that terrifies them, but the greatness of the catastrophe in case the worst should happen. And this mental dizziness, or collapse, may occur in persons capable of great bravery in other respects or at other times. I recollect the case of a young fellow, a lieutenant, tried by a court-martial for cowardice in battle. I was judge-advocate, and, of course, bound to regard the rights of the prisoner as well as the case against him. A judge-advocate, you know, is not a mere prosecuting attorney, anxious to win a reputation for convicting everybody who is indicted. Well, I found that the whole matter turned on a misconception, and that up to the time when the prisoner was found out of his proper place by his superior officer, and peremptorily put under arrest, he had really behaved with great gallantry. Indeed, at the very time when

the colonel arrested him, the brigade-commander had just made a note of his name, to give him special mention in his despatches. But he was so crushed by the accusation and the disgrace attached to the mere fact of a trial, that he behaved, up to the moment of his unanimous acquittal by the court, like a conscious criminal,—to judge by ordinary indications. He had nothing to say for himself, wished he were dead, and so on; and I had a good deal of trouble in working up the case. Fortunately, the evidence was so clear that his vindication was absolutely complete, in spite of him. It was a lesson to me not to judge a man's guilt by his nerves."

"Oh, I *hope* Mr. Campbell was innocent!" said Isabella. "Of course, it will all come out, some day. Such things always do, you know; and how romantic!"

"Seems to me," remarked Frank Vane, taking the other side of the argument by that mysterious instinct without which there would be no discussion, and so, doubtless, no progress, "that you get over his giving up the house too easily. He was n't in such a panic that he could n't make out the papers all right; and the witnesses suspected nothing worse than a headache."

"You would n't make him out guilty because he was n't suspected,—would you?" replied Morton, smiling. "I suppose he brooded over the thought of a trial, and felt that he had no sufficient defence. Since he could not explain to himself the fatal riddle of the circumstances, how could he expect to explain it to the satisfaction of others? If that is the case, it seems natural

enough to me that, after choosing his course weakly, he should pursue it with considerable courage. Your dog ran away from the poodle, you know, to fight the mastiff."

Alice spoke out of a half-revery, in which the conversation had mingled with her own reflections. "I think," said she, "there is nothing but faith can give calmness under such a stress. Faith would do it,—I mean faith in God and in the power of innocence."

"Campbell appears to have lacked both," replied Morton, gravely. "Perhaps either would have sufficed for his case, which may not have been so desperate, after all. But there are cases in which faith in God only can sustain men; when innocence is overwhelmed and swept away like straw, and afflictions come blow upon blow, seeking the wrong victims, confounding our notions of moral cause and effect; when the earth is iron and the heavens are brass,—no deliverance anywhere, even for the righteous,—the times that try men's souls to the bottom. Ordinarily our faith is a good deal like Jacob's bargain: if God will give us bread to eat, and raiment to put on, and keep us in our ways, then shall the Lord be our God. But the "three holy children" that stood before Nebuchadnezzar struck a sublimer tone. "Our God is able to deliver, and will deliver, we trust; *but if not*, be it known unto thee that we will not worship thy gods!"

"I always thought the faith of the martyrs was a meek and resigned sort of feeling," said Isabella. "I did n't suppose that martyrs tried to help themselves at all."

"The faith of martyrs is the faith of heroes too," replied Morton; "no doubt, if Shadrach and the rest had seen a chance of honorable resistance or escape, they would have seized it. The root of the feeling is a sense of duty. I have seen it in soldiers, who stood at their posts, knowing that they were sacrificed, and not knowing why."

"'Theirs but to do or die,'" murmured Isabella, ready with her poetry, and glad of a chance to serve her brother with a neat thrust of Tennyson. Frank replied with a sniff and a yawn, ingeniously signifying both contempt and weariness; and intensified the fraternal retort by saying, "Go on, Morton; I don't mean *you*."

"I will stop the preaching right here," replied Morton; "these topics can wait; and I was near forgetting some things I wanted to ask about Campbell's case. It occurs to me that, if he was innocent, some one else was guilty; and perhaps his strange behavior was partly caused by other machinations, of which we know nothing. A calculating villain might take advantage of his first bewildered panic, and persuade him to fly. What became of that Charley Green?"

"Just what I'd like to know," said Frank. "He staid a month or two in the bank after this affair; but the directors were rather down on him,—said he had no business to pay money on such a clumsy forgery; and, besides, it turned out that he had notified the railroad people, but not the steamboat people, that afternoon; so Campbell got away by boat without any trouble. If he had n't left that deed of his house, you see, there

would have been a heavy loss, — heavy for the bank at that time. We would n't mind five thousand now. But it would have been troublesome for Green; and it was n't over-pleasant as things did go. His cool way made matters worse; and one day Captain Russell blew out on him for something, and said to him, 'How do we know, sir, but you were the accomplice of Mr. Campbell in the whole business?' Green gave him a bow and walked off, and the next day sent in his resignation. The Captain made him a sort of apology, but the board accepted the resignation, and he left town a week after."

"One more question," continued Morton. "Were any of the missing bills afterwards discovered?"

"No; we kept a sharp lookout for a year or so; but I suppose no one has thought of it lately. Handle so many notes every day, you know, and never stop to look at the numbers. Got a fifty from the bank only yesterday." He pulled out his pocket-book and extracted the bill from a stratified mass of paper-money with that skillful jerk which betokens the expert.

This was done merely for an appropriate gesture, precisely as every clergyman, when he enters upon Paley's celebrated "argument of design," pulls out his watch* and holds it in his hand to emphasize the hypothesis, "Suppose an untutored savage, roaming in his native wilds, should find a watch in his pathway." But the surprise of the untutored savage would be insignificant in comparison with the astonishment that overspread

* If your minister does not possess a watch, for this and other purposes, it is high time you gave him one.

Francis Vane's face as he saw, by the last sunset ray gleaming redly on the red figures of the treasury stamp, the number 13,247. It was one of the missing notes. Quickly he made known the startling discovery; and, though neither of the gentlemen could believe it to bear special significance after the lapse of so long an interval, both the ladies were sure it would be an important clew to the truth.

"You will try, at least," pleaded Alice.

"I will, indeed," replied Frank, promptly, with an inward resolve that he would distinguish himself in the eyes of this fair one by vindicating, if human skill could do it, the father of the other fair one.

By this time the town was reached, and the members of the quartet were dropped at their respective places, — Alice first, at the gate of the villa, and Frank and Isabella at their residence near by, leaving Morton to be conveyed in solitary grandeur to his lodgings at the hotel.

We cannot follow them all. Suffice it to say that Alice devoted the evening to a long letter, in which the heroism of Mr. Stephen Moore and the innocent woes of Andrew and Katherine Campbell were dilated upon with enthusiasm, and the opinion was expressed that the noble hero who stood by his friend, and the noble girl who stood by her father, were worthy of each other. This piece of romance was overstrained. Perhaps Alice did not feel it very sincerely. By the time Philip received the letter, he was personally well acquainted with the virtues of both parties, and *he* would have given a good deal to be able to pronounce the idea absurd or impracticable.

CHAPTER XI.

UP THE GRADE.

THE impromptu concert was over, and Gentleman Andy, with a sigh, tenderly replaced his violin in its case. With it he laid away a certain air of refinement that had crept over him in the rapture of his musical soliloquy. With the manner of one at the burial of a friend, he deposited the beloved companion in a chest, whence he had taken it, then turned wearily back to life, and was somebody else again. The company in the sitting-room began to scatter. Some of the teamsters went out to camp on the ground under their wagons; some of the miners started to walk back to their lonely cabins up the cañon; one or two men brought up their horses, tightened their broad "cinches,"* and with jingling of Spanish spurs mounted for a night journey, less dusty and oppressive than travel by day. Miss Campbell vanished to her own apartment, with a good-night to Philip, too cordial for mere acquaintanceship, yet not so impressive as a friend's farewell. The others got no good-night from her at all, but it was their own fault; they were not paying attention, except Stephen Moore, whom she accidentally overlooked, but who noticed her

* Mexican saddle-girths, formed of loose parallel strands of cord or leather.

parting from the young fellow bound for Goldopolis in the coach. It puzzled him. "Kate don't treat people that way, first go off," said he to himself. "That's queer, now; a little too kind and not kind enough. Bids him good-by as if she'd known him for years, and yet as cheerful and jolly as if he was coming back to-morrow!"

Stephen had hit the exact truth. She *had* known him for years, and he *was* coming back to-morrow. The reader will easily understand, after the revelations of preceding chapters, how the Russells, who had been reckoned for many years citizens of Bayport, should have been better known by name and general rumor to Kate than the Campbells, who had come like a comet and gone out in sudden eclipse, were known to Philip. He was away at school and college during the period of their residence near his father's house; but the youthful gossips of the place had told enough of his good looks and cleverness to give Miss Campbell a pretty clear notion of him. Once she had seen him; and though he had forgotten it, she had not. It was not a specially memorable meeting. As she and her father were leaving Bayport for one of their summer trips, Philip came striding up the street, eager to reach home, where he was going to spend his vacation. This purpose had been enough to give him what he seemed to lack now, an air of joyous triumph, a forward look. She had known it must be young Russell, and had thought him handsomer than the girls had said he was. When they met at the Home Station after several years, the change in each had

been sufficient to prevent recognition, even between acquaintances. But she had found him out during their conversation; and the meeting had given her strange thrills of pleasure-pain. The sight of him brought back all the dreams, and with them the sad waking from dreams, of her ardent youth. He seemed the splendid incarnation of the life she had once joyously begun, and from which she had been torn away under mysterious and inexplicable circumstances. For Andrew Campbell had never told his daughter of what he was accused. She had only gathered a vague hint or two from the newspapers, which did not dilate upon the subject of the forgery, being unable to get the details, and not having attained, as yet, the greater modern art of creating them. It was a perilous thing to leave her in ignorance. The chances certainly were that a daughter so treated would be forced to admit to herself, however unwillingly, some degree of guilt in her father. But this she had never done, because she loved him and trusted him. His infirmity she had since learned to know and to pity; but any connection of him with crime was a thing inconceivable to her. So she had clung to him through every change, putting resolutely behind her the bright world from which he led her away. But now came the shining genius of that world; and in a moment its spell was again upon her.

As for Philip, he had heard of Kate Campbell, but had given himself no trouble to inquire about her in the old Bayport days. He could not recall the names of those belles of the town, even, to whom he had at various

times been introduced. How should he recognize one whom he had never before happened to meet? But in his case memory was not necessary to enforce the arguments of present feeling. He was thoroughly captivated. Hence it was natural, if not quite ingenuous, that he should say, just before the close of their cosey corner chat, that he "should be obliged" to come back from Goldopolis by the return stage. What would oblige him it is not hard to guess. *Tendresse oblige* is a veracious proverb, or would be, if the fact were not too notorious even to be proverbial. Philip excused himself to himself by the thought that, as a newspaper correspondent, it was his duty to study the social conditions of the country; and the conditions at Campbell's Station promised to be very social indeed!

Stephen sauntered out to the stable, where the hostler was harnessing the horses; and Andrew Campbell, lighting an extra candle, went into the little express-office to prepare the mail, express freight, and treasure. He was followed, to his surprise, by Mr. Johnson, who entered the office with him, and deliberately locked the door.

"No time for introductions," said the affable Mr. Johnson, in a business-like way. "Do you know this Mr. Harrison Howe?" The unhappy station-keeper, struck dumb by the question, to which he attached some vaguely dreadful significance, could only bow his head in reply.

"Did you know him when he was Jim Barlow?" At this question Campbell breathed again, and held up his head with a respectably audible "No."

"Nor when he was Charley Green?" Here Campbell's soul evaporated suddenly, and he collapsed again.

"Confound it, man," exclaimed his inquisitor; "I'm not after you, I'm after him. If you had any pluck now, you would help me, and help yourself. He got you into a scrape once, and you owe him one for that. Take care he don't get you into another. My name's Johnson."

This announcement produced less effect than the speaker had anticipated. Campbell merely looked at him in a bewildered way, absorbed already in a panic that bereft him of the power to put this and that together. But the traveller had a greater shock for him in reserve. "There's my card," said he, extracting carefully from his wallet a folded and worn paper, which he spread out and held before the eyes of the station-keeper. It was a check for ten thousand dollars on the Bayport Bank. "That's my name," said he, — adding significantly, "if I did n't write it myself. Seen it before, have n't you?"

There was no reply. All the past rolled back upon the weak and helpless soul of Andrew Campbell; and at this critical moment, when a brave word would have broken the fatal charm forever, he was speechless. Mr. Johnson, deeply perplexed, returned the check to his wallet, and contemplated with great vexation the bowed form before him. "Well," he said at length, "if you can't talk, I can't. I shall be back in a few days, and you'll think better of it."

He left the room; and Andrew Campbell, in strange composure, went on mechanically with his work, sorted,

registered, and packed the parcels for the coach, while Mr. Johnson paced the porch, soliloquizing vehemently. "The man's innocent; I'll bet on that," he said to himself. "But what a fool! Here all these years I've been thinking that I had only to meet him, and straighten out the whole affair. I thought he would give me the evidence to fix the other fellow; but as soon as I give him a first-rate chance, down he goes in a heap. Of course, I can't be any plainer with him now; if he should by any possibility be connected with Green, he might go and warn him, and what would W. F. say to me then? But after this affair is off my hands, I'll come back here, and sit square down to it, and have the truth out of him. If I can't go for Mr. Green, I've got a good case against Mr. Barlow; and I suspect I'm just in time to stop a neat little game for Mr. Howe. No, I won't stop it, but I'll spoil it."

The coach drew up before the station, and Stephen cheerily shouted, "All aboard!" As Philip and Howe came out at this summons, the driver called to the former, "You'd better sit up here!" and pointed to the seat by his side. Nothing loath, Philip climbed up and took the indicated place. He was fond of riding outside, — as who is not, except the experienced and *blasé* traveller, who wants to sleep, and knows well that the inside corner with the back to the horses is the best place for his purpose? This was the place of which Mr. Howe coolly took possession, while Mr. Johnson stretched himself on the back seat. "It's too light a load for comfort," said Stephen; "but the road is smooth enough."

Campbell now emerged from the house, carrying the treasure-box and a number of packages. These he handed up to the driver, who stowed them away in the front boot, under his seat. During this operation the station-keeper naturally stood by the forward wheel, and his head was quite near the corner where Harrison Howe was ensconced. It was perhaps to preclude the opportunity of reply that the latter chose the last moment, just before the start, to say in a low tone, "It will be well for you to meet me to-morrow afternoon at the half-way cabin. I *must* see you there." The quiet invitation carried a threat in its tone. Campbell heard it, and made no reply. No more did Mr. Johnson, who also heard it, from the opposite corner of the stage, where he sat rolled up in his blankets, apparently as indifferent as he was really intent.

Stephen gathered up the reins, and took the whip from its resting-place on the roof behind him. The hostler, who had been holding the leaders, let go and sprang aside; the fiery mustangs plunged forward, but speedily felt the master's hand; and in a few seconds the whole team had settled to their work in a free, swinging trot, and the stage rattled away up the road. For half a mile this lively gait was maintained over gently ascending ground. Then, as the hill became steeper, and the shadows of the pines gathered dark over the road, the ardor of the animals subsided, and they fell into the quick walk which is the highest accomplishment of stage-horses.

It will be remembered that Mr. Johnson had been, at

his own request, put inside with Harrison Howe. Yet he made no attempt to improve the opportunity of further acquaintance. On the contrary, he went to sleep immediately. To go to sleep at will is a convenient habit not over-difficult to acquire for those who travel much in stage-coaches; and the reason of its exercise at this moment, I venture to say, was the desire of Mr. Johnson to be wide awake at a later period, when there would be some use in it.

Meanwhile Harrison Howe sat motionless and impassive, but did not sleep. His thoughts it would be difficult to describe. The thoughts of a villain are peculiarly his own, and incomprehensible to others. They are seldom sincere. The worst men justify themselves to themselves, I suppose; and, when they look their own purposes in the face, call them by fairer names than belong to them. This man came as near the pure satanic as human nature could come. He had the hostility to society of a socialist, without the blind passion, sense of wrong, or utopian enthusiasm of a socialist. The world was not so much his enemy as his prey; life was a game, and the main thing was to win it. The greater the odds, the greater the stake and the triumph. Yet he had a flimsy subterfuge or two in his secret soul, after all. One was the plea of contempt for the individuals he wronged. Why should not these boorish miners be skillfully deprived of their money? They would only waste it in some other way, if not in play. And as for swindling a stock company, or robbing Wells Fargo's express, it was only giving the parties what

they deserved. Mining companies were swindlers, and the express business was a regular robbery.

Mr. Howe had recognized Mr. Johnson as soon as he set eyes on him; and it was important for him to know whether he had himself been recognized in turn. From what he heard while he listened under the eaves of the stable, he had inferred that the quondam county recruiting agent was now on special service for the express company, and suspicious of an approaching highway robbery on the road. But he had not heard his own name in that connection, and, unless identified as the Bayport bank clerk, he felt reasonably safe. However, before Johnson dropped off to sleep, he had ventured a careless remark about the road and the weather, and the question, "Are you going beyond town?" to which the traveller replied promptly, "Just as fast, sir, as W. F. & Co. can carry me. My business over at Virginia can't wait." This reply had given him great satisfaction; and he had turned with free mind to the weaving of his dark plans, — grown darker, within the hour, by a new thread of crime. He was slightly troubled by a double purpose. It is a great mistake to pursue two ends at once by the devious path of iniquity. The road is slippery enough at best, and hard to travel with a single object only in view. But Mr. Howe had allowed himself to be tempted with the notion that he could betray Andrew Campbell so far as to additionally protect himself in a contemplated villainy, and then make use of the father's fresh peril to gain possession of the daughter. She should be afraid of him, and then grate-

ful to him, or, if not grateful, at least helpless to resist. At all events, she should marry him. His former threat had partly failed of effect, by reason of Kate's unexpected ignorance of her father's history. But he would make that plainer, — and more too. As for ruining the old man, he was ruined already; why should he be in the way? So long as things continued as they were, the girl would not leave her father, — persisted in throwing away her life for his sake. Well, let her do something better for his sake; or lose him first, and then listen to reason. She might be glad to get a husband, being the daughter of a disgraced outcast. He reflected with satisfaction upon his own magnanimity in stooping to her. *He* had never been disgraced, — so long do men cling to the dead leaves of reputation when the sap of character has departed! It is the dead tree boasting itself over the stripped but living one.

Meanwhile a new friendship was making famous progress outside, on the box. Steve had accepted a cigar from Philip, and two stars of lurid hue had thus been added to the galaxies of night. The sky was deep and clear, and the constellations shone with a brilliancy unequalled in more humid climates. The lamps of the coach illuminated brightly a little space on either side, and their rays streamed forward across the backs and ears of the steadily pulling team, and threw on the road in front of the leaders huge misshapen shadows that glided on ahead in ghostly silence. Beyond these the road could still be seen, dimly white, in spots and segments, through the intervals of the trees. There was

the sound of rushing waters in the unseen cañon on the right; and over all were discerned, from time to time, the snowy summits of the Sierra, holding mute converse with the stars.

"This is grand!" ejaculated Philip, willing to let his companion know that he could appreciate the beauties of nature, and at the same time ignorant whether that companion possessed a soul above his brake-bar.

He was naturally surprised when Stephen replied, "You may say that, particularly when you get up on the Grade. There's nothing, sir, to beat the Grade, except the Yosemite and the Himalayas. Some folks bet on one and some on t'other; but it's not many have seen all three; and as for me, I say, give me the Himalayas once in my life, and the Yosemite once a year, and the Grade for a steady beverage."

"Suppose you trot out your reasons for that opinion," said Philip, venturing a little appropriate slang on his own account, just to make things sociable.

The driver looked around with a shrewd twinkle in his eye. "You could drive six horses, with a little practice," said he. "You take to things kindly; I can see that. Now what's the use," continued Stephen, warming to his theme, and, to the infinite surprise of his listener, dropping almost every trace of the coast dialect as he proceeded,—"what's the use of not accommodating yourself to things? You drive against a stone; which has to give way, you or the stone? I tell you, facts are too many for us, in this world. Folks that mean to get ahead must steer round among them; and folks that

keep stiff in spite of everything, and won't change, are just rocks on the coast, and nothing more."

"Do yielding and accommodating people get ahead?" inquired Philip, feeling inwardly that his own easy-going ways entitled him to this description.

"No; but go-ahead people are accommodating," replied the philosophic John. "There's a high old difference,—just as much as between a ship and a chip. One is going somewhere, and the other is n't. Now there was a gentleman by the name of Paul,—I used to hear a good deal about him, more than I have heard lately,—and he accommodated himself to all men, according to his own story, to see if by any means he could n't save some of 'em. Father Ryan, over here, is another of the same breed; but I don't feel so sure of his kind of salvation. However, it's the best he's got, and he goes in for it like a man. I like to see a man pick up the ways and the talk of people round about him. I do, every time. Bless you, to hear me sling observations with any of our boys up at 'Opolis, you'd think I was the oldest galoot on the Pacific coast! but I'm about the last importation,—only out three or four years. And I'm the only man in four counties that can chant Chineese with a Chineese, or tell what the mashed spiders mean that they call handwriting. That I learned in Hong Kong. It is a great deal handier to talk to people as they talk to you. If ever I meet Captain Morton again, it won't be a week before I have my tongue rigged for college lingo. I never was at college, you know; but being along with Alf Morton is as good as going to college."

Philip started at the name of his friend; and a few hurried questions established the identity of the stage-driver as the former Lieutenant Moore, of whom he had occasionally heard Morton speak. After this, their acquaintance advanced with speedy strides; and for some time they were sufficiently occupied in exchanging reminiscences of "Cap" Morton, as Stephen, with the irreverence of affection, called the man who, though he "went in" a captain, had "come out" a brevet brigadier, but preferred the distinction of no military title at all, after his military service was ended. Talking of Morton led Philip to mention Alice; and Stephen seemed to infer at once some special connection between them. He asked many questions, to which Philip replied with fraternal enthusiasm; at last he said, "If you've got a picture of her, hand it over."

Philip produced a card-photograph, which he held towards the driver, saying (as we always say on such occasions), "It don't do her justice"; and adding, "And how can you see it in the dark?"

"I'll show you," replied Stephen; and gathered his reins and whip in one hand, — the six lines passing in and out among the fingers in an intricate order, known only to the initiated, but to them familiar as five-finger exercises to Rubinstein. Then he knocked the ashes from the end of his cigar, and having thus laid bare the glowing coal, took the photograph and held it close to this novel source of light, moving it slowly around, so as to bring out, one after another, all the points of the picture. In this way he solemnly traversed the waving

hair, the gentle, yet bright features, the dainty laces, and the general refined and graceful *pose*. Everything bespoke the combination of taste, breeding, and earnest intelligence. It was "a notch above Kate, even," thought he, with a pang of remorse for his disloyalty, as he returned the likeness, saying aloud, "She'll do!"

Philip was not quite ready to discuss with a new acquaintance his hopes that Morton and his sister might make a match of it; so he changed the theme abruptly, saying, "You have not told me yet the reasons for your opinion about the scenery of the Grade."

"Well," said Stephen, relapsing into miners' slang as easily as Wegg dropped into poetry, "I don't know as I can segregate my reasons. But I've been in the Himalayas once, and I'd like to have as many thousand dollars as I don't want to go again. Hitched on to a party led by a young Englishman, — a bully boy, he was; as cool as the bottom o' Lake Tahoe, and as keen as the top o' Shasta. But he could n't make food, nor stop winter; and we had a hard time crossing the range. When we came down into Thibet, half starved and half froze, may I be a bull-whacker if they did n't turn us back into the mountains, and paradise, full of cashmere goats, right before our eyes! But we had to git; those fellows laid an injunction on us. They've got a soft thing of it for themselves, and they don't mean to have any foreigners staking out claims there."

"Perhaps they have a law, 'None but Asiatics allowed in this district,'" said Philip, mischievously, *almost* quoting a prohibition which many of the American districts had enacted against Chinamen.

