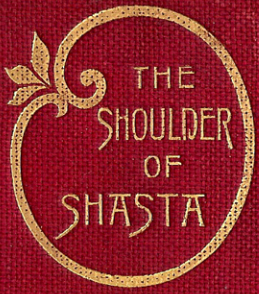
THE
SHOULDER
OF
SHASTA

[redacted]

D. M. Head.

THE SHOULDER OF SHASTA

BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

UNDER THE SUNSET.

THE SNAKE'S PASS.

THE WATTER'S MOU'.

THE SHOULDER OF SHASTA

By

BRAM STOKER

WESTMINSTER
ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE
AND CO 1895

TO

MY BROTHER

SIR THORNLEY STOKER,

PRESIDENT OF

THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

IN IRELAND,

WITH

LOVE AND ESTEEM.

THE SHOULDER OF SHASTA.

I.

When Mrs. Elstree was told that a suitable summer home had been found for her, a certain weight was lifted from her mind. The Doctor whom she had consulted in San Francisco as to her daughter's health was emphatic in his direction that Esse should spend the coming summer high up on some mountain side, and that she should have iron and other natural tonics suitable to her anæmic condition. Dr. De Young suggested that on some of the spurs of Shasta, a spot might be found where the air was sufficiently bracing, and where the waters which lower down made the valleys green and bright with their crystal purity had the requisite volcanic qualities. Mrs.

Elstree had passed by Shasta Mountain once, on her way from British Columbia, and had fallen somewhat under its spell.

It is certainly a wonderful mountain, and has a personality which is rare amongst mountains. The Matterhorn has such a quality, and so have Ranier and Mount Hood; but mountains generally have as little individuality as the items of a dish of peas.

An energetic friend volunteered to make search on Shasta, and after a fortnight's absence telegraphed:

"Have found very spot for you and agreed purchase subject your approval—made deposit; price all told two thousand dollars; strongly advise purchase." She immediately wired:

"Purchase. Cheque sent payable to you." The friend was a wise, astute and business-like agent, and when he returned to San Francisco just after an even month's absence he brought with him the deeds of the estate.

As to its beauties he would say nothing except an energetic "Wait. I may be wrong!" When further pressed he added:

"I went there to purchase for you, not myself; but if you don't care about the buy, wire me and I'll take the whole outfit at ten premium!"

The journey from San Francisco seemed to gain new beauty from experience. As the train, after leaving Sacramento, wound its way by the brawling river, its windows brushed by the branches of hazel and mountain-ash, the whole wilderness seemed like the natural pleasaunce of an old-world garden. The road took its serpentine course up and above its own track, over and over again, and the bracing air made the spirits of all the party more eager for a sight of the new summer home. The only exception was Miss Gimp, a good-hearted lady who had been governess of Esse up to the previous year, when she had arrived at her sixteenth birthday, and was now her

mother's secretary and companion. Miss Gimp was not altogether satisfied with the whole affair. She had not been consulted about the purchase, she had not even been asked, as an accessory after the fact, if she approved; and worst of all, she had not been there to see that everything was in good order. Mr. Le Maistre, who was Mrs. Elstree's male factotum, steward, butler, agent, handy-man, engineer and courier, had gone on a week before with the furniture and household effects of all kinds and supplies wherewith to stock the pantry and wine-cellar. He was to meet them at Edgewood, with horses and ponies, and a suitable guide to bring them to the new house. As he had taken the Saratoga trunks, the present party went flying light as to baggage, and had only to look after their travelling bags and wraps. The live stock was in the special care of Miss Gimp and consisted of a terrier, three Persian cats, and a parrot.

It was but a little after mid-day when the train, winding up through the clearings, drew near the station at Edgewood. The scene was not altogether a promising one. There were too many old meat and vegetable tins scattered about; too many rugged tree-stumps sticking out of the weedy ground, already bare in patches under the heats of the coming summer; insufficient attention to pleasant detail everywhere, and an absolute lack of picturesqueness in the inclined plane formed of rough timber beside the track, and used for purposes of firing and watering the engines. In fact, the whole of the little clearing was in that stage of development when beauty stands equally apart from nature and utility. But there was one sufficient compensation for all the immediate squalor. Beyond, in the distance, rose the mighty splendour of Shasta Mountain, its snow-covered head standing clear and stark into the sapphire sky, with its foothills a mass of billowy green, and its

giant shoulders seemingly close at hand when looked at alone, but of infinite distance when compared with the foreground, or the snowy summit.

There is something in great mountains which seems now and then to set at defiance all the laws of perspective. The magnitude of the quantities, the transparency of cloudless skies, the lack of regulating sense of the spectator's eye in dealing with vast dimensions, all tend to make optical science like a child's fancy. Up at the present height, nearly three thousand feet, the bracing air began to tell on their spirits. Even Esse's pale cheeks began, to her mother's great delight, to show some colour, and her dark eyes flashed with unwonted animation, as they ranged over the splendid prospect. She rushed up to Le Maistre, who was signalling some men on the far side of the clearing to bring the horses which were tethered in the shelter of the great pine-trees, and exclaimed :

"Where is our place? Point it out to me; I am simply perishing to know all about it!" Le Maistre turned round, and then pointed to the northern shoulder of the mountain.

"There, miss, on the left hand of the mountain, a little way below that sharp curve that looks like an old volcano!" Esse looked, and her heart leaped high. On the northern shoulder of the great mountain lay a little plateau where could be seen in the distance the green undulation of forest with here and there a great conifer towering out of the mass. As it lay to the western side of the mountain, it was manifest that it must command the whole range of the seaboard. There was this added charm, that just below it was a thin white line of rushing water, so that there must be some lake or tarn at hand. Mrs. Elstree shared in the joy when Esse ran towards her impulsively, calling out:

"Hurry, mother! hurry, or we'll never

get there!" It was many a long day since Esse had shown so much interest in anything, and the mother's heart was glad that already the mountain had begun its invigorating work.

It took a little time to get the little caravan in order, and Mrs. Elstree utilized the time in making Esse take something to eat. A cup of tea was soon made ready by the obliging wife of the station-master, and some San Franciscan sandwiches formed the rest of the improvised meal. As soon as she could do so without altogether disappointing her mother, Esse hurried out and found Le Maistre, with his companions, ready to set out when the word should be given. Le Maistre was himself somewhat of a picturesque figure, for he was a tall, fine man, with good features, and a black beard tinged with grey; and he was dressed in a suitable compromise between his domestic occupation and the requirements of his new surroundings. He had

riding trousers and high boots, a flannel shirt, and a short cutaway coat; altogether he looked like a Western version of an English squire. But his glories entirely paled before the picturesque appearance of his companions. Some of these were Indians, bronze-coloured, black-haired, high cheek-boned, lithe fellows who made announcement to all men of the fact of their being civilized by the nondescript character of their attire. Some had old red coats of the British infantry, and some the ragged remains of fashionable trousers; but they still wore some of their barbaric feathers, trinkets and necklaces of bone and teeth; and most of them had given themselves a mild coat of paint in honour of the occasion. They were all armed with rifles, and their lassos hung over their arms.

The most picturesque figure of the group by far was, however, a tall, handsome mountaineer who stood leisurely fastening a new whip lash beside a sturdy little

Indian pony at the head of the cavalcade. He was dressed in a deerskin shirt marked with the natural variations of the tanning, and stained with weather, and with fringes cut in its own stuff at neck and sleeve. It was beautifully embroidered in front and round the neck with fine Indian work of bead and quill. He wore his fair hair long so that it fell over his shirt collar and right down his back. In his belt of dressed deerskin was a huge bowie knife and two revolvers; buckskin breeches and great riding boots, with big Mexican spurs, completed his dress. The saddle of his mustang was of the heavy cowboy pattern, with flaps to cover the rider's feet; a Winchester rifle and a curled-up raw-hide lasso lay across the saddle. There was about him a free and resolute bearing—the easy natural carriage of one conscious of his power, and that complete absence of fear, and even of misgiving, which mark the King of Beasts in his own sphere. Le Maistre called him up:

"Hi! Dick!" The man turned and came forward with the long, easy, swaying stride of a mountaineer, and as he came raised his beaver-skin cap. Le Maistre introduced him:

"This is Dick, Miss Esse. He is a neighbour up at Shasta, and has kindly undertaken to Mr. Hotteridge to look after us all. It's no mean thing either, Miss, in a place where there are still lots of grizzlies, and the Indians are—well, you see yourself what they are! This man they call Grizzly Dick because he's killed so many!" Dick took the compliment with true Indian stoicism, and simply turned to Esse and held out a huge brown hand. As she placed her little one in it he wrung it with such strength and exuberant vitality, that she felt almost inclined to cry out as he spoke:

"How d'ye, Little Missy. Glad ter see ye. You'n me'll be pards I guess. When ye want anything, count me in every

time!" While he was speaking, Mrs. Elstree drew close and held out her hand, saying:

"Glad to see you, Mr. Grizzly Dick. I hope you're going to take me on in the little game!" she showed her dazzling white teeth, her blue eyes flooded with merriment, and her tangle of gold hair shook like the fleck of falling sunshine. Dick rubbed his brown palm on the thigh of his buckskin breeches, and then took her hand in his with a grip that made her wince. When she withdrew her cramped fingers, she said:

"By the way, are you Mr. Grizzly Dick or Mr. Dick Grizzly? If that is your friendly shake, I must look out for a real grizzly when I want a mild one!" Dick threw back his head and laughed with a glee and a resonance which plainly showed that not only his heart, but all his other vital organs were sound. Then Esse and her mother mounted, and Dick, sending two

Indians ahead, rode beside them on their way to Shasta.

The sun was hot, and when they rode through clearings between the trees, the air seemed to hold the heat till it quivered from the moist ground to the tree tops high above them; but there was a delicious sweetness and fragrance from the pines, and the rarefied air of the high plateau braced them to the pitch of joyousness. Esse felt that she could never forget that journey; there was such an adventurous, picnicing air about everything, that she was afraid of losing a moment of the time.

For most part of the journey of that day, the snow cap of Shasta was hidden from them by the great trees that seemed to rise all round them; but every now and then, on surmounting a ridge that whilst its ascent was being made seemed itself like a mountain, they caught a glimpse of the noble dome before them rising in silent grandeur. In the early part of the after-

noon their path was almost entirely through the forest, where the hoofs of the ponies fell silently on the mass of pine needles. There were myriads of ant-hills, sometimes rising in open spaces of the glade like little brown mounds of moving items—coherent masses of strenuous endeavour—or piled against and around the fir-trees, up and down whose rugged stems the armies of the ants seemed to be ever moving. More than once they had to make a long and deep descent into a valley, in order to cross a stream which looked from above like a silver thread, but which when they reached it had to be forded with the greatest care. But still the way they were winning was upward, and each time they emerged from a stretch of forest the air was appreciably colder, due both to the height they had climbed, and to the oncoming night.

Towards evening, they picked out a spot for a camp on a little spur of rocky ground overlooking a deep valley. There were

here only a few tall pines whose bare and rugged appearance bore witness to their constant exposure. How they ever came to be there was a wonder to Mrs. Elstree, till she saw the spring of sweet water which bubbled up close to their roots, and trickling away fell over the precipice into the valley below. The instant the word was given, the preparation for the bivouac began. Some of the Indians took from their ponies the material for a little bell-tent, such as soldiers use, and in what appeared to Esse to be an incredibly short time, had it fixed, pegged down and banked up with earth from a trench which they dug round it. At the same time some of the others had got wood, and lighted a fire over which they had hung the cooking-pot for their evening's meal. Le Maistre had in the meantime busied himself with his own preparations for dinner. He had lighted a small fire in a circle of loose stones, and placed over it what looked like

a square box, which presently began to give out appetizing odours. A rough table was formed from a log, and campstools were placed beside it; and before Esse could get over her wonderment at the whole scene, she found that dinner was ready to be served. The evening was now close at hand, and the beauty of the scene arrested the hungry mortals who had the privilege of seeing it. The sun was sinking like a great red globe into the Pacific, and from the great height at which they were, the rays reached them from over a far stretch of the earth below them, now shrouded in the black shadow of the evening. High above and beyond them, when they looked back, the rosy light fell on the snowy top of the mountain, and lit it with a radiance that seemed divine.

And then the sun seemed to pass from them, and they too were hidden in the shadow of the night; but still the light fell on the mountain till the darkness, creeping

up, seemed to wipe it out. When the last point of light had faded from the white peak, which the instant after seemed like the ghost of itself, they looked down, and seemed to realize that the night was upon them.

Dinner was waiting them, so as soon as the entire landscape was blotted out, they bethought them of their hunger. By the time they had sat down at the rude table the Indians had lighted some pine branches and stood round holding them as torches.

It was a wonderful sight. The red flare of the burning pine threw up the red trunks of the great pine-trees so that they seemed to tower towards the very skies, until they were lost in distance, and behind them their black shadows seemed to fall into the depths of the valley. Esse felt like some barbaric empress, and could not take her mind off the picturesque and romantic aspect of the whole thing. It

seemed a piece of nightmare projection of the present on the past whenever Le Maistre, in the course of the meal, changed his enamelled tin plates, or brought a fresh variety of food from his mysterious box. Mrs. Elstree was full of the beauty of the scene; and as she looked at the happiness on her daughter's face, and noted the quick eagerness which had already taken the place of the habitual languor, she felt a great peace stealing over her, much as sleep creeps over a wearied child.

Esse did not stay longer at the table than was necessary. In the thoughtlessness of her youth she overlooked the fact that the others of the party were hungry, and, only for her mother's whispered warning, she would at once have joined the group awaiting round the camp fire the completion of the cookery. The Indians sat on one side of the fire and ate their meat half cooked—part of a little deer which Dick had shot, on purpose for the meal, just

before sunset. Le Maistre and Dick sat together at the opposite side of the fire, and took their dinner with the larger deliberation of the Caucasian. Still, there were not many courses to be served, and it was not long till both men had got out their pipes and were beginning to enjoy a smoke. The Indians had already lit their corncobb pipes, and were in high enjoyment, squatted down close enough to the fire to have begun the cookery of a white man. When Esse saw the puffs of smoke she at once went over to the fire. Le Maistre jumped to his feet and took his pipe from his mouth; but Dick sat still and smoked on. Esse said, as she came close:

"If you stop smoking I shall go away; and I want to come and ask you things." Le Maistre at once sat down and resumed his pipe, and Esse sat on a broken trunk and watched the fire. All the while Miss Gimp was sitting with Mrs. Elstree, asking questions as to the best way of finishing a

new pattern of crochet which had hitherto baffled her. Esse's first question to Dick was:

"Why have we chosen this spot to camp in? Suppose a high wind were to come, wouldn't it blow the tent over the precipice?"

"That's true enough, Little Missy, but there ain't no high wind a-comin' up the cañon to-night—nothin' more than the sea-wind which is keepin' the smoke off this here camp. An' even if it did come, well, we've got fixin's on to these trees that I reckon 'll see the night through. As to choosin' this spot, where is there a better? See, we've shelter from the big trees, an' water here to hand, so with a fire across the neck of this rock, and one man to watch it, where's the harm to come from, and how's it goin' to reach us?"

"I see," said Esse, and was silent for a while, taking in and assimilating her first lesson in woodcraft. After a little bit she

strolled away to the northern side of the precipice, and stood at the edge, wrapt in the glorious silence. A little way off the great fire, which the Indians had heaped with branches, leaped and threw lurid lights on its own smoke, which, taken by the west wind, seemed to bend over and disappear into the darkness of the valley like falling water. Overhead was the deep dark blue of the night, spangled with stars that seemed through the clear air as if one had only to stretch out a hand to touch them; and high away to the south rose the snow-cap of Shasta gleaming ghostly white.

After a while the silence itself became oppressive, as though the absence of sound were something positive which could touch the nervous system. Esse listened and listened, straining her ears for any sound, and at length the myriad and mystic sounds of the night began to be revealed; the creaking of branches and the whispering rustle of many leaves; the fall of distant

water; and now and then the far away sound of some beast of the night began to come through the silence. And so, little by little, the life of the night, which is as ample and multitudinous as the life of the day, had one but knowledge to recognize its voices, became manifest; and as the experience went into Esse's mind, as it must ever go into the mind of man or woman when it is once realized, the girl to whom the new life was coming felt that she had learned her second lesson in wood-craft.

And so she sat thinking and thinking, weaving from the very fabric of the night such dreams as are ever the elixir of a young maiden's life, till she forgot where she was, and all about the wonders of the day that had passed, and wandered at will through such starlit ways as the future opened for her.

She was recalled to her surroundings by some subtle sense of change around her.

The noises of the night and the forest seemed to have ceased. At first she thought that this was because her ears had become accustomed to the sounds; but in a few seconds later she realized the true cause; the moon was rising, and in the growing light the sounds, which up to then had been the only evidence of Nature's might, became at once of merely ordinary importance. And then, all breathless with delight, Esse, from her high coign of vantage on the brow of the great precipice, saw what looked like a ghostly dawn.

Above the tree-tops, which became articulated from the black mass of a distant hill as the light shone through the rugged edge, sailed slowly the great silver moon. With its coming the whole of Nature seemed to become transformed. The dark limit of forest, where hill and valley were lost in mere expanse, became resolved in some uncertain way into its elements. The pale light fell down great slopes, so that the

waves of verdure seemed to roll away from the light and left the depths of the valleys wrapped in velvety black. Hill-tops unthought of rose in points of light, and the great ghostly dome of Shasta seemed to gleam out with a new, silent power.

Esse had begun to lose herself again in this fresh manifestation of Nature's beauty when her mother's voice recalled her to herself. She went over to the tent and found her busily engaged with Miss Gimp in arranging matters for the night. The tent was so tiny that there was just room for the three women to lie comfortably on the piles of buffalo and bear rugs which were laid about; and Esse having seen her own corner fixed, went out and stood by the fire where Dick and Le Maistre still sat smoking and talking. She had taken a bearskin robe with her, and this she spread on the ground, near enough to hear the men talk, and sat on it, leaning back on one elbow, and gazed into the fire.

She did not feel sleepy ; but sleep had been for many a day an almost unknown luxury. For hours every night had she lain awake and heard the clocks chime, and sometimes had seen the dark meet with the dawn, but when sleep had come, it had come unwillingly, with lagging and uncertain step. But for very long she had not known that natural, healthy sleep which comes with silent footstep, and makes no declaration of his intent. The bright firelight flickered over her face, now and again making her instinctively draw back her head as a collapsing branch threw out a fresh access of radiance. And she thought and thought, and her wishes and imaginings became wrought into her strange surroundings. All at once she sat up with sudden impulse as she heard Dick's voice in tones of startling clearness :

" Guess Little Missy's fallen asleep. You'd better tell her mother to get her off to bed ! " With the instinctive obedience of

youth and womanhood to the voice of authority she rose, swaying with sleep, and saying good-night passed into the tent. Here she found her mother wrapping herself in her blanket for the night. Esse made her simple toilet, and in a few minutes she too was wrapped in her blanket and was settling down to sleep. Then Miss Gimp put out the dark lantern which was close to her hand, and in a very few minutes, what she would have denied as being a snore, proclaimed that she slept. Mrs. Elstree was lying still, and breathed with long, gentle breaths. Esse could not go to sleep at once, but lay awake listening. She heard some sounds as of men moving, but nothing definite enough to help her imagination in trying to follow what was happening outside. She raised herself softly, and unlooping one of the flaps of the tent looked out.

The fire still blazed but with the strong settled redness, that shows that there is a

solid base of glowing embers underneath the flame, and round it were stretched several dark figures wrapped in gaily coloured blankets. In the whole camp was only one figure upright; at the neck of the little rocky promontory stood a tall figure leaning on a Winchester rifle, seeming to keep guard over the camp. He was too far off to be touched by the firelight, but the moonlight fell on the outline of his body and showed the long fair hair falling on the shoulders of his embroidered buckskin shirt. When he turned she could see the keen eagle eyes looking out watchfully.

Esse crept back to her bed, and, with a contented sigh, fell asleep.

II.

