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Mr. Lake of Chicago.

A NOVEL.

BY

HARRY DUBOIS MILMAN.

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A NOVEL.

BY



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MR. LAKE OF CHICAGO.

BOOK ONE.

JUDGE LYNCH OF ARIZONA.

CHAPTER I.

MISS MARJORIE BRIDGER.

It is before the days when the horse show at Madison Square Garden had become a misnomer for a society crush and a beauty show.

The exclusive four hundred have discovered the horse show; and are out in force as spectators, exhibitors, and riders. But the four thousand satellites, and their forty thousand lesser satellites have not yet discovered that the show is really a function.

They are all there; but as mere spectators, not yet putting themselves in evidence as a part of "Society."

It is in the old garden; and the excitement has been intense this evening; for the trials of tandem and coach driving have been made, and the novelty has made horses, drivers, and owners nervous; so that there have been heart-rending entanglements of fidgety horses, offset by occasional adroit disentanglements by cool-headed drivers.

Of the latter the most notable is a gentleman who is handling the ribbons over eight restive animals, who have threatened twenty times to go all to pieces, but who have been kept in place by a long

whip managed with extraordinary skill, and by nerves of iron and muscles of steel.

And all the while this gentleman sits on the box, with his handsome face in a perfect calm, as if he is really in no wise troubled to control horses which would have baffled the skill of any other driver there.

He is evidently a stranger; for all through the boxes the fair occupants are asking vainly of their masculine attendants who he is; and the gentlemen are doubly discomfited—they cannot answer the question, and they cannot remain unconscious of the fact that the stranger is engrossing the attention, not to say admiration, of the ladies.

And the worst is that he is worthy of admiration, not only because of the manner in which he handles the ribbons over difficult animals, but also because nature has been very generous to him.

He is a man of thirty years of age, perhaps. He has a strong face, marred, possibly, by an air of grim determination which hovers about the lines of a finely cut mouth, and beautifully molded chin. But on the whole the impression of him is that he is a strangely handsome man.

His hair is brown and slightly inclined to curl; and it clings about his head in a way to show its shapeliness. His eyes are full and of a clear gray; and his brown mustache has the natural curl which the tonsorial artist in vain endeavors to imitate.

If he were not so well proportioned, so evenly developed muscularly, his very great strength must have made him awkward. As it is, a perfect development produces in him precisely the same effect that no muscular development at all produces in the well-proportioned woman—a singular ease and grace in his least movement.

Of course somebody must know him—somebody with a big S too—or he would never be sitting on the box of De Peyster Van Kouver's coach. It is in itself a sort of patent of aristocracy.

It is a young woman of the most exquisite American type of beauty who reasons this out, after making her inquiries in vain of all those about her. No,

not all those about her; for out of the many who crowd eagerly around her box, glad even of a glance from those brown eyes of hers, or of a smile from her red lips, there are a number who are distinguished chiefly by a singular vacuity of expression.

Of these she asks nothing. Not merely because of the expressed vacuity, but because they are of England's best blood; and whatever else they may know, they are religiously ignorant of anything American. And the man on the box is as typically American as the beautiful girl.

"Of course, Mr. Van Kouver can tell me," she says, thinking aloud.

"Aw! did you speak, Miss Bridger?" demands one of the vacuous ones, bringing his monocle to bear on her fair face, by a dextrous if massive movement of the head, by which he is enabled to look over his high collar without bending his neck back.

"Not to you, duke," Miss Bridger answers sweetly, and continues her soliloquy. "Or Dick Francklyn. And there's the dear fellow now!"

The "dear fellow" is one of those ever agreeable, indispensable, anomalous creatures, of which Society knows a very few, who has no visible means of support, yet has abundant leisure, the best of clothes, and no debts. He never loses at cards, but is not even suspected of shady practices. He is inexplicable, but there he is; and as indispensable as inexplicable.

He catches the eye and the dazzling smile of Miss Bridger, and hastens with modest self-abasement to make his way to her side. It is a peculiarity of the inexplicable that he troubles no mammas—he has no matrimonial aspirations. He is trusted by women, and liked by men.

"Mr. Francklyn; you know everything and everybody; now don't you?" Miss Bridger says in her vivacious way.

Mr. Francklyn disclaims so much; but places all he does know at the service of Miss Bridger.

Not gallantly, but courteously, which conduct on his part makes the vacuous ones stare approvingly at him.

"Then tell me who that superb fellow is with the eight-in-hand," exclaims Miss Bridger, who has the American girl's fondness for the superlative.

"Oh, he," says Mr. Francklyn. "That is Mr. Lake of Chicago."

"Aw, Chicago!" interposed the vacuous one Miss Bridger has styled the duke. "That is that big city out on the prairie, is it not, aw?"

"They have inclosed the prairie now," says Miss Bridger, sweetly, "and use it for a public park. The city has actually been obliged to encroach on a lake near by there. He handles the ribbons beautifully," says Miss Bridger, addressing this latter to Mr. Francklyn, who has not changed a muscle during her speech to the Briton.

"He does; and rides as well. He is to ride Van Kouver's Hector in the high-jumping."

"Is he? Well, I'm sorry for him; but I shall have to beat him with Crown Prince. Harry Delancey rides the Prince for me. I would have ridden him myself, but papa said it wouldn't do. I suppose he was right; but if my name had been Van Kouver, or Van anything, I'd have made it do. Pity, isn't it; for I know the Prince so well. But Harry Delancey can do almost anything with him. Must you go? I suppose you are very busy. Everybody looks to you, of course."