Stephen laughed. "Well, they played our own game on us, that's a fact; but we never drove our Chinamen back into the High Sierra in the middle of winter; and that's what they did to us. Almost a third of us got down to the Ganges alive. You bet, I've had enough of the Himalayas. But the scenery was the real thing. There's one cañon in there, as perpendicular all round as the Yosemite, and considerably deeper. There is n't a green thing in it, for the bottom of it is over fourteen thousand feet above tide. When we camped in it, one night, the waterfalls were just spilling down over the edges all round us, so thick you could n't count 'em. In the night they all froze, and when morning came the walls of that cañon were just hung with ice. About ten o'clock the sun got up far enough to shine down into it, and the way that ice sparkled and flashed, discounted all the diamonds in creation! It was the biggest thing on ice ever *I* saw; but once is enough. The show is too expensive; and any other fellow can have my season-ticket.

"And what about Yosemite?" queried Philip.

"Yosemite can't be beat on this footstool," replied the driver, "but there's one thing the matter with it. When you've got there you're there, and there's nothing else to do but go back again. It don't come in incidentally, like the Grade —"

Here one of the leaders showed symptoms of shirking his share of the pulling; and Stephen, stopping the stage, handed the reins to Philip, and descended into the road, where he collected a quantity of small stones,

which he tossed up to the seat, and then returned to his place. The object of this manœuvre was soon evident; for the next time the lazy leader hung back, secure in immunity from the whip by reason of his remoteness, Stephen "rocked" him neatly between the ears, and he recognized the situation at once. "That horse knows," said the driver, "whether I've got rocks aboard or not. He suspected what I lit down for, and now he has got thoroughly posted. He'll not trouble me any more." So saying, and adding a gentle granitic reminder on the flank of the noble animal under discussion, he returned to the subject of conversation.

"As for the Grade, I'll say nothing about her. There she is! you can judge for yourself." At this moment the coach emerged from the last belt of forest. The timber-limit had not, indeed, been passed; there were patches of trees in inaccessible places still above. But near the road all the trees had been cut down for the use of the miners; and the principal aspect of the surface (the stumps being comparatively invisible in the nocturnal light) was that of barrenness and nakedness. The road struck into the main cañon, and followed with regularly ascending inclination the inequalities of the mountain-side. It could be seen as an oblique line, now boldly shown along the face of a projecting cliff, now turning abruptly out of sight, to enter a side-gulch, and run around it, reappearing on the side of the next projection, a little higher up. To avoid bridges, these mountain highways "head" such side-hollows, instead of crossing them directly. Still higher, the Grade scaled the

steep mountain in long zigzag lines, and crossed at last the summit of the pass, — a neck of bare, glacier-rounded granite, just at the lower limits of the snow-fields. The cañon looked a huge, bottomless chasm in the starlight; and while the coach advanced steadily, with leisurely creaking of harness and thoroughbrace, Philip could scarcely refrain from a shudder, as he glanced upward at the mighty masses, or downward into the abyss profound. To his imagination, the road was scarcely wide enough for the wheels; and every time it turned one of those sharp corners, to "head" a side gulch, it seemed as if the leaders were certainly about to walk straight over the brink. But he said nothing of such apprehensions, knowing that they were doubtless the mark of a tyro, and feeling, moreover, that sense of personal irresponsibility which every well-regulated mind experiences on shipboard or in a railway car or a stage. It is not fatalism, but trust in the driver, or engineer, or captain; and a very good model it would make, in a small way, for the larger trust which men try — and fail — to repose in Providence.

Stephen seemed to think he had said enough in the purely æsthetic line, and proceeded to invest the Grade, in his own picturesque style, with the human interest of romance and adventure. "The best grade," said he, "in the Sierra, high or low. Wide enough in a good many places for teams to pass each other. Can do it most anywhere, in fact, if you've got the *savey* and the pluck. Right about here is where Curly Tom had the closest shave ever *he* had. You see he was coming down the

Grade on a stiddy trot, traces all a-swinging, and everything loose, when one of the wheels struck a stone, and the jar broke the brake-bars, close by the shoes, on both sides. That left the coach free to run right on to the horses; and all Tom could do was to lay on the whip, an' holler, and do his level best to keep in the road. So down they came on the run, the coach jumping about like a crazy hydraulic nozzle. But what Tom did n't know about driving was n't possible to ten fingers and two eyes; and they came along as sure as a snow-slide, till they had n't more than quarter of a mile to easy ground. But just as they jerked around this corner here, what should Tom see but a big double-action,* with an eight-ox team, standing putty near the middle of the road, twenty rods in front of him. The oxen sort o' huddled a little towards the hill, but there was n't time to budge the wagons; and the horses knew what was up, as well as anybody. One second more, and they would have jumped the edge in a scare, and carried the coach with 'em. Tom thought it was a dead thing, too, at first; and so it was, for anybody else: that coach, with nine passengers inside and nine out, could n't have been insured at ninety-nine per cent, without a bonus. But most of the passengers were old hands, and had known for ten minutes past that something was to pay; so they were on the lookout to help, only they said nothing about it, on account of the woman. No use scaring her, — hey, boys?"

"Go on!" ejaculated Philip, impatiently; for Stephen

* Two wagons, coupled together.

was enjoying the situation, and seemed to meditate a digression on the subject of women, or, at least, of this particular specimen.

"Go on?" replied the driver, "I believe you; go on it was, or go over. But the boys were game; and when Tom yelled at 'em, they took his meaning as easy as if it had been a dividend. 'Pile over there, quick!' says he, pointing with his head to the side of the coach towards the hill. You bet they did n't stop to consider. The whole nine outsiders rolled and scrambled and jumped across to the edge of the roof on that side; some of 'em hung over by their hands; and the insiders they took the joke, and crowded over to that side, and stuck their heads out o' winder,—any way to get the load shifted all to that side of the coach. Tom, he never looked to see whether they had obeyed orders. Of course they had, you know; and if they had n't, there was no use of remarks. He just laid on the whip more than ever, and yelled like a whole tribe of Injuns, and then held firm on the reins, and drove straight for the strip of road between the wagons and the edge. The horses huddled a little, and the outside ones knocked plenty of dirt and stones down the cañon; but none of 'em fell. As for the coach, there was n't road enough for her; but what with going like lightning, and having the load well over to the upper side, she buzzed by that wagon, with two wheels on solid ground and two in the air, and, before she had time to upset, all four of 'em struck bottom again, and the trick was trumped. The boys gave Tom the biggest watch in the State, to pay for

that performance,—as big, one way, as a Contra Costa pear; and she weighed fourteen ounces before the works went into her."

"How did the woman behave?" asked Philip.

"Just as you might expect," replied Stephen, "from that woman, and not from any average sample. She never spoke a word till it was all over. It was Andy Campbell's Kate; and there ar'n't two such girls on the coast."

CHAPTER XII.

AN ADVENTURE.

THEY had now passed the small side cañons, and entered upon a long reach of straight, steep road, which seemed to end against the sky, where in reality, however, it merely turned a corner and climbed the mountain by another and another and another similar stretch, the whole constituting the vast zigzag of which I have spoken. At this moment, therefore, that part of the road which was a mile ahead of them in one sense, was about three hundred feet above them in another and more literal sense. Not clearly understanding this, Philip was startled and perplexed to hear dropping, as it were, out of the night overhead, a confused sound of trampling hoofs. A few seconds afterwards, with a great crash and rattle, an avalanche of earth and bowlders tumbled into the road just behind the stage. His exclamation of surprise was checked by a "Sh!" from Stephen, who reined up the frightened horses, stopped the coach, stood up, and listened intently. The hoof-strokes still sounded, growing fainter.

"There's a runaway team on the Grade above us," said Stephen. "If they turn that corner and come down on us, Wells Fargo stand a good chance to lose a coach. Keep your eye on that spot, and tell me if you

see them against the sky. We can't make them out along the mountain; it's too dark."

A minute of intense anxiety followed, during which Philip watched the indicated point, while Stephen drove on a few feet, and drew up the stage as far as possible from the brink of the precipice. It was one of the worst places on the Grade. The road had here been blasted out of the solid rock; and economy had dictated that it should be left as narrow as possible. It had been considered the more practicable to make it of minimum width at this point, since the length of the straight course was so great that coming teams could be distinguished in ample time to permit one or the other party to avail himself of the occasional wider places specially designed for passing or turning. But the contingency of a runaway had not been provided for; and Stephen realized keenly the unfavorable character of the situation. Behind him the land-slide which, coming from far greater height, had first terrified the unknown team on the upper section of the Grade, still continued a lively fire of stones. There was no escape in that direction, even on foot. At his left hand the precipice, three hundred feet sheer, to begin with, and indefinite possibilities of *ricochet* beyond that; at his right the cliff, as nearly vertical for thirty feet as the economy of the contractor who did the blasting could make it. It even overhung a little, the inspector having measured the width of the excavation no higher up than he could comfortably reach, and the contractor, after one inspection, having taken sensible advantage of this peculiarity.

These reminiscences are not irrelevant. They actually occurred to Stephen's mind at the moment, leading him to ejaculate through his teeth several uncomplimentary remarks and unsanctified wishes concerning the said contractor, the concluding one of which, to the effect that he "would like to see the fellow try to climb that identical rock with a pitchfork behind him," may stand as a sample of the whole. Then he cast a look up the road, at the point Philip was watching. "Perhaps they won't come round that corner, after all," he muttered; there's a good place just at the turn for 'em to tumble over." But at the instant, both Philip and the driver started, in the shock of common despair; for they discerned, dimly but only too well, against the sky, a crowding, plunging mass of dark objects, which scarcely paused at the sharp turn, and then, as both sight and sound conspired to testify, entered with fresh fury on its downward race along the Grade.

Philip was paralyzed with something worse than fear, — a sort of numbness of the will, coupled with the keenest and most rapid perception of the impending peril. Whether the stage-horses should take fright and become unmanageable before the approaching collision, or the maddened animals should precipitate themselves, unable to check their course, upon horses and coach together, — in either case there was but one possible issue, the abyss.

But Stephen's faculties were still at his command. He might fail and die, but the flag of his unconquerable resolution was nailed to the mast. In this supreme mo-

ment he was as cool as ever; the only sign of extraordinary feeling was the tone of command in which he spoke, without explanation or preface: "Take this blanket; get down; go and stand by the leaders. Keep well up to the rock and in the shadow. Don't touch my horses. Speak low to them, if you want to. When the others are within ten yards, jump out in front of them, shake out the blanket, and make all the noise you can. Then jump back again, and stand flat up against the rock."

Philip obeyed without a question. There was no use in waking the two passengers inside. They could do nothing. As for the driver, he had evidently chosen for himself the position of greatest, though not most apparent, peril; he was in danger from his own team as well as the other. But it was his business to stay with his coach, and share its fate. Philip realized the all-important character of his own duty, and caught from Stephen the inspiration of calm resolve. As he hastened forward, he heard Harrison Howe call out to the driver, who replied, peremptorily, "Nothing that you can help. Take in your head, and sit still; that's all." Even this brief colloquy seemed to disquiet the horses, already trembling with fear. As he approached the leaders, they started from him. Remembering his instructions, he did not touch them, but only spoke soothingly to them, and crossing in their front, to take the post assigned him, noticed with satisfaction that his presence and Stephen's firm but quiet handling of the reins somewhat reassured them. They trembled still; but acknowledged, as steeds do in battle, the controlling purpose of man.

The trampling hoofs came nearer with fearful speed. Already the forms of the animals could be discerned, though he could not make out their number. It was preposterous to try. What difference could it make to him whether he was overwhelmed by five or fifty wild horses? But ridiculous as it was, his chief annoyance at this moment, which might be his last, was his inability to ascertain how many they were. This thought was driven away by a discovery so unexpected as to have all the effect of humor. Just as the plunging throng reached the limit where his active duty commenced, he saw that they were not horses, but mules, and the incongruity between the meek though obstinate beast with which he was acquainted and the notion of a furious onset, made him laugh. A cavalry charge on mules! Mules on the rampage! He had even an insane impulse to drop his blanket and call back, "It's all a mistake; they're only mules!"

The delay was wellnigh fatal; but he was roused by a word from Stephen Moore, like the blast of a trumpet, — "Now!" It drove everything from his mind, except the instructions so lately and so clearly and positively given. With mechanical obedience he sprang into the open space, unrolling his California blanket, waving it with a great flap, as if it were the Gonfalon of Venice, and raising at the same time a yell that startled even the old Sierra. All the lost opportunities of a quiet life were made good in that one wild outburst. A rebel regiment, a Baltimore fire company, a New York news-boy, Rev. Mr. — in his most inspired moments, — none

of these, with all the advantages of steady practice, could have equalled Philip's grand impromptu yell.

The leaders behind him reared and struggled; but the strong hand of Stephen restrained them. Before him he heard still greater commotion, and saw, or thought he saw, the foremost mules swerve suddenly aside; but as he attempted to jump back again, according to orders, the wind and the Gonfalon together wrapped him up neatly and laid him in a heap on the ground, with a lively play of hoofs around and over him. It was some seconds before he could extricate himself. Meanwhile the two leading mules had shied at his sudden appearance; one of them, losing his footing on the brink, had fallen, and pulled the other after him by means of the harness which united them; and in the same manner the whole dozen, inseparably connected, pair after pair, had gone over the fatal edge, snorting and shrieking with terror. After them, again, went the last fragments of a heavy wagon, the loose frame of which, at the final moment, made a vicious sweep, describing a wide circle in the road. Philip had just worked out of his blanket, which lay in a pile at his feet, and was trying to collect his senses, when this timber came swinging round, and — carried away the blanket! Opening again as it descended into the gloomy gulf, it disappeared like a dun cloud, or a pall dropping on the bodies of the dead, or a wide-winged condor, swooping leisurely down to make a meal of them.

It was all over. The depths gave back no echoes. Philip thought he had realized his peril before; but

now it came back upon him fresher than at first. He climbed in silence back to his seat; and even the stage-driver was, for a little time, not inclined to speak. Mr. Howe lifted the leather hangings and put out his head again. He was as cool as Stephen; for bravery does not depend on goodness, though they ought to go together, and make mischief enough when they do not. But we must give even our villain the credit of having obeyed orders and made no fuss. Mr. Johnson deserves perhaps still higher praise; for he had scarcely moved, and everybody but himself thought he had slept serenely through the whole affair, whereas in reality he had waked at the first noise, and was watching. So far as his personal safety was concerned, he knew that the driver would do his duty, and call out the passengers if it was best. Beyond that, his own business was to do his own duty, and study Mr. Howe. After this episode, he could get credence for any amount of sleepiness, and make his observations more securely than ever. It was lucky for him, he thought, and he vented his satisfaction in a gentle snore.

"We've had a close thing of it, I should say," remarked the gambler to the driver.

"Well, Hank," replied Stephen, "I guess you can bet on that. Mr. Russell here has saved your life, sure; don't you go and make him sorry for it."

The coach ascended slowly the road just trodden by the flying mules in their terrified rush to destruction. Stephen Moore broke the silence by whimsically taking up the thread of discourse just where it had been interrupted by the recent thrilling occurrence.

"As I was saying," quoth he, "there's nobody just like Kate. Now, that time I told you of, she just sat there, like a knot on a log; never hollered, or tried to jump out. If she'd been here a minute ago, she would have done the same. You are like her in that, Mr. Russell. There's not many men that never had been in the mountains before would have stood up to their work as you did."

It may easily be inferred, that, if Stephen and Philip were inclined to be friends before, this occurrence cemented their friendship completely. The result was seen during the remainder of the trip. Before the stage entered at daybreak the single street of Goldopolis, the two men had interchanged confidences by the volume, and were calling each other, "by request," Philip and Stephen, with occasional lapses into Phil and Steve. The driver was able to tell his new comrade all that the reader already knows about the California life of the Campbells, though he could throw no light on their earlier history. He betrayed in this narration a warmth of admiration for Kate, and a degree of familiar intimacy with her, that somewhat alloyed the pleasure with which Philip listened to him. Not that the experienced Mr. Russell, after weathering so many flirtations, had fallen in love at an hour's notice with a girl he scarcely knew. The precise condition of his feelings it would be difficult to analyze; he could not have described it himself. Perhaps it would be just to say he had got so far as to acknowledge to himself that one of the two beings mysteriously blended in Miss Campbell — namely, the gentle,

earnest, heroic one — had a strange fascination for him, corresponded to the ideal he now fancied he had always cherished. The other Kate was slightly shocking to his aristocratic taste; yet, after all, perhaps this was the stronger attraction. When he perceived that Stephen Moore enjoyed her confidence, his first thought was that the friendship was doubtless a half-way affair only; that the bold virtues of the stage-driver had won appreciation from the ruder side of her nature. But the spell of Stephen's courage was too strong upon him to permit him to disparage these virtues; and, moreover, every word of their conversation deepened his esteem for the whole manhood of the man, showing him mental and moral qualities of delicacy as well as power, and a noble character, over which the unconventional freedom and roughness of Western ways was but a thin, transparent veil. He could not fail to recognize in his new acquaintance, by the freemasonry of the class, a gentleman. "In three weeks," said Philip to himself, "this man could throw off his disguise, and appear in our 'best society' like a born and bred member of it."

The reader need not be surprised at such a statement. Appearing in society is a simple art, to those who have the knack of adapting themselves to a few outward forms. As for the intellectual requirements, Stephen Moore had more preparation in that line than society requires. Her matriculation is easily passed. The point, however, upon which the critic will be likely to stumble, is that of speech. "It is absurd," the critic might say, in default of the friendly warning which I

now give him, "to suppose that a man can change at will from incorrect pronunciation and syntax to the proper use of his language." Novels confirm this theory, but facts do not. Almost every educated German, for instance, uses with readiness alternately the stately language of the Fatherland and the *patois* of his own district. In our own country, you shall hear the habitual blasphemer converse for an hour without an oath, "when there are ladies present"; or the most extreme enemy of grammar and rhetoric in colloquial conversation rise to address the chair in sentences as nearly like those of Daniel Webster as circumstances will permit. Any intelligent American can drop into good English when he chooses, — as good, I mean, as newspapers and popular books furnish. For it is the all-pervading press that preserves for us the unity of our language, — the press, in the right hand of which is Webster's Unabridged.

But this is scarcely necessary to explain how easily Stephen Moore could have become outwardly as well as inwardly a gentleman; for he had moved, as an army officer, in the realm of social etiquette; and, if he had assumed the manners of a pioneer since that, he could lay them down with his blanket-coat and his buckskin gloves. It was noteworthy that his past life did not hang about him in relics of habit. You would not have recognized in him the sailor or the soldier, though he had been both one and the other, and in each station had assumed for the time the ways of the craft. His varied experiences had wrought themselves into charac-

ter, leaving no selvages of manner. This capacity for utter change of circumstances, this persistent domination of the man over his accidents, is, I think, peculiarly American.

For that reason, probably, Philip Russell was quick to recognize it, and to confess to himself that the stage-driver was in fact (to adopt seriously the point of an ancient satirical anecdote of Mrs. Trollope's school) "the gentleman that drove the stage," and quite worthy of the best woman's best affections. Along with this conviction there dawned upon him another, — that the afore-said gentleman was what the lady novelists call a "masterful man," and likely to win in any contest, whether of love or war, in which he once earnestly engaged. By this process of intuition, Philip's first mental query, "How can this man be the friend of Katherine Campbell?" imperceptibly slid into forms more disquieting: "I wonder if he likes her as much as I do? I wonder if he is in love with her? I hope he don't want to marry her!" Of course, the young critic would have preferred to "study" her, possibly even to "mould her character," before committing himself; but competition alters all these matters amazingly. If there is a rival in the case, the coolest philosopher may have to hasten or skip the preliminaries. The reflection that perhaps Stephen Moore was "spooney" about this young woman made Philip very spooney, all at once. A desire that was almost a purpose sprang up within him, but not altogether unchecked; for the first thought, that "it might be imprudent," melted away only

to give place to a barrier more solid, "it might be impossible."

He was startled to perceive how far his revery had run away with him; and he almost felt as if he was betraying himself, as he remarked with affected carelessness, "You seem to be very intimate with Ka— with Miss Campbell."

"Kate!" said the driver; "she's been an angel to me. I've knocked about the world so much that the polish, what little I had, is pretty well rubbed off; but the sea and the army and this life out here can do more harm than that to a man, if he don't look out; they can spoil him right through, like a stick of redwood. Those big trees of Calaveras, now, you'd think there never were such trees; more timber to the acre than anybody ever dreamed of. But you can't make anything out of it; it's as brittle as pith. The biggest redwood in that grove would n't pull a jerky,* if it was all put into one whiffletree! And men can get into ways that take the strength out of their hearts. Fact is, when I lost all my savings in that gold-mining company, along of Jim Barlow, and had to take to driving, I was so cut up that I came near taking to liquor, and cards, and worse. Kate saved me just in time, — or God Almighty did; it's all the same. He operates through his angels; and she's one of them, fixed up to suit the nineteenth century, and the Pacific coast, and the Constitution of the United States."

* A small covered wagon, used when the roads will not permit the hauling of heavy "mud-wagons" or coaches.

Philip's heart sank a little at this reply. Of course, Kate's affections had been bestowed on the fine young sinner she had saved from destruction. What was his chance for gaining her sympathy? She might despise him for his flippant, philosophic doubts, but she could not be really interested in his rescue. There is nothing romantic in delivering a young gentleman from Fichte, or Hegel, or Feuerbach. Moreover, his brief conversation with Miss Campbell had revealed to him that he was not in such mortal peril, after all. His speculative scepticism was merely the fringe of a texture of healthy philosophy, which lay folded up and ready for use in him. He had only to shake it out, as he had recently shaken out his blanket, to put to flight the monsters of his imagination. He felt that she had treated his little mental ailment as an old physician treats the disease of a hypochondriac, recommending air and exercise. There was nothing the matter with him. Had he come so many thousand miles to find that out? Yes; but he would not have found it out if he had not come. It was the contact with new realities that banished the ancient phantoms. He who had feebly philosophized over the subjectivity of ideas, the unknowable character of truth, and the insubstantiality of moral qualities and feelings, was already implicitly trusting a man, and more than half loving a woman. From the chilly position of the observer, outside of himself, he had got back into himself, and was "one with his kind."

Stephen continued: "In fact, she is — ahem! she is my sister, and a great deal too good for me!"

"Your sister?" said Philip, with a sense of perplexity and relief.

"Well," replied Stephen, confidentially, "I don't mind saying to *you* that that's the best that can be done at present. I confess marrying is n't in my line, but sometimes I think I should take to a quiet life as well as anybody. I'm inclined to think that if the old man — But there! don't say any more about it!"

With this extremely tantalizing communication Philip was forced to content himself; for, at this moment, the coach stopped at a little cabin, half-way up the Grade. It was a rude affair, half logs, half stones, with a roof of poles and dirt, heavily loaded with bowlders, to keep it from flying away on a favorable wind. A light shone through the open door; and, in answer to the call of Stephen, a tall, shaggy fellow came out. It was our acquaintance, Lije Pickering, who kept the Grade in order, and took toll from casual passers. The stage, of course, paid no retail tolls, but contracted for its trips by the year.

"Well, Lije, how goes it?" said Stephen, putting down the brake, to let the horses stand at ease. "Bad enough," growled the road-keeper; "that land-slide has spiled more ground in a minnit 'n I kin fix in a week. Ye hain't seen nothin' of them mules, — hev ye?"

"More 'n we needed to amuse us," responded Stephen. "They come down on us like a Mikosmy freshet. Land-slide behind, and the whole gang of 'em in front. Had to shove 'em over, Lije, to save the coach. Some poor cuss has lost a good team."

Lije turned his head slightly, and called to some one within. "These men have met your mules; you'd better come out and talk to 'em." A man with a slouched hat came and stood in the doorway. "I've heern enough," said he, sullenly; "they've gone over the Grade. I knew it. Just my luck." He sauntered across the road, behind the stage.

"Say," said Stephen to the toll-keeper, "you got any buckskin handy? I've lost the popper o' my whip-lash."

"I'll slit ye a piece off o' my huntin'-shirt," replied the accommodating Elijah; "step right in hyar, an' git the benefit o' the candle."

Stephen descended and entered the hovel, leaving Philip on the box in a brown study, which prevented him from noticing that the man in a slouched hat was the same who had been at Campbell's earlier in the evening; and, moreover, that this man, keeping the coach between him and the candle-light, approached the corner where Mr. Howe sat, and entered into a rapid whispered colloquy with him.