Esse became awake all at once, and, throwing off the buffalo robe which covered her, opened the flap of the tent and looked out. Over everything was the cold light of the coming dawn. The Indians were moving about and piling up again the fire, which was beginning to answer their attention with spluttering crackles, and Grizzly Dick was blowing a tin mug of steaming coffee which Le Maistre had just handed to him. Esse hurried her toilet in a manner which would have filled Miss Gimp with indignant concern, had she been awake, and stole out of the tent. She went over to the eastern side of the plateau, and stood there, looking expectantly for the coming dawn. It was something of a shock when Dick handed to her a mug of hot coffee saying :

"Catch hold! Guess, Little Missy, ye'd better rastle this or the cold of the morning 'll get ye, sure!" She took the coffee, and, although at first she felt it a sort of sacrilege to superadd the enjoyment of its consumption to the more ethereal pleasure of the sea of beauty around her, was glad a moment later for the physical comfort which it gave her. As she looked, the eastern sky commenced to lose its pallor; and then, softly and swiftly, the whole expanse of the horizon began to glow rosy red. As the light grew, the stretch of forest below began to manifest itself in a sea of billowy green. Wave after wave of forest seemed to fall back into the distance, till far away, beyond a great reach of dimness which seemed swathed in mist, the myriad peaks of the Rocky Mountains began to glow under the coming dawn. And then a great red ray shot upward, as though some veil in the sky had been rent, and the light of the eternal sun

streamed through. Esse clasped her hands in ecstasy, and a great silence fell on her. This silence she realized as strange a moment after, for with the first ray of sunlight all the rest of Nature seemed to spring into waking life. Every bird—and the forest seemed to become at once alive with them—seemed to hail the dawn with the solemn earnestness of a Mahomedan at the voice of the muezzin, and the full chorus of Nature proclaimed that the day had come. Esse stood watching and watching, and drinking in consciously and unconsciously all the rare charm and inspiration of Nature, and a thousand things impressed themselves on her mind, which she afterwards realized to the full, though at the moment they were but unconsidered items of a vast mutually-dependent whole. Like many another young girl of restless imagination, at once stimulated and cramped by imperfect health, she had dipped into eccentric forms of religious thought. Swedenbor-

gianism had at one time seemed to her to have an instinctive lesson which was conveyed in some more subtle form than is allowed of by words. Again, that form of thought, or rather of feeling, which has been known as of the "Lake School," had made an impression on her, and she had so far accepted Pantheism as a creed that she could not dissociate from the impressions of Nature the idea of universal sentience. What the moral philosophers call "natural religion," and whose methods of education are of the emotions, had up to the present satisfied a soul which was as yet content to deal with abstractions. This content is the content of youth, for things concrete demand certain severities of thought and attitude which hardly harmonize with the easy-going receptivities of the young. At the present the whole universe was to Esse a wonderland, and its potentialities of expression and of deep meanings which she yearned for, and

she could not realize—and did not in her ignorance think of the subject—proved to her that the Children of Adam, being finite in all their relations, can only find happiness in concrete reality. The religion of the men of Athens who set up their altars "To The Unknown God" was a type of the restless spirit of an unsatisfied longing, and not merely a satisfied worship of something beyond themselves. Not seldom in Greece of old did youth or maiden pass weary hours in abasement before a statue of Venus or Apollo, hoping for the incarnation of the god. So Esse in her unsatisfied young life watched and waited at the shrine of Nature, not knowing what she sought or hoped for, whilst all the time the deep, underlying, unconscious forces of her being were making for some tangible result which would complete her life.

Now, as she stood alone in the springing dawn, with the entire world seemingly at

her feet, she began to feel that in the whole scheme of Nature was one deep underlying purpose in which each thing was merely a factor; that she herself was but a unit with her own place set, and the narrow circle of her life appointed for her, so that she might move to the destined end. It might be destiny, it might be fate, it might be simply the accomplishment of a natural purpose; but whatever it might be, she would yield herself to the Great Scheme, and let her feet lead her where instinct took them. And as she sighed in relief at not having to struggle any more—for so the emotion took her—she found herself repeating Coleridge's lines:

> "And if that all of animated Nature
> Be but organic harps diversely framed,
> That tremble into thought as o'er them sweeps
> Plastic and vast one intellectual breeze—
> At once the soul of each and God of all."

It was not, she felt, all fancy that the gentle sweet wind of the dawn took the pine-needles overhead, and rustled them in some sort of divine harmony with the poet's song.

Esse's mood of semi-religious, semi-emotional exaltation was brought to an end by Dick, who came and stood beside her, and said, as he pointed with a wide, free sweep of his arm to the whole eastern panorama:

"Considerable of a purty view, Little Missy!"

"Oh, beautiful, beautiful! How you must love it who live here in the midst of it all. I suppose you were born on Shasta?" Dick laughed:

"Guess not much! I was raised somewhere out on the edge of the Great Desert. Mother couldn't abide mountings, and kept dad down in the bottoms."

"Then how did you ever come to Shasta?"

"Wall, dad he lived by huntin' an' trappin', an' when the Union Pacific came along, he found the place got too crowded; so he made tracks for Siskiyou! But, Lordy! it didn't seem to be no time at all till the engineers began runnin' new lines

between Portland and Sacramento. So says dad: 'If the Great American Desert ain't good enough to let a man alone in, an' if he gets crowded out of the chaparral at Siskiyou, then durn my skin but I'll try the top of the mountings,' so we up sticks and kem up here!"

"And your mother?" asked Esse, sympathetically; "how did she bear the change?"

"Lor' bless ye! she didn't hev no change; why before we ever went to Siskiyou, she up an' took a fever, an' died. Me an' dad scooped a hole for the old lady 'way down by One Tree Creek. Dad said as how he didn't see as she'd be able to lie quiet even there, with fellers bringin' along schoolhouses, an' dancin' saloons, an' waterworks, and sewin' machines, an' plantin' them down right atop of her. Ye see, Little Missy, the old man were that fond of nobody that he didn't take no stock whatever in fash'nable life—like you an' me!"

A ghost of a smile flickered at the corners of Esse's mouth; she was not herself in any way addicted to "society" life, but rather longed for the wilderness—in an abstract form, and of course free from discomforts; but between Dick and herself there was so little in common—that was Dick's very charm—that she wondered what might be the nature of that fashion which took them both within its limits to the exclusion of others. She was, however, interested in the man, and curious as to his surroundings, so she made an interrogative remark:

"Of course you love living on the mountain; and never go into a town at all?"

"Never go into a town! I should smile! Only whenever I can, and then, oh Lordy! but that town comes out all over red spots!" Again Esse made another searching remark:

"I suppose your wife goes with you!" Dick laughed a loud, aggressive, resonant

laugh, which seemed to dominate the whole place. The Indians, hearing it, turned to gaze at him, and as Esse looked past his strong face, jolly with masculine humour and exuberant vitality, at their saturnine faces, in which there was no place for, or possibility of a smile, and contrasted his picturesqueness, which was yet without offence to convention, with their unutterably fantastic, barbarous, childish, raggedness, she could not help thinking that the Indian want of humour was alone sufficient to put the race in a low place in the scale of human types. Dick continued to roar. "My wife," he said, "my wife. Ha! ha! ha! Wall, that's the best joke I heard since I see the Two Macs at Virginia City a twelvemonth ago." Then he became suddenly grave. "Askin' yer pardon, Little Missy, fur laffin' at yer words, but the joke is, I ain't got no wife. No sir! not much!" Here he turned away to avoid wounding her feelings, and his face was

purple with suppressed laughter as he passed beyond the fire, where she heard his laughter burst out afresh amongst the Indians. Esse looked after him with a smile of amused tolerance. With a woman's forbearance for the opposite sex—whether the object deserved it or not does not matter—she felt herself drawn to the man because of her forgiveness of him. The laughter, however, had completely dispersed the last fragments of her pantheistic imaginings, and she realized that the day was well begun; and so she went to the tent to her mother.

When she opened the flap and entered, she felt a sense of something out of harmony. The white walls of the tent were translucent enough to let in sufficient light to show up everything with sufficient harshness to be unpleasant. Mrs. Elstree and Miss Gimp still slept; the former lying on her side, with her golden hair in a picturesque tangle, and her bosom softly

rising and falling; the latter on her back, with her mouth open, and snoring loudly. Her hair was tightly screwed up over her rather bald forehead, and in her appearance seemed to be concentrated all that was hard in Nature, heightened by the resources of art. Esse bent down and kissed her mother, and shook her gently, telling her that it was time to get up. Then she woke Miss Gimp, with equal gentleness, but with a different result. Mrs. Elstree had waked with a smile, and seeing before her her daughter's bright face, had drawn it down and kissed her. Miss Gimp woke with a snort, which reminded Esse of one time when her umbrella stick had snapped in a high wind, and, after scowling at Esse, turned over on her other side with a vicious dig at her pillow and an aggressive grunt. A moment later, however, the instinctive idea of duty, and work to be done, came to her, and instantly she was on her feet commencing her toilet; then Esse went out

and sat by the fire, till presently her mother joined her, and later Miss Gimp, and they all fell to on the savoury breakfast which Le Maistre had ready for them.

Whilst they were eating, the Indians had struck the tent; and very shortly the little cavalcade was on its way again under the spreading aisles of the great stone-pines, and tramping with a ghostly softness on the carpet of pine needles underfoot.

The first part of the journey took them down into the valley overhung by their camping place of the night, but after crossing the stream which ran through it, they began a steady ascent which continued for hours. It was very much steeper than the ascent of the previous day, and the men all dismounted so as to relieve the ponies. Esse, too, insisted on walking, and by a sort of natural gravitation found herself at the head of the procession, walking alongside Dick, who held the rein of his pony over his arm. Hour after hour they

tramped on slowly, only resting for a little while every now and again. At last, when the noon was at hand, they emerged from the forest on a bare shoulder of rock. At first the glare of the high sun dazzled Esse's eyes, focussed to the semi-gloom of the woods; but Dick and the Indians felt no such difficulty, and the former, pointing up in the direction of the Cone, said:

"Look, Little Missy. See where the tall pine rises above! There's where you're bound for, and the shaft of thet thar pine will tell you what o'clock it is." Esse clapped her hands with delight, for the home which she had so looked forward to was in their sight. It lay on a level plateau below where the belt of verdure stopped. It was still a considerable way off, and lay some seven or eight hundred feet above them, but a fair idea could be had of its location. It was just on the northern edge of the shoulder of the great mountain, and, so far as they could judge, must have

a superb view. Esse was all impatience to get on, and her mother shared in her anxiety. She, too, wanted to see in what kind of place fortune had fixed her for the months to come. From this on, the trees did not grow so densely, and here and there were patches of cleared space, where the stumps of trees, some bearing the mark of axes, and some of fire, dotted the glade. The nature of the ground did not permit of their seeing the place of destination again till, after a long spell of upward ascent, followed by a stiff bit of climbing, they emerged on the northern edge of the plateau. Then Mrs. Elstree and Esse agreed that they had never seen any place so ideally beautiful.

The plateau was like an English park, ringed round with the close belt of pine forest. Great trees, singly and in clusters, rose here and there from a sward of emerald green, and through it ran a bright stream, entering from the south, and after curving

by the east, fell away to the western edge of the plateau over a shelf of rock. Where the stream entered it fell from another great rock, making a waterfall sufficiently high that its spray took rainbow colours where the sunlight struck it, and fell into a great deep pool, seemingly cut by Nature's forces from the solid rock. In the centre of the plateau was a great circular hedge of prickly cactus and bear-thorn, inclosing the house in a garden of some two acres in extent. The house was small, and built solidly of logs, with a veranda all round it, and many creepers climbed over it. Right in front of its northern aspect grew a giant stone-pine, which towered up more than a hundred feet without a break, and whose wide-spreading branches threw a flickering shadow on the sward as its very height made it tremulous.

Esse was speechless, and clasped her mother's arm tightly, and then began to thump her shoulders, as had been her habit

when a little child, and she had been unable in any other way to express her feelings of delight. Dick spoke:

"Well, Little Missy, ain't it a purty location; though why you should thump the old lady I don't quite see. Say, if ye want physical exercise of that kind why don't ye lam inter me! Guess I'm built more suitable fur it than that purty creetur!"

Mrs. Elstree had been slightly annoyed at being spoken of as an old lady, but Dick's compliment set matters straight again, and she shook her golden head at him, and her blue eyes danced as she said:

"It's evident, Mr. Grizzly, that you don't understand the feelings of a mother when her child is happy. You are not a mother!"

"Guess not!" roared Dick; "not by a jug full!" and he slapped his thigh, and laughed with that infectious laugh of his. Esse did not altogether like to hear him laugh, especially without good cause; so

to divert the subject she asked him how the tree could tell what hour it was. "Come and see," answered Dick, as he threw the reins of his pony to an Indian, and strode towards the house, followed eagerly by the two women, holding arms.

When they got near the hedge they turned to the right, and followed it for a little time. On the west side they found a gateway, which Dick opened. The gate seemed ridiculously massive for such a place, and was studded all over with sharp steel spikes.

"What on earth are they for?" asked Esse, pointing. The answer was as complete as it was short.

"B'ars! Things didn't uster be as they are now!" They all went inside the inclosure, and as they drew in front of the great pine Dick spread out his arms, and with a comprehensive sweep took in the whole circle of the compass. "Look, Little Missy," said he; "tell me now what o'clock it is?"

Esse looked around, and up and down, but could see no sign of any time-keeping appliance. She was disturbed by a quick little cry from her mother:

"Oh, look! Esse! look! look! the whole garden is a sun-dial!" Esse looked, and sure enough all around her, at intervals, rose groups of tall, slim pines, but at varied distances, so that there was no appearance of a ring. Some of them leaned from the perpendicular in a queer way, and yet all were so arranged that a perfect sun-dial with Roman numerals was formed, and the shadow of the great pine fell with the movement of the whirling earth, and told the tale of flying hours. There was a long pause, and Esse turned to Dick.

"Dick, did you do this?" Again the hunter slapped his thigh in mirth, and his wild, resonant cachinnation seemed to sound louder than ever, as though there were some containing acoustic quality in the prickly fence. Esse got somewhat

nettled, and there was a red spot on each cheek as she said:

"I don't see much to laugh at in that. I don't see why you can't answer a simple question without being rude!" Dick sobered at once, and, with a grave courtesy that seemed like a knightly act by a natural man, took off his cap and bowed his head.

"Askin' yer pardon, Little Missy. I'd no mind to be rude, nor no call to. Why, I'd not a thought of that in a thousand years. That was all done by the old doctor who found this place, and built the house, and fixed up the fence and the garden. Took a mighty deal o' pleasure in it too, seemin'ly. Every year he was here he left it less and less, till at the end he wouldn't ha' quitted, not for a farce-comedy speciality an' a comic-opera troupe rolled inter one! 'Pears to me, Little Missy, that you've come along jest in time, for there's many as would like to hev the place

if onst they knowed of it." Esse made no other reply than:

"Come along, Dick, and show me the view. I want to see the Pacific from up here." Without a word Dick strode away to the rocky ledge over which the stream tumbled. As they got near it Miss Gimp, who had been grizzling with the indifference of all to her presence, overtook them, and said in a tone which all could hear:

"Wants to show her all the kingdoms of the earth from a high place! We know what to make of *him!*" and she snorted. Esse looked at her with an amused smile, but Mrs. Elstree felt annoyed, and, in order to get rid of her, asked her to go into the house and see Mrs. Le Maistre, who was the housekeeper, as to the arrival. She complied with outward calmness, but was shortly afterwards seen going to the house with several Indians. One of them carried the cats, and another the dog, while a third held out at arm's length the cage of the

parrot, which, from its talking, he evidently regarded with some very remarkable awe. She was letting off steam by poking the Indians in the back with the point of her umbrella. They did not resent it, but took it with that outward stoicism which marked their bearing. This aggravated her even more, and she poked the harder; but still the Indians did not resent it. She would have been not a little mortified had she known the cause of their forbearance.

Mrs. Elstree and Esse stood for a long time looking at the view, and then Dick took them northward along a ledge of rock behind the belt of trees. Here there was a high, bare rock with a flat top, and on it was a natural seat of rock, resting whereon they looked round the whole horizon, except where the giant bulk of Shasta shut out the southern aspect.

Esse was in a trance of delight. Below her the mountain fell away in billows of green, through which the rivers ran like

threads of silver. Far away, where the whole landscape became merged in one dark, misty expanse, she could see the Pacific, a grey mass of nothingness, fringed on the near side with the jagged edge of the coast, and beyond, the arc of the horizon. Here and there in the plain hills rose and valleys dipped; but their heights and depths were lost in the distance, and had no more individual existence than the pattern of a carpet. Then she looked south, and her eye travelled up the steep side of the mountain, passing from the lessening fringe of forest to where the hardy trees stood out starkly one by one in the isolation of their strength to endure; up the rolling steep where rushes and scanty herbage grew in the shelter of the rocks; upward still, where the bare rock stood out from the grey mass of primeval rubble wherein is no vital strength, and where the snow and ice ran down in spurs into the sheltered gorges; upward

still, to where the snow lay like a winding-sheet, and where the ruggedness of Nature was softened into flowing lines. And then her eye lit on the mighty curve of the mountain top, whose edges, as the high sun took them, were fringed with dazzling light. She turned to her mother, and with a sort of hysterical cry fell over against her, clasping her in her arms and hiding her tears on her bosom. "Take me in, mother," she said; "I am tired, tired! and it is too sweet to see all at once!" Mrs. Elstree felt her arms relax, and bent down anxiously; Esse had fainted. The mother knew of her long illness, and was not altogether surprised, but Dick was overcome with anxiety, as strong natural men are where womankind and her weakness are concerned, and he said, in an awe-struck whisper:

"The poor, purty little thing! Let me carry her for ye, marm. I'll bear her very gently!" Mrs. Elstree nodded, and

he took her up in his powerful arms as though she was a baby, and together they went softly to the house.

At the door they were met by the entire household with Mrs. Le Maistre at the head; Miss Gimp rushed out on seeing the body of Esse carried limply, and began to scream and call out:

"Is she dead? Is it an accident? Oh, my child, my child!" and she beat her hands wildly together. Miss Gimp was a good creature in spite of her eccentricity, and Grizzly Dick summed her up fairly when he said: "The old girl is a crank from Crankville; but her heart is in the right lo-cation all the same." Mrs. Elstree tried to soothe her, and raised her hand as she said:

"Hush, hush! she has only fainted. The journey and the hot sun have been too much for her. She will be all right presently!" Then Mrs. Le Maistre, who had been her nurse, took her in her strong

arms, and carried her in, not without protest from Dick.

"Let me carry her, marm. Purty Little Missy, I'll be as gentle as her mother!" As they entered the doorway Esse opened her eyes, and, after looking at them all for a few seconds, in a dazed sort of way, said suddenly, whilst a bright blush took the place of her pallor:

"Oh, let me down, I'm all right now! Don't let Dick see me like this; he'll think me a baby!" Miss Gimp sniffed as she looked over at Dick, but said nothing, for it was borne in upon her, swiftly but conclusively, that he was a mighty fine figure of a man.

Towards evening, when, after a lie down and a cup of tea, Esse was feeling quite restored, she asked her mother if she might go out and see the sunset. Without a word, Mrs. Elstree tied a scarf over her head, for the evening was growing chilly at this altitude, and taking her daughter's

arm they strolled out towards the entrance gate and across the plateau. Once more they sat upon the rocky seat and looked out westward. Once again they saw the sun sink, a red globe, into the western sea, and the dark shadow of night climb up the hill-side, and the summit of Shasta gleam ghostly white.

And then they went in.

III.

For several weeks the life on the Shasta was ideal, and Mrs. Elstree's heart rejoiced to see the changes it was working in Esse. Her languidness seemed to have disappeared, and she was now bright, brisk, and alert, for ever devising new ways of passing the time, and helping with invention and design to improve the place. Le Maistre, who had a pretty mechanical aptitude of his own, had designed a new water supply for the house, and was already carrying it into execution. From the rocky basin which stood up the mountain nearly three hundred feet above the house, he was to lay a series of logs, pierced with great augers, now being brought up from San Francisco on purpose. These were to be joined together, and would convey so

easily applicable as well as so abundant a supply that Esse had designed several fountains for round the house, each of which would throw up a fair sheet of water to a considerable height. Thus from whatever way the wind blew, something of the cooling spray could be borne to the house. In this work Dick was of great use, not only by his lending a hand himself, but by being able to induce the Indians to help. A few nondescript settlers of lower down the mountain were glad to earn a little money, and altogether muscular power was not wanting. Dick was only present now and again, for his hunting pursuits took him away sometimes for a few days at a time. But his time was not wasted in so far as the household was concerned, for it was he who kept the larder supplied with fresh meat. There was always abundance of all sorts of game, and a very liberal supply of necessaries had been laid in; the garden afforded a good supply of fruit and vege-

tables, and altogether no need for comfort was lacking.

Esse's great amusement was with the Indians. She very soon learned that their village was in a deep cleft which lay between the house and the western side of the mountain. As a little rocky peak lay between them, it was not possible to see even the smoke of their fires. On the near side to them, but on the far side of the rock, Dick's cabin stood on a rocky shelf beside a spring. From it he could see the whole western slope of the mountain, and by it he could on his many journeys make for the most direct way home. His proximity kept the Indians in order; for with the dominance of a Caucasian he made himself to some degree regulator of his neighbour's affairs. Indeed, he stood with regard to the Indians somewhat in the relation of a British justice of the peace to the village community. This dominance was a great comfort to Mrs. Elstree, who

had at the first some doubts as to the physical security of her party, removed so far as they were from any means of help. An incident which occurred shortly after her arrival had not tended to allay her fears.