"What infernal new foolery is this?" said Howe. "Can't you wait till to-morrow, but you must be trying it on with teamsters and mules? The whole country will be up after you."

"Now don't you worry, Cap," replied the other. "We got a good haul in money and dust, and we are holding on to the teamster for a while, so he can't make a fuss about it till we get well out of the country. Besides, some o' the boys wanted the mules to ride; said they could n't make tracks afoot. I was jest a goin' on down

to old man Campbell's, with the critters, to keep 'em out o' the way for a day or two, an' I hed n't more 'n stopped here, to drink along with Lije Pickering, — had to do *that*, if I calc'lated to play teamster on *him*, you know, Cap, — an' I was hevin' a friendly game o' seven-up with him, to keep his attention off o' them mules, for fear he'd recognize 'em, — and down come that land-slide, an' that 's the last o' *them* mules. I'm most afeared to go back to the boys. They'll be down on me, sure; but it warn't my fault. I ain't no land-slide."

"No; but you're a fool," said Howe, angrily; "and so are all the rest. However, it's too late to talk about that. Mind what I tell you: if any one of you does any more of this fooling beforehand, I'll lead the vigilants to hang him myself. Every one of you has the rope round his neck already, if I choose to say the word. Now listen, and hold your tongue. Have everybody on the Grade above here to-morrow night. You know what to do and how to do it. Andy Campbell will be there; send a man half-way to meet him and fetch him."

"What's the use of lettin' in any more?" grumbled the slouched hat; "there's too many claims for the pay-streak already. Andy Campbell's on it, too, — is he? What's the use of Andy Campbell?"

"He knows nothing about it," replied Howe, impatiently; "but I mean to have him on the spot, *without a mask*."

"Oho! I see it," ejaculated the inferior villain, with complacency; adding, in a tone of profound admiration, "You are a sharp one, Cap, — you are."

Howe turned away from him with an impatient air; and as Stephen emerged from the hut at this juncture, the slouched hat stole around the stage again, and disappeared in the shadows.

The colloquy above reported, with as much fidelity to truth as my fixed determination to exclude profanity from these pages will permit, was overheard by no one except the slumberous Mr. Johnson, whose presence was unobserved by one of the speakers, and disregarded by the other. Mr. Johnson, having shammed sleep with so much success during a good part of the trip, and being now in full possession of his "case," felt himself entitled to a sincere and genuine nap, and allowed himself to doze in earnest the remainder of the way. Howe did the same; his responsibilities were lightened too.

Stephen mounted to his seat again, gave his new "popper" a couple of trials, which woke a response of lively, snapping echoes among the rocks, and the coach resumed its slow ascent. After a moment's silence, the driver said: "There's some deviltry afoot. Lije Pickering says that man wasn't the rightful owner of the mules, *he* knows; as near as he could tell from a look at 'em, it was Joe Crockett's team. And as near as *I* could tell from a look at *him*, it's the same skulking villain that played pardner to Hank Howe five hours ago at the Home Station. I can't seem to make it out."

After this, conversation flagged. For two hours they pursued their monotonous course, pulling up one incline after another, and pausing occasionally to breathe the horses. As the summit of the pass was reached, the

keen wind from the snow-fields swept over them, chilling them to the bone; but the dawn was near, and in the first white glow of the east — the whiteness that precedes the flush and the gold — there was promise of warmth. A vast expanse of mountain peaks and domes, crested with snow, like the foam-crowned billows of a petrified sea, rose on every side. Some of them already caught the first rays of the sun, and were waking into the glory of day, foot by foot, as the shadows retreated down their sides. One fancied, almost, that one could hear them murmur the mysterious music with which the statue of Memnon was fabled to thrill, at the life-giving touch of day.

The summit was passed, and the descent on the other side began in a gentle slope. It was not the main divide of the Sierra which had been crossed. That lay still farther east, beyond Goldopolis altogether. But this eastern declivity of the spur surmounted by the road was sufficiently exposed to give the traveller, for a few rapturous moments, the picture of the morning sky. As the coach went whirling down the road, guided by Stephen's watchful eye and firm hand, the heavenly picture unrolled itself above the white horizon of the Sierra, until, just as the disk of the sun lifted its edge into view, spreading right and left the long rays so finely called by the Psalmist "the wings of the morning," a sudden turn in the road shut out the gorgeous scenery of heaven, and substituted for it the rude aspect of a mountain cañon, into which a town had been crowded, like putty plastered in a crack. This was Goldopolis, *née* Knucklesville.

CHAPTER XIII.

GOLDOPOLIS.

THE appearance of a gold-mining camp is unmistakable. Aside from the traces and the implements of this peculiar occupation,—heaps of bowlders, stacked by the side of a disembowelled gulch; derricks; sluice-boxes; vast excavations; or, if quartz-mining be the branch pursued, prospecting-pits, dotting the hills like a legacy of small-pox; dumps of waste rock, opposite the mouths of tunnels; engine-houses, with ceaselessly smoking chimneys, telling of pumps and reels at work night and day to lift from the depths men and rock and water; windlasses, marking the shafts of humbler enterprises; stamp-mills, perhaps, rattling if the stamps are few, roaring if they are many; the stream, red with the tailings of the diggings, or white with the tailings of quartz-mines,—aside from all these, I say, there is the town itself, telling its story of eager activity, of sanguine speculation, of strange vicissitudes. The houses crowded wherever they may be most convenient to the work of their inhabitants; the mines right among them; the main street accommodating itself to the progress of mining, here retreating before the hydraulic nozzle, there warped and twisted by the intrusion of a dump; * the

* A pile of refuse ore, so poor as to be not worth working.

parallel streets, mere precarious terraces along the steep hillside, where the miners' cabins adhere as if they had been spattered there, and were in danger of trickling down; the cross-streets, mere precipices, alleviated with occasional flights of rude stairs; the saloons, of unexpected splendor and astounding number; the one or two handsome stone buildings, monuments of "Eastern capital" (marking its graves, as monuments should do); the swarm and bustle when water is plenty and the claims pay well, or when investment is active and speculation rife; the sepulchral desolation when the dry season either of nature or of finance has set in, and particularly when the rumors of new discoveries elsewhere, reviving the hopes of the adventurous pioneers, have caused a stampede of population, leaving a community of mournful store-keepers, despairing croakers, infatuated persisters in dubious enterprises, and cool, shrewd gleaners and wreckers, who take the opportunity to acquire what everybody else is wildly anxious to abandon,—these are the marks of the gold-mining village, well termed a "camp," during the period when it has ceased to be a congregation of tents and temporary cabins, and before the establishment of permanent mining, reinforced by agriculture, has given it a definite expectation of prolonged existence. A few California towns, like Grass Valley, have outlived this stage, and assumed a more enduring aspect; but even these cannot obliterate the traces of their boisterous youth. Most of the mining-hamlets, new or old, possess to some extent the features I have outlined. Goldopolis had them all, except the

signs of extensive quartz-mining. The causes of this pervading similarity (which is not found in agricultural or commercial towns) are, first, the nature of the surface, which is usually rugged and precipitous; secondly, the nature of the occupation, which is exciting, largely speculative, and intermittent, fluctuating from intense industry, with large immediate gain (filling the miner's pocket with coin or dust which he wastes as lightly as he wins), to moody idleness and destitution; thirdly, the nature of the laws, which make this industry supreme, and bend to its necessities all other considerations. Great pains is usually taken to select for a cemetery some locality not likely to be required for mining purposes; but it has happened within my knowledge that a funeral procession, arriving at the open grave, was warned off by the jubilant sexton, who had "struck a vein" while digging, and "located a claim." I have a vague remembrance that the indignant relatives of the deceased insisted upon a share of the location, because the prospecting had been done under their orders; but I am not positive as to that.

These causes combine to make most mining-towns disagreeable places of residence, and the result is indifference on the part of the community to all considerations other than those of necessity or temporary convenience. Nobody purposes to stay long; nobody considers the place as home, except in the liberal sense of that word in vogue among the claimants to "homestead lands" on our agricultural public domain, who build the shanty required by law, and dwell in it "constructively" for the

necessary period, on the convenient theory that "a man's home is wherever he keeps his boots." By the time it has become certain that the district will support a permanent industry, it is generally too late to reform the original hap-hazard plan of the town.

Goldopolis never had been solidly prosperous since it dropped its homely old name of Knucklesville. The speculation that was coming had not yet fairly come; and a good deal of the honest labor had oozed away, or evaporated, under a succession of dry seasons. It was known, however, that much ground of value yet remained untouched in the gulch, and a successful operator from the Yuba valley, after "panning" for a week or two samples of dirt from the high bank, had concluded that it would pay to bring in water, and "pipe that bluff down." So he had proposed a subscription in the town, to build a ditch which should bring abundance of water from a larger stream. But nobody subscribed; whereat the gentleman from Yuba had vigorously cursed the community, and announced that he would do the thing at his own expense, and take it out of them in high water-rates. The work was now going forward; and the weekly "Goldopolitan" (sole relic of three dailies) was regularly alluding to the owner as "our enterprising fellow-citizen." Of course the editor was prepared, when the ditch, completed, should no longer be a source of disbursement in the town, keeping business alive, to assail the Shylock who held the water supply, by virtue of an outrageous monopoly, so high as to "strangle in its cradle the incalculable wealth of this entire gulch." But

meanwhile faith as to the gulch and hope as to the ditch kept the citizens from panic at least, and made them patient to wait for good times close at hand. True, there was a strong attraction caused by the discoveries over at Dead Man's Gulch; but the place was too near, and it was too easy to verify or disprove the stories told of the rewards of labor over there. If the same had been reported of some place in British Columbia or Arizona, away would have gone two thirds of the able-bodied men, to try their fortune once more in the new Eldorado. But Dead Man's Gulch, just round the corner only, as it were, was too familiar to them. It was not worth while to sell out stocks, supplies, houses, and claims, just to go to that gulch; hence the stampede that might have been feared did not take place. So the people "hung on," living upon their savings or their hopes, doing what could be done with the scanty supply of water in the creek, prospecting for ledges on the mountains, or loafing about the streets. The shop-keepers gave liberal credit, as merchants in the mining-regions always do under such circumstances, knowing that the poorest customer will pay like a prince when his luck turns, and willing to help him along with flour or beans, bacon, candles, gunpowder, and boots, lest he fall into despair, and inaugurate a depopulation of the camp. The saloon-keepers, on the other hand, did not give credit. Some of them moved away; the rest were ready to go as soon as they should hear of a promising new, thirsty camp; a few stood their ground, finding the business not altogether unprofitable, after the departure of so many rivals.

But the gambling and hard drinking and fighting fell off notably, to the great improvement of the public peace.

The coach, having paused at the post-office, and delivered a mail-bag to the sleepy clerk, drew up in front of the hotel. One or two early risers stood on the wide porch. The community in general was asleep, having been made aware, the night before, by the telegram posted at Wells Fargo's office, that the coming passengers comprised only "Johnson and Russell — through." Through passengers were not an attraction sufficient to keep Goldopolis awake, or make it get up at sunrise. So only the landlord, the express-agent, and one of those chronic loafers who are always on hand when anything happens, however insignificant,—born to be newspaper "locals," and thwarted by the lack of the necessary newspaper,—received the coach.

Just before pulling up, Stephen Moore said to Philip Russell, in a cordially regretful tone, "I suppose you'll go on, after breakfast. There's no use o' making many words about it; and I don't generally worry myself about my passengers. Good friends with us, one trip, and never see 'em again; it's all in the natural course. But the fact is, I've rather froze to you, Phil; you're the first man I've struck that I wanted to own. If I only had time to unharness myself here, I'd like to travel pardners with you. It's high time I got out o' this, anyhow. I'm running down, and it's strange I didn't find it out before. But somehow it comes over me all of a sudden, along of talking with you."

The operation of stopping and unloading the coach interrupted Stephen's confidence and prevented Philip's reply. The driver, indeed, seemed desirous not to return to the subject. After turning over the treasure-box to the express-agent, and the empty coach to a boy, who proudly drove six-in-hand to the stable, he walked to the end of the porch, and stood alone, gazing moodily into the morning sky. It was a moment of painful revelation to him, in which he had a vision of what was and what might have been, — an overwhelming consciousness of powers unemployed and precious years slipping away. What had all these wanderings in many lands come to at last? Driving down a hill every afternoon, and up again at night; sleeping all the forenoon to get ready for the monotonous duty. How he must have changed to be willing to keep up this round of drudgery for so many months! Even the thought of Kate Campbell, the daily sight of whom had doubtless contributed much to this contentment, was now powerless to quell the restless desire that awoke within him. "Lucky, after all," he muttered, "that Kate did n't close on that bargain. I ain't the man to settle down; and we should have found it out too late for comfort."

Philip approached him. "Steve," said he, "do you mean what you said about travelling with me?"

Steve nodded.

"Would you go away and leave Miss Campbell?"

Another nod. "Yes; if I left her safe, an' she had no need o' me."

"Well, then, I'll wait for you. In fact, I'll ride back

with you this afternoon. I should like to go *down* that Grade!"

(So you would, Mr. Russell, by reason of the Home Station at the bottom of it!)

"All right," said Stephen, with unmistakable pleasure, extending his hand; "put it *there*!" They shook hands on it; and in this simple fashion was ratified a partnership the full meaning of which Philip Russell probably did not realize, though his more experienced friend understood it well. These partnerships among miners and pioneers are marriages of men; they mean mutual faithfulness, community of labor and peril and gain, heroic defence, even to death. Formed and dissolved by simple consent, they stand, while they stand at all, on the firmest foundations of an honor which is at bottom a deep necessity, and at top an all-controlling sentiment of pioneer life. In this instance, it is true, there was to be no full community of goods. Philip was an employee, under pay; Stephen would be his own master, and was provided with money enough, saved out of small ventures in the barter of mining-claims, to pay his share of the expenses. But he felt that, in all other respects, independence of his partner, while the partnership should last, would be treason. What would come of this temporary relationship he did not know; he hoped that it might in some way open the door for him into the larger world where he yearned again to be, — the world of great thoughts and great affairs; the world to which belonged his old friend Morton and his new friend Philip.

"Give us a look at that photograph by daylight," said Stephen, suddenly. He took the picture from Philip's hand, and studied it intently for a moment; then, returning it, said, "Cap Morton's a lucky man. Come, pard; you and I must take to our bunks, — that is, unless you are hungry. Best way is to sleep till twelve o'clock, and then take a square meal. Start at five in the afternoon, and get down to Andy's before eight, sure. We can get a good supper there, you know. Kate's a famous cook."

They parted to go to their respective rooms. Philip, worn out with the long journey from San Francisco, and particularly with the excitement of the last evening and night, threw himself on his bed without undressing, and fell into a heavy sleep. Stephen went off to his nap as a matter of daily business, pausing only, on the way, to exchange a word with the host, who stood behind his bar, disconsolately mixing a single cocktail for Mr. Harrison Howe, and recalling the days when the arrival of the coach was regularly the signal for the appearance of a long rank before that now almost superfluous counter, each defining with prompt decision "what he would take." The landlord had but one eye, having lost the other in debate some years before, when times were good. A surgeon down at the Bay had provided him with a glass eye which was a perfect match to the remaining organ; and the success of this operation had led the postmaster, who conducted also a book-store (novels and playing-cards) and a drug-store (mainly bit-
ters and blue-pills), to import on speculation a variegated

lot of glass eyes, in the expectation of future debates on optics. Unfortunately, the man who next lost an eye was the landlord himself; and the eye he lost was his artificial one. So he was supplied by the postmaster with a new one, which did not correspond with the original sample. "Laid in my stock," explained the postmaster, "to provide for every man in camp; but of course I never thought of you." Hence the landlord now appeared with one small twinkling greenish-gray eye, serviceable but not ornamental, and one lucid, contemplative bluish-gray eye, ornamental but not serviceable.

"Judge," said Stephen, declining with a gesture the offered bottle of particular old rye, "is Joe Crockett in town?"

"You must 'a' met him," replied the Judge, lifting the glass he was mixing, and examining it with his practicable eye to ascertain if the sugar was dissolved; "he started from here with his mule-team and a back-action along in the afternoon."

"Did n't exactly meet *him*," rejoined Stephen; "but you bet we did meet the mules; and anxiety ain't no term to express the state o' mind that agitated *them*, — hey, Hank?"

Mr. Howe assented without special enthusiasm, and Steve continued. "Fact is, the mules have gone over the Grade, and a Blake's crusher would n't break 'em any finer. They're all in a pulp, down there in the holler. Strange, now, that Joe Crockett should 'a' lent his mules to a galoot with a slouched hat that he happened to meet on the Grade."

Howe turned away, after tossing off his cocktail, and pretended not to hear more; while Stephen, struck with the sudden notion of consulting Mr. Johnson on some of these little matters, looked about for that worthy, but in vain, and continued, cheerily, "Well, Judge, I've got no time to waste a shooting off my mouth without a target. So I'll turn in till noon. The young man from the Bay goes back with me; so you can lay yourself out on a patent combined breakfast and dinner." Whereat the Judge winked over his glass eye, — the only variation of expression possible in that quarter, — and the driver departed.

Meanwhile Mr. Johnson was affably chatting with Wells Fargo's agent in the express-office, which occupied two rooms on the ground floor of the hotel building, the front one opening on the piazza through double doors, surmounted with the familiar sign of the company, — white letters on a blue ground, or let us say, to be correctly heraldic, argent in a fesse azure, — minus the rest of the escutcheon. Mr. Johnson seemed to have a liking for private talks in back rooms; there he was again, with the door locked behind him, and the agent argent (that is to say, very white) before him.

"I see what you mean to do," said he, approvingly. "You will send Mr. Howe as messenger, to guard the treasure; but you will fill the box with nails, instead of treasure. Luckily there was a couple of kegs of nails sent up by the stage for the horses. One of them will be more than enough. And you won't say anything to Mr. Howe about it, — an excellent plan. Because, you

see, if Mr. Howe gets away, you might be held responsible; whereas, if he is caught, you can testify that you helped to catch him. And you intend to resign your place as agent; but you will consent to serve one day longer, just for the pleasure of assisting the company, provided I will relieve you of the trouble of taking care of the company's letters and money. A very good plan indeed. You might write the resignation now."

The agent obeyed this friendly suggestion in silence, stammering, as he handed the letter to Mr. Johnson, "I suppose you — you think you have got something against me; but I have n't done anything."

"No, nor won't do anything," replied the cheerful adviser. "Among friends, you know, there's no evidence against you, unless you make it between this and sundown. It's a mere point for you and Howe, which goes back on the other first. If he thought he could gain by it, he'd leave you in the scrape, and never stop to see what became of you. I shall leave after breakfast by the Virginia coach; but I shall come back as soon as the other coach is gone, and stay all night with you. The arrangements are all made, but you wouldn't care to hear about 'em. Howe won't try to talk to you. He thinks he may be watched. While I think of it, I'll take the key of that Virginia box. You need n't open the treasure-box that comes in by the coach this afternoon. Keep it here, and send on your extra box instead of it, with the wrought-iron inside. W. F. & Co., carriers of the U. S. nails!" Mr. Johnson chuckled over his

little joke; then took the padlock-key to which he had referred; locked the safe, and took the key of that; and at last departed, with the final remark, "You'll have to be out, if anybody wants to cash a draft to-day."

CHAPTER XIV.

DOWN THE GRADE.

AFTER the departure of the coach from the Home Station, described in a former chapter, Andrew Campbell knocked at his daughter's door. Kate was not in bed, but seated by the window, listening pensively to the noise of hoofs and wheels as it receded towards the hills. As he entered in response to her call, she looked around inquiringly.

"My darling," said he, in tones of agony and terror, "we must fly again. All is lost. That man knew me; fool that I was, why did I not know him at first?"

"What is it, father? What is lost? What man, — not Mr. Russell?"

"Russell!" cried Andrew, "was the other one Russell? Worse and worse! Let us go at once, — here, — now!"

"Father!" replied Kate, firmly, "you must not speak so. You are beside yourself. Listen: I will do whatever you wish to-morrow. There is no need for such hurry. If it is that Mr. Johnson who has alarmed you, he is going beyond the town; he said so at supper. He can't be back for two days. We can make our preparations to-morrow, and leave at night, after both the coaches are gone."

"Yes, yes; to-morrow night," said Campbell. "I forgot; I have an engagement to-morrow."

"What engagement?"

"I must go up to the half-way cabin — to meet —"

"It is Mr. Howe!" said Kate, by a sudden intuition.

"O father! I wish you would be more afraid of *him*!"

"Afraid of him!" echoed the wretched father, with a fierceness born of pain, "so I am; but he means well, — he means well by me. He will save me, he says."

"Save you, — from what? — no, no; don't look so; I didn't mean to ask. You know I promised never to ask you, though I feel that it would be better, far better, if you would tell me all. Nothing could be worse than not knowing! But you mustn't talk any more. Only go and sleep. To-morrow I will do anything. Good night."

Andrew Campbell went to his own room, threw himself upon his bed without undressing, and lay staring into the darkness, motionless and sleepless, all the rest of the night. His daughter took the matter more lightly. The burden of caring for her father was an old one, and her heart was used to it. She half believed his fears were imaginary. At all events, he exaggerated the secret danger which shadowed his life. If it was necessary, to please him, that they should forsake this new home as they had forsaken the old one, very well; the sacrifice was but incidental to the greater sacrifice of her whole life's hopes which she had deliberately resolved to make. So Kate prayed in the dark — doubly in the dark — and fell asleep, to dream that

Harrison Howe had carried her away, while her father wrung his hands, and begged her to be quiet, and that she was magnificently rescued by a splendid young fellow, who seemed to be Philip Russell, but subsequently, by a whimsical metamorphosis, proved to be Stephen Moore.

The next day, little was said between Andrew and his daughter. His face was haggard and set, and she thought best to humor him. In reply to her question what they should take with them, he replied, "What we can carry on horseback." This troubled her little; for she knew there was ready money enough. Business had been good, and Kate had a well-filled safe in her own room. "Stephen has promised to help us," she thought; "I will leave everything in his charge. Perhaps, when this panic is over, we shall come back again."

After dinner, Campbell saddled a horse, and started up the road, in obedience to the invitation of Harrison Howe, which he dared not resist. Indeed, he looked forward with irrational eagerness to the meeting, as affording a possible way of escape from the terror that pursued him. The man's mind was so curiously warped that a plain course, though open before him, could give him no hope; but a rescue mysterious as the peril inspired him with superstitious confidence, amounting even to courage. He was ready to fly into the jaws of a big dog, to escape the bark of a little one. As he rode slowly up the Grade in the slanting sunlight of the afternoon, his spirits improved.

A stranger stepped from under the trees by the road,

and intercepted him. This man wore a mask, and for an instant he suspected an assault. But the stranger called him by name.

"Goin' up the Grade—be ye, Andy? Goin' up the Grade to see Cap'n Howe. Wall now, that's curus; the Cap'n says to me, 'Go down the Grade,' says he; 'an' you'll meet Andy Campbell.' Jest come right along, Mr. Campbell; an' I'll es-cort ye to the Cap'n."

The more mystery the better. Andrew followed his guide, who led the way on foot. Once they met a team. On the wagon with the teamster sat Joe Crockett, mourning the loss of his mules, and bound to the bottom of the cañon, to see what could be got in the way of salvage from the general wreck. Joe had not dared to return at once to Goldopolis and denounce the robbers who had kept him a prisoner through the night, because they still commanded the road above, and he feared for his life. If he had only paused to talk with Andrew Campbell,—as he could easily have done, since Campbell's masked acquaintance had retired into the woods as he approached,—this story might have had a different end. But no; Joe rode moodily by, and Campbell did the same, with no more than a nod of recognition. "Something the matter with Andy," said Joe to the teamster. "What's *his* call to be so almighty solemn. *He* hain't lost no twelve Spanish me-ules!"

This was true enough; yet, in that brief moment, Mr. Campbell had lost his last chance of avoiding the worst disaster of his life. In another hour, he was a prisoner in the hands of three robbers, all masked. The guide

who had betrayed him seemed to be a spokesman for the party; and in reply to Campbell's query, what was the object of this treatment, explained with many oaths that his prisoner had wanted to see Hank Howe, and now he should see Hank Howe. The blackguard, with the usual insolence of a subordinate in the absence of his superior, added some remarks about that pretty girl down at the Station,— "too good for an old bilk like you,"—at which even the infant sinews of Andrew Campbell stiffened into steel and glowed with fire. He sprang towards the speaker, unarmed as he was; but a collision was prevented by the interference of a tall, lank fellow in a very broad-brimmed hat and a red shirt, to which was belted a pair of canvas overalls, stained with the mud of the diggings, and tucked into the legs of his alligator boots. This gentleman was a product of North Carolina, sublimed in the Confederate service during the war, and precipitated at its close on the Pacific coast. He had been lying on the ground, with his big hat over his face; but now he lazily arose, and, laying his hand carelessly on the handle of a navy Colt, that hung from the middle of his belt behind, stalked between Campbell and his tormentor.

"Quit!" said North Carolina, laconically. "'Pears like you done gwine* talk too much."

"Well, you hain't no call to be a shootin' off *your* mouth!" responded the other, sullenly. "I ain't no nigger o' yourn."

"Which I say quit," drawled the representative of the

* Were about to.

peanut State; "you done got the old man hyar, you mought let him rest. Leastways you hold yer jaw about the girl. Look hyar; my name 's Dan'l —"

He slowly drew his revolver as he spoke; but several of the gang now interfered, cursing him for the imprudence of mentioning his name, and at the same time counselling his opponent to remember the business in hand, and not spoil everything. So there was an armed truce, and Andy Campbell was molested no further.

Meanwhile the simple annals of Goldopolis had gained another uneventful day. Philip rose at noon, refreshed and hungry. At dinner he met Stephen, but Mr. Johnson had departed on the eastward coach. After dinner he strolled through the town and along the banks of the diggings, observing with curiosity the rude form of mining which they presented. A few men only were at work, shovelling dirt into the long sluices through which ran the scanty and carefully economized stream, or laboriously lugging and piling up the bowlders which hindered the operations of pick and shovel. It was not much to look at; and he soon felt as familiar with the process as if he had been drudging at it himself for years. There are subtleties of skill in placer mining; but to the casual observer it seems the dullest and rudest of human occupations. Not so when the hydraulic pipe and nozzle are part of the scene. These introduce an element of excitement, a splendid display of power. The crackling stream which Mose and Sykesy, "holding the butt," used to direct with so much enthusiasm, before the degenerate days of paid fire depart-

ments, upon the fury of "fancy" conflagrations, was as nothing — a mere ladies' watering-pot — compared with the mighty spouts that thunder from the hydraulic nozzles of California to-day; three, five, *eight* inches in diameter, roaring through their iron mouths under a pressure of hundreds of feet of water-column, and striking against the solid bluffs with the impact and the noise of an artillery battle. The hills melt away before them; bowlders of a ton and more are rattled and thrown about like pebbles; while man, no longer delving painfully for his little shovelful of auriferous dirt, stands by with a grim smile, his hand upon the regulating lever, and rejoices in the victory of mind over gravel.

But hydraulics were not yet in vogue at Goldopolis, and Philip found the half-deserted placers rather tedious. A brief opportunity for a study of human character diverted him for a time. As he stood idly upon the bank, a seedy individual, who had reconnoitred him from afar ever since he left the hotel, made bold to join him.

"Pity those hard-workin' miners didn't know," remarked the stranger, confidentially, "the vast mineral resources o' quartz. Look at that gulch, sir, and then cast your eyes around on the glorious Si-erra. Any geologist will tell you this is the regular formation. Real igneous fatuus rock," he added, triumphant in his mastery of the language of science. Philip cast his eyes around in the loose manner suggested, and replied that he had no doubt of it.

"Your first visit to our parts, sir? Probably a geolo-

gist yourself—I flatter myself I can tell a scientific gentleman when I see him—studying up the formation?”

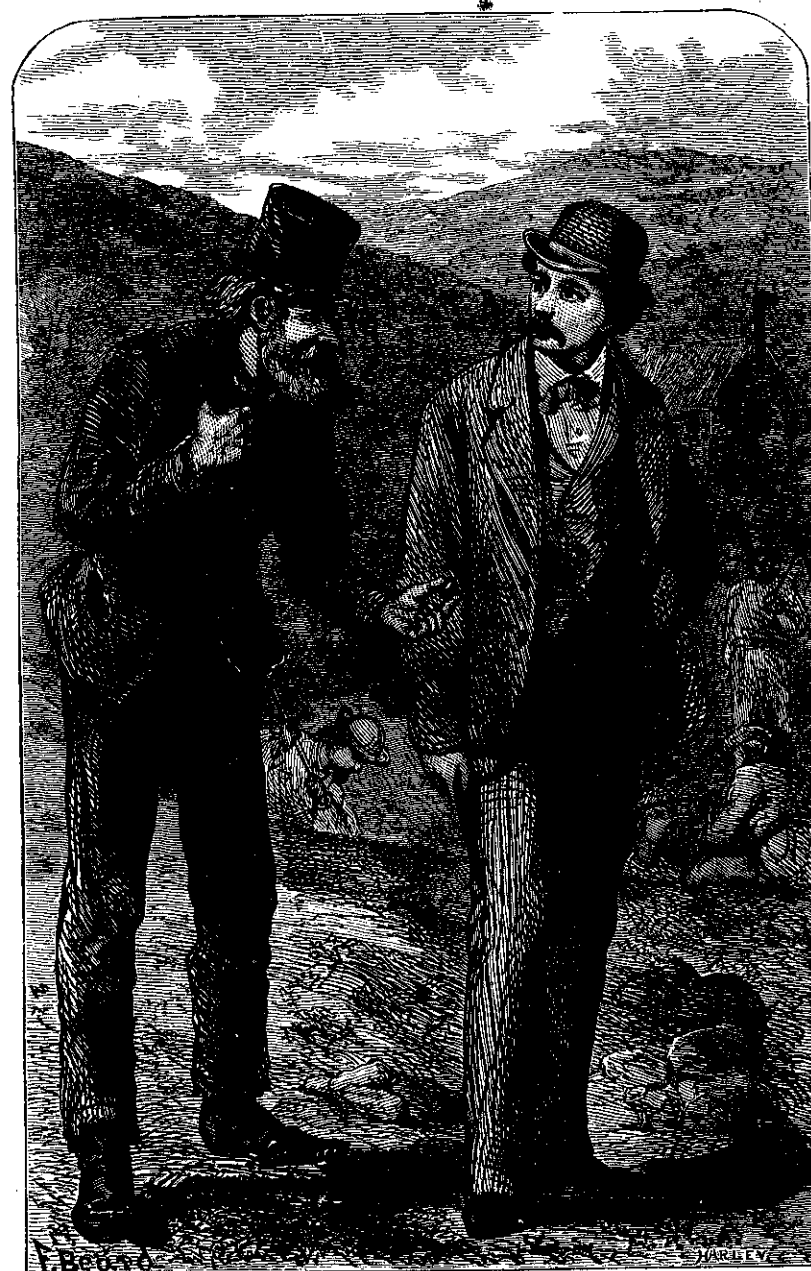
Philip wickedly intimated that he was looking over the country a little “for other parties”; at which piece of information the seedy stranger brightened to such an extent that he might be said to have passed from seed to blossom in a second.

“Now there’s a specimen,” said he, producing from his pocket a small piece of quartz, quite polished with much fingering, and showing several specks and scales of gold; “that specimen will assay a dollar to the pound; and there’s tons of it.”

Philip jokingly remarked that he did not see even a pound of it; at which the exhibitor laughed almost too heartily for perfect sincerity, and brought back the conversation as soon as possible into the serious scientific tone.

“Where that came from,” said he, “tons upon tons. All that is needed, sir, in this camp, is capital to develop our vast resources. I shall be proud and happy to show you some of our undeveloped riches. A distinguished geologist like yourself will recognize the metamorphic character of the formation at once.”

From this he proceeded to hints of liberal arrangements that could be made (in stock) with an eminent party who would report favorably on the specimen mine. Philip finally wearied of the conversation, and, pleading the necessity of writing some letters, left his fellow-scientist, and started towards the hotel, from which he had



THE SEEDY GEOLOGIST.

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wandered a considerable distance. He returned by another route, and as he strode along, enjoying the delicious mountain air, and reflecting with amusement upon the strange phenomenon of a mine containing tons upon tons of quartz, worth a dollar a pound, that could not be worked for want of capital, his attention was attracted by a novel machine. It consisted of a large circular bed cut from a single stone, provided with a raised wooden rim, and a central vertical shaft, with revolving horizontal arms. To these arms heavy stones were attached by chains, so that when the apparatus, by means of a long lever terminating in a mule, was set in motion by the circular journeyings of the mule, the arms dragged the stones around after them on the bottom of the bed, grinding and mixing in this way the slimy mud with which the latter was half filled. A man, kneeling before a basin on the ground, was wringing quicksilver through a buckskin bag. This rude apparatus was a Spanish *arrastra*, and the owner was straining the amalgam of his last "clean-up."

Strange to say, this operator in quartz did not appear at all desirous of displaying the resources of the country, or enlarging upon its geological character. It was only after Philip had plied him with much skill and patience that he surrendered so far as to explain the operation of his machinery, and confess that it paid expenses and a little over.

"Of course, you need capital," said Philip, following the convenient rule of repeating what he had just heard with the air of having known it always.

"Capital!" repeated the sturdy pioneer with scorn. "No offence, stranger; but I reckon you must be one o' them sharps from the Bay. That ain't my kind. I take money out of my mine; but I don't put nary dollar in, not if I know myself. But I'll tell you what; I've just lost my pardner,—went over to Angel's, on a long spree, and got hisself killed; the best man in the mountains. Now, I rather freeze to you, I do; and if you're on it, and want to try quartz-mining, and kin cook, I'll give you a show."

"On what terms?" inquired Philip, amused and curious.

"Thar's my terms," responded the miner, holding out his hand. "When I say pardner, I mean pardner. Divide fair and square, after every clean-up."

"But I should n't be bringing anything into the concern, to offset what you have," pursued Philip.

The bearded miner looked at him keenly, and said, with a quick relapse into indifference, "Good by, stranger; I reckon we should n't get along so well, after all. You folks from the Bay don't *savey* the nater of a pardner, and you don't know the vally of *a man*." Whereat he turned to his buckskin bag again, and declined further conversation. But Philip insisted on shaking hands with him; and that led to a satisfactory explanation, after which they parted friends.

Philip returned to the hotel, and spent a couple of hours in writing. This time his letter to Alice was longer than his letter to the newspaper. The latter contained a very knowing account (considering the inexpe-

rience of the writer) of the social and industrial condition of Goldopolis, with a thrilling description of the adventure on the Grade. But to Alice he poured out his more private experience,—his acquaintance and cemented friendship with Stephen Moore, whom he painted in heroic colors; and his discovery, in the obscurity of the Home Station, of a perfect jewel in the form of a young lady. He depicted pathetically the character of Andy Campbell, and enthusiastically that of his daughter. After finishing the letter, he read it over, and, moved by an undefined desire to counteract the effect of some too cordial expressions, added this postscript:—

"Don't think me in danger of falling in love with Miss Campbell. To tell the truth, I have reason to suspect that she is attached to that glorious fellow, Stephen Moore. And Stephen is my 'pardner,' now, you know. I must respect his rights."

He looked at the last words with a painful perception of their truth. Yes; his obligations to Stephen, and their new bond of friendship, would make it his duty to let Stephen win Kate Campbell if he could, and not to lift a finger or breathe a word to hinder it. The postscript looked like a vow; he was half o' mind to tear it off. Not that he had resolved to try his own chances with Kate, but he disliked to be bound not to do so. The thought of not gaining her love, of seeing another gain it, stung and stirred him more than any vague dream of hope could have done. He meditated sternly for a while, then quickly sealed the letter, postscript and all, and, walking out on the porch, where the letter-box

of Wells Fargo hung invitingly, dropped it through the slit, out of sight, and went away wishing he had not been quite so fast.

But the bustle of preparation for starting required his attention. The coach from the East had come in empty, but there were three inside passengers booked from Goldopolis. As they took their places in the down coach, Philip thought they were a rough-looking lot, though he did not suspect them to be, what they really were, confederates of Hank Howe's. This was a part of the gambler's plan of which even the Goldopolis agent had not been informed, and which the astute Mr. Johnson had not suspected.

Philip climbed to an outside seat. The agent, who had been invisible all day, came out, dragging a heavy treasure-box, too heavy for him to lift alone; and Howe, who had likewise spent the day in retirement (or rather in drumming up passengers for the trip), and who now stood on the porch, armed and equipped as messenger, to guard the bullion, stepped forward to assist him. The agent avoided meeting the eye of the gambler, until the latter, over-confident in his deep-laid scheme, muttered in his ear, "What's the matter with you? Do you want me to suspect you, and tell on you to the Company? I can do it, you know; I've got the proofs; and I will, too, unless you play fair."

This threat was not without effect. The agent looked him in the face, and said slowly, "I'll not trouble you to sell me out, Mr. Howe; you will find it is all right."

A thought of treachery crossed the gambler's mind,

but was at once rejected. Everything was as he had meant it to be: his three men in the coach; three waiting for him on the road; the treasure indubitably on board, and plenty of it; Campbell probably a prisoner, and Kate helpless. Nobody in the way but Stephen Moore and — ah! there was that young Russell. What possessed him to go back over the Grade? He might be troublesome.

"You had better sit inside," said Mr. Howe, as he ascended to the driver's seat. "I shall have to sit here, you know." But Philip, who wanted to be near his "pardner," cheerfully replied that he would take the upper seat; and Hank could only submit, particularly when his appeal to Steve Moore, who now appeared, drawing on his buckskin gloves, was repelled by that last authority with disdain.

"Top-heavy!" said Steve, "you need n't agitate yourself about that, Hank; there's three sacks of horse-shoes in the bottom, that we forgot to leave last night at Andy's. Anyhow, I presume I know how to drive, — hey, boys?"

Another moment, and they were off in fine style. The Chinese cooks, and the miners who were temporarily cooks at that hour, looked out at the doors of their cabins to see the coach go by; and the afternoon sun paused with his chin on the summit of the pass to wait its coming. They kept him in view for a while, ascending faster than he could sink; and when they crossed the breezy summit, and entered fairly on the Grade, his full round face was still visible in the west. But sud-

denly he dropped behind the far blue barrier of the Monte Diablo range, and they saw him no more.

There was little conversation on the coach. Howe was moodily silent, and Stephen was occupied with his driving; for driving down the Grade was a different thing from driving up. Speedy but sure, the well-trained horses followed, on a swift swinging trot, the windings of the road. It was beautiful to see them turn the corners, the leaders taking a wide sweep, and hugging the rock or treading the dizzy verge of the precipice, as the case might be, and each following pair describing its smaller circle! The depths of the cañon grew, first misty blue, then dark, in the twilight, and the shadows rose rapidly, like spirits from the deeps, to spread their garments of dusk over all the hills. The moonlight was obscured by driving clouds. The driver stopped to light the coach-lamps, and resumed the swift descent.

Above the half-way house there was a short level, over which Stephen quietly trotted his team, and which he had nearly crossed when a man appeared on the roadside, holding up a letter. "Way-mail," said the driver, in laconic explanation, and stopped the coach. The next instant several forms emerged from behind the rocks, and a voice cried, "You 're covered, Steve Moore; don't you stir, or you 'll get the top of your head blowed off!"

Stephen put his hand behind him, and suddenly drawing his pistol from beneath the cushion, pulled the trigger once, twice, thrice. The empty chambers replied

with impotent and spiteful snaps. Meanwhile Howe was blazing away with great rapidity, and emptied all six barrels of his revolver without doing any harm. The assailants were apparently in good-humor; they shouted in reply to this ineffectual volley, "No use, Cap; why don't you carry a shot-gun? Six-shooters ain't no good against a road-agent."

Howe began quickly to load again; but Stephen stopped him. "They've got us," said he; "all we can do is to give in, and keep our wits about us, to recognize the rascals."

"There are the passengers," said Philip, eagerly; "they are armed."

Stephen laughed aloud. "Young man, the passengers don't waste their powder nor take any risks for the stage company, and the road-agents won't trouble *them*."

But he was mistaken on the latter point, for while one of the robbers stood with weapon pointed at the group on the outside of the coach, a second opened the coach door. "Tumble out! One at a time! Hold up your hands, in there!" The passengers obeyed with curses, and, from the ejaculations which followed, it was apparent that each of them in succession was obliged to give up his arms and money.

Meanwhile the two other highwaymen remained close together, by the side of the road. One of them now approached, calling on the other to follow, and on Stephen to hand over the treasure-box, and be lively about it. Stephen obeyed with apparent alacrity. The

box fell upon the road with a heavy thud, and the robber kicked it, in complacent satisfaction over its weight. His companion, taking advantage of this opportunity, sprang away, and, crossing the road in front of the horses, disappeared over the edge at a point where the descent, though perilous, was not absolutely impossible. As he traversed the zone illuminated by the head-lights of the coach, both Stephen and Philip started in astonishment to recognize in this only unmasked member of the marauding party the features of Andrew Campbell. Philip's half-uttered exclamation was checked by a significant pressure upon his knee, which, in his elevated position, came directly behind the driver's back. Evidently Stephen did not care to betray his discovery to Hank Howe; whether out of tenderness to Campbell or out of distrust of Howe it would be difficult to say. The latter person showed some vexation at Campbell's escape. "There's one of the villains got away!" said he.

"Now that's what I call a good one!" replied Stephen, as jolly as if nothing had happened. "Here's Hank thinks he has captured the crowd, all but one. Don't let the rest get away, now, *don't*." Howe bit his lip and was silent.

The affair was soon over, according to the time-honored programme followed on such occasions in the usually bloodless robberies of the West. The passengers were all re-seated, and the road-agents, picking up the treasure-box, prepared to depart. Their last word, spoken by the tallest of the party, was, "You're bound to

set thar till moon-down, afore you go to go any further, if you know what's good for you."

They had no sooner disappeared, taking also the steep path down the mountain-side, than Harrison Howe, assuming command of the situation, called to the inside passengers, "Boys, did they get all your shooting-irons?"

"No, you bet," was the chorused reply; "we're heeled yet; got a revolver apiece."

"Well, who'll follow the trail with me? We can catch 'em yet; they'll have to carry that box or stop to break it."

The company within unanimously declared, with demonstrations of fierce eagerness, curiously contradicting their recent pusillanimous submission, that they would all go. They got out of the coach, and ran to the edge of the road, peering over the dim expanse of mountain-side after the party which had just vanished. A whoop sounded from below. It was really a guiding signal to the confederates; but Harrison Howe still kept up his character of avenging pursuer, and chose, therefore, to consider it as an insulting defiance.

"The impudent scoundrels!" said he, as he heard the whoop (for which indeed he had waited until that moment); "I'll make some of them pay for that."

"Had n't you better make haste, Mr. Barlow?" said Stephen, coolly, gathering his reins in one hand, and dropping the other carelessly into his overcoat pocket; "you might n't catch those fellows, unless you know just where they are going."

Howe appeared not to notice the name by which the driver had called him ; but secretly he accepted it as an open declaration of war. There was to be no more assumed friendship between these two men, and both of them knew it. The gambler glanced around, but the moment was not propitious for violence. His men were already commencing the descent, and calling on him to follow. He would not drop the mask just yet.

"No doubt I shall overtake them," he said, carelessly. "I think I know one of the scoundrels."

"So do I," replied Moore; "*the scoundrel that put a new cylinder into my revolver, and has got my cylinder this minute in his.* Lay down your pistol, Mr. James Barlow ; hold up your hands, Mr. Barlow ; Mr. Russell, have the politeness to go through Mr. Barlow while I explain the operation of this derringer. You see it takes one hand to hold the team, and the other hand to explain. A derringer, Mr. Barlow, is calculated for close quarters. You point it at a man's head, in fact, you put it close to his ear, and if he stirs, or speaks a word, you spoil him. Don't forget that inside breast-pocket, Mr. Russell, that carries the way-mail. It's all for your good, Mr. Barlow ; you see it wouldn't look well for the company to be robbed and the company's messenger omitted in the distribution. Now GIT, you jackass-rabbit !"

Even in this moment of discomfiture, the gambler did not lose his impassive, quiet air. He submitted to the inevitable like the fatalist he was ; and, while Philip stripped him of arms, money, and papers, busied himself

with rapid planning of the immediate future. Of course he must leave the neighborhood at once ; but that troubled him little. It would not have been safe to stay long, in any event, after the robbery. Too many people were concerned. He would join his party, divide and conceal the booty, and press on to Campbell's Station. Something could be made out of the old man's fears yet. He would frighten Kate into compliance, by threatening her father's life. Relieved to find that the stage-driver did not offer to detain him, he descended without replying either to Stephen's humor or to his final contempt, and vanished, as the rest had done.

"Why did n't you keep him ?" asked Philip, whose quick intelligence had gathered most, but not all, of the meaning of the scene.

"Because we don't want him," replied the driver, instantly starting the team. "Can you ride a horse ?"

"Yes ; why do you ask ?"

"We must ride ten miles while they walk two. Who gets to the Home Station first ? — that's the question."

"Do you think Miss Campbell is in any danger ?"

"I think it is my business to go and see," replied Stephen, shortly, and pulled up before the half-way cabin. "'Lije ! O 'Lije !"

'Lije Pickering came to the door. "Strip the leaders as quick as you can, and give us a couple of blankets and a saddle, if you've got it. There's an old one here in my boot. You hold the team, Phil. The coach is robbed, old man, sure enough ; never mind particulars. You just take care of the rest of the stock till you hear from me."

With a speed born of much practice, the two frontiersmen unharnessed and saddled the foremost horses, — a pair of spirited mustangs. Philip and Stephen paused a moment longer, to load the pistol they had captured, and the one which had proved so harmless in the recent fight. Then they mounted, and began their ride against time, — a wild, breakneck ride, a mad gallop down the Grade. It is not difficult, only dangerous, to ride fast down hill. There is no recovery for a stumble; but, this point aside, the pace is exhilarating and delightful. The horses caught the stern excitement of their riders, and with long, sure strides, and rapid rhythm of hoof-beats, swept down each incline, slackening slightly as they turned the corner, and resuming immediately their headlong gait. Philip could feel his steed double and undouble like a hand beneath the saddle, which was scarcely stirred by the motion. Flakes of foam struck him in the face; he could hear the pattering of the gravel thrown out behind. He might be killed at any moment; a fall over the precipice, even a fall in the road, would do it; but he had never enjoyed anything so much in his life as this risking of it. Through his reckless physical excitement came perpetually the thought of Kate, — brave, lively, lovely Kate. He was not "in love" with her at this moment; he loved her, which is, mademoiselle, a different thing. For his supreme desire was that she should be saved from the unknown peril that threatened her. Let Stephen save her; thank God, Stephen was able to do it. As for himself, he would do what he could.

Neck and neck they rushed onward until the Station could be seen, white in the moonshine. No one seemed to be stirring near it, and Stephen broke silence with an exclamation of relief. They were in time. But the moments were still precious; and more furiously than ever, if that were possible, they drove their straining steeds till they seemed to sail or fly, rather than run. Past the stable, where the hostler stood aghast; past the corral, straight up to the porch they rode, before they reined the trembling mustangs. And here it was, when all the perils of the fearful descent were safely past, that Philip's horse stumbled and fell on his knees, throwing the rider over his head, with terrible momentum, upon and across the porch.

When Kate Campbell opened the door, Philip Russell lay senseless at her feet.

CHAPTER XV.

AUNT MARGARET.

IN the west bedroom of the Bayport villa, Aunt Margaret sat alone. The table at her side was covered with books, and across it she could look out through the window upon a fair, wide landscape, showing in the foreground a part of Bayport, and, beyond that, the undulating surface of the country, marked with roads and fences, white houses, with an occasional red house, or a mill, or a village spire, and patches of woodland, now glowing with the brilliant hues of autumn; for the maples had turned, though more conservative trees still clung to their summer garments, albeit a little the worse for wear. She might have had another room with an ocean view; but this one pleased her best. A landscape — even if it be but a picture — *wears* better for the absence of the sensational element. It is not then forever saying, “Look at me,” and intruding itself upon the mind; it enters rather like a silent, sympathetic friend into every mood of the soul, bringing, not occupation nor distraction, but peace.