She had been taking a siesta in a hammock slung between two of the sun-dial trees, and was in the semi-lethargic condition of one who is sleeping for mere luxury, not need—such a sweetly overpowering condition as is only to be felt in the open air—when she noticed one of the Indians approach stealthily. He was one of the most brainless looking of the tribe, and in general a sort of butt of the rest. His face was in fact only removed a degree above idiocy, and this by the cunning twinkle of his eyes. His character, as it often happens amongst Indians, was shown in his name, Hi'-oh', which means Heap (or always) Hungry in the Shoshonie dialect. Half amused, and half in that

adventurous state of mind when fear becomes a sort of intellectual tickling—a sort of continuation of her dreams—Mrs. Elstree lay still, pretending slumber. He approached with increasing stealthiness, keeping always behind some tree trunk, till he had reached the head of the hammock. Now, when he was out of her sight, Mrs. Elstree became seriously alarmed, but by a great effort she lay still, though her heart beat like a trip-hammer. The seconds seemed to be years, and in the agonizing suspense she could hear—or thought she could—the blood running through the veins of her neck. Then slowly and cautiously a pair of copper-coloured hands stole gently down the netting of the hammock, and with deft movement the fingers began inserting themselves under her head. With a tremendous effort she lay quite still, for she felt that it was too late now to do anything if harm to her were intended. Her only grain of consola-

tion—and it necessitated a new effort to suppress the smile which it caused—was that her scalp would be different from the general run of such curios. She had once seen, in a chest full of scalps, in the collection of a friend who was an amateur of Indian trophies, a scalp of a woman's golden hair, and she herself, in common with all who had seen it, felt more pity for the late owner of those yellow tresses, than for all the original proprietors of the dark ones put together. She could in her mind's eye see her own tresses hanging up in a wigwam, or helping to trim a buck's festal costume, and already she had begun to hope that his earth-colours would match her hair. Here her thoughts were cut short by a strange sensation. The hands were lifting her head and holding it balanced; then it was laid down again softly, and the hands were withdrawn. Once more she conquered a strong impulse to start up, for she thought it better not to appear to have

noticed. So she lay still awhile, breathing softly. Then she yawned, raised her arms, turned over, and as if waking, assumed a sitting posture. She looked around keenly; but there was no sign of an Indian about the place.

At first she was a little startled, and then a queer kind of doubt came upon her as to whether she had not been asleep and dreamed the whole thing. As there was no trace of an Indian, she remained in doubt, not liking to tell any one, lest it might cause ill feeling. Dick was away; but the day after he returned, and she took the opportunity of being alone with him to ask his opinion of the transaction. To her surprise, but also to her relief, Dick burst into his characteristic roar of laughter.

"Wall, durn my skin!" said he, "but that is the all-firedest funniest rascal I ever kem across. I guess now what was in Heap Hungry's thick head when he made a proposition to me that we should work a

gold mine together: 'Hi'-oh' knows,' sez he, 'of a gold mine, much gold on top. If much gold on top, mucher gold under that, waugh!' He is a cunnin' beggar, too; wouldn't take any chances over his gold mine, but wanted to make cert if it was gold."

"But I don't understand!" said Mrs. Elstree. Dick slapped his thigh again in his emphatic way, and roared with laughter:

"Why, marm, don't ye see. You was the gold mine! With the golden hair atop, he thought as how yer skull would be gold, an' he wanted to make sure before ringin' me in, so's we'd kill you together and wash up fair!" Mrs. Elstree shuddered, but she laughed nevertheless; she felt when Dick took so grim a thing jocularly it would not do for her to make new troubles.

But she was seriously disturbed in her mind all the same. She was not accustomed to Indians, and their ways and their proximity, combined with the possi-

bilities of such ideas as had been brought to her notice, made her anxious. It might be all very well to have a terrible penalty afterwards exacted by one's friends; but scalping was not a pleasant matter to contemplate, and the battle between the edge of a tomahawk and the human skull was not altogether a fair one.

Esse got on very well with the Indians. They had the idea that she was somehow or other under the special protection of Dick, and she was herself so kind to them, that to show her their eagerness to serve came easy. At first they amused her, and then, when she knew them a little better, they disgusted her. In fact, she went with them through somewhat of those phases with which one comes to regard a monkey before its place in the scale of creation is put in true perspective. Now and again she grew furiously indignant when there came under her notice some instance of their habitual and brutal cruelty

to their squaws and children, their dogs and their horses. At first she used to speak to Dick, and to please her he would rate and threaten them ; but she soon began to see that this was not quite fair to the hunter, as it created a certain sullenness towards him, which augured badly for future peace. So she gradually began to realize that, in spite of their ragged relics of a higher civilization, they were but little better than savages, and with the savage instincts which could not be altered all at once. Dick, who was, like all hunters, a close observer of little things, noticed the change in her bearing, and spoke of it in his own frank way:

"Guess, Little Missy, you're gettin' the hang of the Indian. He ain't of much account nohow, and ye can't bet money on him more'n on a yaller dog. Though he ain't so bad as those think that don't know him. There's times when the cruelty of that lot of ours makes me so mad, I want

to wipe them all out; but I know all the same that there isn't one of them, man, woman, or child, that wouldn't stand between me and death. Ay, or between any of you and death either. Guess, you're about beginnin' to size up the noble red man without his frills!"

The member of the party who got on best with the Indians was Miss Gimp. Le Maistre they respected and looked up to on account of his big beard; and for Mrs. Le Maistre they had the respect and affection which goes with the enjoyment of toothsome delicacies. But Miss Gimp ruled amongst them like a princess. No matter how she rated them for their imperfect costume, or their dirty ways, or their cruelty, they never made reply except their grave obeisance; and the point of her umbrella made, without evoking remonstrance, indentations in their bodies. Whenever they saw her stiff skirts moving along the sward—for Miss Gimp adhered loyally

to the traditions of her youth and wore hoops—albeit of an undefined pattern—they would glide up as near as they could, keeping furtively in the shelter of the trees. So long as they were allowed, they would hang around her, looking like a lot of spectres who had seen better days. At first this used to annoy her, but it very soon became a source of pride, for human nature very soon becomes accustomed to the deference of inferiors. Miss Gimp, in her mind, regarded them as in some sort a kind of royal cohort, and began to treat them with added disdain, such as is supposed to be the attribute of royalty. They were perpetually sneaking round the house, and if they saw her at a window would wait patiently for hours in the hope of her coming out. Both Mrs. Elstree and Esse saw with amusement this perpetual attention on their part, but never said anything to her about it. Esse noticed that it used to give the most intense amusement

to Dick whenever he chanced to see it, and that he often hurried away with a purple face; and she, listening, would hear the forest echoing to his explosive laughter. One day she followed him and came upon him sitting upon the trunk of a fallen tree, slapping his thighs, and with his long hair tossing about as he shook his head in a paroxysm of laughter. He did not hear her approach, and for a few moments she stood looking at him, at first a little indignant that he should be making such a fool of himself; but then the contagion of his laughter took her, and she too burst out in a wild peal. He instantly started to his feet, all his instincts of protection and aggression awake, and for the moment sobered into a grim seriousness. When, however, he saw who it was, the lines of his face relaxed, and he said:

"Wall, an' it's you, Little Missy. Durn! if I hadn't kem away by myself I'd have busted—jest busted with laughter. The

old lady takes the Indians like she was a queen, an' all the while it ain't her they're after at all. There ain't one of them that wouldn't take and put a tomahawk through her skull or skelp her so far as the queenin' racket is concerned."

"Then what is it they are after, Dick?"

"It's the parrot! Nothin' else than that durned parrot!" and again Dick went off into fits of laughter. When he recovered his breath, he went on:

"Did ye notice him lately—the parrot, I mean—they've all been tryin' to get near him, and jest now one of them went up nigh him, an' as soon as he got near up, the durned bird says 'How!' jest as well as if he was a Christian or an Indian. The man was so took back that he was like to drop. They all thought he was a god before, but nothin' in this world would make them disbelieve it now!"

"But how does this affect Miss Gimp?"

"Why, don't ye see, Little Missy, that

she has the charge of him; she's the sachem, the medicine-man, the witch, and they want to make themselves solid with her because they think she can square him. There isn't one of them that likes her; but, all the same, they'd go a good length to please old Yam-pi, as they call her."

"What is Yam-pi? What does it mean?" said Esse, inquisitively.

"It means, in Shoshonie, 'Leather Legs,' or 'the old woman with boots,'" said Dick, and he laughed again.

Esse came away from the wood not altogether pleased with Dick. There seemed to be an overpowering levity in his character which did not altogether suit her idea of him, based originally on his fine physique. A woman who likes a man wants to respect him, and as Dick was the only male in the place, for of course Indians and servants did not count, she felt that she had to think of him now and then.

One morning Miss Gimp was in a state

of suppressed excitement which at once arrested Esse's attention. At breakfast she could not remain still, but buzzed and fluttered about everyone and everything in an unusual way. Mrs. Elstree with her usual placidity did not notice anything out of the common, or, if she did, kept it to herself. Esse had therefore the sweet interest of a secret, and she carefully noticed every detail of the companion, and very shortly came to the conclusion that she had a secret which she was simply bursting to tell someone—anyone. With true feminine perversity she therefore, at once and sternly, made up her mind that she would not assist in the unfolding at all. If Gimp wanted to tell anything she would have to do so altogether on her own initiative. It would of course have been quite a different thing if Gimp had a secret which she didn't want to tell; in such case Esse would have had to make the overtures and do the entire corkscrew business herself. Therefore it was that

the games of hide-and-seek, run-away-and-follow, were so prolonged that morning until they would have afforded the most exquisite enjoyment to any third party who had been in the secret. Esse stayed all the early forepart of the morning with her mother, nothing could take her away, lured Miss Gimp never so wisely; and when she did go out it was at a time when Miss Gimp was absorbed in some household duty and could not follow her. She went into the wood, and when Miss Gimp followed and called after her softly, she did not answer; so hour after hour Miss Gimp had to bear in her breast the burden of her untold secret. After lunch Esse's heart relented, and she strolled out to the seat on the rocks so that Miss Gimp could follow her. She sat down, and within a few minutes the amanuensis sat alongside her and had entered on her theme. Esse noticed that she had put on a veil, an adornment—or concealment—so rare with her that it became at once notice-

able. Esse sat down and waited. She had allowed the first step to be taken and had to be wooed into accepting the next. Miss Gimp looked up at her under her eyelids with a very tolerable imitation of bashfulness, simpered, sighed, looked up and down several times, turned warily round to see that there was no one else within earshot, gave a premonitory cough, and opened proceedings:

"It is a very strange thing!" said she.

"Indeed?"

"Yes, my dear; and the worst of it is that it is so embarrassing. One doesn't wish to make anyone unhappy, much less to ruin their lives!" After a pause, which Esse filled up with another "Indeed," Miss Gimp went on:

"I have been told that young men take such matters so to heart that they grow wild, and go out and drink, and do all manner of dreadful things!" Esse's curiosity was now becoming interested; she had a vague idea

that Miss Gimp had some kind of hallucination as to a love affair, but she could not quite make out yet what was its special direction. She felt herself thinking a phrase which she had several times heard Dick use, "How many kinds of a durn'd fool was it that she was makin' of herself?" Her monotonous "Indeed" was hardly adequate to the situation, so she added with as little tendency towards laughter as she could manage.

"Poor young man! You must not let him suffer too much!" Miss Gimp sighed and wiped a phantom tear from her cheek as she said in a far-away manner.

"Oh, poor Dick! Poor dear Dick! I fear he has much suffering before him!—Did you speak?" she added in a different tone, for Esse had on the instant been taken with a sudden and very violent cough which made her in a short space of time grow almost purple in the face. The shock was too much when Miss Gimp apostrophized the

man who was the victim of unhappy attachment, and in her mind's eye rose the burly figure of Grizzly Dick, driven crazed for love, painting red spots all over the town of Sacramento. The figure changed instantly to the same man sitting amongst the forest trees, slapping his thighs and roaring with laughter as he thought of Miss Gimp and the parrot, and the relative places which they held in Indian esteem. Miss Gimp bridled somewhat, and seemed more than ever to justify her Indian name; but Esse, who really liked her, found her risibility checked by her genuine concern for her, apologized for the interruption, and asked her to go on. So, with as many "flirts and flutters" as Poe's famous bird of ill omen, Miss Gimp began her story.

"It has surprised—surprised me very much, to find little offerings placed outside my window. Most odd things, my dear—wild turkeys and young fawns, hare, bear-meat, and sometimes fruit of an edible kind,

potatoes, honey, and such like. I wondered who could have put them there!" Here she simpered in a way that would have looked artificial in a girls' school on the day when male relatives are received. Then she went on with marked inconsequentiality:

"It would be a sin—a perfect sin to drive to desperation such a fine figure of a man!" Esse had expected to find her laughter uncontrollable as the story went on, but instead she felt something beginning to overpower her which was much nigher akin to tears. How could she but feel sorrow for the poor, dear old thing who with all her oddities was as loyal and as true as the sunlight. She knew that whatever was the cause of her error, there was no possibility of her manifest wishes being carried out. Then came a doubt. "How did she herself know this?" with the consequent answer, "Because Dick was already"—the thought was completed in her mind with an overpowering rush of blood to her face, which

Miss Gimp must have noticed only that she was coyly turning away and simpering all to herself.

It is commonly thought that men and women become transformed and glorified in and by great moments. This may be so, but the common idea of great moments is not so true to Nature. There are great moments for all the Children of Adam; but they are not always great through the force of external facts. The dramatic moment in real life does not always come amongst picturesque and suitable surroundings. It is the conjuncture of spiritual and mundane suitabilities which makes the opportunity of the dramatist; but to others, who are the puppets of the great dramatic poet Nature, the moments of transfiguration come as they came to St. Paul. The Great Light which turns the thoughts of men inwards, and reveals to themselves the secret springs of their own actions, has many moral and psychical and intellectual manifestations.

The pagans whose imagination wrought into existence the whole theology of Olympus, had a subtle insight into the human heart when they showed the familiar figure of Cupid shooting his sweetly poisoned arrows at them that slept.

Such a crucial moment was now for Esse. She had come to that great temple of the hillside to laugh—to laugh at the brain-sick, love-sick fancies of an old woman whose whole being seemed a mockery of the possibilities of love; and she had remained to pray, with a bitter pang of hope and fear. In the whirling of her thought she got glimpses into her own soul which made her cheeks burn, even while half in a fainting mood she felt the solid earth slipping beneath her feet. Her mind must have been earnestly occupied, for she did not hear Miss Gimp go on with her story. It was strange to her that after a pause of mental blankness, during which she sat still, she felt the roaring in her ears

pass away and realized that Miss Gimp was speaking—speaking with the volubility of one who has entered on a congenial theme and is under its sway:

"Of course, my dear, Dick being a hunter thinks that he should make his—he! he!—offerings of a suitable kind. It is most embarrassing, for a girl can't put a leg of a deer, or a bear ham, or a wild turkey, into a jewel case, or lock it up in a drawer, so that she can take it out when no one is looking and kiss it. In fact there is no sense in kissing a ham or a leg of raw meat at all, and if you lock it up in a drawer it doesn't smell very nice, even if it does not go bad altogether. The matter is now getting serious. I assure you, my dear, that my room is beginning to get into a shocking state. I am positively afraid to open the lower section of my chest of drawers, for I put the first of the—the offerings in there; and there's a very suspicious odour from it already. I wish you'd advise me, my dear,

what I ought to do!" There was such a delightful air of seriousness about Miss Gimp as she made her strange disclosure, and it seemed so absolutely out of harmony with the ridiculous matter, that Esse felt once more an almost overpowering desire to laugh. She felt that she could not overcome it if she remained where she was, so she started up briskly, and, taking Miss Gimp by the arm, called out:

"Come along quick!—We must look over the jewel casket, and see what can be done." Miss Gimp would rather have sat still and nursed her sentiment, but she was overborne by Esse's spirits and energy; and so hand in hand, like a pair of children, they raced to the house.

When they went into Miss Gimp's room there was no possibility of mistaking the odour. Even a properly arranged larder is not always the most pleasant of places, but a lady's bedroom is in no way adapted for the storage of dead flesh. Esse for a

moment felt qualmish, and would have decamped at once only that Miss Gimp had silently and mysteriously locked the door, and so she remained, supported solely by the humour of the situation. Miss Gimp walked on tip-toe over to the chest of drawers and opened the top drawer. "Here is the last," she said as she lovingly surveyed a fine wild turkey which was huddled into the drawer, wings and neck and tail twisted about ruthlessly. She put in her hand and began to stroke its feathers, whilst she sighed pensively. The idea of a hunter's bride was strongly fixed in her mind, and with it a tenderness towards all belonging to his craft. Esse now wanted to see the job over so she asked:

"And where is the first?" Miss Gimp pulled out the lowest drawer of all and disclosed to Esse's gaze a horrible looking leg of deer meat all blue, damp and sodden; and which had been rudely hacked from the carcase. The look and the smell almost

turned Esse faint, and with a sudden jerk she shut up the drawer. "What an awful thing to send you!" was all she could say. Miss Gimp was pathetically apologetic in her manner as she said:

"Well, it is an odd way of showing affection. If it had been a nice gold specimen now, or one of those opals in the matrix, like the one that was presented to your mother in Mexico, or a slab of onyx, one would understand it better. But the dear man has his own ways I suppose! He is a fine figure of a man, isn't he?" This she said in a burst of something like rapture. Esse tried to cut this short—the new light still shone round her enough to make it seem unfair to let the other woman show her heart, more especially when her hopes were so baseless; so she turned the conversation to what was to be done with the offerings. Miss Gimp was beginning to be seriously alarmed about being found out, on one side as hoarding the provisions in

such a ridiculous way, and on the other of being laughed at if she broached the subject at all; so she was glad to embrace Esse's suggestion that they should during the darkness of the evening take out the gifts and bury them.

This fell deed was achieved before they went to bed that night, and Miss Gimp slept peacefully, with the consciousness of a weight taken off her mind.

The next morning Esse came across Dick, who was for once in a way in a tearing rage. She asked him the cause, and he told her:

"It's that durned crowd—dirty, thievin' scoundrels; an' I believe that Heap Hungry is at the bottom of it. I'd make some of them own up, but that it don't suit me to quarrel with them just now. I'll lay for them some night an' I'll put a hole through some of them."

"What have they been stealing?"

"Not much—nothin' of any value, but

it's the beginnin', and I mean to stop it right here. An Indian is real pizon when he gets off the square, and this may be only one in the lot; but it's a beginnin', and I won't stand it!" Esse began to have an understanding, so she asked again:

"What did they steal, Dick?"

"Oh, only some meat and such like. A week ago I had a buck hangin' up, an' in the night the durned thieves came and hacked a leg off it; last night it was a turkey. By gum, Little Missy, what air you laughin' at now?" for Esse had gone off in peals of laughter after his own manner. At first he was annoyed, but in a few seconds the anger of his face disappeared; then his features relaxed into a grin and the pent up whirlwind burst, and Esse's laughter was drowned in the volume of his stentorian tones. When Esse recovered her breath she told him what she had found out, and as Dick's laughter broke out afresh at every step of the doing, of Heap Hungry's

stealing the meat and placing it in Miss Gimp's window as an offering to the parrot, of her taking it to herself and as a love gift from Dick, and of the mysterious burying. Then she suggested that to complete the circle Dick should come each night and dig up the offering and use it either for himself or for Mrs. Elstree's household. The humour of the idea took hold of Dick, and his imagination was so manifestly touched that Esse got a little frightened lest he should in some way betray the secret. She was only made easy when he solemnly swore not to betray the secret in any way.

And so this night Dick went to his cabin shaking with laughter; and Esse put her head on her pillow filled with a secret but fearful exultation that Dick and she shared a secret between them.

IV.

Esse's first quarrel with Dick arose from wounded vanity. Remotely the feeling may have been on his side, but the immediate cause was on her own part. When the secret had been shared for some time, she began to take Dick to task in a purely feminine way. She wanted his hands to be always clean, and his nails to be properly regulated. Dick was something of a dandy in his way, but in the mountains vanity prefers more picturesque forms than the manifestations of soap and water. He was not by any means a dirty man; but more than the mere absence of dirt is demanded by the exigence of feminine propinquity, and Esse, greatly daring, took him to task. He received her monitions well enough at the time, but later on developed a certain

huffiness which told her that his self-love had been wounded. Anxious to set matters right, she took an early opportunity of saying to him:

"Dick, you know you and I should help one another. You are big and strong, and mother says that the care you have taken of me, and the sense of security which your presence gives has made a new girl of me. I want to see you like other men—no, no! I don't mean like them, with all their meanness and selfishness, but in not being ridiculous or not seeming at your best. Down in the cities men have rules among themselves as to how they should dress and what they should do; and I wouldn't like any of them to misjudge you, if you should be there, or they here. You're not offended with me, are you, Dick?" He had been sitting with his knees apart and his face downcast, but there was something in her voice which made him look up. His great blue eyes looked into her great brown ones, and the whole

quarrel was made up in one word as he held out his great brown hand and said:

"Shake!" Esse took the pleasant punishment of his pump-handle shake without a wince, and when Dick had dropped her hand as suddenly as he had grasped it she felt in a less dictatorial mood towards him than she had ever experienced. With a certain new shyness she said:

"And I want you, Dick, to tell me of anything you notice that isn't quite right in me—not quite as you'd have it in a girl that you respected. You know, Dick, we all want help to do the best that we are capable of!" she went on in a voice that somehow seemed to herself not to ring true, though Dick did not seem to notice it. He fidgetted his hands about awkwardly and blushed, actually blushed like a school-girl—that is, as a school-girl is supposed to blush according to the books. Then he coughed prefatorily: this sent a

pang through Esse's heart, or whatever portion of her anatomy vanity resides in. Did a woman ever yet not feel a pang when a man whom she liked discovered the smallest fault? She could have beaten herself for the falsity of her tone as she said, with seeming impulsiveness:

"Go on, Dick! Don't be afraid! I'll tell you if you're right." So Dick began:

"Wall, Little Missy, as you wish me to tell you, there is a matter—I don't know as how I oughter mention it; or I don't quite know how to say it right. But it hasn't been my own noticin' entirely. Them Shoshonies are mighty cute in noticin', an' they have a name for you which tells it; or rather they had, till I promised to knock the stuffin' out of any of them that would use it again."