But at this moment Aunt Margaret was not looking at the landscape, nor at the books on the table, nor at the book on her knee. She was reading a manuscript in Alice’s handwriting; a copy of verses, which she had found on the

piano, among the sheet-music. For the old lady had a way of going to the parlor when nobody was about, and playing the piano in a quaint, old-fashioned way, as if it were a harpsichord. Rondos and minuets and bits of Mozart in simple arrangements — nothing so elaborate as the Battle of Prague — constituted her slender stock, which she made no attempt to increase. She enjoyed much of the modern music which Alice played; but her own remnant of an accomplishment was exercised for a different purpose. It was memory, not music, that she played. However, this is neither here nor there; the only point of present importance is the fact that she had found, while curiously and reverentially turning over with the tips of her fingers the pile of nocturnes, sonatas, tarantellas, and (most perplexing of all) *études* on the piano, this poem, in Alice’s hand; and she was now reading it for the second time, with a look of pain; for, as she said within herself, it did not “sound like Alice.” Of this the reader may be permitted to judge. Here are the verses:—

MOCKED.

I look upon the fairest scene;
My fancy only makes it fair;
I know not if it really bear
Such greenness, — neither, what *is* green.

I hear (at least, methinks I hear)
The tones of some melodious strain, —
Obscure conditions of the brain,
Excited, haply, through the ear!

Nor surer is my cautious touch,
 The truths of matter to reveal,
 Since ever 't is the thing *I* feel ;
 My feeling, or what seemeth such.

Alas ! what refuge can I find,
 What lofty outlook into space,
 Reflecting other than my face
 And empty echoes of my mind ?

As Aunt Margaret mused over this somewhat metaphysical production, a knock at the door, and a sweet voice saying "May I come in?" interrupted her meditations. A moment later, Alice entered the room.

"How bright and peaceful it always looks in your room, Aunt Margaret! I wonder what is the secret of that appearance of perfect peace. It certainly don't inhabit *my* chamber."

"You have what's every bit as good, my dear, and better for young folks," said the placid old lady; "your room is a curiosity shop, and gives you plenty to think of. Now old folks's rooms are like their minds; there is n't much furniture or clothing around, and what there is, is laid away orderly, on shelves, or hung up on pegs. For instance, my dear, we old folks don't worry ourselves writing poetry."

"O, but you read it ever so much, Aunt Margaret! I found you out long ago; do you think I don't know who borrowed my Mrs. Browning? But you've got one of Philip's poems in your hand this minute. Philip writes very fine poetry when he chooses, though he's such a teaze he will turn everything into fun. I found

those verses pencilled on the back of an envelope, and, because they were serious, I copied them. What do you think of them?"

Aunt Margaret looked relieved. "So Philip wrote the verses?" said she. "Well, my dear, the rhymes are in the wrong places."

"Now, Aunt Margaret, that is one of your sly jokes. You know 'In Memoriam' is written that way, and of course it is proper for —"

"For imitations of 'In Memoriam,'" interposed the old lady, with quiet malice. "Well, well; that's a matter of taste. As to the sentiment of the verses, it shows very clearly that Philip ought to get married. Nothing cures a young man of looking too much into his own face, like looking into somebody else's."

"I don't think you understand Philip," said Alice with some indignation.

"Perhaps not; but I've seen a good many young philosophers cured in my day, particularly the kind, my dear, that think they have found out the uncertainty of knowledge and the vanity of life. It is n't good for them to be alone with their thoughts; the sooner they get a sense of duty, the sooner they will get a sense of truth. Business wakes them up, but it may make them worldly and indifferent; love, my dear, is the best medicine for them."

Aunt Margaret breathed a gentle sigh of reminiscence, — was it of regret? We will not draw the veil from her youthful vision of romance. Certainly she must have loved and must have been beloved; and as cer-

tainly it must have been some sorrowful but not bitter fate that had ended her early dream ; for in her old age she cherished still the pure ideals of a young girl, and spoke of love and marriage as they should be, as they are in happy hearts and homes, not as they are too often, when care and trouble, made sharp with selfishness, have scratched the once bright mirror of the soul. Yet there was withal a spice of worldly wisdom, born of much observation, in Aunt Margaret's shrewd remark that Philip ought to get married.

"I thought at first that you were the sad poet," she continued ; "and that perplexed me."

"Did you think *I* ought to be married?" said Alice, blushing in spite of herself, and looking for a pin on the carpet, — useless pretence ! there were never any pins on Aunt Margaret's carpet. Her toilet was not the fearful and wonderful structure that perpetually loses its constituent bolts and fastenings.

The old lady smiled. "I think you can afford to wait till you are asked."

Alice blushed more than ever, gave up her fruitless pin-hunting, brought a stool to Aunt Margaret's side, and, facing her at last, said, "I received a letter from Mr. Morton, and — and I must answer it." She took a paper from her pocket, and handed it to Aunt Margaret, who, opening it, found to her surprise another copy of verses.

"Why, does he make poetry too, and in your handwriting too?"

"O dear!" cried Alice in confusion ; "how stupid of

me ! That's not it ; that's only some scribblings of my own. Here, auntie ; here's the letter."

But auntie had already "dropped into" the poetry ; and the poor girl's embarrassment left her nothing but dismayed submission. Here are the verses :—

MY HERO.

He knows me not, yet him I know ;
With him in spirit come and go,
And bide content to have it so.

Where perils press, I see him stand
With fearless face and skillful hand,
Supreme to act and to command.

Nor change nor death his temper move ;
His steadfast faith shall ever prove
Loyal to friendship and to love.

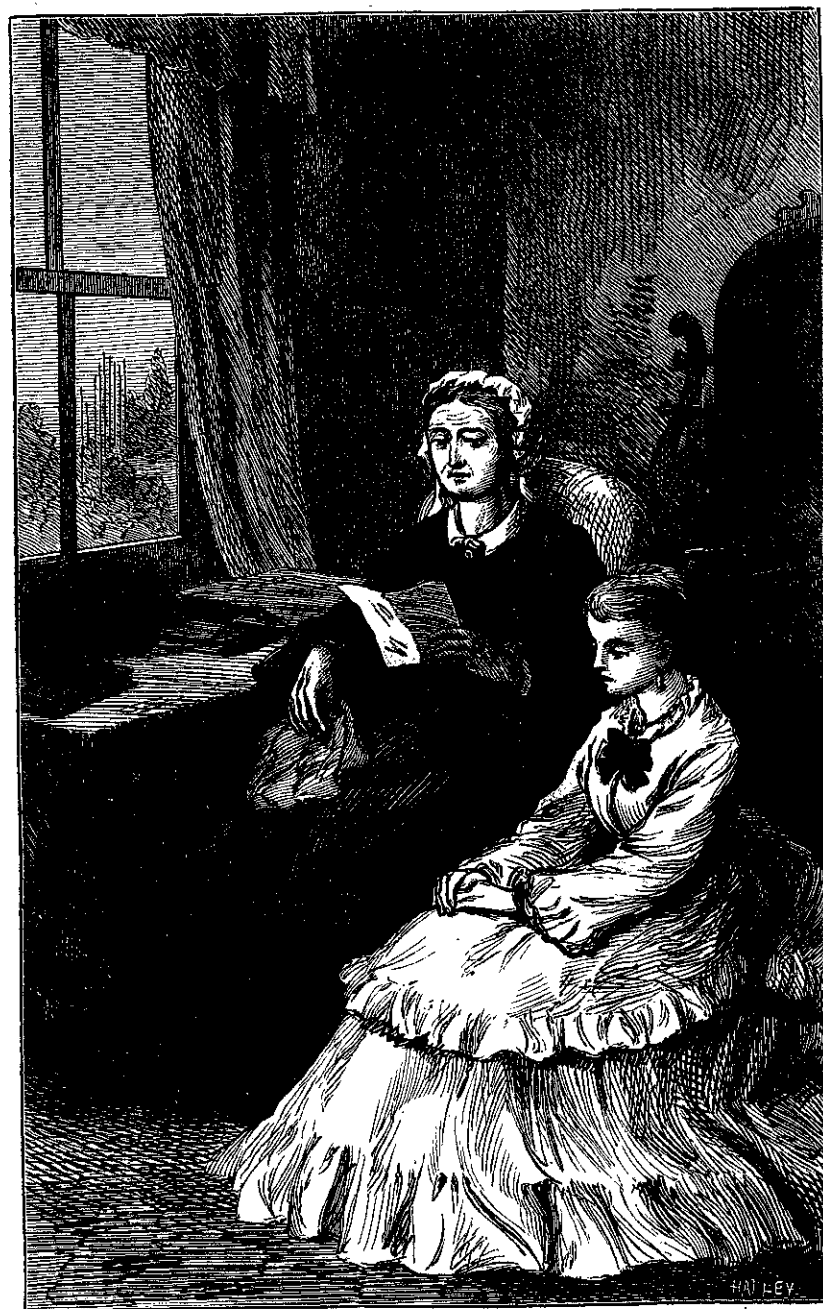
Through whatsoever rude disguise,
My hero still I recognize
By the calm fervor of his eyes.

O feeble doubters ! stand apart ;
Ye cannot touch with reason's art
This deepest truth of heart and heart !

There was no indication in these lines that anybody in particular was the hero referred to, unless it be considered significant that in the second stanza the word *perils* had been originally written *pirates* ; but that was a mere slip of the pen. The simple truth is, that certain stories about a certain person had captivated the imagination of a certain young woman, who had there-

upon made an imaginary hero of him, in a gush of poetry that resembled Mrs. Browning's as much as her brother's resembled Tennyson's; that is to say, not at all, except in the number of feet and the distribution of the toes, — I mean the rhymes.

Aunt Margaret made no remark upon the poem, but proceeded to read Mr. Morton's letter. It contained a proposal of marriage, and it was all that such a letter could fairly be expected to be, — tenderly respectful, earnest, sincere, manly, grammatical, and free from blots. Perhaps the allusion which it contained to the satisfaction which Philip would feel at a union between his friend and his sister was slightly injudicious. It seemed at least to indicate that Philip had been meddling a little on both sides; Alice remembered that he had shown an inclination to labor with her in Alfred Morton's favor; but that was trifling compared with the blunder of inciting Mr. Morton to a courtship. After all, however, two things were decisive of a third in her mind, and the third was quite decisive of Mr. Morton's fate. The first was, that he had wooed by letter at all. The second was, that he had shown of late an evident liability to be bewitched with the beauty, grace, and accomplishments of Isabella Vane. It looked as though he had once made up his mind, not unwillingly, that Alice Russell was the true wife for him; and now, finding himself in danger of wavering, had taken the irrevocable step, to satisfy his conscience and his judgment. The third point was, that Alice, finding herself able to review so coolly the other two, very sensibly concluded



AUNT MARGARET AND ALICE.

Aunt Margaret made no remark upon the poem, but proceeded to read Mr. Morton's letter.

that she did not love Mr. Morton, and had written a kind, sincere letter, refusing his offer in so delicate and skillful a way as to turn him, without detriment to his self-respect, back again from a lukewarm lover into an earnest friend. In truth, they were too much alike to match. What each needed was a complement, not a double.

So it was with her mind made up, and her answer ready for the post-office, that Alice had gone to consult Aunt Margaret. It would give her an opportunity, perhaps, to repeat aloud the arguments that had seemed so conclusive in soliloquy. But the wise old lady, having finished Mr. Morton's epistle, merely held out her hand, saying, "Now let me see your reply, my dear."

And when she had finished reading that, she remarked only, "That will do very well, very well indeed; or, you might send him the poetry. He would n't see his face in that, — would he?"

This allusion to her unlucky rhymes drove Alice out of the room in a garb, to express it in feminine nomenclature, consisting of confusion very deep, with a *piqué* over-skirt of laughter. (I trust the figure is intelligible, and the phraseology correct.) But the literal result was that Mr. Morton "got the mitten," at his sanctum in New York, by the next mail.

Meanwhile, Mr. Francis Vane had been following up, with some success, the clew afforded by the fifty-dollar note, No. 13,247, to the history of the old, half-forgotten, Andrew Campbell affair. This was one of the missing notes, and, though years had elapsed, it was still so crisp

and new as to show that it had not been much in circulation. This, and the large denomination of the bill, gave some faint ground for hope that its travels might be traced. It was not exactly detective's work; merely a letter to the bank in St. Louis from which the note had come. The reply was positive, that the note had lain in the safe a good while, with several others of the same denomination, there having been but a slight call for fifties at the paying teller's desk. The whole package had originally been deposited in exchange for small bills; the receiving teller had taken the precaution to jot down in pencil on the envelope surrounding the bill the name of the depositor; and this name was James Barlow, — a circumstance not clear in its significance to Frank Vane. It might mean that Campbell himself had assumed a false name, or that James Barlow, being another person, and not a mere *alias* of Campbell, had received the money from him; or, for that matter, why from *him*? The appearance in the case of this Mr. Barlow did not touch the question of the cashier's guilt or innocence. It only added another question, — who the dickens is Barlow? The fact that he had deposited all, or nearly all, the stolen notes in one package at one time, was strong presumptive evidence that he had some near connection with the crime, either as robber or as receiver. After pondering these points for a week, Mr. Francis Vane, without explaining his plans to anybody, took the cars for St. Louis.

Foolish boy! he too must needs write Alice Russell a letter. What possessed these silly suitors, not to see

that the girl should be taken, if at all, by storm, and not by such formal approaches? I think the trouble was, though both Morton and Vane would have been indignant at such an imputation, that they were not sufficiently in earnest. They advanced like judicious generals, looking out to keep open their lines of safe and dignified retreat. By this strategy they diminished the possible disasters of defeat, and also the chances of victory. The citadel of the maiden's heart might have surrendered to a furious assault from either of them; one of the wild charges which stake all on the issue, and which are made, in love as in war, by those men only who "would as lief not be" as be defeated.

So Vane was answered, as Morton had been. Alice wrote this time with greater ease. She was getting accustomed to the style of composition required; and it was even a source of considerable intellectual pleasure to her to fit her reply to what she imagined to be Mr. Vane's character, so as to "do him good," without giving him pain.

It would not be fair to say that either of the young men was delighted with the result of his suit. But there was consolation for both. Morton professed to himself that his true love, founded on esteem, had been thwarted by fate; the thought of meeting Alice as before, *in the presence of Isabella*, was slightly embarrassing; but he had entire confidence in Miss Russell's discretion and generosity. She was not one to wear the scalps of victims at her belt, or shout catalogues of their names during the war-dance of society. After a little, matters

would be as before; indeed, he should enjoy her presence and intellectual companionship more than ever, since there would be no disturbing undertone in his thought of her.

As for Frank, it must be confessed that he had got much interested in the Campbell affair, and the vision of the cashier's daughter had somewhat haunted him of late. He had performed a sort of mental experiment, to test the relative brightness of the two images, — Alice and Kate, — putting them, as it were, on opposite sides of the semi-transparent screen of his affections, and observing which side was the more strongly illuminated. The result was, on the whole, in Alice's favor; because love, in this stage, is, as Holmes says, a matter of propinquity. Its power is apt to be inversely as the square of the distance. And, most important of all, the electric light had not yet been focussed upon Master Frank's soul, which should turn all other lights to shadows in comparison. So he reached for the nearest luminary, and, finding it was not to be won, took for his guide the remoter one, that shone from unknown distance like a star. Whether it would turn out, on nearer approach, to be a light in the window for him, or remain forever a star, troubled him little. It was a good thing to steer by; and that sufficed for the present.

CHAPTER XVI.

A NIGHT'S WORK.

WHEN Philip Russell recovered consciousness, he was lying upon a cot at one side of the sitting-room of the Home Station. Stephen was skillfully cutting away his boots from his feet, and the slashed remains of a coat on the floor showed that this garment had been removed in a similar manner. Kate was bending over him with a gaze of anxious tenderness, which she suddenly turned aside when he opened his eyes, — so suddenly that he wondered afterwards whether he had seen or dreamed it.

The stage-driver's bearing had that high-strung air which was natural to him in moments of emergency. A sailor would have said he had called all hands on deck. Every faculty of his mind was alert to meet the crowding duties of the hour, so sadly disturbed and complicated by this new catastrophe. If it had been his plan to warn Kate of coming danger, and to get her away from the Station, that notion had been of necessity given up; the present imperative business of both of them was to look after the sufferer. As Philip revived, Stephen said cheerily, — "I told you so, Kate; he's come to. Now let's see what's the damage. Lucky I know something about breaks and bruises."

With that he commenced a rapid and not unskillful examination of the patient.

"Feel faint, hey? That's natural. Hm — this cut on your head's no 'count. Wash it, Kate; vinegar and brown paper's too expensive. Can't move this arm. No wonder; it's out at the shoulder. Nothing broke there, though. Ribs all right; now that's queer. When I break anything, it's a rib. So many of 'em, you know; the chances are always in favor of a rib. Thighs, knee-pans? Thank the Lord, *they're* not pulverized. I'm up to most tricks in the surgery line; quite a bone-sharp, in fact; but thighs and knee-pans *git* me, that's so. Bad shape, and nothing to splice 'em to. Hello, what's this? O yes, I see; well, you'll have to lie still awhile, partner, that's all, and Kate and I will pull you through."

The last discovery, of which he affected to make so little, was really the most serious, — a fracture of both bones of the leg, just above the ankle; caused, probably, by the catching of the foot in the stirrup. If it had not been a big Spanish stirrup, the chances are that the foot would not have got clear at all, and Philip, dragged or trampled by the mustang, would have furnished nothing more to this story, save a funeral.

Stephen's decision was instantly made. The leg must be wrapped in wet cloths to reduce the swelling and inflammation; to-morrow, perhaps, it could be set. The shoulder he would immediately attend to.

"Now we must make him sit up a minute," said he. "If we had a doctor here, how he would jerk and jam, and make you holler! But I won't hurt you a bit."

He tore up the shirt-sleeve, leaving arm and shoulder bare. Then he raised the elbow till it was level with the shoulder, and moved it back horizontally. A few seconds of gentle rotary motion, — a sort of feeling for the proper position, — and the arm slipped, without snapping, back into place. "It's a good deal like a bayonet-joint," said Stephen, complacently; "get the right hitch on her, and in she goes; but if you don't, you may hammer and screw away forever, and you can't fetch her. Any hostler knows that, that ever put the bottom on a stable-lantern; hey, boys? But these doctors have n't found it out. Doctors are all right when you don't know what ails you; when you do, you don't want 'em."

They laid Philip down again, and wrapped his broken leg in wet cloths. "I shall want some plaster-o'-paris to-morrow," said Stephen. There was none in the house.

"Then we'll make some; you'll subscribe this concern, hey, Kate?" He took from the mantel a small vase of alabaster. Of course Kate would sacrifice it; she had already left it behind in packing for the mysterious departure commanded by her father; and the pang of doing so was now removed by the prospect of its use. For it was a *souvenir* of Bayport; and what worthier fate for it than to be consumed in serving him who lay before her, a symbol of the bright and broken happiness of her Bayport life?

"Well," said Stephen, "you pound it up to-night, before you go to bed, and put it in the bake-pan, with plenty of hot coals all round it and over it. I guess

some of it will be plaster-o'-paris by the time we want it."

At this moment Andrew Campbell came hastily into the room, pale and panting. When he saw the faces of Philip and Stephen, he started as if he had met a ghost, — though that is a poor comparison, for ghosts had no special terrors for him. It was living men, and his own vague phantasm of a hostile, remorseless fate, that he feared. He would have fled, perhaps, but not without his daughter. Trembling with fatigue, excitement, and panic, he sank into a chair.

"Hello, Andy," cried Stephen. "Good thing you've come. Here's a pretty mess; stage robbed up on the Grade; all the passengers out hunting the road-agents; mighty brash about it, after the thing was over; but we all let those fellows go through us at the time, and never gave them any lip-currency along with the gold. And here's my partner and me rode the leaders like mad down the Grade, for fear the boys were going to play off something or other on Kate — and you; and Mr. Russell was in such a hurry, he got off his mustang the wrong way, and knocked at the door with his head and his shoulder-blade and his shins, all in a heap. We'll have to cement him up, and tie him together with a string, and set him on a shelf to dry."

Campbell scarcely followed the words, but the friendly and cheerful tone of the speaker reassured him. Philip beckoned the driver to his side, and whispered, "Look out for him; I saw his face on the hill." To which Stephen replied in a suppressed, peremptory tone, "Let

me drive, will you? I've got to look out for *you* — and Kate."

You and Kate, — that had a pleasant sound; and Philip, finding time rather heavy on his hands (to say nothing of the weight of the damp cloths on his leg), amused himself during the next half-hour by humming a variety of tunes, to all of which the words *you and Kate*, repeated with sufficient frequency, were found to fit exactly.

Meanwhile, the coach came in as usual from the west, Bronco Bill driving, and one Chinaman as passenger. Stephen held a hurried conversation on the porch with his professional brother, the result of which was that Bill bolted his supper with even less loquacity than usual, and immediately afterwards drove on with his own coach and a fresh team towards Goldopolis. The light load permitted an unusual up-hill speed, and the unfortunate Chinaman rattled about in the unballasted vehicle, — a single pea in a pod contrived by nature for nine. Bill had no fears of road-agents on this trip. The road is never so safe as just after a heavy robbery; and besides, who would be such a fool as to stop the up coach? So he drove briskly on in the moonlight, with a message in his head for Mr. Johnson.

The rest also took their supper, and were scarcely done with it when Harrison Howe and the three passengers came in. Stephen saw them approaching the house, and quickly took a revolver from Philip's coat, which he thrust under Philip's pillow. Then he offered his deringer, with a significant look, to Kate. "I have n't had

any chance to explain matters to you," said he, "and I could n't explain if I had time; for I can't make the thing out. But there's deviltry afoot, Kate, and you ought to be armed."

"Since how long?" replied Kate, with a gleam of the laughing spirit which had seemed to have died out of her during the last twenty-four hours; and with the word she showed the handle of her own revolver. "I don't care to *shoot*," she added, "except at hill-grouse, or two-bit pieces; but a pistol is a handy thing to *show*."

The confederates entered the room in a fierce, sullen way, suitable, perhaps, to people who had been robbed, and had failed to catch the robbers. It was Stephen's cue to keep on good terms with them as far as possible; and he speedily suspected a most important fact, namely, that, for some reason, Hank Howe was out of favor with the rest.

"Well, Hank," said he, ignoring, as he felt sure the gambler would find it politic to do, the slightly irritating manner in which they had parted, "what luck? Did you catch 'em?"

"No," replied Howe, curtly, with keen observation of the effect of his reply upon Stephen; "but the company don't lose much. We found the treasure-box broken open, and full of horse-shoe nails."

Moore's astonishment at this statement was evidently genuine, and as evidently followed by complete incredulity. The gambler, uneasily conscious that unseen hands were weaving a web of trouble about him, was satisfied that Stephen's were not among them. His little

feud with the stage-driver could wait. For the present, his position lacked a clear line of retreat. Somebody — doubtless the agent at Goldopolis — had played him false, and probably the officers of the law were at this moment on his track. Then his six confederates were enraged at their disappointment, and in fierce despair because the robbery would force them to leave the region at once, without giving them, as they had expected, the means of going and a reward for their trouble. They were ready to visit it all upon him; his waning authority had only sufficed to bring them to the Station, in vague hopes of plunder there, and of revenge on Andy Campbell, who, he had hinted to them, was probably the informer and marplot.

Three other men entered, as if independently, at intervals of a few minutes. One was our acquaintance of the slouched hat; another was our tall friend from North Carolina; the third served merely to make three, and his individuality is of no more importance to my story than that of the "citizens and strangers" who bring up the rear of a Fourth-of-July procession. The intelligent reader will perceive that these are our robbers, who have laid aside their masks, and reappear in the character of honest miners.

The new-comers listen with affected attention to the story of the robbery, and join the rest in cursing the Company, which lets its passengers be cleaned out, and yet carries only nails in its treasure-chest. Stephen puts in a sly remark, which has its due effect, — a declaration that the galoot who rigged up such an arrangement, and

did not take pains to find out whether there was treasure on the coach, was a shiftless fool, or else, more likely, had gone back on his partners. A mighty pretty game it would be, between him and the agent, say, to *pull the treasure-box beforehand*, and then fill her up with nails, and let her be lost on the road. The prettiest gold-extraction process ever got up yet.

The six "roughs" looked suspiciously at one another and at Hank Howe. They were evidently on the point of throwing off all disguises, and taking vengeance at any risk. But his quick wit saved him. Apparently unmoved and unconcerned, he said in a clear, cutting tone, "It will go hard with anybody that was concerned in this affair, if he is found out. Wells Fargo never lets up on a man that has touched the treasure-box, no matter what was in it." This remark brought to the gang a sense of peril that cooled them like a shower-bath. Mr. Howe proceeded: "And before Wells Fargo could get hold of him, a vigilance committee would do the business. This sort of thing has got to be stopped."

(Cries of "That's so!" and expletives by the company.)

Andrew Campbell, who had been absent, mechanically attending to some household duty, now entered the room, candle in hand, and stood amazed to see so many assembled faces, and among them that of Howe, of whose connection with the robbery he was still ignorant, though he had heard enough from the highwaymen to make him suspicious, in his feeble way.

One of the passengers, at a glance from Howe, ex-

claimed suddenly, with an oath, "Thar's the man; that's one of 'em, — the one without a mask!"

White, speechless, tottering, Andrew Campbell received the sentence of doom. The candle dropped from his nerveless grasp. Kate flew to his side.

"O gentlemen," she cried, "you are mistaken, you are cruel! My father is too ill to bear such accusations. They are not true! Speak to them, father; you were not there?"

Campbell's colorless lips whispered, "I was there, Kate. God help me, I was there!"

"He does not know what he is saying. Believe me, gentlemen, he has fits like this; they make him quite delirious. You could not have seen him, sir."

The passenger, who, it must be remembered, really did believe Campbell to have been not only an accomplice but a traitor, reiterated his declaration, adding that it was mighty rough on the gal, but it was true; and the two other passengers joined in. Kate appealed to Philip; but his silent, helpless look in reply was sufficient answer. She turned to Stephen; but Stephen, watchful and stern, said only, "Don't ask me." At last, overcoming her deep repugnance, she addressed Harrison Howe, who had not given his verdict.

"Mr. Howe, this is some dreadful error. They have taken some one else for my father. But you will correct them; you were in the best place to see. You know his face; you know he is no robber. You will save him!"

A moment's silence followed. The impassioned girl,

as her own words died away, realized that the marble face towards which she gazed was lit with sinister triumph. The eyes said more plainly than tongues, "If I save him, you know the price!" Her whole soul rose up in rebellion, and sank again in nethermost despair.

Stephen made a step forward, but controlled himself in time. It was useless, at this point, to interfere. He was not master of the situation.

Even Philip half lifted himself on his cot, feeling that some new and precious stake had been added to the game. Alas, how helpless *he* was!

In truth, much depended upon Kate Campbell's reply, by word or look, to Howe's insolent and relentless condition. If she should yield, he would doubtless be able in some way to save her father. The rest were mainly anxious for plunder, to make good their disappointment and to assist in their escape. He could divert them from the idea of violence, at least. If she should refuse, Mr. Howe's last card was not by any means played; it would become his interest to have her father torn from her, kept from her, banished or imprisoned; he did not seriously mean anything worse; and, if worse should happen, it would be against his protest.

Kate saw the alternative vividly, if not accurately. She must sacrifice herself, and for a meagre and uncertain hope,—perhaps altogether in vain. Her promise to marry Harrison Howe, that dreadful, fateful man would certainly find means to enforce; his promise to save her father, if he should give it, would be kept only

until it suited him to use again the weapon of her fear. The argument went on visibly, as it were, in her face; the whiteness of desperation swiftly alternating with the flush of shame and wrath. It was a drawn battle, unless it may be said that the white flag at last occupied the field undisturbed; for while the motley company, struck silent with awe and intense interest, waited for her words, she fainted, and was caught in her father's arms.

This incident added nothing, apparently, to Andrew Campbell's woe. He looked at her pale face as if he were dead, and she also, and life concerned them not. His wits were leaving him. He did not even show fresh fright when Harrison Howe remarked at last, "I am glad the young lady is insensible; for I am obliged to confess that I distinctly recognized her father among the robbers of the coach. Probably it will be best to arrest him and hold him until we can hear from the sheriff. Meanwhile," added Mr. Howe, with delicate tact, "the house can be searched for the money stolen from the passengers."

The confederates breathed more freely. They had got the girl off their consciences; that is, she had shut her eyes, and could not make them uncomfortable by staring around at them. Moreover, the simple plan of an arrest and a search secured their approbation.

But at this point Stephen Moore took command.

"No sending for the sheriff while I'm around," said he, striding forward. "This is my affair; the man stopped *my* coach. People don't stop *my* coach and get

off easy, — hey, Hank? We can get along without a sheriff, boys; I guess we know how to run a trial. Some of you escort the man outdoors, and we'll organize."

So speaking, with a sort of cool impetuosity, he lifted the unconscious Kate, and carried her swiftly away to her room. In an instant he reappeared, before any of the perplexed spectators had thought what to say or do. "She'll come to," he remarked; "now for business."

Andrew Campbell made no resistance, but, like a somnambulist, walked out of the house, surrounded by a portion of his judges. The rest ran hastily to the bar-room and the express-office, where they rummaged in vain. The liquors had been buried in the corral; the safe they could not open; and the private moneys of the station-keeper were in Kate's room, packed for the projected journey. One of the gang started to go in that direction; but Philip, who had been a watchful though, so far, powerless spectator, took the pistol from under his pillow, and, with a violent effort, sat up on his cot. "The other door!" said he, imperatively. The ruffian hesitated, and seemed about to accept the implied alternative of a fight, when Dan'l of North Carolina, who had just re-entered the room, interposed, saying, "'Pears like you'd better pleasure the Kernel thar. He's got the dead-wood on yer; his weepson's done drawn; hit's a pore show, an' yer bound to git, Mose; t'other door, sure!"

A shout from the road here caused a fortunate diversion, and the robbers hastily left the house. Their companions had missed them; and, instigated by Stephen

Moore, who said they "must have a quorum," and by their own jealousy lest the stragglers should obtain an undue portion of the plunder in which all expected to share, after the slight preliminary of lynching the owner, had raised a unanimous call.

Stephen was the recognized head of the *ex tempore* vigilance committee. No one could have disputed it but Harrison Howe, and he seemed to be paralyzed by the new turn in affairs. Each of his confederates thought himself unknown as an actor in the robbery; Howe knew that by some means, and to some extent, his share in it had been discovered; and already he was revolving plans for escape, surrendering with easy fatalism those other plans which he had followed hitherto with so much pertinacity. It is the peculiarity of the gambler's temperament to lose with equanimity.

"This place ain't quiet enough," said Stephen. "We don't need any witnesses, beyond ourselves, — hey, Hank? When you made a small hole in old Knuckles's head, you did n't hev any witnesses?"

"Drop that!" growled one of the men; "old Knuckles was my pardner."

"Ex-cuse me," replied Stephen; "I was n't aware o' that; but it was all right, you know; the jury said it was all right, — only *I was n't on the jury*. I wish old Knuckles was here now, gentlemen; he was a good hand at a vigilance committee."

Mr. Howe was exceedingly uncomfortable, and could not help glancing over his shoulder, as if he expected Knuckles to appear. He felt that he was steadily losing

ground with his associates, and that in a few moments more he might be on trial himself. But open flight was out of the question; so, biding his time, he said, sneeringly, "You don't seem to be in any hurry for business."

"Start your team easy, if you mean to arrive on time," replied Stephen. "I allow that's a good place up yonder on the edge of the cañon, under the pines. A few rods beyond there, you can see pretty near the whole of the Grade. Mr. Howe will just step up there and look if there's anybody coming; and by the time he gets back to us, our little business will be attended to. And perhaps this gentleman will look *down* the road. There's half an hour of moonshine yet."

Hank Howe started briskly ahead of the party, and tall Dan'l remained behind. Stephen led the main body, his hand on the collar of the speechless, unresisting station-keeper. If Andrew Campbell had cherished any hope of escape, it vanished with Howe's departure. Some vague association of that man's presence with the power, and possibly the willingness, to assist him had lingered in his mind; but it can scarcely be said that he experienced a pang at this last loss. There are no degrees in numbness.

The five vindicators of outraged public sentiment followed closely, in a condition of mental chaos. Certainly they did not constitute a very passionate mob. Two of them knew well that Campbell had neither suspected nor betrayed their plot. The rest had got their belief on the subject from Howe; and now they were seriously distrusting Howe. The general feeling, therefore, was a

readiness to follow any leader, so long as the whole body acted together, and *saure qui peut* when the leader should be wanting.

In half an hour the party reached the indicated spot. It was separated from the road by a belt of forest, and from the precipitous bluff of the cañon by a similar belt, of comparatively small width. In the open space between the two, Stephen halted, and, with a haste quite in contrast to his previous leisurely manner, proceeded to the trial.

"Prisoner, stand against that stump. Gentlemen of the jury, there's no need o' making a long rigmarole about this matter. My coach was stopped and cleaned out on the Knuckles Grade, three hours ago. *You all* know that, — hey? If anybody says this prisoner ain't guilty, let him say so; it's unanimous. Prisoner, what have *you* got to say? The prisoner has nothin' to say. If any man thinks this prisoner had n't better be attended to in about ten minutes, let him step up: it's unanimous. Prisoner, if you've got any little messages for your friends, or any watch or any photograph you want to send East, or any pardner to take charge of your traps, now's your time for makin' your arrangements. These gentlemen will do the fair thing by you."

Andrew Campbell awoke from his lethargy with a start of fresh, keen terror. "A message — yes — yes; I will send a message to Kate. I can tell her now. My God! why was I tongue-tied before? But you will not kill me, gentlemen! I was not — I did not mean to be —"

"You 've got no time to lose," said Stephen, sternly; "we don't hang people because they 're guilty: we hang 'em because they 're *found* guilty. If you want to give me any private messages, we 'll step out yonder, and these gentlemen will keep the time. Eight minutes, gentlemen." And the stage-driver, leading his helpless victim, disappeared in the belt of trees towards the cañon.

Scarcely a minute had passed, when a pistol-shot was heard, and immediately afterwards Stephen returned alone. "Gentlemen," said he, "the prisoner attempted to escape, and I was obliged to draw on him. I reckon it hurt him some, for he proceeded in the wrong direction, and went over the edge of the bluff. I presume this explanation is satisfactory. If any man ain't satisfied," he added grimly, pistol still in hand, "let him step out and say so. It's unanimous. This court is hereby adjourned; and if any of you boys had a horse hitched up the road there, that man Howe has stole it."

Sure enough, the sound of galloping hoofs came on the wind from the Grade. The effect produced upon the jury was startling. The owner of the animal, with a hoarse oath, and a cry of "*Sold!*" (which referred doubtless to himself, and not to his steed,) rushed away in vain pursuit; and the rest followed, ostensibly with the same purpose, but really to begin a scattering flight through the mountains, since the desertion of their late leader was proof positive of his meditated or already completed treachery. The last one had disappeared, and Stephen thought himself alone, when the North-Carolinian

loomed up among the shadows. The driver could afford to be plain-spoken now, — the odds were even.

"You 're another of 'em," said Stephen, fiercely; "do you think I don't know your peanut-eating, snuff-dipping, yaller old head-light?"

"Easy, stranger, easy; don' say no mo' o' that talk. Hit's mighty onpleasant, an' nary good in't. Whar's th' ole man?"

"Out o' the way. Found guilty; and Hank Howe has run off to tell on the rest of you."

"You did n't done kill th' ole man!" pursued the Southerner, heedless of the remainder of this remark. "I reckon I'm boun' to hunt up th' ole man, an' I'm gwine to do it, sure."

"And I reckon you 'd better git out o' this, unless you want to be derricked. If you care anything about Andy, I don't mind telling you that he is safe enough. I don't know exactly where, probably pretty nigh this place. It ain't more'n ten minutes since I fired my pistol over his head, and told him to git. He was guilty, I knew that, — saw it with my own eyes; but I let him off on account of the girl."

"Mought 'a' knowed that!" remarked the other, with much apparent satisfaction. "But th' ole man ain't guilty; he's wind-shaken, but no mo' guilty 'n you be. I done seen the whole thing. No; I ain't afeard; thar's my passport."

He handed Stephen a paper, on which was written, "Andrew Campbell or Stephen Moore may trust the bearer. JOHNSON." It was dated the day before.

"How did you get this?"

"In town, while you 'uns was abed, I reckon. The boys thought I was gwine for grub; but I done went for to see Johnson. Johnson knowed a heap about the plan to stop the coach; and he allowed to ketch Howe and some o' the rest. 'But,' says he, 'that's no use without evidence; an' you'll git the evidence. An' besides, you look out for Moore an' Campbell; and don' you let any of the boys hurt *them*.'"

"Keep the paper," said Stephen, handing it back. "If Andy is innocent, I'm sorry I was so hard on him. The best thing you can do now is to hang around here a day or so. He'll come back to see his daughter."

They returned to the Home Station. The doors and shutters were closed, and, not caring to wake the inmates, the two entered the stable, to sleep until morning on the hay heaped in an unoccupied stall.

Let us now sketch briefly the course of events within doors.

After the intruders had departed, Philip lay down again, as exhausted as if he had been actively engaged in the exciting scene he had witnessed. The room was now lighted by the moon only, which shone obliquely through one window, and plated with silver a single strip of brightness on the floor. The solitude and silence oppressed him, and it was to his great joy that the door opened, and Kate Campbell entered with a lighted candle. Yet how could he comfort her?

To his surprise, she seemed quite calm and courageous. Her anxiety was at least buried out of sight.

She closed the shutters and the doors, listening for a moment in vain, as she did so. "If Father and Stephen come," she said, "I can let them in."

"Then you still trust in Stephen," said Philip, perplexed.

"Yes; I trust in Stephen — and in God."

With quiet efficiency she put fresh bandages on Philip's leg, brought him a drink of water, arranged his pillow, and, taking her seat by the table, made a pretence of sewing as usual. But this was too much for her self-control. The garment upon which she began to work was one of her father's; and, after a stitch or two, she dropped it on the floor, and buried her face in her hands.

Philip yearned to say or do something; but he was merely a feather on the sweeping tide of events. "Oh!" he groaned aloud, "if I were not a useless cripple, I might serve you, or show at least how I burn to serve you!"

She rose at once, came to him, and, kneeling by his cot, said earnestly, "Mr. Russell, do not think me ungrateful; I will never forget, so long as I live, what you have done for me this night. Do you suppose I do not know that you risked your life, and that you got your hurt, for me and mine? Ah, what can *I* do, rather, to serve *you*?"

"Trust me," said Philip, eagerly, "as — as you do Stephen."

To this impetuous appeal she made no answer, but, after a moment's pause, begged to hear of all that had passed since their parting the night before. Philip com-

plied; and his chagrin at her silent rebuke of his too forward friendship melted away, as he saw with what absorbed interest she followed the history of his adventurous journey up and down the Grade. It was, perhaps, because Stephen had a part in it all; but he fancied that she bestowed likewise some sympathy on him. And, at any rate, he would not grudge her to Stephen, who — *did* he love her? and *did* she love him?

The story over, Kate went to the door, and looked once more out into the night. There was nothing. She closed the door again, and, bidding Philip try to sleep, departed. After she was gone, he slid easily and imperceptibly from thoughts of her to dreams of her. Among his latest sensations was that of a dull hammering noise in another room. It was Miss Campbell pounding up her alabaster vase; an explanation not a whit less romantic than Philip's impression that Harrison Howe was charging at the house with a battering-ram, and that the fair lady of the house commanded a brave garrison consisting of one Russell, while the banner on the outer wall bore the inspiring motto, "Me and Kate."

It is not surprising that Stephen and Philip slept soundly that night, after their excitement and fatigue. But if Stephen had been more wakeful, he would have been aware that Andrew Campbell came before day-break, and actually took his two horses out of the stable; that he proceeded to the window of his daughter's room, and held a hurried conversation with her; that she passed out of the window several packages, including a violin-case, which he made fast to the saddle;

that, after a brief interval, she came out herself by the front door, and the two rode away together as dawn was breaking; and, finally, that Dan'l of North Carolina had quietly appropriated a Wells Fargo horse, and followed them.

As for Philip, he dreamed at last that Katherine Campbell came back to his bedside, and laid her hand upon his brow; and that when he did not stir, being fettered with the bliss of her touch, she bent over him, and let fall a tear upon his face; then kissed him, and departed, weeping. Certainly, if Philip had been more wakeful, he would not have dreamed all that.

CHAPTER XVII.

OVERLAND.

It was late in the forenoon of the day following the events of the last chapter, when Stephen performed his grand surgical operation on Philip's leg. The earlier occurrences of that morning the reader may imagine,—how the stage-driver woke at dawn, and was surprised to miss his bedfellow and the horses; how he was still further surprised to find the house door ajar, which had been shut the night afore; how he peeped into the kitchen, and found a breakfast all ready, except the final touch of heat for the bacon and the coffee; how among the dying embers was the bake-pan, containing the calcined dust of the alabaster vase; how Philip was alone, and as much amazed as his friend to learn that Kate had fled. All this the reader may imagine, as well as the racy manner in which Stephen narrated the history of the vigilance committee. In one matter only would I limit the reader's imagination by setting up before him the literal facts; namely, when Stephen lifted his dripping head from the wash-basin in the corner, that morning (his first reconnoissance being over, and the expectation of breakfast having stimulated him to a good "square" wash), he observed a paper pinned to the wall beneath the diminutive looking-glass, and addressed

to him. It was, indeed, a delicate compliment to his personal habits, this employment of the toilet-corner as a post-office for prompt delivery; as though one should place a ticket for to-morrow evening's Philharmonic as a book-mark in the Bible of a friend, to be discovered to-morrow morning at the hour of Scripture reading. But Stephen tore down the paper without thinking of that, and read its contents hastily, blotting them with a good substitute for tears, in the drops that fell from his hair and nose. It was a note from Kate.

DEAR STEPHEN:—I am going with my father, why or where I do not know. He says you spared his life, but he wishes you had not. Do not follow or try to find us. It will only make him worse, perhaps kill him. I must have him alone for a while. If you will take the Station, and run it until you hear from me, or always, it will be better than to have it jumped.* You deserve to own it. There are some things, and the safe-key, buried in the corral. My father will not tell me what happened last night; and I don't wish to keep his thoughts on it by asking questions. But I believe I understand you,—indeed, I trusted you always,—except for that one moment. My dear brother, I will never doubt you again, nor cease to bless you.

KATHERINE CAMPBELL.

You will find the alabaster in the kitchen, properly baked, I hope. It's a new kind of cookery for me. Of course Mr. Russell will stay with you, and you will take good care of him and cure him. I envy you both. [The word *both* was interlined.] I am afraid I must have seemed to him

* Found unoccupied, and seized by adventurers.

rather forward and familiar. He would not understand me, like you. If he ever says so, tell him I have met him before — at Bayport. Please give him my regards. Father is waiting for me; I cannot think of anything more, — or, rather, I think of too many things. God bless you both. [That word *both* interlined again.] Good by.

KATE.

"A clear title to the ranch!" ejaculated Stephen, when he had read the letter. He handed it to Philip, and finished his washing and combing while the latter perused it. Philip studied the lines closely, giving particular attention to the postscript. He wondered whether Kate was like other women, who, as all philosophers agree, put the most important matters in their postscripts. And as for the two interlined *boths*, he wished the first of them had been left out; but the kindly afterthought that prompted the second was precious. Finally he settled on the enigma of that previous meeting at Bayport, which he strove in vain to solve. The solution was on its way to him, stamped with a three-cent postage-stamp, and drawn by six horses. But that he could not suspect, nor would the suspicion have added just now to his peace of mind. It is hard, when one yearns to know, to be satisfied with knowing that one shall subsequently know, whether in love or religion.

"Well, partner," quoth Stephen, cheerily, "the first thing is to mend the leg. After that, I guess Kate's about right; my business is to stick by you till you get well, and not go gallivanting after her. She'll take care of herself and the old man too; and some of these days, perhaps, they'll come back. Not but I'd go on the trail

if I was alone; but Kate says stay, and she knows best. Now, most women," continued he, reflectively, while he unwound the injured limb and examined its condition, "you've got to look out for, and judge for, and help 'em, in spite of 'em. But if Kate Campbell needs anything from me, she'll know it before I do, and she'll out with it, sure."

Was this perfect openness of trust like the shy reserve of maidenly love? Philip pondered the question painfully, and stumbled always at the one unknown and portentous element of the case, — the utter unlikeness, as he thought, of this young woman to all other young women. An age or two ago, he had said to her that she reminded him of his sister. How silly!

Stephen now declared the leg to be fit for surgical treatment, and proceeded to show what he knew about bone-setting, which was, indeed, quite sufficient for a simple fracture. He was not embarrassed by the traditions of the faculty; his service in the army had made him acquainted with the latest novelties, simple and effective, developed by ingenuity under the pressure of necessity in the field.

He prepared what seemed to Philip an enormous length of bandage, by tearing up several towels and a sheet, and stitching together the ends of the strips with needle and thread from his pocket.

"Always carry 'em," said he. "Needles and pins and string and wire and a jackknife and a revolver, — that's a man's necessary baggage."

Then he made a blanket bandage, not so long. Then

he filled the wash-basin with hot water, to which he added a little salt. The long bandage, dusted with the calcined alabaster of Miss Campbell's vase, was rolled up, and immersed in the hot brine.

Without adjusting the bones, Stephen wound the patient's leg in the blanket bandage, securing it with a few stitches at intervals. In three minutes this part of the work was complete, and the application of the long bandage began. Before putting this on, he extended the foot, and brought the broken bones carefully into place. Then the plastered roll was taken from the basin, squeezed to remove the superfluous water, and rolled with dexterous rapidity and firmness round and round, unwinding as it went, from the base of the toes over the whole leg to the knee. Each turn he smoothed with his hand, rubbing in the moist plaster, and, as he said, "putting on a polish." For a few minutes more he held the limb motionless, and then laid it carefully down on a piece of rubber blanket, cautioning Philip not to stir it until the splint had become quite dry and hard.

I shall spare the reader further details of Philip's recovery. Stephen's manipulation was perfectly scientific. They don't do the thing better in Paris, or Berlin, or Vienna; and the average sawbones of the rural districts does not begin to do it so well. The result was, that in three weeks Philip was walking without a crutch, and in six weeks he was as well as ever, without the slightest trace, in the shape or length of the mended leg, that it had ever been other than whole. But I must not anticipate the course of events.

The surgical operation was scarcely over when Mr. Johnson arrived from Goldopolis. He was not satisfied with the result of his stratagems. Like all highly artistic detectives, he had attempted too much. The detective is not content to prevent a crime; his ambition is to have it committed, and then catch the man who did it. In the present instance, Hank Howe's employment of three confederates as passengers had been unsuspected. It was a deeper plot, which the astute gambler had not confided even to his accomplice, the express-agent. Nor had the detective's detective, from North Carolina, discovered it in time to make it known to his principal. Mr. Johnson had suspected some foul play towards Campbell; but, knowing by experience the usual bloodless character of these highway robberies, had contented himself with directing his subordinate to look after the old man. (Everybody thought of Andrew as old.) Now he wished that he had arrested Howe in town, before the coach started. Then all this confusion would have been spared. He seemed particularly pained to find Philip injured. "I knew your father, young man," said he, "and I'm sorry his son has come to any trouble by me."

Philip was eager to follow up this clew, hoping that the person who had known his father might also have known the Campbells; but Stephen ignorantly prevented him, by asking some question about the pursuit of the robbers.

"O, we need n't track them," said Mr. Johnson, indifferently. "The company don't care to spend money in a case where it has n't lost any. It's only a question

of time. They won't go far; and, if we keep quiet, they'll all turn up here again by spring. If they had the dust, now, it would be different. Then they would start off somewhere to spend it, and we should after 'em, helter-skelter, to catch 'em before they *had* spent it. But I must go right back to town. I only came down to see how you were getting on. Sorry the Campbells are gone, Steve, but you're right. Let 'the old man rest for a while, and lie low. It'll do him good. You keep Station, and I'll make Mr. Russell here the temporary express-agent. Something light, to keep his mind occupied. Poor Campbell! The queerest man I ever saw. Can't quite make up my mind, this minute, whether he's innocent; not this last business, though,—did n't know any more of that than a baby,—but an old affair in Bayport."