"What was it?" asked Esse in curiosity, though her face was suffused with an indignant blush. But Dick kept an artful silence on the point.

"Well, Little Missy, I think I'd better explain to you first. Why do you keep that nose-rag of yours always over your face the way you do? Guess, it looks mighty odd to folks!" Esse's blush turned a bright scarlet; she had a habit which had adhered to her from childhood up, just as some children maintain the habit of sucking the thumb, and concerning which she had often been spoken to and remonstrated with. She would twirl her handkerchief round her forefinger and thumb, and then place these fingers, parted widely, across her nose and mouth and sit reading hour after hour in this attitude. Even when she was not reading she would unconsciously assume the same position. She could not but be conscious that the habit was an odd one even if her mother and Miss Gimp had not kept her eternally informed of it, and it was simply gall and wormwood to her to have Dick notice the matter and join in the ranks of her tor-

mentors. For a few moments she remained silent in sheer bewilderment as to what she should say, and then the only thing that was possible under the circumstances was spoken :

"Thank you! Dick, it is a bad habit I know, and mother and Gimp are always hammering me about it. I suppose I got into a habit as a child, and it has stuck to me. But I'll try and get rid of it! indeed I will." There were tears of mortified vanity in her eyes, which recognizing, Dick held out a red hand and gave his comfort in a homeopathic dose :

"Shake!" Then Esse grew coy and said :

"Not till you tell me what the Indians call me." Dick looked for a moment embarrassed, and then his laugh rang out.

"Ha! ha! ha! Well, Little Missy, I'll tell you—they call you Pahoo-mounon-he-ka."

"And what does that mean?" as she spoke Esse tried to keep down her flaming

indignation. The very fact of her not knowing what the word or phrase meant intensified her feeling. *Omne ignotum pro magnifico.* Dick answered:

"It means, 'Nose-ghost'; so you see that even the Shoshonies, that haven't had a nose-rag among them since Adam, noticed that you don't use yours correctly."

"I presume that you mean a pocket-handkerchief by—by that—that vulgar phrase," said Esse tartly.

"That's so. But look here, Little Missy, since we're on the trail, and we mean to run down the game this time—and since you kick—oh, yes, you do! Don't I see it in every corner of your face! A man don't learn woodcraft without gettin' to notice little things like that! Let us wash up clean right here. Why do you always carry the nose-rag—excuse, me little Missy, the pocket-handkerchief—rolled up in a ball when you're not making a tent of it over your nose?"

"I don't do anything of the kind!" said Esse indignantly, and again the tears of mortified vanity rose in her eyes. Dick laughed in a way that seemed more insulting and aggressive than ever as he slapped his thigh in the way that aggravated Esse more than anything else.

"Wall, bust me if that doesn't take the cake! Here is you denyin' that; an' all the time you're a-holdin' your nose-rag screwed up just the same as ever!" Esse looked at her hand, and, seeing the handkerchief just as he had said, flung it on the ground as though it had been something noxious. Then, turning her back, she ran out of the glade, and went home.

An hour later she went back to the glade to get the handkerchief, but she could not find it; it had gone. From this little fact she felt that Miss Gimp could have woven a romance; and somehow it did not seem to her that it would have been quite ridiculous on the part of Miss Gimp.

Two days afterwards, Dick, in the midst of a conversation, suddenly stopped and handed her the handkerchief, neatly washed out and folded:

"This belongs to you, Little Missy. You dropped it in the wood the other night when you ran away." Esse took it with a simple "thank you," but when she got home, she put it in the locked drawer where she kept her valuables of all sorts.

The constant habit of trying to conquer her old trick when Dick was present seemed in some way to make a subtle kind of barrier between them. But it was in truth only a subtle barrier, and one that thought could overleap at will. The very existence of such a restraint raised the rough man in the girl's eyes to a more important position, and blinded her to a thousand little roughnesses and coarsenesses which would have hourly offended her more cultured susceptibilities. This very lack of refinement on Dick's part

caused Esse many unhappy moments, for he seemed to fail to see that she was trying her best to rid herself of the ridiculous habit, and would often notice failures to which a more delicately minded person would have been wilfully blind. Thus, Esse soon grew to abandon the habit of covering her mouth and nose, but she still instinctively and unconsciously clung to the habit of rolling her handkerchief, and keeping it hidden in the hollow of her hand. But habits, be they never so trivial or ridiculous, have a hideous vitality of their own, and Esse soon found to her cost, that this unutterably trivial habit, which both the Indians and the trapper had noticed, had a tenacity denied to worthier things. She was often wounded to the quick when Dick, in his boisterous way would notice her resumption of her failing; but all the time this little trial was forming her character and developing that consciousness of effort which marks the border line

between girl and woman. Once she was goaded into a retort—but such a retort as she had never dreamed of—when Dick had slapped his thigh, and with a Titanic peal of laughter remarked:

"Wall, Little Missy, the Ghost is kep' to home in the shanty to-day, but she's sent the wean on the trail!" she answered, with a certain soft appealing in her voice:

"You needn't be too hard on me, Dick. I am doing my best; but I can't be quite perfect all at once." She had never in all her life been so sweetly womanly as at the moment, and even whilst she spoke she could not but feel that some change had taken place in her own nature. Dick seemed to realize this too, for off came his cap in a moment in apology, and he said with, for him, gravity:

"Your pardon, Little Missy. Why, I wouldn't pain you for all the world!" Esse smiled, and held out her hand, which was by this time nearly as brown as his own,

and said, in exact imitation of his style, "Shake!" And so that breeze passed on its way and left the air clearer behind it.

In these days Miss Gimp was nursing a gentle melancholy, which was daily fostered on game, honey, and raw meat, which took their usual course on their allotted circle from Dick's larder to Miss Gimp's window-sill, thence, *via* her wardrobe, to the place of burial, and so back to the larder again. Heap Hungry was more than ever assiduous in his attentions to the parrot, and was maturing schemes of his own. Esse had now taken up her sketching, and having exhausted all the picturesque possibilities of the plateau, had begun to go further afoot in search of material to suit her fancy. Tired of the endless expanse, she now sought inclosed dells amidst the woods. She used to go about alone now, for her health had been completely restored by the bracing air, and the chemical qualities of the water, as the doctors had foretold.

She sometimes took the dog with her, but not always; for the freedom of the mountain had somewhat demoralized it, and it took to hunting in miniature on its own account, instead of devoting itself solely to the wishes of its mistress. At first Miss Gimp used to accompany her, but Esse got so unutterably tired of her perpetual chattering, that by-and-by she began to make excuses to leave her at home. When she found that these, being naturally limited, began to be exhausted, she kept her away by making her own sketching tours to distant places. Miss Gimp knew when she was beaten in this respect, and after a time made no effort to accompany her. Esse had by this time, under Dick's guidance, learned to shoot with a heavy revolver, which he insisted that she should always carry with her when out of sight of the house.

"'Tain't, Little Missy, that I'm afeard of any special harm; because if I'm put to it

I can't point out any as is likely to come. But in the forest everythin' or anythin' may be harmful, and you can't be wrong anyhow in bein' heeled proper! Some day or other you'll find that very derringer of yourn the best friend you ever set eyes on. But even if ye don't, wall! then the exercise of carryin' it won't do your muscles no harm!" Mrs. Elstree did not at first like the idea of Esse carrying firearms, but when she saw that she soon acquired a certain dexterity in their use she solaced herself with the thought that at any rate they meant protection.

One day Esse, straying further than usual down the steep side of the mountain, came to a spot which excited all her artistic admiration. The hot sun beat into a dell so well watered that even in the great heat the grass was as green as emerald, and there was about everything a semi-tropical luxuriance. There was a fallen tree, which served for a seat, and here, having un-

strapped and mounted her portable easel, she began to make her sketch. There was a drowsy hum about the place, for these were regions of honey bees, and in the delightful solitude her thoughts took their most pleasant way, their central point being none other than the picturesque figure of Grizzly Dick. For two days she had not seen him, for he had gone out on a hunting expedition and had not yet returned. By-and-by the sweet drowsiness of the place overcame her; her hands and eyes relaxed from the intentness of their work, and with a gentle little sigh she slid from the log, and, half reclining against it, slept among the soft grass.

After a while she started, broad awake with that conviction upon her of some new presence, which shows that some of the senses at least guard us even during sleep. She realized that there was some physical stir going on around her, for the log against which she leaned was being shaken, and

the sounds, as it was touched, were like sawing and hammering together. Her senses, only half aroused, had still something of the imaginative power of sleep; and even whilst she felt and listened there grew over her some strange feeling of uncanniness. Of one thing she was certain, that her surroundings were not those she was accustomed to, and all awake in a moment her heart began to beat strangely.

"As one who on a lonesome road doth walk with fear and dread,
And having once turned round he turns no more his head,
Because he knows some frightful fiend doth close behind him tread."

Esse felt herself gasping out the lines as, with instinctive caution, she turned her head round to see what was causing the disturbance.

The sight which met her eyes might well have appalled the bravest. A great

grizzly she-bear was tearing a honeycomb from the end of the log, whilst two tiny cubs sat on their haunches by her side. Esse's brain began to throb. She could not think all at once, but her instinct was to remain still, and she obeyed it. Then she began to remember that to feign death is an artifice of the hunter, and she feared lest the bear should turn round, and, seeing her eyes open, would discover her secret, so she shut them close and waited.

But the suspense was awful. Her temples began to throb, and she felt an almost irresistible desire to scream out. Each instant the monster seemed to be coming closer, closer, till its great paw was stretched to tear her heart out, as she had seen it rend the fallen tree to take out the honeycomb. In her fancy she saw the great shaggy head thrust forward, till the big white teeth were close to her, and the enormous mouth was opened to seize her. She could feel the hot breath falling over

her, and could even smell the sweet scent of the honeycomb which the bear had been eating. . . . . She could bear the suspense no longer, and opened her eyes. And then a desire to laugh almost as irresistible as that to scream came to her, and instinctively she crammed her pocket-handkerchief into her mouth. The bear was sitting down on her haunches, sucking the honey from her paws, and the two cubs were simply her miniatures in appearance and attitude.

But her mirth was short-lived, for as she looked she saw the bear turn her head suddenly to the opposite side of the thicket and give a low warning growl, which had the effect of drawing the cubs to her side as though they had been attached with springs which had suddenly been released. Between the bear and the edge of the thicket was a low clump of bushes, and to look beyond this she reversed herself on her hind paws, and with a sort of waddle

moved to the far side of it. Esse looked on fascinated. As she looked she saw Dick's head rise above the edge of the thicket, and the muzzle of his rifle brought down to cover the bear. He had not seen her, for the clump of bushes and the log hid her easel and herself from him, and his eyes had been so intently fixed on the bear that he had seen nothing else. Esse was afraid to move even an eyelid, lest she should spoil his aim, and waited, waited, with her heart throbbing. Dick meant to take no chances, but just as he was about to fire a slight puff of wind turned the leaves of the sketch-book, which lay on top of the log beside where Esse had been sitting. This was just enough to spoil his aim; the rifle cracked, and seemingly at the very instant the bear, with a wild snarl, threw herself forward at Dick. Esse started to her feet; but the happenings were quicker than her movements. Seeing the bear rushing at him, Dick

shifted his rifle to his left hand, and grasping his bowie knife with his right, threw it open with that dexterous jerk which those who use the weapon understand. The bear struck at him, but only hit the rifle, which, driven forward, took Dick on the leg, knocking him off his balance. Esse screamed, but Dick recovered in an instant, and, as the other great paw was raised to strike, drove the knife straight into the beast's heart. But the grizzly bear is a creature of extraordinary vitality, and death seems to reach it but slowly. The uplifted paw fell, and catching him on the thigh, broke it, with the sound of a snapping branch, and threw him down as though he had been struck with a hammer, whilst the forward rush of the great beast took its dead body onward.

It seemed to Esse that all at once Dick lay on the ground, maimed and bleeding, with the great bulk of the dead grizzly pinning him down.

She rushed over to him, and, although the sight of the blood unnerved her for a moment, bent over to help him. Dick lay on his side, with the back of the bear towards his head, and she could see by the way that one of his legs—which stuck out from under the carcase—was twisted, that it must be broken. She seized hold of the bear's leg to try to drag it off, but as she tugged at it unavailingly Dick groaned and spoke to her:

"Hold hard, Little Missy! The varmint has broke my leg, an' is lyin' on it; but don't bother about it yet a minute. We'll have some work to do first! The old gentleman was the one I was followin', an' he ain't fur off. When he sees that I've sliced up his missis he'll come in on the tear, and we've got to look out. Try if you can find my rifle. The b'ar knocked it out of my hand with her first come on, and I fear it's busted!" Esse looked and found the rifle; but it was all destroyed,

the stock beaten off, and the barrel bent. Dick groaned.

"Look here, Little Missy, you can't do no good here. You trot off home, and tell Le Maistre to get some of the Indians to come along here with a blanket and a pole. Let them bring their weppins, for if the old gentleman don't get me before they come, we'll get him, sure."

"Go, and leave you alone!" said Esse indignantly, "and you wounded and tied down like that? Not me! What do you take me for?"

"By gum! I take you for a plucky little girl, anyhow; an' I shan't never forget it! But what can you do? What can I do, with my weppins gone—for this young lady has got my knife in her, an' is lyin' on it! I can't stir—hold on! What's that?" He raised his hand warningly, and then said in an agonized whisper:

"For God A'mighty's sake, Little Missy, clear out that way!" and he pointed to one

side of the clearing; "and if ever ye clumb a tree in your life, try to do so now! There's the male b'ar on the track. Quick! quick! here he comes!" At that instant there was a fierce growling, the underbush crackled as if violently forced aside, and an enormous grizzly bear plunged into the glade. A grizzly bear is at all times a sight to inspire terror, but when inflamed to do battle he is more than ever appalling. Esse stood a moment paralyzed, till she heard Dick's quick shout to her:

"Get out your gun, Little Missy—quick! It's the only chance now!" Esse looked helplessly to where her revolver was hung on the cross arm of her easel; but it was as close to the bear as it was to her, and she knew that before she could reach it the fierce animal, which was even now rearing on its hind legs to plunge, would be down upon her. He had smelled the blood, and had seen the body of his mate, and was full of fury. In her helplessness she had been

unconsciously twisting her pocket-handkerchief into a ball in her usual habit, and as the bear dashed forward, she instinctively threw it at him, throwing it in that high, helpless, over-arm fashion which is woman's method. The tiny ball struck him between the eyes, and opening out with the impact, just as a slight puff of wind swept through the glade, for an instant covered his face. He stopped and put up a great paw to tear it down, and as he did so, Esse heard a chuckle from Dick across the glade. This, together with the hiding of the baleful eyes, which seemed to have in some way fascinated her, recalled her to herself; to her dreadful position and Dick's; to the necessity for instant action. With a bound she jumped to the easel and seized her revolver, and as the bear, who had now cleared his eyes, hurled his vast body towards her, she fired once, twice, at random, with only a vague intent of aiming at him, but without marking any special spot. The

good fortune which now and again waits on novices seemed to have guided her aim, for one of the baleful eyes seemed on the instant to become obliterated, and then to spout out blood. The grizzly quivered, and, whirling his great paws like the flying sails of a windmill, fell over towards her in a heap. The sharp claws of one of the fore-paws, just grazing her flesh, tore through her dress, and rent it in strips, almost tearing it from her body.

For an instant she gazed at the fallen monster in a sort of stupefaction. From this she was aroused by a wild laugh from Dick; and as she turned to him she saw him slapping the hind quarters of the great carcase of the she-bear as he used to slap his thigh, and heard him say:

"Durn my cats, if Little Missy hain't killed the biggest grizzly on the Pacific Slope with her nose-rag!"

As she looked however, his voice faltered;

and as she ran towards him she saw his face grow deadly pale, as flesh does under ether spray, and he sank back seemingly as dead as the mighty brute that lay over him.

V.

Esse rushed wildly over to Dick, and, kneeling down by him, raised his head and laid it on her knee. As she did so she became aware for the first time of the ravages which the bear had made with her clothing, and a hot blush swept over her. In the intensity of her shame it did not trouble her to see that the bear's claws had in that last death-stroke actually cut her flesh, and that her stocking—the remnant of it—was running with blood. She looked despairingly round for a moment in the vague hope of help, but seeing that there was none she braced herself for the superlative efforts which had now to be made. Her reason and even her emotion responded to the call, and she set about her work with a business-like precision. First she felt

Dick's heart, and distinguishing its beat, though very faint, knew that he still lived. This made her efforts of feverish intensity, and she worked with an unconscious power and purpose which those who knew her would never have suspected.

First she threw the remnants of her torn dress around her and pinned them together; this was just enough to protect her modesty and did not impede her efforts. Then she set herself to draw the body of the great she-bear from Dick's wounded leg. She knew that it must be taken away in the direction of head to feet so as not to lacerate the flesh with the broken bones or to rub the pieces together. If she could but succeed in removing either the body from him, or him from underneath the body, without further injury to the broken leg, all might be well—at least the smallest amount of harm would be done. So she set herself to examine the situation, and as her eye lit on the bent barrel of the rifle

she straightway conceived a plan. She buried one end of it in the ground, close to Dick's chest, leaving the other sloping up the brute's great side—this was made with a rough calculation of the weight, so that the carcase could not topple sideways. Then she got a strong branch and, using it as a lever, began to try to lift the bear little by little. At first she could not stir the carcase, but by getting each time the lever further under she felt at last that it moved. Then, bending her knees, she put the branch on her shoulder, and, using all her strength, pushed upwards. The weight rose, and the gun-barrel, slipping down the side, acted as a strut and prevented it falling back. With joy Esse looking down saw that Dick's legs were free; running to his head she took him from behind under the armpits and dragged him safely away. As it was, there had not been a moment to lose, for the weight of the bear was slowly sinking the gun-barrel into the soft ground

and a few seconds later the carcase sank back to its old place. But Dick was free. Then she ran and filled her cup with water from the little rill that murmured over the rock in the glade, and raising Dick's head began to try to restore him to consciousness. It was but the consequence of her womanhood that in the midst of her ministrations she stooped and kissed the brow, pale under its nut-brown skin, and never thought of blushing as she did so. The change of posture, and the relief from the horrible pressure on his wounded leg, seemed to aid in restoring him to consciousness, and after a minute or two of her bathing his temples, and trying to force a few drops of water into his mouth, he opened his eyes in a dull, dazed way and looked inquiringly round him. The first manifestation of instinct was that of the hunter; that of the man came later. He said in a quick, eager voice:

"The b'ar! Is he dead?" but catching

sight of Esse's face a gleam of fun lit up his own as he said: "Oh, I remember; you killed him with"—here he seemed to realize that Esse had not come off scot free in the encounter, for in a horrified way he said, raising himself on one elbow, whilst he pointed with the other hand:

"Why, Little Missy, you're wounded. 'Taint very bad, I hope!"

"No! no, Dick—it's nothing. He only tore my dress!"

"So I see. The brute! couldn't he let you alone, anyhow!" Esse burst out laughing. She had been under such a horrible strain of anxiety and effort that some reaction must come. Dick's remark, and, moreover, the rueful, angry tone of it, afforded the occasion. There was to her something exquisitely humorous in the idea that they too who had just escaped death—if indeed they had escaped, for their troubles were only beginning—should be only troubled about a torn dress. Dick

joined in the laugh, but it was rather through his instinct than from any merriness of heart, for presently his laughter suddenly ceased, and with a groan he fell back. He had not fainted as Esse found when she had flown to his side; it was simply that the pain had overcome him, and after giving him some whiskey from his flask he was somewhat restored. But even in his half swooning state he had been thinking, for he now said:

"Wall, Little Missy, guess ye'll have to tramp off by yourself, and send down that help to bring me home. You jest pull my knife outer that b'ar an' find my gun for me if it's lyin' anywheres round, an' put a cup of water by me. Then you jest run off home afore the dark comes on."

"I'm not going to do anything of the kind!—I'm not going to leave you here alone!"