As he spoke, Mr. Johnson was walking away to mount his horse. Stephen accompanied him to the door, and Philip heard fragments only of his closing sentences: "forgery"; "owned up"; "ran away"; "I always said"; "believe it yet"; and so on: then the final, "Well, take care o' yourself, old fellow!" and the retreat of galloping hoofs. Philip did not ask Stephen for the particulars. He was smitten with a sudden dread of knowing them, still more of discussing them.

The days passed on, not unpleasantly. Stephen was excellent company, and proved to be a most popular station-keeper, though the daughter and the violin of his predecessor were much missed by the frequenters of the establishment. The cause of their disappearance was,

however, sedulously concealed. Mr. Johnson kept his own counsel, and, after arranging matters in the Goldopolis office, departed mysteriously eastward, on the Company's service. Stephen invariably replied to all queries, that Campbell and his daughter had gone off on a visit, and left him to run the ranch. The other witnesses to the robbery, except Philip, who was as reticent as Stephen, were scattered abroad; and most of them believed Campbell to be dead,—shot by Stephen, and thrown over the bluff, after having been sentenced to be hanged. But the circumstances of their connection with the case were such that they prudently avoided spreading any rumors about it, to say nothing of the general rule of silence observed by all "vigilants" concerning their own doings.

Philip felt much sympathy with the women and children of the miners, and with the men who came as of old to read the papers and books that Kate had provided, and who felt that half the charm of literature had departed with her face. He knew how they missed her,—did he not miss her much more? Every day brought him new proofs of her goodness and heroism, her brave self-forgetfulness, her merry helpfulness. For her sake, he even tried to supply her place. He told the miners strange stories out of classic and mediæval history, and listened in return to their wild or comic legends of the Sierra. He even took up Kate's Sunday-school class, dividing the weekly exercise into two parts (Part I.—Talk about the lesson; Part II.—Talk about Kate), both of which proved agreeable and profitable; and he

realized suddenly the result of a gradual change wrought in his temper by contact with the active world. His metaphysical ghosts melted away, and troubled him no more. Vexatious questions of philosophy actually seemed of their own accord to climb up and lay themselves on the shelf, saying mutely, "This is the place for us." Once in a while he took them down, examined them curiously, and allowed them to put themselves away again. He felt the half-truth, at least, of Stephen's remark, "It's all very well to try, just for fun, to see the inside of your own head; but if you keep it up, you'll get cross-eyed."

But Stephen soon left him to keep house and run the reading-room and Sunday-school alone. The cause of this change was the arrival of Alice's long letter, growing out of the conversation at the clam-bake, detailed in a former chapter. He showed the letter to Stephen, and its contents stirred them both profoundly. Philip was proud, of course, to know how highly his old friend Morton held his new friend Moore; but he had known something of that before. To him the light shed upon the history of Kate and her father was more profoundly interesting. Stephen shared this feeling; and, putting things together in more unrestrained discussion than they had ever before indulged on this subject, they constructed a theory of Andrew Campbell's character and career that was not far from the truth. But Stephen's special attention was enchained by the story of his own exploits, set forth with glowing eloquence by Alice, whose version was more enthusiastic, if less detailed and accurate, than Morton's. How generously Morton must have praised

him, to rouse such admiration in the heart of such a fair and noble woman!

"Dear Alice!" said Philip; "how I wish she was here!"

"Send for her," promptly replied Stephen, with a sudden inspiration of folly.

Folly it seemed to both at first; they laughed at it, and then looked at each other as if to say, "Well, after all?"

The subject would not let itself be dropped. There was the telegraph, offering the means of instant communication; the railroad as far as Atchison; the daily stages from there onward. She could get some friend to accompany her. Stephen would go to Atchison to meet them, and escort them safely through. Women were coming every day to their husbands, brothers, and sons on the Pacific coast. The thing was feasible. Allowing time for Stephen to reach Atchison, Alice could be with her brother in less than three weeks.

The upshot of it all was, that Philip wrote a telegram, just to see how it would look. This is how it looked:—"Leg broken, but doing well. Can you and Aunt Margaret come on? Stephen Moore will meet you at Atchison in ten days."

He was so well satisfied with its appearance, that he sent it by the wires from Goldopolis the next day; Stephen riding into town at dawn to take the message, and at the same time to catch the coach going East. Before he left, Alice's letter was by agreement divided, Philip retaining the sheets which told of the Campbells, and Stephen appropriating the account given of himself. "Must have something to read on the road," said he.

At the moment Alice received Philip's telegram, she had but recently finished reading Philip's long letter from Goldopolis, in which both the Campbells and Stephen Moore were fervently praised and fully described. As she had written to Philip concerning these people, so on the same day he had written to her, each supposing the other a stranger to the persons whose biographies were partly given. The mood into which Alice was thrown by this sudden meeting, face to face almost, with the hero who had served hitherto as a frame to hang her imaginations upon, was one of curiosity, dread, and overpowering gratitude. For this noble being had saved her brother's life, — though Philip, too, had been a hero *there*, — and was her brother's friend, of course, forever. Her admiration and affection were freely bestowed upon him, without a shade of any feeling save that of exalted friendship. She longed to see him — and Kate Campbell, whom of course he loved, who certainly could not help loving him, and who, according to Philip's account, was every way worthy of him.

The thought crossed her mind that Philip himself might be more deeply interested in Miss Campbell than he chose to confess; and she even caught herself speculating upon the possible consequences of rivalry between the two friends. It was a problem like that of the meeting of two irresistible forces; but she reflected that Philip, by his own declaration, would not stand in the way of his "partner," and that, moreover, it would be for him no defeat to withdraw, Mr. Moore having really won before he had appeared. She talked the matter

over very freely with Aunt Margaret, and waited with eagerness for further news.

It came sooner than she expected, and in a form which caused her to forget all but her brother's suffering. Philip, man-like, had omitted to consider that the brief statements of his telegram left an affectionate sister no recourse but to fly to his side. He thought it would be all right. Aunt Margaret or somebody would come along. As it turned out, Aunt Margaret was, at the last moment, rendered unable to travel by a sudden attack of an old complaint, which, though it threatened nothing worse than a tedious confinement to the house, forbade her attempting so long a journey, particularly at so late a season. And Alice, under a high-pressure sense of sisterly duty, started alone. Mr. Morton, whose relation as the friend and business agent of the family, and as Philip's employer, would have made him an available escort, was of course occupied with his newspaper business, than which there is none more exacting; and recent events made it a delicate matter to ask a sacrifice from him, for which there was no real necessity. She was not afraid to travel alone. No healthy and sensible American woman need fear to traverse her own country. She will find everywhere chivalrous protection and unobtrusive helpfulness.

Such was her experience in this case. The railroad journey from Bayport to Atchison was effected with perfect ease and comfort, thanks to a series of courteous conductors, who passed her on from hand to hand like a piece of precious freight, looked after her baggage, and

secured for her in advance, by telegraph, sleeping-car sections, which increased in convenience and beauty as she proceeded westward, until they culminated in the solid, roomy, tasteful, and luxurious "Pullman" pattern.

She had timed her departure so as to reach Atchison by the day appointed; and this she accomplished, without pausing on the road, in only two hours more than the Railway Guide prescribed; so regularly, day and night, over the vast breadth of a continent, ply the shuttles of interior commerce that weave our homogeneous though many-colored national life. If Mr. Frank Vane, at that time engaged in amateur investigations at St. Louis, had been aware of her passage through the town, he would certainly have taken pains to see her. But she preferred not to see him at present; and so over the rolling prairies of Missouri she went forward day and night, until Atchison was reached. Here she left the cars, at last feeling as though she were indeed alone. The wilderness was before her.

O Stephen Moore! how could you transform yourself in three hours from the commonplace individual who arrived by the morning coach, with a linen duster reaching from his neck to his heels, and a huge pair of mustard-colored blankets for baggage, into the startling swell with spotless shirt-front and fashionable walking-suit and kid gloves, who now lifted a new silk hat, and revealed his hair parted in the middle, as he inquired if this were Miss Russell? There could be but one explanation of the metamorphosis. Stephen had had himself

got up by contract, regardless of expense. The proprietor of the bath-house, where he resorted for renovation after his journey, was accustomed to receive commissions of that character, and found his profit in the complete furnishing of "gents." Men entered his establishment hirsute, dirty, ragged, and tired. They emerged shorn, shaven, shirted, and shiny.

Alice was one of those sensible feminine travellers who are always neat, because they dress simply and suitably, without flounces, furbelows, flying ribbons and feathers, or frowzy curls. So, in spite of her long journey, she looked like her picture; and Stephen, who knew her at once, said to himself, "There's no discount on *her*."

In a few moments they were dining together at the hotel, whence the overland coach was to start in an hour. Conversation between them had its little spasms of difficulty, followed by intervals of ease. They could not quite know what to dwell upon, and what to avoid. Of course, Philip was safe common ground; him they both knew and both loved. Stephen gave a brief outline of the recent adventures, and promised details afterwards. A telegram from Philip that morning had informed Stephen that all was well at the Station. Alice's glow of joy at the news, and her deep exhilaration at the thought of meeting her brother soon, her naive enthusiasm which counted what was left of the journey as nothing, quite bewitched Stephen. It was not Kate Campbell's courage that Alice showed, but the fearlessness of an innocent child. Kate would not have been afraid of

the stage-journey; but then her not being afraid would not have particularly called for admiration.

As Alice talked of her brother, Stephen watched the expressive play of her features, and scarcely noted her words until he heard her say, "And I'm so glad, Mr. Moore, that you and he are friends, and have stood by each other in danger. It was just what Philip needed, to bring out the powers that I always knew he had, — a friend of your — experience."

She had called Stephen's character by better names than that, — heroism, nobility, generosity, inborn command, and such thorough-going epithets; but what she had said in poetry or in soliloquy, in the abstract, was scarcely to be spoken to his face; so she merely spoke of his "experience," and was angry with herself to find the word so cold. But Stephen interpreted it in the light of the manuscript of her last letter to Philip, which he carried in his breast-pocket, and knew by heart. It was with a certain sense of self-inflicted penance that he replied, "He could n't have a better friend than Alf Morton. I have n't asked after Morton yet; but you must not think I had forgotten him." (Stephen, Stephen! you know you had forgotten all about him, from the time you set eyes on his *fiancée*. But you made up for it by recalling him now with something like a pang.)

To his perplexity, Alice received this remark with some coolness, saying that she believed Mr. Morton was well; she had not seen him for some time. Poor Stephen took this as a rebuke for his broad hint that he appreciated the tender relations between the parties.

"Of course," he thought, "it's none of my business. She's just one o' my passengers, that's all; I've no call to be twitting her about her sweetheart." Whereupon he made matters worse by begging her pardon, and she capped the climax of embarrassment by blushing, and saying there was nothing to pardon; and a silence ensued during which both paid an amount of attention to the dinner which it really did not deserve.

But Alice, not comprehending and not wishing to investigate the nature of his mortification, bethought herself, in the goodness of her heart, of a subject which could not be other than agreeable to him. "Mr. Moore," said she, "I ought to have asked about Miss Campbell and her father. From what Philip wrote in his last letter, I am sure she must be charming. I know I shall like her."

Stephen felt an uncomfortable significance in this innocent remark. But the feeling vanished before his simple loyalty. "No, sir," he said to himself, "I won't go back on Kate." And in his anxiety to render full justice to friendship he somewhat overdid the matter. "Kate and Andy are gone, nobody knows where. They cleared out in the night, after the robbery. But I'll tell you all about that on the road. No use o' staking our whole stock o' news on the first deal. But don't you be afraid about Kate. She can take care of herself and the old man too. And if she wants any help from me, she'll let me know. There's no fooling about Kate. No more like any other woman than — present company excepted," added Stephen, glad of a way out of *that* sentence.

"Philip liked her very much," said Alice, following up the pleasing theme.

"I should think so; who don't?" replied the stage-driver, without a trace of jealousy. "If you'd seen the way she watched and tended him there, in the midst of her own troubles! You see, Kate had the advantage of Philip; she'd seen him before, and he could n't remember *her*. Women do take the prize for remembering people, — hey, Miss Russell?"

Thus they started on the overland trip, each quite secure in the belief of the already mortgaged condition of the other's heart; a barrier on either side of which the flowers of sentiment might spring unseen, and grow in sweet mutual ignorance until, reaching at last the top, their rosy blossoms should look one another in the face. But the barrier was not altogether a phantasm; for though Alice was not engaged to Morton, Stephen was, in a certain sense, engaged to Kate; that is, he had asked her to be his wife, and left the offer open. As he put it to himself, she "had an option on him, and no time set."

Stephen's thorough acquaintance with the tricks of travel, and his boon-companionship with drivers and agents all along the road, enabled him to play the part of what European tourists call a "courier" with great success. The best seat in the coach — in front, with the back to the horses — was always reserved, as if by magic, for Alice, with the privilege of a place outside whenever she wished for a change. At the lonesome way-stations, unexpected refreshments were offered from most unprom-

ising quarters, but of excellent quality, as might have been expected by any one who had known how Stephen had planted the whole road with canned luxuries, and warned all his friends to do their level best in the way of coffee on his return.

Days and nights they travelled over the vast plains, — buffalo and antelope in the distance, like dark sails on a tawny sea; prairie dogs near by, sitting on end like miniature kangaroos, or diving into their holes, as the coach sped by. Then Denver, even then (and much more now) the metropolis of the plains, the Venice of the great ocean of land. Alice gazed in speechless delight, from the top of the coach, at the magnificent ranges of the Rocky Mountains, behind the city, — two hundred miles of the mighty chain visible at once, its cañons and foot-hills soft with the shadows of the morning twilight, and its snowy summits already afire with the sun.

Then they skirted the mountains for a day and a night, following the Platte, and at last, passing Fort Laramie, they crossed the South Pass, — rugged hills around them, and the sublime Wind River ranges gleaming afar to the north. Echo Cañon, which had not then echoed to the rude clamors of the railway, sent back from its red cliffs the cracks of the driver's whip. The more quiet and picturesque Weber Cañon, through which the railroad now passes, they left on the right, as they swerved southward; and the mighty precipices of the Wahsatch overshadowed them as they emerged, at last, through tortuous Parley's Cañon, into the broad and peaceful valley,

where the great Salt Lake spread its sheet of burnished silver.

After the first day or two, Alice found herself rather invigorated than fatigued by this incessant travel. It was like exercise, without the trouble of exercising. Neither at Denver nor at Salt Lake did she care to stop longer than the time-table prescribed. So through the wide, tree-bordered, brook-watered, yet albeit very windy and dusty, streets of the City of the Saints they sped onward into the desert of sage-brush and alkali. This was dreary, but not without its beauties and delights. The dry pure air, the marvellous tints of sunset and sunrise on the bare mountains, the mirage of a lake with bowery shores that sometimes flitted just before the horses' feet, — these things, and Stephen's conversation, made the desert fairly blossom to her thought.

For, by this time, the two travellers had reached a very intimate friendship. One overland trip is as good as a "cycle of Cathay" for such a purpose. Though never the only passengers, they were the only ones who had made the continuous journey. People had got in or out at many points on the road, and Alice had cared nothing for their coming or going; but Stephen was constant, with his skillful care, and his quaint humor, and the splendid power which she knew lay hidden under all, ready to spring forth in her defense. Day after day lulled her into a delicious dream of journeying forever thus, — they two, on the long road, holding on their way, while others came and went, according to trivial circumstances.

Not far from Egan Cañon, they met at early morning, as they had done daily and nightly since the beginning, the overland coach going the other way. As usual, the two coaches stopped for an interchange of news and views; but this time the eastward-bound driver had something to say which he did not care to have the passengers overhear. Stephen descended and crossed to him, to take the message. It was not pleasant: a band of Piutes were said to have gone on the war-path, and to be somewhere along the road.

I have heard a simple, touching story of a locomotive engineer, who had been accustomed to run the lightning express by night, through tunnels and over bridges and around curves, without a thought of fear, but who was well-nigh paralyzed with anxiety on one occasion, merely because his little grandson was in the train behind him. Something like this Stephen felt at the prospect of a running fight with the Indians, whom he ordinarily despised, but whom he now dreaded unspeakably. The shock overthrew every barrier of concealment in his soul, and left him to face the fact that he loved with all his might the woman who was to marry Morton.

Alice, who was riding outside, read tragedy in his eyes as he returned.

"You must get inside the coach, Miss Russell."

"May I not stay here — with you? If there is any danger, I am sure I shall feel safer."

"You do not know what the danger is, or you — Danger? what danger? I did n't say danger!"

He stood on the foot-board, facing her. The other

coach had passed on. The driver of this one was politely busy with his brake-bar; though what he should want with that, on a level, I cannot say.

"Stephen Moore," said Alice, leaning from her upper seat, and laying on his shoulder a hand that thrilled him through body and soul, "there is *something*. Do not deceive me!"

He would rather have faced again, for his old friend Morton, the pirates of Singapore, or the cannon of the Peninsula, than the lawless, rebellious, passionate impulse that raged within him. The woman who gazed so earnestly into his eyes, to penetrate the secret of his anxiety, saw something in them which made her cast down her own. But his voice betrayed him not.

"Alice," he said, "Alice Russell, I will never deceive you. There *is* danger, and I know my duty. You must do as I say."

"Yes," she murmured, "I will do whatever you say"; and passively allowed herself to be lifted down. Stephen remained outside, for the simple reason that he knew the manner of an Indian attack. They would first attempt to disable the driver, and bring the coach to a stand. Under the circumstances, two drivers would be better than one: that was all.

But the Piutes were not on the war-path, after all; and by the next morning the dangerous part of the road had been safely passed. The affair had no further result than this, that Miss Russell had found a man who did not reason with her, but commanded her, — and whom she obeyed. A man not polished, not her equal in edu-

cation, occasionally using the English language in a manner neither elegant nor correct; but he commanded, and she obeyed.

For the remaining five days of the journey they abode in a strange, sweet reserve, banishing from their minds, so far as might be, the thoughts of duty and of sorrow that would soon enough demand attention. Alice was almost sorry when Virginia City, with its restless throng of miners and speculators, then in the first flush of unparalleled success, was left behind, and she knew that Goldopolis would be reached the next afternoon. Precious, indeed, was the last hour, when they drove down the Grade in the starlight, and Stephen rehearsed once more the story of those adventures in which Philip and he had borne a part. Now the light of the Station gleams before them. Philip, advised of their approach by telegraph, is on the alert. He stands on the porch, well and strong; and at the sight of his beloved face the troubled waters of his sister's heart are hushed to sudden peace.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TOO LATE.

THE first thing Frank Vane did on arriving in St. Louis was to visit the bank, make himself known to the officers, and request a description of the appearance of that James Barlow who had deposited the fifty-dollar notes. This he was unable to get. Nobody remembered the person. Vane felt as if, to use the words of a Western story, his road had changed to a squirrel-track and run up a tree. The Directory exhibited a James Barlow, who, when hunted up, proved to be in the white-washing business, and never to have possessed check or check enough to enter a bank, — a venerable African, in short, with \$15.75 laid up, in a woolen stocking, against the day of his helplessness.

Several days were passed in following false scents suggested by the city police, whose brief list of Barlows *alias* something else was soon exhausted, without furnishing a clew. Frank had about concluded to abandon the search so hastily undertaken, when one day, as he sat at the dinner-table of the Planters', he was startled to hear a low exclamation from his next neighbor, — "Jim Barlow, as sure as my name's Johnson!"

The man who spoke was looking across the room and through an open door into the hall. Frank followed the

direction of his glance, and recognized, in spite of the changes wrought by time and fashion, the features of Charley Green, the former clerk of the Bayport Bank. His start of surprise attracted the attention of the first speaker, who looked at him and exclaimed, "Why, this must be Frank Vane! My name's Johnson; I knew your father well, and I'm particularly glad to see you here."

A few words explained matters; and Frank was for rushing out immediately, lest the thief should escape. But Mr. Johnson took matters coolly, saying, "No hurry; he can't get away. See that man out by the door? That's my man. Been tracking this Green-Barlow-Howe around town for three days, and never came up with him till this minute. In fact, we looked everywhere but here. But we won't lose him now."

After dinner they walked out into the hall. Hank Howe saw them coming, and knew that he was trapped. The interview was brief and business-like. Mr. Johnson produced his papers, and showed the gambler that they were regular in form. He might gain some delay by refusing to leave the State until a demand should be made for him by the governor of California; but California, when she got him, would charge the extra trouble to his account. It was his best policy to make things easy for his prosecutors. So he surrendered at once. When Vane questioned him about the Bayport forgery, he inquired coolly, "Is that going down in the bill?"

"No," said Frank; "we only want to get the facts about that." And Mr. Johnson added significantly,

"We want to clear Andy Campbell, whether we do it by trying you or not. That's a point had better be decided now; for if this Bayport business goes into court, we'll try that first; and after you get through with that term, we'll call on you again. Wells Fargo can wait, you know. Then there's that Knuckles matter. They do say that old Knuckles had n't a fair show in that." The gambler's iron nerves must have become crystallized and brittle, as iron rails and axles do, by repeated jars. He was palpably crushed by the pressure put upon him; and it was with a wretchedly unsuccessful attempt at his usual indifference that he replied, "You need n't squeeze so hard. I've no objection to clearing that old fool Campbell, — for his daughter's sake, if nothing else. If he had had her spirit, he would have cleared himself long ago."

The confession which followed contained nothing new, except the account of an interview between Charley Green and Andrew Campbell, in Bayport, after the accusation of the latter, in which the clerk had skillfully intensified the nervous horrors of the cashier, and urged him to fly from a place where, even if acquitted, he would no longer be unsuspected. The surrender of the house would stop pursuit; and a peaceful, unmolested life would await the fugitive in the fair, new West. In his first craze of despair, Andy Campbell had followed this advice, Green secretly assisting his departure. Many a time afterwards did the cashier bitterly repent this first step. Before his terrified thoughts that inexplicable restitution stood, blocking forever the way of his vindica-

tion. His only available recourse was to avoid all connection with the life behind him, — to become forgotten, though he could not forget, — and to spare Kate the misery of sharing his remorse. Upon this habitual mood of his, Harrison Howe had intruded a second time, and even more easily than at first had controlled the weak spirit of his victim. All this, made plain, I trust, in preceding chapters, was now set forth to Vane and Johnson in a clear, connected narrative, devoid of passion, repentance, hypocrisy, or humor, by the defeated villain.

Our story has no more to do with Harrison Howe. He makes no startling end. He reappears not, in a desperate last endeavor, to bear the senseless Katherine away before him on his midnight steed; he stands not at bay in any rocky cañon, shooting several subordinate characters before he finally puts the pistol to his own head, and "dies as he has lived," etc., etc. On the contrary, he turns out as might fairly be expected of a cold-blooded, sharp-witted, selfish man, with strong nerves, a *penchant* for plotting, a reckless courage, luxurious tastes, good clothes, and a handsome mustache. The nerves wear out in time; the courage wears out with them; the gamester throws up the game; the fine clothes and the fine mustache fall off; and there is left only a meek, ordinary individual, with shaven poll and striped garments, a mere link in the chain of humanity that drags itself across the prison-yard, "keeping step," to meals. There is only enough of the flashy gentleman left in him to make his comrades dislike him, particularly the one who marches just behind him (whom we

might recognize, if he would grow his hair and resume his slouched hat) and who takes malicious pleasure, when the keeper is not looking, in whispering, "*Knuckles!*" over the shoulder of No. —, and noting the invariable start of terror which the word produces. Mr. Harrison Howe's career is evidently a failure. He tried to be satanic, and broke down, — because he was human.

Francis Vane, having so unexpectedly succeeded in his object, was now seized with the impulse to go further, and break the tidings to Andrew Campbell — and his daughter. Perhaps he would not have yielded to this impulse but for Mr. Johnson's cheerful communication that *he* knew exactly where the station-keeper was. "One of my men taking care of him," said Mr. Johnson. "No use in his going back to the Station right away. Some of those fellows might try to lynch him again, and perhaps no Stephen Moore to save him. But I've kept my eye on him."