"Then what in thunder air ye goin' to do? Air you an' me to stick here and have

a picnic as long as the b'ar meat holds out? No! Little Missy; ye'll hev to go home, an' soon, or that prospectin' party will have to bring on a bran new coffin for this durned leg of mine!" He winced and almost writhed with pain. In the meantime Esse's mind was made up and she had commenced action. Pulling from the heart of the grizzly Dick's bowie knife, though it made her shudder to touch the bloody hilt, she quickly cut several straight sticks and trimmed them roughly. These she placed beside Dick and quietly began to tear the remnant of her dress, the part which she was not wearing, into long strips; she then filled her cup with water and dipped the bandages in it. Dick looked on with silent admiration, for even in the midst of his pain he could admire her swift dexterity; and with a practical man's instinct, seeing that she was busy with her work, did not distract her, but waited with what patience he could summon. When Esse commenced

her efforts to splint the wounded leg Dick helped her, not only with directions, but by shutting his teeth hard and enduring without a groan even her most ignorant efforts. At last the job was done, and Dick spoke again:

"My dear Little Missy, I'm world-wide obliged to ye. Ye saved my life from that old grizzly, and ye've doctored me fine! Now, run off home, an' I'll be all safe here till ye return."

"I'm not going to leave you, Dick!" she said decisively. "I'm going to carry you home myself." Dick laughed feebly, but this time it wounded the girl to the quick; she blushed up hotly, but cooled at once into a paleness, and her answer came with sudden tears into her eyes:

"You wouldn't leave me, Dick, if it was I who was hurt—would you, now?"

"Wall, I should smile!" said Dick.

"Then why should I leave you?" Dick scratched his head; logic and reason failed

him as they have failed many a man when arraying them against the strength of a woman's resolve. Besides, Esse had a very forcible argument on her side ; in his helpless condition it was utterly impossible that he should oppose any of her wishes. Accordingly, when Esse bent over to lift him, he gave the best aid in his power by throwing his strong arms round her shoulders, and so placing his weight that she could most easily carry him.

And, strange to say, she did carry him all the way home. It is true that the struggle seemed an endless one, and that over and over again she felt that she could have lain down and died of sheer fatigue. But it was for life and death, and to men and women who have true grit great needs give great endeavour. They bring out all that is royal in their natures, from physical strength to highest nerve and psychic power, so that such strength as Nature has manifested to them can be used to the full.

Dick suffered a simple martyrdom; for the constant struggle of the weary girl, and her want of usage in such effort, seemed to thrill through the very marrow of his bones, and made the broken leg a veritable torture. But he was a generous and chivalrous soul, and never once in all the long weary hours that followed their outset for home did he utter a groan. Even when, every now and again, the pain overmastered him to such a degree that he swooned, he did not make any sign, but took his swoon like a gentleman, and sank into it, and awoke from it, without a sign to add to the torture, both mental and physical, which the poor devoted girl, who was struggling on his behalf, endured. Over and over and over again had Esse to set down her burden and rest, her heart panting wildly, and her knees trembling so sorely that she felt that she would be unable even to raise her precious burden again. But each time her spirit rose to the new endeavour, and

she attacked the task before her with a fresh energy which surprised herself as much as it did Dick, who helped her loyally to the very best of his power. His heart seemed never to flag or falter, and at times, whilst she sat beside him panting and in almost utter collapse, his ready laugh would ring out to cheer her. She was not even conscious of his swooning, for each time she spoke to him her voice seemed to recall him to waking sense, and he resumed the thread of his own endeavour to cheer her up.

The sun had long set, and the forest paths were dim—like cathedral aisles in the night, when the light through great windows just steals in to show the gloom as an existing thing—when they began to emerge from the depths of the wood and to enter on the steep rise that led to the plateau. Here the moon rose, sailing high in the heavens, and its cheering light gave Esse, now tired almost to unconsciousness, a new

lease of strength. With feverish energy she toiled up the steep incline, spurred on by something of the same feeling which quickens the pace of a returning horse, or cheers a spent swimmer who hears the dash of waves on a welcome shore. At the top her arms relaxed, and Dick, now quite unconscious, sank to the ground; and for a little while she lay beside him almost as unconscious as he was.

Suddenly she seemed to wake to the fact that Dick was deathly still, and, forgetting for the moment her own awful tiredness, she sprang to her feet, and, putting her hands to her mouth, sent out a shout for help which rang across the plateau and reached the anxious household, which awaited her with vague apprehension, shared by all, but which none dared to utter.

With answering shouts they all ran out, some bearing lanterns, and came to where she stood beside Dick's body. Her mother screamed when she saw her, for she was

indeed but a sorry sight. The struggle, and the constant forcing a way through undergrowth, had tumbled her hair and thrown it, wild and dishevelled, over her shoulders, and the dust of the forest had grimed her damp face, which also was smeared with blood. The hours of strong effort had kept her own wounds and Dick's open, and from top to toe the white dress in which she had started out—all that was left of it—was smeared, if not drenched, with blood. The flashing lanterns threw into harsh relief the red stains which the falling moonlight had softened, and though the wild picturesqueness of her figure seemed to heighten the effect of her manifest vitality, it could not comfort the heart of her mother, who saw in every item of it danger and pain, and all sorts of unknown possibilities of horror. Recognizing the look in her mother's face, Esse said quickly:

"I am all right, mother. It was the bears, but they are both dead. Look to

Dick! he is badly wounded, and I had to carry him home!" and even as she spoke she reeled and would have fallen, only that the strong arms of her old nurse held her up. By this time Le Maistre was kneeling by Dick. Presently he turned round and said:

"He is not dead! I can feel his heart beat! Run for some Indians to carry him to the house!" And without a word, off started Miss Gimp—who up to now had stood wringing her hands—glad of an opportunity to be of some service. Mrs. Le Maistre murmured to Mrs. Elstree:

"*Some* Indians to carry him, and the dear child carried him all by her poor self up the mountain!"

The Indians were on the spot in a very few minutes, but by this time Dick had recovered his senses, under the stimulant of a little whiskey, and was telling in his own way of the accident and his rescue. At first Esse had tried to put in a word of

protest when his praise seemed excessive, but she was by far too exhausted to argue, and Dick's words seemed to have a far-away, pleasing music of their own as he went on:

"I followed the b'ar an' missed him, but see his mate eatin' honey. As I seen her, an' fired, I see Little Missy sittin' beside the log, an' that put out my aim, an' the old lady came jumpin' for me before I could draw a bead on her. She hit out, and crumpled up my shootin'-iron quicker nor I could see; so I had just time to whip out my bowie, and drive at her before she came at me, an' busted my leg into matches, an' tumbled over me with my knife in her heart, pinning me down everlastingly. Then while Little Missy was tryin' to raise me up the old-man b'ar came whirlin' along; but Little Missy went boldly up to him, and threw her nose-rag in his eye, and while he was clawin' it off, she up with her derringer, and gave it him in the face.

He'd just got near enough to rip her tucks out, and scratch her a bit before he went under. Then Little Missy she tackled me like a little hero, as she is, an' dragged the b'ar off my sore leg, an' took an' splinted me up and carried me here like I was a rabbit. Blest, but she's the all-firedest, bravest, kindest, staunchest comrade from the Rockies to the sea! She wouldn't leave me, no, sir! but took me up here all by her little self; an' I'd have died any way, only for her, half-a-dozen different ways—God bless her!" then he said in a whisper to Le Maistre:

"Take me home, quick, old man! I'm racked with pain, and nigh dead, and its torture keepin' it up afore the women folks. I'll be better when I get to my cabin!" Mrs. Elstree, who was just bending over, heard the last word, and said:

"You'll go to no cabin, but to my house, and be nursed. I'd like to know what Esse would have done if you hadn't killed

the bear; and, whether or no, I wouldn't let you go anywhere else. So that ends it!"

"All right, all right; thank ye much!" said Dick resignedly. "Ye'll forgive me marm, for my manners, but I ain't pannin' out much in that way just now, owin' to contrairey circumstances!" And so the Indians took him up, and carried him to the house, previous to their going off to the glade, by his emphatic instructions, to get the skins and claws of the two grizzlies, and to bring back the cubs.

For the next few days Esse was obliged to keep her bed, so that she did not know, and was barely in a condition to know, exactly how Dick progressed. The terrible strain, both mental and physical, which she had undergone, brought on a sort of fever; but good nursing, and a little antipyrine, finally ousted the fever, and she was allowed to get up. She had of course heard in the interim of Dick's condition, and was anxious to be allowed to assist in the nursing.

When she was seated in the balcony, and felt the freshness of the breeze sweeping down from the white summit of Shasta, she had a long talk with her mother on all the events that had passed. First, she learned that Dick was going on as well as could be expected, for his wound was a terrible one, and the hardship of his home-bringing, which she had effected with such nobility of purpose, had much aggravated the original evil. When he had been taken into the house, Le Maistre, who had some little knowledge of surgical dressing, had unbound the bandaging in order to reset it in a more finished manner, but, finding it in good order, waited more skilled assistance. An Indian runner had been sent with a letter to the Doctor at Ashland, and twenty-four hours later he had appeared on the plateau, and had brought to Dick's aid the latest academic skill. When he saw Esse's improvised splint he shook his head, but on his unwinding the bandage, and seeing

how well his patient was getting on, he grew enthusiastic on the subject of the mechanical ability displayed in the improvisation. With genuine amazement he learned that it had been effected, under unheard-of conditions, by a young lady who had never seen a broken limb in her life. His wonderment increased when he was told that the slight, pale girl whose pulse he had just felt in the veranda had herself carried the huge bulk of the wounded man up the side of the mountain.

Dick's splendid physique stood him in good stead, and the ruthless stretching of his leg when he was pulled from under the bear, combined with the almost miraculous accident of the rude splints being placed in exact position, had already begun the cure. The Doctor happily prognosticated that within a month, if all went well, Dick would be on the high road to recovery, if not able to move about a little.

"We can never tell," he said "what will

happen in the way of recovery with a man like that. His simple life, with his great energy and his plain living, make recovery seem extraordinary to town-bred men. But we must not judge of his health and recovery by the standard of the towns, but rather by the animals, who simply lie quiet and lick their wounds, and are running about again when a man is beginning to realize that he is helpless!"

Miss Gimp had been up to this the head-nurse, with Mrs. Elstree as a relief; but Esse now joined the nursing staff. Her mother was not altogether satisfied about it, but did not like to make any objection just at present. She was beginning to have an uneasy feeling that perhaps Esse had seen too much of Dick at her impressionable age, though, as yet, she did not imagine that there could be anything serious arising out of their unchecked companionship. But out of her uneasiness came one certain thing—the complete realization

that Esse was no longer the child that she had hitherto considered her. She was a woman now, for good or ill; and whatever she thought or did was from the standpoint of a woman, and would have to be adhered to with a woman's constancy, or abandoned with a woman's resolve. Esse had by this time told her mother all the incidents at the killing of the bears, and she could not but see that the circumstance of her own life being saved by Dick—for, with woman's imagination, she realized more than any other episode the agonized waiting till the bear should discover her before Dick came—as an important step in the growth of a romantic affection. She realized as a still stronger one the fact, as Dick repeated to all over and over again, with increasing freedom of speech and added emphasis of delivery, about her saving his life. Mrs. Elstree therefore thought that to forbid the girl the sick room would be to beget or increase a desire to see the man, which

might develop later into something more serious.

So Esse sat with Dick daily, reading or talking to him whilst he was awake, which was always charming to her; and watching him whilst he slept, which was a much more dangerous pleasure, for then her memory and imagination worked together to weave romances which she durst not think when his eyes were on her, and which were not nearly so real when she was alone. The closed eyelids could not take note of blush or pallor, and had no terror for the maiden spirit in its hour of stress.

Dick was distinctly an interesting invalid. There are men who look their worst under such circumstances, and whose natural petulance under pain or restraint destroys any charm which their weakness may have for the feminine mind; but Dick was not such. There was about him a large-hearted patience and a masculine dominance, on which illness seemed to have no effect.

Miss Gimp, who was a born nurse, kept him so clean, and his room so picturesque with summer flowers, that even the memory of his personal carelessness died away from Esse's mind. More than ever the man who had saved her, and whom she had saved, and with whom she had undergone the adventure so sweet to look back upon, became idealized in all those smaller details with which the romantic simulacrum in a woman's mind is in some degree built up. His great amusement at this time was to polish the bears' claws, and to drill them in a particular way, until finally he made a magnificent necklace of them, which he handed over to Esse, telling her that they were fairly hers as she had won them.

When the time of convalescence came, Esse became herself head-nurse. At least, all the labour of amusing the patient seemed to devolve on her. She sat by his side in the veranda reading to him and playing draughts or chess, all of which pastimes

were dangerous enough; or often listening to his stories of adventure, which was a thousand times more dangerous. After a while Mrs. Elstree came to understand something of the feelings of Brabantio, as he afterwards reflected on the method of Desdemona's wooing by Othello—with the exception that she assured herself that in no way had Dick the smallest intention of making love. Had she known the deeper strata of human passion she would not have so easily thrown aside her fears with a sigh of relief, for the very indifference of the man to the girl's preference, so palpable to the mother's eye, was perhaps the one element remaining to complete the daughter's fascination. Mrs. Elstree was, however, a wise woman within her own limitations, and as the summer was drawing to a close she determined not to take any notice at present of what was going on, but to let affairs run their course till the return to San Francisco. She felt that it would be a less dangerous

course than doing anything whilst there was present the opportunity, in the shape of Dick, of matters coming to a head prematurely.

At this time there were two surly people on Shasta: one, Miss Gimp, who seemed never to get farther in her love-making to Dick; and the other, Heap Hungry, whose offerings to the parrot had been cut short by Esse, lest their continuous presence should lead to some awkward revelation.

One morning when Esse looked out of her window she saw the whole plateau white with snow. It was but a tiny dusting of the ground, and had vanished before the sun was high. But it was a warning that the summer had gone, and that Shasta was henceforth to be, for a time, at any rate, but a sweet memory. When departure had been decided upon, all the mother and guardian became awake in Mrs. Elstree; day and night she watched, and waited, and bestirred herself so, that there was never an

opportunity for Esse to have a sentimental leave-taking. To this end, Dick's natural imperturbability aided, and it was with only a hearty handshake, and a last wave of his cap, that Dick took leave of Esse at the railway station at Edgewood.

Esse herself was too sorry to be very demonstrative. She knew her own secret now, and it took her all her time and effort to so bear herself as to deceive her mother.

VI.

THE change from Shasta to San Francisco for a time altered the course of Esse's thoughts. It was not merely that the atmosphere was different or that the duties of life, in great and little degree, were not the same, but that there were compensations for the loss of the bracing air, the natural exhilaration which is given by a rarefied atmosphere, and the unconventional companionship of Grizzly Dick. There were shops! Shops whose contents were to be investigated thoroughly and their new treasures displayed. There were concerts with divine possibilities, and Esse was a musician cultivated far beyond the opportunities of even San Francisco. Hollander, and Paderewski, and Sarasate were all personal friends of her mother, and from

each of them she had friendly counsel. Now that she was come again in touch with all these delightful results of civilization, she began to feel as though the Shoulder of Shasta were barren of the higher delights of life—of some of them at least. Then there were the theatres, for to Esse a theatre was a veritable wonderland. Like all persons of pure imagination, the theatre itself was but a means to an end. She did not think of a play as a play, but as a reality, and so her higher education—the education of the heart, the brain, and the soul—was pursued; and by the sequence of her own emotion and her memory of them, she became, each time she saw a play, to know herself a little better, and so to better know the world and its dwellers. Visits, too, and dances, and the thousand and one harmless frivolities which go to make up a woman's life, claimed her time and her passing interest.

And so it was that within a few weeks of

her return to San Francisco, Grizzly Dick and all his romantic environment became for the time only a distant memory. But out of this very state of things, in which her mother had a new sense of security, there came a new danger. Since Dick was only a memory, he became one with that particular nimbus of softening effects which is apt to accompany and environ a memory which is a pleasant one—that which is to a memory what a halo is to a pictorial saint, at once a distinguishing trait and an aid to fancy. Esse began to feel that since Dick was a memory he was one that could be shared; and so each dearest friend of the hour became in turn the recipient of her confidence. It is an easy matter to sympathize with a misplaced affection; and the slaughtering of grizzlies and the saving and being saved by picturesque hunters, massive of limb and quaint of speech, has a charm for young ladies unaccustomed to the shedding of blood. Esse began to hear

nothing but praise of Dick, and envious wishes, sighingly expressed by susceptible companions, that her chance of love had been theirs. Thus by a subtle process, which the Fates so thoroughly understood, Esse began to look into her own heart with the eyes of her friends. What she found there she did not quite know. All was nebulous, inchoate and dim of outline; but it—whatever it was—had a living, breathing charm which touched her imagination, fired afresh all the impulses of her virgin heart, and made her very nerves tingle at all sweet unknown possibilities. When a girl gets thus far into the dark forests of love she seems to realize—historically, but last of all by herself—the truth of that master of the craft who said that "a woman loves for the sake of loving." There is something in feminine nature which seems to have a distinct need of expressing itself in some form of self-abnegation. It may be that there is a bacillus of love, which, when once

it finds an entry into the human heart, goes on multiplying itself, as other microbes do when finding their "final" destination; or it may be that it is a virus which can affect all around it in ever-widening area. But be it what it may, and work how it will, one thing is certain, that when once this idea has become conscious to a woman and she can locate its cause, the process of its growth is a natural one, and nothing in the world can stop it. Thus Esse, having begun the new phase of her feeling towards Dick by finding in him a sort of hero of romance, began to exaggerate her own feelings towards him; and finally grew to believe that she had acted rather badly towards him.

And here her memory, spurred on thereto by her wishes, began to play her tricks. She construed in the secrecy of her own soul the indifference of their parting into a wrong to him; and remorse began to assail her. She seemed to remember a certain

sadness in his beautiful eyes—for by this time his eyes had become to her memory beautiful—and to have all the wealth of varied and passionate expression which is the possession of a young woman's fancy. As one by one the thousand little incidents of Dick's illness and convalescence came back to her mind they came accompanied by all sorts of added charms on his part and small defects on her own, which fed the fires of her remorse; so that it was not long until as she sat thinking and recollecting her eyes would fill with unbidden tears.

This process of Esse's mental unhinging was aided by the care which her mother took to avoid the subject. She had seen that Esse had resumed her old life where she had left it, and was rejoiced that she did so with a physical improvement which she had hardly dared at the beginning to hope for. Mrs. Elstree prided herself on her worldly wisdom, and took special satisfaction to herself that by her patient for-

bearance at Shasta, she was now enabled to let well alone, without any fear of her attitude, positive or negative, being misunderstood by her daughter. Had she been a more experienced woman, she would not have avoided the subject of Dick, but from her superior position of manifested tolerance could have minimized the effect of his picturesque romance by judicious belittlement. As it was, her silence seemed to Esse a want of appreciation on her part of Dick's heroic qualities; and so it left her daughter to the dangers of her own imagination, with its active and reactive power on memory, and to the less wise sympathies of her girl companions. In the world of Esse's imaginings as to how Dick bore her absence, she began to invest him with a despairing loneliness which became in time but the coordinate feeling of her own heart.

Naturally her brooding on this theme, and the secrecy which as naturally became imposed upon her when once she had come

to understand its existence, told in time upon her health. She began to grow pale and listless; with poignant fear her mother realized that she was lapsing into her old condition of ill-health—with the added drawback that she had in the meantime passed from girlhood to womanhood, and that her secret tears whose traces she could not always conceal, showed that a new and dangerous emotional side of her nature had been developed. Mrs. Elstree thought and thought the matter over patiently, prayerfully, doubtingly, and with a vague, deadly fear which at times became an anguish. She could not conceal from herself that there might be some deep-lying cause in the shape of an unrequited affection, and naturally she thought that Grizzly Dick might be the object of it. Well, she had known from the observation of her own life and that of the companions of her youth, the truth that was told in Viola's true-false tale:

"She never told her love
But let concealment, like a worm i' the bud,
Feed on her damask cheek."

She took counsel with Miss Gimp on the subject, and even asked her opinion as to the possibility of Dick being the object—if indeed, there was one. Under ordinary circumstances the perspicacity of the two elder women who loved her, might have found a way to the knowledge of Esse's secret, and have also found a way for her to its settlement; but Miss Gimp's own feeling for Dick became at once a bar to the knowledge. She had in the discussion her own secret to keep, and this involved a putting aside of the subject altogether. She had also her own end to serve, for she still regarded Dick as a victim to her charms, and a possible object of her settlement in life. In slang phrase she had "her own axe to grind" in the matter, and looked upon the possibility of Esse's falling in love with Dick as a direct infringement of her

own rights. She was only human—and woman—and the stalwartness of her opinion on the subject of Dick set Mrs. Elstree's doubts on the subject almost at rest. She determined however to be assured, and took an early opportunity of touching on the subject with Esse herself. She was, however, delicately careful only to touch on the subject in such a manner as not to arouse Esse's suspicions, in case the idea should have no basis in fact, and not to put such an idea in her head, in case it was not fixed there already. And as Esse wished to keep her secret from her mother, who she felt by this time assured would not understand it, it was no wonder that the conversation had the result of clearing all doubts from Mrs. Elstree's mind and leaving her under the impression that she had Esse's direct assurance that Dick had no place—and no possible place—in her affections.

The schoolmen doubtless believed when they came to formulate the rules of logic

that the *suppressio veri* and the *suggestio falsi* were emanations from the mature intellect of man. Widely they erred! for Eve, the first of women, understood them to the full, and it was in that stage of her existence which coincided with a later woman's girlhood that—before she had known Adam and begun to understand the more simple directness of his man's thought and ways—she most fully understood their advantages. Since her time no young woman has ever failed to conceal, by their use, her thoughts on the subject of her affections—when she wished to do so—more efficaciously than a man can conceal his by the direct method of a denial accompanied by blows.

Now and again Esse wore the necklace of bears' claws, for she felt that to omit doing so occasionally would arouse her mother's suspicion; and it was sweet to be able to have so close to her something which was in every way a manifest link

between her and Dick. But she continued to grow thinner and paler; and the heart of her mother grew sadder as the time went on.

There came to visit their home in California Street an old friend who occupied a sort of brotherly position towards both mother and daughter. He had been an intimate friend of Esse's father, and on the marriage of the latter had become equally a friend of his young wife. This relationship was not changed even by his own marriage or by Mr. Elstree's death, for his wife became, as it were, a partner in the friendly concern, and when Mr. Elstree died he left a letter asking him to look after his wife and daughter, and aid them by his help and counsel. He did not burden him with the trusteeship or care of their affairs, for the fortune which he had left to them was sufficiently great to be a care in itself. Peter Blyth was now approaching middle age, and seemed to have gathered to himself in his progress

through life all its pleasant possibilities and advantages. He followed, or had followed at some time or other, quite a number of avocations, so that his knowledge was as varied as his taste and sympathy; and as in every phase of his career he had some distinct points of contact with the needs and doings of men he had arrived at a large and tolerant knowledge of human nature. Esse, from her earliest childhood, had known him as a sort of big brother, and had never called him anything but Peter. From him had always come to her something that was pleasant or helpful, from the days that she used to wheedle him into producing the toy or sweet that she knew was waiting for her in the deep recess of some pocket. When she was in any trouble, either of her own or others' doing, she relied on him confidently to see her through it; and even when she had suffered any childish pain, to hold Peter's hand was a distinct ease and help to her.

Naturally between the two had grown up a rare confidence, and up to now in her life Esse had never had a secret which Peter Blyth had not shared. The years that had passed had not aged him in any way, except in the limiting of his physical buoyancy, and in strewing a few white hairs through the thickness of his curly brown beard. This beard of Peter Blyth's was the feature on which a physiognomist would have lingered longest in the setting forth of his character, for it gave a distinctive quality to other features which, though altogether good, were in no wise remarkable. From his beard, and what was all around it, could be deduced the fact that he belonged to the antique rather than the modern world, and distinctly to the pagan school of life. It was not that he was sceptical, for he was not; nor that he was assailed with unconquered doubts, for he had his moods of acquiescence in the fitness of things, and the opposite, as have

all men in whose veins the red blood of life flows freely. But there was about him a large-hearted, easy tolerance which made any limited phase of thought a thing rather despicable to him than abhorrent. For all "isms" he had only contempt, from Calvin to Ibsen; all who held with the ungenerous side of beliefs could not move him from intellectual placidity. His throat had the broad smooth lines which we see in the old busts of Jupiter, and his mouth and chin, which, taken separately, showed the two poles of resolution and of power of enjoyment, pronounced, when taken together, for a conscious *joie de vivre*, which was most certainly not a characteristic of his time.

When he saw Esse his instinct and his knowledge jumped to one conclusion—that there was some secret cause for her low condition, but with characteristic caution he did not betray himself. He then and there determined to take an early opportunity of learning from the girl herself how

matters stood. To this end he had a long talk with Mrs. Elstree, and in the course of it gathered all the events, great and small, of the life at Shasta. Not content with Mrs. Elstree's confidence, he took an opportunity of learning the opinions of Miss Gimp, and thus armed, he felt himself fairly confident of finding out in his talk with Esse the true inwardness of things.

The next morning he came to breakfast with his mind made up as to how he should discuss affairs with Esse. He knew already from her mother all that that dear lady knew, including her put-aside suspicion of an attachment between Esse and Dick, and as he had discovered her mother was manifestly not in Esse's secret, whatever it might be, he knew that there was need for extreme caution. To this end he determined that time should not be of vital importance, for the telling of a secret means on a woman's part a gradual yielding to her

own wishes, and a not impossible accompaniment of tears; so he opened the matter with a frank remark:

"You're not looking well, Esse! Too many dances and sittings-out in the conservatory. Suppose you put on your bonnet and come with me for a drive. A whiff of sea air will do us both good." Esse looked at her mother appealingly, and on her nodding acquiescence, assented joyfully, so Peter Blyth went off to look for a buggy suitable to the occasion. He shortly drove up in a very snappy one, with a pair of horses that looked like 2·40 speed. Esse came to the stoop with a lighter footstep than she had used for many a day, and, her mother noticing it, said to herself, with a sigh of relief, "The dear child is only tired. She feels already with Peter like her old self."

As they swept up and down the steep hills that lay between them and the Pacific Peter Blyth tried his best to put and keep

Esse in a gay humour. He told her all his best and newest stories, and so interested her with all the little things which had happened in her London home since she had last seen it, that when they came to Sutro Heights Esse was looking more like her old—or, rather, her new—self than she had done since she had parted with Dick at Shasta.

Peter put up his trap at the Cliff House, and having ordered luncheon for a couple of hours later, the two strolled out along the beach to the southward. When they had gone some distance they sat down on a patch of sea grass and looked around them. Below their feet, beyond a narrow strip of yellow sand, was the vast blue of the silent Pacific, its breast scarcely moved by the ripple of a passing breeze. Southwards the headlands, dimly blue and purple, ran out, tier upon tier, into the sea; northwards the mountains towered brown above the Golden Gate. Both were im-

pressed with the full, silent beauty of the scene, and for a time neither spoke. Then Peter, turning to Esse, said:

"What is it, dear, that is troubling you?" Esse started, and a vivid blush swept swiftly over her face, and then left her pale.

"What do you mean?" was her answer, given in a faint voice. For reply Peter took both her hands in his, and said:

"Look here, little girl, that's the first time in all your life that you ever asked me what I meant. Do you really mean, Esse, that you don't understand? Tell me, dear! I only want to help you! Don't you know what I mean?"

Esse's "yes," came in a faint voice. Peter went on:

"Now that clears the ground. We understand each other. Tell me all about it, Esse! Confession is good for the soul; and I don't think you'll ever find a softer-hearted father confessor than your old friend."

"Must I tell, Peter?" She spoke in an appealing way, but it was manifest to him that she wished to be treated in such a way that her natural obedience would help her. So he smiled a broad, genial smile, and seeing that her face brightened, he attempted a chastened laugh, and flung some of his good-humoured man-of-the-world philosophy at her:

"Look here, little girl, when we human beings have any secret that's pretty difficult to tell, and that we had rather not tell our mothers, it's generally about the opposite sex. When it's a girl that has to do the telling, well! she's best off when she can get it off her chest to some sympathetic soul that won't give her away. Nature demands that she tells some one, and that some one must be either a friend or the Other Fellow. If it's the Other Fellow then there's no need to tell the friend! But in that case there are rosy cheeks instead of pale ones, and the harmonies of

life are set in a full major key instead of the minor. See?" Esse nodded. Peter continued:

"I'll help you all I can, little girl, now and hereafter. Your father was my dearest friend, and one of his last acts was to write to me asking me to look after you and your mother, and to do what I could for you both. If he were here, my dear, you wouldn't need to talk to me! Shut your eyes, little girl, and pretend that he is with you, and open out your heart to him. Don't fear to! Every girl has to, and it is well for them that there are fathers and brothers and friends, to whom they can speak; for otherwise there would be a deal more sorrow in the world even than there is!" Esse took his hand in hers and turned away her head, hiding her face with her other hand, and said in a low voice:

"I want to see Dick!" Peter's reply was given with heartiness, although her words sent a mild chill through him. He

had almost come to this conclusion already, and he saw trouble—possibly great trouble—ahead for his little friend:

"Grizzly Dick! I've heard all about him, and a mighty fine fellow he must be. No wonder you want to see him, little girl, after all you and he went through together. When your mother was telling me last night about the bears, I was looking at the skins of the two monsters, and thinking that I'd like to shake hands with the fellow that shared that danger with you, and that you were so good to!"

Esse said nothing, but he could tell by the pressure of her fingers on his hand that his words touched her, so he waited a minute or two before going on. Then he asked suddenly:

"Esse, do you want to see him so badly? Is he all the world to you, so that his not being here makes life, with all the good things which it has for you, of no account? Tell me! Speak freely;

don't be afraid!" Esse turned her face round, and her eyes were all swimming with unfallen tears. At this moment her heart was full of Dick, and she could look unabashed at Peter whilst she spoke:

"Oh, yes! I want to see him so. The whole world seems so small and cramped without him! If I could only see him for a moment it would be like feeling the wind blowing down from Shasta—like hearing the roar of the falling water—like the sound of the forest coming up at the dawn! It all seems so little here, and he is so brave and strong, and moves through life as though he were born to rule it!" Peter Blyth sat silent, amazed. The young girl's poetic phrases, her full, passionate way of speaking; the very openness of her avowal, were all strange and new to him, and he felt that he must learn more, and then consider well his store of knowledge; so again he asked her:

"Esse, do you think you love him?'

She immediately began to cry quietly, and it was only when he had petted and comforted her a little that she was able to reply:

"I don't know! I don't know!" and Peter muttered to himself:

"Hanged if I do, either!" then he went on with his questioning:

"Now, tell me just one thing—I only want your opinion—do you think he loves you?"

"He never told me so."

"No, but what do you think?" Esse turned to him with all the coquetry of her nature ablaze, and asked:

"What do you think?" Peter Blyth instantly laughed a merry, wholesome laugh which seemed somehow to find an echo in the very recesses of Esse's soul. Somewhere there was hope and comfort for her. This winning trust in a man's power to smooth matters, and the consequent shifting of the burden from her own shoulders was

beginning already to work for her recovery. She laughed too, though the laugh smote Peter with pain, for it was like the ghost of her old cheery laugh; but he was glad to hear any approach to merriment, and took advantage of the occasion.

"Come on! Let us get to lunch, and then we shall be able to think better. We *know* now; our next step will be to see what is best to be done, and then to *do* it!" Esse took his outstretched hand, and so, hand-in-hand, they walked by the sea together. Suddenly he stopped and said:

"Look here, little girl, you mustn't go into the hotel with your eyes like that. They'd think that *I* was the lover, and that I had been quarrelling with you!" He put his hand into his pocket and took out a tiny parcel which he handed to her. Esse took it with curiosity and opened it. Out fluttered a gauzy veil.

"Well, I do declare!" she said, "I believe

this is a put-up job, and that you expected me to cry, and were prepared for it."

"Of course I did," said Peter, boldly. "What else did I come out here for except that you and I might be alone, and that you could tell me your troubles! I knew you would cry! all girls do—under the circumstances!" and he laughed a resonant and ease-giving laugh. So she took his arm and they walked back to the hotel.

VII.

When her mother saw Esse, her heart was filled with gladness, for her pallor had given way to a cheerful tinge of rose, and her manner was buoyant and exhilarated. "Well, I declare," said she, turning to Peter Blyth, "an hour or two with you has done her more good than all the doctors in San Francisco in three months. You must take her in hand, and prescribe for her a bit, if you will." By this time Esse had tripped upstairs to get ready for tea, and Peter, seeing his opportunity, wished to get from Mrs. Elstree a comprehensive consent to whatever he might see well to do. All the way home, after lunch, whilst Esse had been chattering to him with all the energy of an emancipated soul, he had been thinking. The problem which

he had to solve was a difficult one, and he felt that all his diplomatic acumen would be required. He could not believe that his highly cultured, refined little friend Esse whose fastidiousness, even in her babyhood, had been a little joke in the family, could be really in love with a rough, unmannered trapper. And yet he could not deceive himself that at the present time Esse had an absorbing desire to meet the man; that the unsatisfied desire was sapping her health, and that it would be necessary to take the matter seriously as the only chance of an ultimate solution of the difficulty. It might be that Esse's craving was for the mountain as well as the man; that the place and its possibilities, its adventures, its bracing qualities, the stimulation of the high mouutain air and the whole wild, free exuberance which had come into her life at the moment when her womanhood was developing, and as cure for her failing health, had seized on her imagination.

In such case, her sense of contrast and the strongly humorous side of her character would be her best protection. In any case, the man was at present so inextricably mixed up in her mind with his surroundings that without his presence no disentanglement could take place. Of course, it might be that when Esse should see him the vague desire for his presence might become an actuality, and that nothing short of marriage with him would content her. If so, then the chance must be taken, for it could not be allowed that her present declining health should not be considered; and if marriage became a necessity, at least Esse had at her disposal all the means of comfort for them both In a word, the argument ran in his mind: if she should not see Dick she would in all probability fade away and die. If she should see him, one of two things must happen—she would become disenchanted, which was all desirable, or her infatuation would increase

until it ended in an undesirable marriage. In any case she must see him.

She must see him—that was certain; and this conclusion having been arrived at, Peter's next point was as to the most advisable way of this accomplishment. There was already experience of the ill effects of her seeing him when his foot was on his native heath. There he was paramount, and his whole personality gathered round itself the romance of the surroundings. If Esse were to see him on Shasta under her present psychic and nervous condition, she would simply tumble head over ears in love with him. There was nothing at all to the contrary; whereas if she were to see him in the midst of her present refined surroundings, she could not help contrasting him with them, with a result that could not altogether tend to further infatuation. Dick therefore must come to San Francisco! Peter felt that his logic was complete, and that no further

thought on that part of the subject was required. Thus he had driven up to California Street with his mind so far at rest, and his only present intent that Mrs. Elstree should, without even guessing at his knowledge, be content to leave the affair in his hands. So when Esse had gone to her room he turned to Mrs. Elstree and said:

"Do you really wish me to prescribe?"

"Most certainly! Look at the effect of your first dose!"

"And you will not blame me if anything should happen that you don't contemplate; or as you should not wish?" Mrs. Elstree put both her hands in his and said:

"Peter Blyth whatever you do will be for Esse's good. That is your intention I am sure. I know it; and my dear husband knew it. None of us are infallible; but you are at least a true friend and a clever man. Do what you will for my dear child's good. Nothing can be worse than to see her

fading away from me, as it has been my misery to watch for months past." She turned away her head, but Peter could see that she was crying as she left the room. When she returned she was cheerful, though there were traces of tears in her eyes. Women have a sort of fixed idea that bathing the eyes with watered eau-de-cologne will remove traces of tears; it is a happy belief, saving much small humiliation, and there are men generous enough to pretend that they are deceived!

After dinner Peter Blyth sat with Esse in the back of the drawing-room, whilst her mother in the music-room opening from it played Liszt and Chopin. His manner was hearty, and his laugh so cheery, that it would have been impossible for Esse to have in his presence been under the domination of any brooding or love-sick fancies, so she fell into the buoyant mood. Now that the strain of keeping her secret was past she felt able to discuss it without doing violence

to her feelings. Peter opened the battle with a point-blank shot:

"I have thought all over what you told me, and I have come to a conclusion." Esse's heart seemed to cease to beat, and she simply listened. "I think Dick had better come here!" A blush rose under the girl's eyes, and steadily grew, till cheeks and forehead, and ears and neck, were all flushed to a deep crimson. She put her hands before her face but still sat silent. Peter went on:

"I take it, Esse, that this has your approval?" she nodded.

"I take it also that it is your wish?" again she nodded.

"I take it also that I may—that you wish me to convey to Dick the strong feeling that you have towards him, the keen desire to see him,"—here Esse broke in:

"Oh, Peter, must that be?"

"I fear, my dear, that it will be necessary.

He might not be willing to come without such assurance. You see he does not know me at all!"

"But wouldn't it be like my asking him?" Peter laughed cheerfully:

"It would be uncommonly like it. There is no possible mistake about that! But then the whole thing is uncommon! It is not common that you should care for a man away outside the class you have been reared in; the occasions that threw you together were uncommon. It is uncommon that I should be holding this conversation with you all the time that your mother is playing there in the next room so uncommonly well. I take it also that I had better let Dick know that there may be—later on—a more tender feeling between you?" Esse paused. It seemed to her like the probing of a wound this questioning by Peter; and yet it was done with the same matter-of-factness which distinguishes the work of an able surgeon. The wounded have to suffer,

and it does not matter if the wound be inflicted by a bullet, or an arrow, or a knife. But there was about the whole thing a sort of business atmosphere, something which tends to suppress romance and to bring into unpleasant prominence the sternest facts; and Esse could not but feel that she was rather following up the logic of the part than expressing her present feelings when she replied from behind her sheltering hands:

"I suppose so!"

"Good!" said Peter. "Now I know exactly where I am!" and he rose up to join his hostess in the music-room, whilst Esse lay back amongst the deep cushions of her chair, thinking what a queer place the world is, when even the realization of one's wishes is not a matter of unqualified happiness, and beginning to wonder if Dick would think it strange of her sending such a message. Then she began to wonder how her San Francisco friends with their

fastidiousness, their fondness for the ridiculous side of things, and their haughty pride at times, would look on Dick. And then she began to think how Dick would look amongst his new and unaccustomed surroundings. A thousand little traits and habits of his, which she now wished that she had forgotten, recalled themselves to her memory, and she thought it would have been better that she had not told Peter so much, until, at all events, she had some opportunity of seeing that Dick was better schooled to conventional usages. But that could never be until Peter told him! The whole thing was getting so tangled that she could not follow it; and so she stole out of the room, leaving Peter talking to her mother as she played on, and went to bed.

Esse was beginning to feel that an unconventional attachment was not without its drawbacks. The cure was commencing to work!

Next morning, at breakfast, Peter mentioned that he had had a telegram which would compel him to go at once to New York. It might be, that from New York he might have to go on to London; but this was only a possibility, and in any case, his visit home need be only a short one. He would, he expected, be back in San Francisco in a couple of months at the latest. Mrs. Elstree was truly sorry that he had to go so soon, but hoped that he would soon be back, and Esse looked at him with a flush and endorsed her mother's sentiments. He received many commissions, and went up to dress for his journey. Before he left he said to both ladies:

"I think I have my commissions all right. Do either of you want to alter anything?" There was no reply, and off he went.

Esse had a half-feeling that she would like to countermand all that she had asked Peter to do, or had acquiesced in his doing.

Womanlike, she began to have misgivings when once the bolt had sped, and, womanlike, she felt personally freer now that she had committed herself to a definite act.

Peter Blyth left the eastward train at Sacramento, and took the Portland train on his way north. He had posted himself thoroughly as to the route, and had telegraphed to the station-master at Edgewood to have procured for him horses and a guide to Shasta. On his arrival he found all ready for him, and setting out at once, made good way before stopped by the darkness. Early the next day he arrived at the Shoulder of Shasta, and leaving his guide and horses on the plateau, went at once to Dick's cottage.

All the way up the mountain he had been thinking of the strange job which he had undertaken; and the higher he got, the more the ridiculous side of it came to the front. Here was he, a man of middle age, climbing up an almost desolate snow-clad

mountain, to find a hunter who probably couldn't read or write, and to ask him to marry a particularly refined and cultivated young heiress. He had no clue to the man's style, or thought, or ideas, and he could only surmise what his reception might be. Like a good many Londoners, his sole knowledge of the actuality of Western life was from "Buffalo Bill" and the "Wild West Show," and, from the rough-and-ready energy displayed by some of the participants in these Olympic Games up-to-date, he had strange imaginings as to what his welcome might be like in case he should be regarded as a meddlesome fool—a capacity which, to do him justice, he felt that he filled with quite sufficient satisfactoriness. By the time he had arrived at Dick's cabin he felt not only ridiculous, but in a sort of "funk," an unusual thing with him. With somewhat of the feelings of a schoolboy, who learns on calling that the dentist is absent, he found that the cabin door was

locked. He had, however, a duty to do, and he did not mean to shirk it, be it never so ridiculous or unpleasant; and so went back to his guide to breakfast.

When he returned to the cabin, an hour later, he found the door unlocked; the owner, however, was absent. He went in and seated himself, awaiting his coming. As he sat, all his unpleasant surmises came back to his mind, and he called himself—inwardly—an unmitigated ass, until the image of Esse's pale face came before him and nerved him. He looked round the cabin, and, as he saw its meagreness and absolute destitution of refinement, he could not bring himself to believe that Esse could really and truly love a man who lived in such a way. The exhilarating air of the mountain, somehow seemed to increase his natural buoyancy of spirits, and he felt that he wanted to laugh, but the gravity of his mission restrained him.

There came a shadow in the doorway

and Dick entered, quite unconscious that there was a stranger in his house. When Peter Blyth saw him, the contrast between his appearance and the purpose of his mission was so great that it burst the barriers of his gravity, and the long pent-up laughter broke forth in a flood. He tried to rise, but he was helpless with his paroxysm of cachinnation, and sank back again, and shook whilst Dick looked on in a sequence of emotions. First he was amazed, then somewhat indignant; and, finally, his kindly nature yielded to the humour of the situation, and, throwing back his head, he joined in the laughter till the rafters rang.