This settled the matter; when, one day after Alice and Stephen left Atchison, the morning coach departed from that lively town, it carried Frank Vane as well as Mr. Johnson and his prisoner. Frank enjoyed the journey keenly, feeling, as never before, the grandeur and beauty of his native land, and not forgetting to note what fine chances for investment were opening in the West. "Twenty years from now," he said, in the rashness of youth, as they left Denver, "there will be a railroad depot in this town, and lots will be worth money." In less than half that time, there were to be five railroads centering at Denver; which fact, had Frank

Vane only foreseen it (or you or I, dear reader of small means), would have led to the purchase of some corner-lots in Denver that only nabobs are now likely to touch.

They had a taste of adventure too; for the Piutes went after them in earnest, and chased them for a good mile, luckily in vain. But they were besieged for a day in a stockaded way-station; and so it came to pass that at the moment when Alice sprang into the arms of her brother at Andy's station, Messrs. Johnson and Vane, quite unconscious of her presence on that side of the continent, were two days behind her on the road.

It may well be imagined that the brother and sister had much to say to each other; though for the first time in their lives, each had something to keep back. Alice did not care to mention her rejection of Morton, not knowing how Philip would receive it; and still less would she betray that feeling towards Stephen which she had scarcely acknowledged to herself. Philip, on the other hand, was determined to hide from every living being his love for Kate. She belonged fairly to Stephen, — if Stephen loved her, and if his love was returned. That this was really the case, Philip continually told himself; and in the same tone he made as many allusions as his self-control would permit, in talking with Alice. She, poor girl, tried to show that she comprehended the situation perfectly, and that she rejoiced at Stephen's love for Kate; and thus they co-operated zealously in making themselves miserable.

But, the evening after Alice's arrival, as they all sat

before the fire in the great room of the Station, chatting pleasantly about the scenes and adventures of the last few weeks, the door opened, and Katherine Campbell stood before them, her riding-habit splashed with muddy water, her face pale and sad. They made Alice known to her; and a gleam of brightness crossed her countenance as she said, "I am very glad you have come, Miss Russell, for your brother's sake. We have not treated him well, out here in the mountains."

She looked once at Philip; and, satisfied at a glance that he was entirely well, smiled in token of her thanksgiving for one boon at least, and then turned to Stephen.

"I want you now," she said. "Father is not well; he is sinking every day; I am afraid he will die." Her voice trembled, and her lip quivered. "Come to us, and see what you can do for him."

Thus far they had all waited for her to speak; it was so evident that the weightiest tidings would be those she brought. But now Stephen and Philip both started eagerly forward, volunteering to go immediately. Alice ventured to insist on accompanying them. "I can help you watch with him," said she; "men are not good to watch."

"You don't know how good — nor how bad — they are," replied Kate, recalling keenly the perils, rescues, and sorrows of the last month. "But I should be glad to have your company." Glad, indeed! Through all her deep anxiety uprose a yearning desire to make this sweet sister of Philip Russell her friend.

Stephen was ready with his plan at once. "We can

turn over the shebang* to the hostler," said he. "As for Philip's express business, we'll let that slide. The boys can carry the parcels and the treasure-box straight on to the valley station or up to 'Opolis, according. I'll go out and saddle the mustangs. Of course you can ride, Miss Alice?"

"I don't know what terrible animals mustangs may be," replied Alice. "Have n't I heard of an awful performance called 'bucking'?"

"O, if that's all," said Stephen, mischievously, "you will do well enough! One person's as good as another on a bucking horse!"

Here Kate interposed. It was useless, she said, to start that night. Her father was in good hands; she had left him four hours before. By daylight, they could reach him in three. But it was necessary to ford the river; and, though the water was low, the quicksands were bad. She would not try it again in the dark, herself. There was a touch of beautiful unconscious pride in the last argument, as if she had said, "Where I do not dare to go, no man would dare." A slight shudder accompanying the words was the only sign she gave of the story mutely told by her stained dress, — a story of her desperate struggle for life in the treacherous river bottom, with the lights of the Station in view, yet no human help at hand.

It was arranged that they should start on the following morning; and, there being fortunately no guests that

* This term, strictly meaning a rude cabin, is applied on the Pacific slope, half jocosely, to any house.

night at the Station, the four friends passed the remainder of the evening together. Kate's tensely strung nerves relaxed under the influence of this kindly companionship, which she accepted as an omen of relief. As she learned from her companions so many things about her father's early and recent experiences, hitherto unknown to her, and gained thus the clew to his weak life, she wept silently, but with lightened heart. All might yet be set right. They would carry to her father the medicine he needed,—hope and cheer. Alice would tell him that everybody in Bayport believed him innocent (which Alice had indeed said, in her enthusiasm, and which was destined to be quite true, shortly); Stephen would assure him that nobody doubted his innocence of the robbery on the Grade; Philip—why, Philip need only give him his hand to show him that a gentleman knew him for a gentleman. They would bring him back to the Station; and what would happen after that she did not quite dare to question. Probably Philip and his sister would go away. She would not torment herself yet with such thoughts.

Alice was occupying Kate's room, and proposed to surrender it to her, but she firmly refused. "Steve will turn out for me," she said; "I'll take his room, and he will camp here in the sitting-room. We barbarians are better used to such little inconveniences than you Eastern people."

"That's pretty talk," cried Alice, "to a girl that has been sleeping a fortnight in stage-coaches. But I do wish, at least, you would take your own room,—and let me share it with you."

This arrangement was accepted, and the ladies retired. They must have combed their back-hair a good while that night,—if that is, as I am informed, the ceremony attending the mutual confidences of women,—for when they appeared next morning, it was arm-and-waist, and no longer Miss Russell and Miss Campbell, but Alice and Kate. Evidently Kate, who had her own reasons for loving Philip's sister, had completely conquered the affections of Alice, who certainly had no special cause, at the outset, for liking her. The intimacy had thriven rapidly on the basis of a long talk about Philip and Stephen, in which Kate had divined her companion's secret, and successfully guarded her own. Yet Alice somehow gained from it all a delicious doubt as to the nature of the affection between Kate and Stephen. "Perhaps she only thinks of him," she mused, "as I think of Philip."

The morning was fair, though an early snow-storm had new-robed the Sierra. They crossed the stream safely, and rode in single file along a bridle-trail, leading into the foot-hills, through the forests, over many a gulch and cañon, towards *the* Gulch, the rival mining-camp which threatened to eclipse Goldopolis. This was not the main road, and they met no travellers upon it. After following it for a couple of hours, they left it for a still fainter trail, which led them up a steep, wooded ridge, on the farther side of which they came upon a wood-cutter's camp, consisting of a single large, low cabin. It was a picturesque scene. Close around stood the grand forests of the Sierra, upon which little inroad had yet been

made by the hand of man. Just before the cabin the ground descended suddenly into a magnificent deep cañon, in the distant bed of which could be seen the curling smoke and the white split-pine roofs of the cabins of Dead Man's Gulch. There was a simple arrangement called a wood-slide, itself of wood,—a sort of smooth trough running straight down the mountain, along which the timber and cordwood cut above could be shot down without expense (except to careless travelers below) nearly into the mining-camp. This arrangement, with the log-house and the business of cutting wood, belonged to Dan'l, who had left it for a couple of days at Mr. Johnson's orders (and for good pay); and had persuaded Andy Campbell in his despair to accept it as a refuge.

As the party approached, Dan'l was observed squatting before a fire in the open air, which he had just reduced to the proper consistency for cooking, namely, to a mass of glowing coals,—the smoke and blaze of the log being gone, and only its fiery heart remaining. His undoubling and uprising was like the growth of a magic gourd. He shook hands with his visitors, pointed to the house, and, as they turned to enter, followed them with his eye, in silent thought; then, turning to a huge piece of bacon that hung from a neighboring limb, cut eight extra slices, two for each of the new-comers, and piled them neatly on a chip, to wait the proper moment for frying.

The house contained one room only, but this had been divided into two by means of blankets hung from the roof, leaving an interior chamber for Kate's occupancy.

In the outer apartment were two rude bunks, made comfortable with abundant bear-skins and blankets. On one of these, which had been drawn out to the middle of the earthen floor, so that it commanded through the open doorway a view of the sunny, airy, leafy world, lay Andrew Campbell. His violin was on the floor, where it had fallen from his hands. The hunted, haunted look had vanished from his face; he was more like the loving, happy father of years gone by than Kate had ever hoped to see him again. But her first glad surprise was quickly followed by anguish, when she perceived that memory had departed as well as fear. He looked placidly upon them all, but spoke no word save incoherent whispers which they could not understand. Kate he seemed to recognize, though once he called her Mary, which was her mother's name. The Russells he ignored. Upon Stephen he looked occasionally with an air of perplexity.

Philip and Alice returned to the clearing before the house, feeling that they could not render any immediate service. Within, Kate sat by one side of the narrow bunk, holding her father's hand, and Stephen on the other side, watching the case with a growing conviction of its hopelessness. The dying man looked from one to the other. Feebly he felt for Stephen's hand, and, having found it, lay for a few moments in impassive forgetfulness. Then he brought the two hands together,—Kate's and Stephen's,—clasped them in both his own, and closed his eyes. But his gentle breathing showed that he still lived.

The crackling of twigs and leaves under horses' hoofs

was heard without. Then a hasty exclamation of surprise. "What, Miss Alice, you here? How in the name of wonder—" Then a sudden hush, followed by eager conversation in low tones. Kate slipped quietly out to learn the cause; but in a moment she returned, elate, triumphant, sure that the good news she bore had virtue to inspire the despairing, to call the dying back to life.

"Father, father!" she cried, "you are innocent; they all know you are innocent; they want you to go back to Bayport. Indeed it is all true; see, here are Mr. Johnson and Mr. Vane come to tell you so!"

Andrew Campbell awoke once more to life at the sound of these names. He sat up suddenly on his bed, just as the two men appeared before the door. At sight of their faces, a look of recognition, and with it, alas! the old look of terror, came back to him. He flung up his hands wildly, with an inarticulate shriek, fell back upon his pillow, and neither spoke nor stirred again. They watched his waning breath and pulse for an hour, hoping against hope; but at last both were still, and the gray shadow that comes but once, and is nevermore lifted, crept upward to his brow.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BRAVEST HEART.

KATE CAMPBELL sat in her chamber, absorbed in sad reflection. The events of the last week had lifted from her shoulders one burden to which she had grown accustomed, only to lay in its place another, almost too heavy to be borne.

First, there had been her father's death, of which her friends spoke as of a release for him and a relief for her. She felt that this was true. Moreover, there had been no lack of sympathy for her or respect for the deceased. Father Ryan had come to the wood-cutter's cabin, on purpose to conduct the quiet burial-service, which he did in a manner both touching and amusing, considering that the man had been a heretic. They laid him under the grass on the edge of the high bluff; and after the ceremony was over, the good priest said to Kate, "Sure it's not exactly consecrated ground,—more 's the pity; but yer tears, me darlin', faith, I think they'll be reckoned as howly wather, considerin' the circumstances."

The funeral was private; but the next number of the weekly "Goldopolitan" contained a glowing eulogy of "our esteemed fellow-citizen, Andrew Campbell, Esq.," dilating especially upon his services in maintaining a high standard of musical art "among us," and tendering

"to his lovely and accomplished daughter the sympathies of a sorrow-stricken community."

But all consolations could not fill the void in her life. We miss our departed friends in the proportion not merely of our love, but of our care for them. Love can reach out across the narrow rill of death, and still walk hand in hand with the unseen beloved. It is habit that is smitten with a mortal wound, and must die in us with slow pain. Though we know the dead are happier, and that soon we shall be happier to remember than we could have been to retain them, yet the vacuum in our lives remains for a while, and while it stays unfilled is abhorred of nature.

But Katherine Campbell had to face more troublous thoughts than these, — thoughts connected with her own plans for the future. It seemed as if Fate required her to continue the sacrifice of her life, though he for whom it was begun no longer needed it. Since his death, two friends had left her; and though their going was her own work, and she did not dream of recalling them, the omen was disquieting.

The first was Dan'l, who, on the evening after the funeral, had offered her his heart and hand, in language as sincere, respectful, and earnest as it was uncouth. He did not appear surprised at her refusal. He had scarcely dared to hope for more; but, as he explained, it had "'peared like she mought be lonesome, 'thout th' ole man"; and so he had revealed his humble affection. The next day he appeared at the Station, and said he had sold the wood-ranch, and was "gwine back to the States."

So she lost the faithful friend who had been for many weeks the guardian of her father's refuge, and her companion in the duties of that weary time. She had contributed regularly to the expenses of their rude house-keeping; but she begged Dan'l, at parting, to accept some money for himself. He took from the offered gold a single dollar, in which there happened to be a hole. The rest he returned to her. At the very last, Dan'l looked into her face with the simplicity and the penetration of a child. "You mought be lonesome," said he.

"I shall be very lonesome, Daniel. Good by." She never saw him again.

A day or two after that, Frank Vane went away. From the time of his arrival, he had been put on a footing of familiarity, justified by ancient friendship. As he was fond of intimating, he had known Kate longer than any of the others. But one or two small reconnoissances had satisfied him that this intimacy was really a sign that she had no thought of him as a suitor. On the whole, it would have been very awkward to pay court to Miss Campbell while Miss Russell was by, though his relations with the latter were simple enough. In the first surprise of meeting her, he had forgotten to be embarrassed; then the death of Andrew Campbell before their eyes had driven from their minds all thoughts of the past; and subsequently, Alice, determined to have no chance for misunderstandings, had taken an opportunity of saying, "I am glad we are to be good friends, Frank. You see I drop the 'Mr.' You had better do the same by the 'Miss.' It is the custom of the country

between intimate friends." So Frank Vane, content to "take the good the gods provide," had found himself on excellent terms with two charming girls, one of whom had refused him already, while the other had snubbed his aspirations in infancy, so to speak, and doubtless deemed him cured of folly in his thoughts of her.

Before bidding Kate good by, he informed her that the Bayport villa was her own. "I got the telegram this morning," said he, "in answer to my letter from St. Louis. It's all arranged. You see, my governor never would believe your father was guilty; and he bought the villa of the bank for a thousand dollars more than the money they had lost, and held it till he died. We talked about it a hundred times. 'If I ever find Mr. Campbell and his daughter,' he used to say, 'I shall give him back his property, and take a mortgage on it for the amount I paid for it —'"

He hesitated; and Kate looked up inquiringly. "Well, this is what he said, Kate; I'm not to blame. He said that he would present you with the mortgage on your wedding-day. The governor was always fond of you. And when he died, he left that property 'to my son Francis, for a purpose which he understands.'"

"O Frank! you must keep the mortgage yourself; I cannot take it from you."

"You can give it to any fellow you choose," said Frank, significantly, — "Stephen, or Philip, or me. But there now, I won't be silly: I did n't mean anything, Kate. By Jove! I wish I was your brother; then you would n't care what I said. I can chaff Isabella all day,

and she don't mind. Of course I did n't mean anything; do you suppose I am blind? Can't I see that Stephen Moore is dead in love with Alice? Poor fellow, I pity him. I've been there, myself. And so has Morton. But we're done for. One pair of mittens was just enough to go round!"

Kate listened with amazement. "Stephen! Alice!" she ejaculated.

"As sure as you live," replied Frank, with the jaunty indifference which we feel for other folks' love-affairs. "But don't mix yourself up with it, Kate. It'll settle itself. The Russells don't take naturally to matrimony, I'm afraid. There's Philip, had all the Bayport girls thrown at his head, and thinks more of the Darwinian theory, or whatever it is, than of the whole lot. The great trouble is, he and Alice are in love with each other. But my time's short, and I must finish up business. You will let me obey my governor's wishes, won't you?"

Kate could resist no longer. "It is too generous," she said; "but have it as you will."

"Business is business," replied Frank; "and here's some more of it. Lots have gone up in Bayport since the war, and no end of people have been after your place, but I would n't sell at any price. Said I could n't give a clear title. But here's a fellow has heard somehow that the title is now perfected, and offers me by telegraph forty-four thousand for the place with the mortgage on it, or fifty thousand with the mortgage paid off. You might get more by holding on to it; but, on the whole, I advise you to sell."

"Whatever you think best," said Kate, not half realizing the extent of her good fortune, and not in the least suspecting that the purchaser was Mr. Frank Vane.

"Well then, I'll sell for forty-four, as soon as I get back. And there's another item, — six thousand dollars and interest, due you from the Bayport Bank. I'll see about that promptly. That's all, I believe, — except to say good by. I'm afraid you'll be lonesome, Kate. If you are, come and visit us. And you must keep me posted as to your address. I shall have to write to you about your investments, you know. Well, good by."

They were standing at one end of the piazza, and the rest of the household were within doors. Only the stage-driver (not Stephen, but a stranger) was within sight, but his back was turned, and he was busy arranging packages on the roof of his coach. The silence, the solitude, and the starry witnesses above, brought back to Frank Vane's memory the night, so many years ago, in which he tried to kiss little Kate Campbell, — and emphatically failed. It was not easy to abstain from repeating the experiment now. Her fair and earnest face laid a spell upon him. But he had taken the *rôle* of faithful friend only, and he must not covet the privileges of the "first gentleman," whoever *he* might be. So, with a heroism as large as the petty character of the sacrifice would permit, he took her hand only, in the firm, free clasp of steadfast affection, as he said good by.

But Kate lifted her face to his, and kissed him. "God bless and keep you, Frank," she said. "You have been indeed a true friend to me." Then she turned hastily

away, and he saw her no more before his departure. As he sat wrapped in his blanket on the top of the stage, and rode up the Grade, between the peaceful earth and the peaceful sky, Frank Vane made up his mind that, on the whole, his journey had repaid him well.

So now, as I said at the beginning of this chapter, Katherine Campbell sat in her chamber, absorbed in sad reflection. Frank had been gone two days; and the rest were evidently waiting only out of sympathy and respect for her, until she should speak the word which would scatter them on their several roads. What she should do with herself, she could not yet decide. She would first consider what she could do for these dear friends. Perhaps Stephen loved Alice, as Frank supposed. Perhaps he considered himself bound by his former proposal to herself, or by the half-unconscious, mute gesture of her father, joining their hands over his own heart. If these were the only obstacles, she would put them out of the way. But it cost her a pang to make the resolution. Although she would not marry Stephen, it was not easy to take a step that would send him away from her. Yes, he too would doubtless go to live at Bayport, — dear Bayport, where all her friends would be gathered, the only place in the world where she would care to be, yet the only place she must avoid. For she fronted bravely the knowledge that she loved Philip Russell with all her heart. She repeated to herself the sad, sweet refrain, —

"I love thee so, dear, that I only can leave thee."

But yonder went Stephen, and her thoughts returned

to him. With a pretty little feminine burlesque of the Indian war-whoop she hailed him; and he came quickly and stood outside her window, crossing his arms on the sill.

"Steve," said Kate, "you look pale; something worries you. You must tell me what it is. When father put our hands together, I remembered that we had shaken hands already over a promise to trust one another. You are my brother, you know."

"I remember both times very well," said Stephen, slowly. "What I offered once, I'll stand to now. Your father is gone; and there is nothing to prevent you, if you'll take a rough fellow like me."

"Not too rough, dear Stephen, for any woman's hand. But I tell you again, as I told you before, you are merely thinking how to help and protect me. I will not marry you under those circumstances, nor under any circumstances, — never, never, never. You darling old kind-hearted fellow, you have to be refused a dozen times before you'll give up what you don't want. But I hope *that* will satisfy you."

It apparently did not satisfy him, for it only threw him back on his secret and hopeless love for Alice. He could have laid this love away with his memories of childhood, and settled into an affectionate and contented life with Kate, — Miss Russell being far enough away. Or at least he tried to believe that he could have done so. But to live on the unsubstantial passion only was a desolate prospect for an active and naturally hopeful mind like his.

Kate, having the key to the cipher, read all his heart in his face. "Wherever you are, Steve, I shall know that you are my wise and true friend, ready to advise and help. It is not necessary for me to take a husband I don't want, in order not to lose a brother I do want. We will be friends, as your old companion Mr. Morton and Alice Russell are. Why, how queer! just as we speak of Alice, there she goes!"

Stephen turned swiftly, and saw Alice walking slowly up the road. "Kate!" he said, huskily and in great agitation, "don't torture me! You know she is engaged to Alf Morton."

"I know better," said Kate, letting out her friend's secret inch by inch. A wave of light surged over his countenance, chased by a wave of shadow. He spoke again, intensely eager, staking his whole soul on the issue.

"Kate, she would n't listen to *me*?"

"I think you had better ask her yourself," replied Miss Campbell.

He turned swiftly to go, yet, looking back once more, could not but perceive how sad and exhausted she appeared. Returning to the window, he took her hand earnestly, saying, "I think I'll stay with you, Kate. You'll be lonesome when they are gone."

But she pointed up the road. "Don't let us have too many lonely people, Steve. *What if she loves you?*"

An instant more, and he was striding away in a tumult of surprise and hope. She watched him till he had disappeared. Everybody said, yet nobody knew,

how lonely she would be when the last friend had left her. The rest would go without her sending them. Philip was already longing to be off; she could see that in his restless manner and his constrained reserve towards her. Was he afraid that, in her Western frankness, she would trouble him with some unwomanly tokens of her feelings? No; he was too noble to misunderstand her so. Nor could he suspect the secret she had kept so well. Out of the memories of that dreadful night one sweet, sacred vision arose perpetually, and she heard again his earnest tones, "Trust me as you do Stephen." Even then she had not been able to promise *that*. She had felt the difference in her feelings for the two, and she could not class them together. Well, it would all be over soon, — except the dreaming, and the praying, and the unknown troubles of her future life, which should be welcome, if they would only dull the sharp edge of this present pain.

Meanwhile Mr. Philip Russell sat on the piazza, his chair tilted back against the wall, and his hat drawn over his eyes. Though the mountains showed the early snows, the rainy season had not come; and the autumn sunshine made the days delicious. But Philip was resolving for the hundredth time that he must tear himself away. He would insist upon going, — Alice and he, — and Kate and Stephen should never know what it had cost him to leave them together.

Up the road went Stephen, and just beyond the first trees that hid the Station from view he overtook Alice Russell. She knew *who* was coming behind her. Was

it a wild, vague suspicion of *what* was coming, that made her walk faster at first, and then stop short and turn about?

Her hero never looked to her so noble as now, when he stood before her in manly humility. And certainly no impassioned wooing was ever so eloquent (in the opinion of the audience) as the straight-forward, terse, and weighty words of the stage-driver.

"Miss Alice, will you hear me a minute? I thought you were engaged to Morton. If it is not so —"

Alice replied faintly, regarding with great attention a specimen of quartz which some one had dropped in the road, and which she turned over assiduously with the toe of her boot, "No, it is not so."

"Then you *must* hear me," quoth Stephen, with the air of the captain of a forlorn hope, who purposes to die, at least, face forward, "for I love you; and you will not refuse me a word, to put me out of pain, — the pain of not knowing. I might not have dared to speak, but Kate encouraged me. I have loved you, — always, I think; anyhow, ever since that day on the coach, when we expected the Piutes. I could n't bear the thought of harm coming to you; and when I looked in your face, I knew that — it must be you or nobody."

Alice heard him, motionless, with downcast look and deepening flush. Kate had sent him to her! Then there had been a great mistake, and it was now cleared away. As he paused, she looked up and met with frank and serious look the intense glow of his waiting eyes.

"I remember that day upon the coach," she said,

slowly. "You would have risked your life for me. I remember every word you spoke. Have you forgotten mine?"

"You told me," replied Stephen, the glow in his eyes breaking forth in a flame of joy, "that you would do whatever I thought best."

She nodded with a quick, tearful smile, murmuring, as she held out both hands to her lover, "But I said first that I would rather stay with you!"

Half an hour after, Mr. Philip Russell was roused from his disagreeable ruminations by the sound of footsteps before him. Tipping his chair forward and his hat backward, he saw Stephen and Alice. "Fetch on your blessing, partner," quoth the stage-driver, while Alice laid her happy face to Philip's cheek. He started up in amazement.

"What!" he said, "*you two?* WHERE'S KATE!!" And Mr. Russell rushed into the house like a California whirlwind.

THE END.

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