There certainly was ground for Peter's laughter when one took in calmly Dick's appearance as the proposee of marriage on the part of a young lady. He had just come back from a hunt of several days' duration, and bore all the signs of hardship and turmoil. Manifestly, he had not

washed, even his hands, for several days; his hair was matted and wild looking—unkempt would have been an inadequate word to describe its condition. His clothes were creased with sleeping in them, and were encrusted in places with mud, wherein had stuck bits of twig, dead leaves and pine needles; and from head to foot he was smothered with grease and blood. Killing and skinning big game is not an æsthetic occupation, and is apt to leave just the same traces on the operator as on the artist who wields the knife in a Chicago packing house. In sober truth, he looked like a large, rough, peculiarly dirty, and slovenly butcher on leaving his work. Across his shoulders he carried the skinned carcase of a deer, from which dripped on the floor drops of blood, till they formed a little glittering pool.

Dick, with a hitch of his mighty shoulder, dropped the carcase on the floor, and stood looking admiringly at Peter Blyth, whilst

joining in his laugh; then he sat down opposite him on a rough stool, which he drew towards him by crooking a toe round its leg, and went on with his laugh in greater comfort. Presently Peter began to realize that he was in a more amazingly ridiculous position than that which he had feared, and, with a certain feeling of shamefacedness, felt his laughter die away as he began to gasp out apologies. Dick leaned over, and, lifting a mighty hand, smote the other's thigh as he roared out:

"Durn me, stranger, but ye're welcome. I hain't seen a man laugh so hearty in all my born days, an' I hain't had such a laugh myself since I seen the Two Macs split one another's heads open at the Empire Saloon in Sacramento. My! but I'm glad to see ye, though who the hell ye are, or why ye're here, is more'n I know yet. But we'll know in time. Have ye breakfasted? I'm nearly famished myself; but I've brought in a roast," he designated it by a

kick, "and we'll soon have a blaze and get fixed right up!" Before Peter could say anything he had strode to the fireplace, and stirring up the embers with his foot, had thrown on them an armful of dried twigs. In a few seconds a fierce blaze was roaring up the rude chimney, and very shortly a chunk of the buck, hung on an iron hook, was already beginning to splutter in the heat. Peter offered to help, but the other waved him back:

"No, sir! This is my shanty, an' ye're my guest! Ye're as welcome in it as the flowers of May. Jest ye sit down and try to get ready another laugh for after breakfast, while I get the fixin's ready. I hope ye can eat saleratus bread; it's all we get up here this time o' year." As he spoke he was making tea, and setting out his rude table with workmanlike dexterity. Peter could not but admire him as he moved, for notwithstanding his big bulk he was always in perfect poise, and in every-

thing he did he seemed perfect master of it; and he soon lost sight, or at least consciousness, of his dirt and blood, and saw only the splendid specimen of natural manhood, so magnificently equipped for his wild mountain life and so nobly unconscious of his surroundings.

Peter Blyth felt his feelings mingled; half being of shame that he had so underestimated his host, the other of anxiety as to the future. Matters did not seem of such simple solution as he had imagined. He could not but feel that there was a basis for Esse's unsettlement rather wider than he had thought possible.

When breakfast was ready he sat at table with enjoyment, and, despite want of tablecloth, napkin, or any of the luxuries to which he was accustomed, made a hearty meal. As for Dick he ate to such an extent that Peter had serious misgivings as to whether he might not do himself an injury. When hunger was satisfied Dick

took two pipes and handed one of them to Peter with the tobacco canister, and drawing up a rude armchair to one side of the fireplace motioned Peter into it; he took his own seat in a similar one on the other side. Then he commenced the conversation:

"Now, stranger! Wire in, and tell me all about it!" Peter Blyth saw that the difficult part of his task was at hand, and went straight at it:

"I am a friend of Mrs. Elstree and of Esse!" Dick rose up and held out a large hand.

"Wall, ye were welcome before, but ef that's yer racket, there ain't no welcome under this ar roof big enough or good enough for ye. Shake!" Then Peter experienced the force of Dick's pump-handle act of friendship; and, like Esse and her mother, felt that Nature might easily have been forgiven if she had gifted her child with a lesser measure of manual power. One good thing, however, was

accomplished, the two men were *en rapport*, and Peter's task became more possible. He went on :

"My name is Blyth—Peter Blyth ; but no one ever calls me anything but Peter! I hope you will be like the rest!"

"All right, Peter!" said Dick cheerfully. "Drive along!"

"I saw both the ladies two days ago. Mrs. Elstree did not know I was coming here or she would, I am sure, have sent you her very warm greeting. Esse, however, knew that I was coming, and sent her love."

"Lor' bless her! Little Missy, I hope she's keepin' peart an' clipper? She kem up here as white as a lily; but me an' Shasta soon set her up, an' she went away like a rose!" Here Peter saw an opportunity of arousing Dick's pity, and at once took advantage of it.

"Poor little girl!" he said, "I fear she is not at all so well as she should be. She looked pretty pale when I saw her."

"Do tell! The poor purty Little Missy. I wouldn't see her sick for all the world."

"I'm sure of that, old fellow! And it would gladden her heart to hear you say that!"

"Well, I should smile! Why, I don't suppose that by this time she remembers there's such a man as me!"

"No, no, Dick—you mustn't think that! Esse thinks more of you than you imagine. Indeed, that's why I'm here now!"

"Why you're here? Say, stranger, you're talking conundrums!" Peter felt the drops gather on his forehead; he was in the thick of it now, and spoke out boldly.

"Look here, Dick, I've come up here on purpose to speak with you! May I speak frankly, as man to man?"

"You bet!"

"And you promise that you will never repeat what I say?" Again the horny hand was held out:

"Shake!" The promise was recorded.

"Dick, that poor little girl is fretting her heart out to see you again!"

"No!" the wonderment ended in a short laugh. "Go on! What's yer game? Oh, ye're a funny one, ye are!" and he gave his guest a playful push that almost sent him headlong into the fire, whilst his laughter seemed to Peter to hum and buzz amongst the rafters. Peter went on seriously:

"Honest Indian, Dick! I give you my word of honour that the little girl has been thinking of you till she has nearly broken her heart for want of seeing you. She is as pale as a ghost, and her poor mother has been fretting her life out about her. Now, won't you do something for her?"

"Do somethin'! Why look here! ye may take the full of her purty little body of blood out of my veins for her, if that will do her any good!" This time it was Peter Blyth who held out his hand, and said:

"Shake!" Then he went on:

"You know, Dick—or perhaps you don't know, living up here all alone—that young girls have strange fancies, and their affections don't always go where their elders would like to see them. Esse has been a good deal with you, they tell me, all last summer; and after all, you're a man! By George, you are all that! And she's a woman! And it seems to me—you understand, old man! Why need I go on!" A blush, a distinct and veritable blush, as pronounced as might be found in any ladies' seminary in San Francisco suffused Dick's face, and he turned away with a little simper that would not have disgraced a schoolgirl. "Why, ye don't mean to say," he went on sheepishly, "that that purty thing wants me for her bo?" His bashfulness kept him silent, and Peter Blyth looked on in fresh wonderment to see such awkward modesty so manifestly displayed in the person of such a blood-stained ruffian as he looked. Dick's embarrassment, however,

was only momentary, and ended, as did most of his emotions, in a peal of laughter. Peter looked on with qualified amusement; it would have been all pure fun to him only for the memory of Esse's pale face in the background. Dick suddenly stopped and said:

"What do ye want me to do?"

"That's right, old chap! I want you to find your way down to San Francisco, and let Esse get a glimpse of you. It will bring back to her all this beautiful mountain, and she'll feel the wind from the snow peak blowing once more on her, if I know her!"

"Good, I'll come! It can't be for a few weeks yet, for I have undertaken a contract that I must get through with; but I'll come. That's cert! Where does she live in 'Frisco?"

"In California Street, No. 437, the big house with the stone seals on the steps. Dick, you're a brick! Old man, you'll be very tender with her, will you not? Re-

member it was a great struggle to her to let me gather even so much of her wishes as I did. She's only a young girl; and you must make things easy for her! Won't you? Don't shame her by making any overture come from her?"

"Say, what's that? Over what?"

"Overture! It means, old man, that you mustn't leave it to her to do the love-making, if there's any to be done."

"Hold hard there, pard! Easy up the hill! I ain't much of a feller I know, an' my breedin' has been pretty rough; but I ain't such a fool as to leave no girl to do the courtin' when I'm on the racket! Ye make yer mind easy!—Say, must ye go?" for Peter had risen.

"Yes, Dick, I'm bound to be in New York without a day's delay. I've important business awaiting me there; and say, Dick, if things don't turn out as I think, and as you may think too, when you see her, you'll make it easy for her, won't you?"

Dick looked a perfect giant as he stood in the doorway following out his guest, for all the manhood of him seemed to swell within him, and to glorify him till the blood and dirt on him seemed as if Viking adjuncts to his mighty personality. His words came deep and resonant as from one who meant them :

"Look you here, pard! That dear little lady is the truest and bravest comrade that ever a man had! She stayed by me in the forest, when it was good time for her to go, with the biggest grizzly on the California slope comin' up express. She fou't him, for me, an' killed him. An' then she wouldn't leave me, even to get help; but she carried me alone, although she was wounded herself, more'n a mile up the mountain side! She took me outen the grave and hell and the devil, an' I ain't goin' to go back on her, so help me God! I don't want to be no trouble to her, nor no sorrow, an' I think it's a mistake of her

choosin' such a man as me—but I tell ye this: She'll do with me what she likes, an' how she likes, an' when she likes, an' whar she likes! The wind doesn't blow that's a-goin' to blow between her and me, if she wants me by her side!"

VIII.

When Esse found that there was a possibility of her again seeing Dick she began to become reconciled to the existing condition of things. It was true that as yet she had only a glimmer of hope, for Peter Blyth had not been explicit as to his intentions. In the first place he might not be able to find Dick, for his journey to New York, and possibly to Europe, might eventuate in complications which would forbid his returning to California at all; in any event for a long time. Then again, Dick might not see his way to come to live in cities, and Esse had already begun to appreciate the refinements of life sufficiently well to make it impossible for her to even contemplate an isolated life in the woods or on the mountains. Picnicing,

and especially in a honeymoon form, might be delightful, fascinating, of unspeakable joy; but such life, without relief, would never suit her as an unvarying constancy. From the glimpses which she had had into Dick's shanty she knew well enough that the measure of his refinement would not reach her own minimum standard, and she had doubts from her experience of his improvement in small matters if he would readily lend himself—if he could lend himself, even if he so desired—to a loftier social condition. These were certainly arguments which tended to damp the zeal begotten of absence, and the stimulating effect of pleasant memory working upon a morbid but fervid imagination. When in the anæmic condition Esse's imagination was apt to run away with her, though when her system was well furnished with red blood her fancies and desires were healthy and under control. Now that the strain of her self-imposed secrecy had been relieved, her

health began to mend, and the improvement was manifest in the ready manner in which she yielded herself to her surroundings, and began to make the most of them; thus mental and physical health began to act and react on each other, and Mrs. Elstree's heart rejoiced as she saw the improvement in her daughter. Soon Esse began to show something of the same robustness which she had achieved on Shasta. Her chalky pallor yielded to a delicate rose colour which, tingeing her brown skin, made a charming union of health and refinement. Her figure began to fill out, and within a few weeks from the time of Peter Blyth's departure she looked quite a different being from the pallid, meagre, green-sick girl whom he had left. Peter had telegraphed from New York that he had to go to London, but that he looked to return in about two months. He had said nothing of Dick, thinking it wiser to be silent until he knew for certain whether he

would turn up in San Francisco. Mrs. Elstree did her best to keep Esse up to the mark of health and energy at which she had arrived; and she so laid herself out to this end that her house became the very centre of the most pleasant circle in San Francisco. Every stranger who arrived was of course introduced to her, and not a few found an excuse for prolonging their stay in order to share again her charming hospitality and the companionship of Esse. There was a constant succession of luncheons, dinners, balls, picnics, and all those harmless gatherings which have no definite name, but which have a charm of their own in their freedom and the relaxing of the bonds of conventionality.

Amongst the strangers who came, and in natural course made Mrs. Elstree's acquaintance, was a young English painter, who had already made a great name for himself. He was one of those who had not attached himself to any art school long

enough to be cramped by its inevitable littleness. He had skipped lightly through the various schools of the world, learning and adapting all their methods to his own genius, and keeping his mind and imagination fresh by a perpetual study of Nature in all her moods. Partly by nature, and partly by merit of his varied training, he was of a most charming personality, with gentler manners and keener refinement than might have been expected from his strength and stature. As, in addition to his other qualifications, he was remarkably handsome, it was small wonder that he was looked upon with favour by the ladies in San Francisco, and with a certain reserved tolerance by the men. Even the instantaneous heartiness of his reception by the Bohemian Club did not allay the misgivings of certain young men of pleasure, unattached.

Between Mr. Hampden and Esse a friendship soon sprang up, and this was

fostered by the opportunities given by her sitting to him for her portrait, and his finally coming to stay as a guest in the house. To him the freshness and artless simplicity of Esse was akin to those grand simplicities of Nature which had been the study of his life; and it was little wonder that when for some time his art and human sympathies had been thus united and centred in so charming a young lady as Esse, his feelings of friendship should have taken a warmer turn. Before the month was over he was head over ears in love with her.

And Esse? By this time, sad to tell, Esse had quite overlooked, if indeed she had not forgotten, the fact of Dick's existence. Sometimes, when some accidental allusion or expression suggested the idea, she remembered him, but as a far-off and independent fact; she never connected him now with her own life. He was, and would be till the end of her life, a true and faithful friend, whose memory was set in a

frame of romantic picturesqueness, as a miniature is set round with diamonds; but he did not belong to the living present at all. And, strangely enough, when he had come to occupy this place in Esse's mind, all the pleasant things began to cluster round him again. His individuality was a centre round which crystallized all the pleasant lesser memories of the summer on Shasta. Once or twice in the night time, when something kept her awake, Esse thought, with burning blushes, of her confiding to Peter Blyth the one secret of her life. She wondered how she could have done such a thing, and was angry with herself for what she now considered her mistaken idea as to her own feelings, as well as for her unmaidenly confidence. With a gush of thankfulness she remembered Peter's sudden call to the East, and determined that on his return, and before any harm could be done, she would set *that* matter right in a few words. Mrs.

Elstree saw what Esse herself did not see, that she was herself becoming, nay, had already become, in love with the young painter; and as she in every way approved of him as a possible son-in-law, she allowed matters to freely run their course. Esse's romantic feeling for Dick belonged to the school-girl phase of her existence; but the new affection was the expression of her woman's life, and it differed as much from the former in its strength as in its consciousness. The episode of Shasta was, in a sort of way, the "preliminary canter" of her affections, and had all the consciousness of its limited purpose; whereas the later and truer love had all the unconscious, serious earnestness of the race itself, where means are forgotten and only the end is held in view. There was no thought of Dick in her mind, no regret, no remorse, even no pity of his wasted and ruined life, as a few months ago she would have considered it. There was, in fact, no thought

or recollection of Dick at all, when, in answer to Reginald Hampden's passionate appeal, she put her two hands in his, and their lips met in love's first long kiss.

That evening, as they sat hand-in-hand in the little drawing-room, where there was no one else, in that early darkness which is the nearest thing to twilight which California can produce, Esse, with a manifest purpose, and with many flutterings of the heart, told Reginald that she had a confession to make. He, with the amused, superior tolerance of a successful lover, encouraged her by gentle words and manifold tender caresses to proceed. As a man of the world he knew that, as a rule, the sins which well-bred young ladies have to confess to their *fiancés* are merely self-distrustful exaggerations of minor indiscretions, or breaches of temper. With a sinking heart Esse began, for now that she had to speak of Dick again to a third person, his figure loomed up un-

commonly large into the foreground of her thoughts.

"It is about Shasta!" she said, in an almost inaudible voice.

"About Shasta, dear, that is lovely! I like to hear you speak of that sweet spot! I think I am in love with it myself from what I have heard you and your mother say of it. I am thinking already, Esse"—here he drew her closer to him—"how you and I shall go there some summer and have a fresh honeymoon!" Esse was silent; there were conflicting thoughts in her mind, and she listened as he went on:

"You shall show me all over the place; the seat on the rocks on the edge of the plateau, where we shall see together the sunset over the sea; the sun-dial of the trees by which we shall reckon the hours of our happiness—for, my dear, we shall not be able to keep any other reckoning, they shall go so quickly; the spot where you

killed the bear; and then we shall come up by the way you carried Dick. You see, dear, I know them all!"

"It is about Dick I want to speak!"

"Speak on, Esse dear; I like to hear about him! What a splendid fellow he must be! I want to shake him by the hand; he saved the life of my little girl, and she saved his! Why, we must be like brother and sister to Dick!"

"But, Reginald, I must tell you about him before you say——" Here Reginald interrupted her.

"Isn't Dick the splendid, brave fellow that I think him; the manly, upright gentleman of nature, with the freshness and splendour of the wood and mountain upon him!"

"Oh yes! he is all that; there is nobody in the world braver or nobler than Dick! You can't say anything too good of him. But that's just it! You may not like it that I—one time—before I met you—thought

all the world of him!" Reginald laughed, and caught her again to him; he was glad of these excuses for demonstrative affection.

"Oh you dear little high-minded goose!" he said. "Why, of course you thought all the world of him! So would any girl! If I were a girl I would go my boots on a splendid fellow like that." Esse began to breathe more freely, though the worst was yet to come; she had to finish her confession. She bravely went on:

"That would be bad enough if only you knew it, but I told it to Peter Blyth!"

"And who may Peter Blyth be?" asked Reginald, with a tinge of jealousy in his voice.

"He is an old friend of my mother's. He was my dead father's greatest friend, and he is a sort of guardian to us both."

"Oh!" said Reginald, partly satisfied, so Esse went on.

"I don't know why I told him—that I—I—wanted to see Dick—but I did; and he

said he would see Dick some time and that he would come and see me!" Here she covered her face with her hands, and in the dusk Reginald could see that she was crying. He took it that it was partly from regret and partly from vexation, so he asked another question in order to distract her mind:

"And did he come?"

"Oh no!" Esse started up and looked at him with wet eyes. "Oh no! and I hope he never will! Peter Blyth was called away to New York the very next day, and from there had to go on to London, so I am in hopes that he will never tell Dick. When he comes I shall ask him never to say another word about it again as long as he lives, or never even to think of it!" Reginald thought for a moment and then spoke. "Would it not be well to send Mr. Blyth a cable?"

"Why so?"

"Because he might go up to Shasta on

his way back. And, my dearest, that would never do. In addition to making you uncomfortable it would not be fair to Dick. He would take it to heart that he had been so invited; and without any blame on his part he would feel that he had been deprived of a great happiness!"

"Oh, Dick would not mind!"

"How do you know?"

"If he had cared about me he would have said so long ago!" from which it could be seen that poor Dick's silence was already beginning to be construed into a fault, and his blindness into an offence. Reginald hardly took the same view as Esse on the subject, but he was none the less contented. However, they agreed that it would be no harm to send a cable to Peter Blyth to his London address, for Esse did not know where he stayed in New York, and the following was despatched:

"Do nothing about Dick till I see you.—Esse."

The next evening Mrs. Elstree had a reception of all her friends, and she thought that it would be a good occasion to make known Esse's engagement. Her receptions were given in English style, and as she had brought over English servants, her Californian friends were always interested in the way things were done. They generally ended however in an impromptu dance, American fashion. When the night arrived Mrs. Elstree received, just as she was going to dress, a telegram from Peter Blyth :

"Arrive in evening ; dining on car." So she gave instructions to have his room prepared. Presently the guests began to assemble, and both Esse and her mother were busy receiving them, Reginald naturally not being far off, and being now and then introduced in his new capacity. There were congratulations on all sides, and a well-bred hum arose throughout the rooms.

In the midst of the festivities a tall,

powerful-looking man, walking with long strides, but putting his feet down as though they were cramped, came to the house and knocked. When the liveried footman opened the door he said :

"Say, boss, does Mrs. Elstree live here?" The man had only been imported a few days, and, as he had come to the West with vague ideas as to snakes and scalping, and other American common-places, and would not have been surprised if he had seen a tribe of Indians on the war-path in Montgomery Street, answered with his usual imperturbability :

"Yes, sir, she receives to-night."

"Kin I go in?"

"Certingly, sir, if my mistress was expecting of you."

"I know Little Missy is."

"Miss Elstree is within too, she receives with her mother."

"Then, General, I guess I'll just cavort in and pay my respects." The man mo-

tioned him in, and he was handed over to another footman, who took his hat and said :

"What neem, sir ?"

"Guess, Colonel, you have me there!"

"What neem shall I enounce ?"

"My name ? Oh, I tumble ! Jest you say Grizzly Dick of Shasta !" The man called up the staircase to another footman half way up :

"Mis-tar Greezly Dick of Shost-ar!" The second man called on to another, at the door of the drawing-room :

"Mr. Greazy Dick of Shostar !" And the latter shouted the name into the room, in a Hibernian accent :

"Misther Crazy Dick Shostoo!" Dick was for an instant amazed by the wilderness of strange faces, the myriad lights, the hum and movement of the scene ; and as for Mrs. Elstree and Esse, they were for a moment ignorant of the personality of their visitor. The Dick who now stood

blinking in the doorway, and awkwardly shuffling his feet, had little resemblance, except in stature, to the Dick whom they had known on Shasta.

When the time for his visit to San Francisco was ripe, Dick had come as far as Sacramento, and had then prepared himself for what he considered a fashionable visit. This he did by getting himself up as like as he could to the more aristocratic-looking of the Two Macs, as that individual had dwelt in his memory, combined with the most stylish of gamblers and barmen, from living examples. His general effect was enhanced by the failure of the goods exhibited in the various tailors' shops, and "misfit parlors" to adapt themselves to the great bulk and free, sinuous carriage of the hunter. Dick had thus arrayed himself in a blue claw-hammer coat with brass buttons, a low-cut waistcoat of mighty pattern, in plaid of many colours, in which primary shades of scarlet,

yellow, and blue, predominated, a light pair of yellow cord trousers, of preternatural tightness, and enormous patent leather pumps, which were all too small to be easy on feet accustomed to mocassins. His shirt was what far-western salesmen call "dressy," and exhibited on its bosom many rows of fancy pleating with, between them, masses of herring-bone handwork, such as the rustic maiden is wont to exhibit on her Sunday petticoat. A red tie with big bows and fringed ends, and some massive gold studs of fancy pattern, to match the watch chain, which lay across his diaphragm like a hawser, completed his toilet. But Dick, not feeling complete, even in this subjugatory attire, had been to the barber's and undergone a process of curling, oiling, and scenting, which alone would have isolated him in any high-bred society throughout the world. Add to these disadvantages a manner composed of equal parts of unchastened ease of gait and shy awkwardness,

and it is little wonder that the ladies did not at once recognize their old friend the free-gaited, bold, natural child of the mountains. Esse was the first to recognize him, and stepping forward, held out both her hands with eager welcome, utterly forgetting, in the surprise of seeing him, her previous anxiety as to his possible coming. At the moment, however, Dick had recognized Mrs. Elstree and had stepped forward and taken her by the hand, and was beginning to work the pump-handle shake, which she already knew, and dreaded. This peculiar shake of Dick's was a work of time, and Mrs. Elstree knew that the best way to get over it was to submit quietly; she was not sorry also, to have a moment in which to collect her thoughts, for it flashed on her that so strange an appearance, and so unexpected a coming, must have some special cause. She had a half fear that there was some trouble in store for Esse, or with her; and as she knew that the eyes

of all fashionable San Francisco were on her, she felt that it behoved her to be cautious. She instantly determined on a course of action—heartiness. Dick was an unconventional person, and when the guests knew and realized who and what he was, the manifest surprise and amazement with which they were already regarding him would cease. He had saved Esse's life, and she had saved his, and under very strange and unusual circumstances. This alone would justify his appearance, and any reception that might be accorded to him. So she said effusively:

"Why, Mr. Grizzly Dick, this is a treat! I am delighted to see you in San Francisco! Do you make a long stay?"

In the meantime Esse stood with outstretched hands, for she did not like to draw them back, lest Dick should think she was offended, and so waited. Before Dick could reply to her mother he saw

them, and answering: "Thank ye, marm!" turned to Esse and said:

"Wall, Little Missy, if this ain't jest the all-firedest, highest old time as ever was. My! but ye look purty; like a ripe apple ready to be bit. An' do ye remember the b'ar, and the way yer frock was tore all away? Durn me if the old-man grizzly was here himself now, he wouldn't have the heart to lay a claw on ye!" As he spoke he had taken her hand, and was subjecting her in turn to the pump-handle ordeal. Esse answered with what heartiness she could muster, for there was a look in Dick's eye, a sort of assuring her, which was quite new to her, and which made her anxious as to what might happen. She would have given worlds that her mother knew the exact state of affairs, for she could and would have helped her at any cost; but her mother did not know, and she must now trust to Providence and the chapter of accidents. In the meantime,

other guests were arriving, and they both had to receive them. Mrs. Elstree saw so much of the difficulty as that Dick would become a nuisance if he did not pass on with the rest, so she said sweetly :

"Won't you take a seat for a few minutes, Mr. Dick? Esse and I have to stand here a little while to receive our guests; but we shall come to you very soon." Dick laughed his boisterous laugh—how Esse felt at the moment that she disliked it—which more than ever attracted all eyes to him, and with a rough bow and a "Count on me, marm, every time!" withdrew to the other end of the room. Feeling thoroughly awkward in such a novel situation, he began to make up for his want of *savoir faire* by brazen impudence, this being his idea of easy deportment.

At this time Peter Blyth arrived at the house, and went upstairs to his room to dress himself for the evening.

IX.

It was some little time before either Mrs Elstree or Esse could get an opportunity of rejoining Dick. The news of Esse's engagement had got about, and all her friends made a point of coming round to offer good wishes. The stream seemed to Esse as if it would never end, for with each moment her anxiety grew. Those who have not experienced it cannot understand the rapidity with which a desire for a few moments' thought grows, until it becomes a sort of agony. Esse was in a way chained to the social stake. She had to stay by her mother, to smile, and give her whole thoughts to what was going on around her. She would have given anything to have had time to warn her mother, or Reginald, to take care of Dick, and find

out his purpose; for all the time unconscious cerebration was working, and she was rapidly coming to the conclusion that Peter Blyth's message had gone, and that Dick's presence was an answer to it. Reginald saw with the eyes of love her anxiety, but could do nothing to allay it; he, too, was chained to the stake by the exceptional circumstances of his social duty. Presently they heard a loud laugh in the room behind them, followed by a titter of feminine voices, and a louder laugh from men. Esse felt her ears burning. Her mother shot a quick glance at her and said *sotto voce:*

"Never mind, dear, we shall be able to attend to him in a few moments; I see the stream is slackening." A few minutes more and the last of the guests, except stragglers, had arrived, and they were free to move about. Esse went off to look for Dick, for she felt that he was safest with her, and that she was safest too, for she did not know what he might not do or say

in his strange surroundings. She found him in the midst of a group of the smartest young people in San Francisco society. Poor Dick in his ignorance thought he was getting on capitally, for in the society in which he had hitherto mixed the person who caused the loudest laughter was most esteemed of the company. He had with his native taste and daring selected out the prettiest girl in the room, one who though ostensibly one of Esse's "dearest friends" yet bore her no good will since it had been apparent to her that Reginald Hampden, upon whom she had set her heart, was in love with her friend. The recent knowledge of their engagement was gall and wormwood to her, and she was delighted to have an opportunity of making Esse feel uncomfortable. Dick had opened his conversation with a piece of complimentary pleasantry such as he would have used to a barmaid in a dancing saloon, nothing coarse, nothing unpleasant, but altogether familiar and out

of place in a conventional assembly. The young lady was not offended, a girl very seldom is at being singled out for compliment by a fine-looking man, be he never so rude in his style; but she saw her opportunity, and led him on. She had seen the familiarity of Esse's greeting, and, though she did not comprehend the whole situation, saw that there was fun for her and others, and some sort of humiliation for her friend. So she at once began to ask Dick questions, and to encourage him to laugh and make remarks. Some of her smart set came round, and a game of refined bantering began, the victim being unconscious of his ridiculous position, and of the ridicule showered upon him. That was the fun of the game—Dick was not the build of person that a man would ostensibly make game of, unless he wanted a fight. She asked him all about Esse, and supposed all manner of things as to their friendship; and in fine brought Dick to the point of

bragging, not of his own prowess, but of hers. This involved an appearance of familiarity with Esse, and as he went on she gently insinuated that they must be great friends : at last she daringly said :

"If I was a man, and a girl saved my life, I would ask her to marry me. I think it would be the least I could do!"

"Now, do ye really think so, miss? Wall, I do admire! Do tell, now, how ye'd set about it?" Poor Dick had quite fallen into the trap through his very simplicity, and the honesty of his purpose in coming to the city. His tormentor, gathering courage from the winks and smiles of her male admirers round her, said :

"In the most open way I could! I'd ask her before all her friends, so that there might be no mistake. If I wanted to honour her by the offer of my hand and heart there should not be any slouch about it!"

"Shake!" said Dick, extending his mighty hand, and half a moment later his

new friend, with a rueful smile, raised a crumpled hand, and looked at the blood, where her rings had cut into her crushed fingers, which was beginning to show through the rent in her glove.

"Oh, I say," said one of her admirers, "has the clumsy brute hurt you?"

"Miss," said Dick, "I humbly beg yer pardon! I never thought of how tender ye women critters is. I should have known better." Then he turned to the last speaker and said:

"Look here, Jedge, I wouldn't be so free with them cuss words o' yourn. Ef ye fling them about so promiscous, some one is apt to be hurt. They're worse'n chunks of rock, anyway!" The man addressed ran his eye up him from his boots to his oily hair, but said nothing.

At this moment Esse came forward, and Dick, seeing her, and with her a way out of the embarrassment due to his clumsy strength, stepped towards her, and delivered

himself of a little speech which he had rehearsed to himself an innumerable number of times on his journey from Shasta. He had submitted it to his casual friends the bar-keeper and the barber at Sacramento, and armed with their approval, and fortified by the expression of Esse's young lady friend, whom he took to typify fashionable society, and who had used almost his words, he had no hesitation now in speaking. Dick was in no wise a coward; he could face an awkward situation, and, like many another man, he had only to begin to find all his difficulty removed. Esse stood amazed when he began his speech, and for a moment looked helplessly round her; but then, catching Reginald's eye as he stood on the outskirts of the little throng, braced herself to the situation, and smoothed her face to a grave smile by mere force of education and habit.

"Little Missy! An honest man's love is all that he can give the proudest lady! I am

only a simple man, but I have come from the snows of Shasta to do ye the only honour in my power. I am glad to do it before your honoured friends and your family circle. Will you honour me by becoming my wife and giving me your heart and hand?" Having spoken, he looked calmly around him, as one does who has done a meritorious action, and done it well. Esse felt the blood rushing up to her head, and burning her cheeks and ears, as she heard the titter of laughter around her. Dick heard it too, and faced round with a quick flush.

It was just at this moment that Peter Blyth came into the room, standing just inside the doorway. He saw instantly that something was afoot, and said to the servant at the door:

"Who is that, Stephens? that gentleman with the shiny hair, with his back towards us?"

"That, sir? I think his name is Mr. Measly Shostoo, or words to that effek!"

"Mr. how much?"

"Measly Shostoo, sir. I didn't hear him pernounce it hisself, for I was a-taking of the 'ats in the 'all, but only on the transgression." Just then, Dick turned, and Peter saw him, and instantly recognized the situation. He hurried in, but too late to be of any immediate service, and stood by, ready.

Esse did not know exactly what she should do, but instinctively she put her hand up, and said with a smile:

"Oh, Dick, Dick! not before all these people! They'll think you are making game of me." One of the smart young men here said:

"Making game of her! He is a hunter! Good!" Dick turned on him like lightning:

"Dry up there, mister! I don't make game of no female of her sex; and I don't allow no man to say I do, see? Look ye here, Little Missy, this is honest Injin, a right square game; and, durn me, but I

mean it down to my boots. This ain't no ten-cent ante, no bluff on a pair, but a dead sure thing—a straight flush, ace high!" Instantly there was a chorus of ironical remarks from the men all round:

"I straddle the blind!"

"Raise him out of his boots, pard!"

"I go you two chips better!"

"Make it a Jack-pot!"

Dick looked around again scornfully, but as he did so he caught Esse's eye, and seemed to recognize the story which it told; the ripple of laughter around, however, filled up the blanks, where there were any to fill. Dick felt that he was fooled. He was, as may have been seen already, a vain man, all the more vain because of the consciousness of its own strength. Hitherto in his life he had only been tested in ways that brought out his natural force and left it triumphant; and the habit of his life was behind him to resent an affront. He glared at the ring of faces around him, and this

time his look meant mischief to all who knew danger signals in a man's face. Controlling himself with an effort, he said to Esse:

"Little Missy, ye ain't a-foolin' me, air ye?"

"Oh, no, Dick; no, no!

"Then I wish I had that laughin' jackass that kem all the way up on Shasta to fool me —to fool me in face of all these——" Here he looked around again, and, as he did so, whipped from the collar of his coat his great bowie knife and, pressing the spring, threw it open with a dexterous jerk. No woman screamed; it takes more than a generation of ignorance of such matters to make women fear cold steel. But there was more than one woman present who in earlier days had seen just such quiet anger flame out and end in murder, and with one accord they drew back and left the men in front. Dick, seeing only men's faces, finished his scornful sentence: "These—these swine!" There he is, the laughin'

jackass hisself!" he said, seeing Peter Blyth's face in the ring, where the withdrawal of the womenkind had left him in the front.

With a sudden spring he caught him by the throat with his powerful left hand, and held him as in a vice. Esse was paralyzed, and could make neither sound nor stir, and Peter Blyth found himself, for the first time in his life, face to face with sudden death. The rest of the men round feared to stir, not for themselves, for there was not one of them, being Californians, who would not cheerfully have made the battle his own ; but they were all unarmed, and they feared that in his present infuriated condition Dick might do a brutal violence before he could be restrained. As for Peter his manhood stood to him. He did not flinch, but with cool, calm courage faced the situation. On one side was Dick, more dangerous than any wild animal, and ready to do anything, as he thundered out :

"Now, ye dog, tell me what ye meant by foolin' me and shamin' me this way; and beg my pardon, or by the Almighty I'll corpse ye—whar ye stand!" On the other side was Esse's quivering face, all fright; but fright of many kinds, for Peter, and for the shame of the open exposure of her secret which she saw coming. Peter Blyth did not himself quite know how matters stood: he had not yet heard of Esse's engagement to Reginald. All he knew was that Dick was there in such a rage that it might mean death and disaster and life-long sorrow to those he loved. The comedy had all at once and, with a vengeance, become a tragedy. So he was silent, and Dick, who was all man, even in his blood-madness, recognized the courage in him, and with an imperious gesture threw him off, saying:

"I suppose ye ain't no worse nor the rest. I've seen the day when I cleared out the Holy Moses saloon in Portland for less

than this. Answer me some of ye! what does it all mean?" It was a terrible situation, and in all that roomful of people, now as still as death, there was not one whose heart did not beat quickly, or seem to stand still at the thought of the potent, reckless, fatal force which seemed to have been let loose amongst them. In the midst of the silence Reginald Hampden stepped out, and Esse felt glad, and a new sense of relief, as she noticed his calm and gallant bearing. He moved towards Dick, and said with courtly sweetness:

"I hope I may speak here, since it is my privilege to speak for Miss Elstree! Look, sir! Look; the young lady! You are distressing her! I know you to be a brave man, and, from all I have heard her say to your honour, I am quite sure you would not willingly cause her harm or humiliate her. See, sir! you are crushing her to the dust!" as he spoke he went to Esse and stood beside her.

A quick flush seemed to leap up Dick's face from neck to forehead; his hand dropped, and with a sound in his throat between a sob and a gasp he said:

"Little Missy, forgive me if ye can! I must have gone mad! This galoot here was pretty right when he called me a brute. Let me get back to the b'ars an' the Injuns. I'm more to home with them than I am here. Be easy, Little Missy, an' ye too, all ye ladies and gentlemen; it'll be no pleasant thinkin' for me up yonder, away among the mountings, that when I kem down to 'Frisco, meanin' to do honour to a young lady that I'd give the best drop of my blood for—and she knows it—I couldn't keep my blasted hands off my weppins in the midst of a crowd of women! Durn the thing! I ain't fit to go heeled inter decent kempany!" As he spoke he lifted his arm, and with a mighty downward sweep hurled down his bowie knife, so that it stuck inches deep into

the oaken floor, where it quivered. Once more he turned to Esse:

"Forgive me, Little Missy; an' if ye kin forgit me, an' the shame I've brought upon ye and yer house!" He bowed and was moving away, when again Reginald, to whom Esse had whispered, strode forward.

"No, sir! You must not go like that. There is a mistake here which must be set right! You will understand me when I tell you that Miss Elstree has done me the honour to consent to be my wife. You have been put in a false position. It is quite true that Esse wished to see you; that she asked her friend, Mr. Blyth, to carry such a message to you. Believe me, that she does understand and appreciate the honour that you have done her, though, I must say, in some justification of these other ladies and gentlemen, in so unconventional a manner. But you must not leave the house in such a way! Believe me, you are, and ever shall be, an honoured guest in

a house to which you have saved so dear a life!" And he put his arm round Esse who had got suddenly pale and seemed about to faint.

"One of you boys," he said, "pick up Dick's knife and give it to him. I can't move yet!" One of the young men took the handle and tugged at it, but in vain. There was a laugh; another tried it, but with the same effect. A smile stole over the pale anger of Dick's face; he was beginning to yield to the humour of the situation, and he stood silent where he was. Mrs. Elstree came forward, she had only just come into the room, having been in the music-room, and did not understand what was going on, but seeing Esse's head drooping had flown to her side. Reginald, finding her mother's arms round her, left her side and striding forward, seized the handle of the bowie knife. With a sharp jerk, and with a force which made his arm tingle from wrist to shoulder, and sent the blood up

into his head, he plucked it from the floor amid a buzz of approval, and a responsive "Good!" from Dick as he slapped his thigh in his old fashion. He stepped over to Dick, shutting the knife with an experienced jerk, and held it out him: "Your weapon, sir!" he said, "but I should be very proud if you will let me keep it, in memory of a brave man to whom I and others owe so much!"

"Take it," said Dick, "an' welkim! The poor thing 'll never, I am sure, be disgraced by ye as it was to-night by me. Shake! Ye're a man, ye are; and I wish you and Little Missy all the happiness in the world!"

The two men shook hands and Reginald went on:

"You'll let me give you this in exchange, I hope." He drew from his pocket, and detached from its gold chain, a beautiful hunting knife. "It is not merely that it is mine, but it was given me by an em-

peror, who was good enough to say I had done him some service when a wild boar charged him in a Thuringian forest." Dick took the knife:

"I'll take it and keep it, pard, because on my soul I believe it will pleasure ye if I wear it! An' now, good night, an' I humbly ask all yer pardon for my conduct! Forget it and me if ye can!" and he moved to the door.

Here Mrs. Elstree spoke out; Esse had been whispering to her during the foregoing:

"No, no, Mr. Grizzly Dick, you must not go! There is no one who can come into my house that I could be more glad to see. You must stay and show us all that you forgive us that we have amongst us made you, for a time, uncomfortable!" He paused, and Esse stepped up to him, her eyes this time full of tears, and said:

"Yes, Dick, do stay; if only to show me

that you forgive me! And that you are not unhappy for what has passed. Dick—D—D—Dick, sh—sh—shake!" her tears fell as he clasped her two hands and whispered to her:

"Lord love ye, Little Missy, I ain't a-goin' to be onhappy. Why, I only kem down from the mounting because I heerd tell that it was like ye wanted me. I didn't believe it myself, an' I feared it would be a mistake if ye did. But that wasn't my affair, but yourn; an' whatever ye'd do would be right enough for me. An' as to forgivin'!—Wall of course I'll stay if ye wish it. I think I've made this jamboree pretty dismal enough already, without refusin' to do anything I kin do to help make it lively again." Another voice now joined in, that of the young lady who had commenced the trouble.

"Yes, stay! Do stay, Mr. Grizzly Dick, and presently you must dance with me, if only to show me that you forgive my bad

manners and my unkindness of heart. And if you do tread on my toes, I guess we'll be about even!"

"Done with ye, miss; but I'm afeerd this here rig out of mine ain't jest exactly the thing for a fash'nable party. So ye'll hev to excuse me."

"Never mind, Dick," said Reginald heartily; "we are all friends of yours here! If there are any who are not so, then they are no friend of our hostess or of me either; and I'll stand back to back, if you'll let me, when we slice up the last of them!" Dick smiled a good ten-inch smile, and just then catching sight of Peter Blyth's face he slapped his thigh and burst out into a peal of laughter. Going over to him he held out his hand saying:

"Ye'll forgive me, pard, won't ye; though I mighty near skelped ye? Ye took it well though! Durned, but ye took it standin' with yer boots on! I only hope I'll take it as well when my time comes; fur ye had

a close call that time—closer 'n ever ye'll hev it again. Shake!" the two men shook hands, and Peter Blyth, within his mind's eye the recollection of their first meeting, roared with laughing too. Then Reginald came and slapped him on the shoulder and said:

"Come with me, Dick. I've got something that will make you feel more comfortable than this Sacramento rig out!" Then he straightway took him off to his own room.

Some fifteen minutes afterwards there was a buzz of admiration through the room when Dick entered, clad in a hunter's outfit, something like his own, which Reginald had some time before bought from the Indians as a model for his work.

There was about him something so fresh, and wild, and free—so noble a simplicity and manhood, that more than one woman present did not wonder that Esse had asked him to come down to 'Frisco.

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