The arena is given up to the men now, and they are busying themselves making it ready for the high-jumping contests. A buzz of eager, animated conversation goes up from the spectators. It seems to be a foregone conclusion with the knowing ones that Crown Prince will excel at the high jump.

The box of Miss Marjorie Bridger is the most animated spot in the garden. It is not only because she is the proud owner of Crown Prince, but also because she is at once a most beautiful girl, a most brilliant one, and the daughter of a Cræsus, who it is said will give her a dowry such as a royal princess might envy.

It is her dowry, of course, which attracts the titled Britons who stand about her; and it would be idle to say that it is not the same glittering thing that

draws the American men around her. But, after all, her beauty and wit are the things most regarded when in her company.

She is not to the manner born; but no one would suspect it; for she has that extraordinary adaptability for which the American girl is famous; and no belle in the great garden this night knows better how to remain the active center of twenty eager men, each one desirous of being first.

Her voice, pitched rather too high, after the American fashion, but of a sweet quality, rises out of the hum of conversation.

"Where is Mr. Van Kouver? I want to offer him odds against Hector."

"He's coming this way now," drawls one of those who is unmistakably English, but who, in an undefined way, is different. "But I don't believe you'll get him to lay anything against Crown Prince. If I thought he would, I would not mind putting up something myself."

Marjorie Bridger flashes a quick glance at the speaker, and he catches her eye and holds it a moment, a hard smile curling his lip. An imperceptible shudder of dislike runs over her, and she turns to the Duke of Moorcroft.

"What would be fair odds, duke? You should know about such things."

"Aw—er, never give more than five to one on anything but a certainty; and you cawn't bet on that, ye know," is his oracular answer.

"Ah! there is Mr. Van Kouver! Thank you, Lord Sandowne!" and she inclines her pretty head coldly toward the one who had offered to place something on Crown Prince.

It is evident that she does not like this nobleman; but he bears himself with an assured air, as if he has no doubt about his ability to carry any point he has set for himself.

Van Kouver makes his way through the throng toward the pretty owner of Crown Prince. He has a languid, bored air, which gives place to a faint smile as he comes in sight of Miss Bridger.

"So you are expecting to win the high jump?" is

her greeting to him, as she puts out her little hand with engaging frankness.

"Say hoping, and it will be nearer the truth," he answers. "Hector is in prime condition, and he will be well ridden."

"Ah, yes!" she cries, vivaciously, "I know you are counting on your Mr. Lake of Chicago. But he can't do everything."

"You know him, then?" in some surprise.

"No. Mr. Francklyn told me his name. But, Mr. Van Kouver, I wish to make this interesting. What odds do you ask to back Hector?"

He smiles as he looks down into her animated face.

"Association with our English cousins has given you a touch of their mania," he says, in a low voice, intended for her ear alone, but caught by another, who has listened to everything, as if he had some right to do so.

"Perhaps Miss Bridger is reverting to the customs of her own West," he drawls.

Van Kouver does not even look around; but his eyes, fixed on the flushed face before him, see an angry look flash into the brown orbs, and then as quickly die out.

"I will give you five to one," Miss Bridger says, looking at Van Kouver.

Van Kouver smiles.

"In what?"

"Candy or gloves," she replies.

"The odds are too liberal," he says. "I will take you at two to one in gloves. Will that do?"

"But I am sure to win," says Miss Bridger, in a tone of expostulation.

"You have the best horse," he answers; "but I have great faith in my rider. I could not take greater odds than two to one."

"Very well, then," and she writes the wager down on her fan with a jeweled pencil.

"A rider cawn't make a horse go higher than he can go," says Lord Sandowne, at this point.

"That is a statement I will not dispute," replies Van Kouver, in a tone of languor all his own.

"But you will back your horse?" queries the nobleman who seems to be in so little favor.

"At proper odds, for any sum," replies Van Kouver, almost ignoring his questioner.

"I'll give you two to one in hundreds," says Lord Sandowne.

"At such times I only bet in thousands," replies Van Kouver, in his languid way; and then begins to speak with Marjorie, as if his answer had disposed of the matter.

A bright red spot appears on the tanned cheeks of the Englishman, and a vindictive, malignant expression flashes into his eyes.

"I will give it to you in thousands," he says, his voice slightly hoarse.

"Taken!" and Van Kouver calmly makes a note of it, but without in the least diverting his attention from Marjorie.

Lord Sandowne makes a note also, and then silently saunters from the box and disappears. Without seeming to notice his departure, Marjorie really has done so, and a look of relief passes over her face. Mr. Van Kouver wonders why she permits the presence of Sandowne, since she dislikes him so much, but is too well bred to speak of it.

"Who is this Mr. Lake of Chicago?" she demands, suddenly.

"He is a gentleman I first met when I was out on my ranch in Montana," Van Kouver answers. "He did me a very great service, then, and we have been fast friends since."

"Tell me about it," she cries. "I know from his looks that it must have been something heroic."

Van Kouver smiles.

"It was heroic," he answers; "but I am not sure he would wish me to speak of it. However, if you desire it——"

"I do. Come! please tell me while we are waiting for the horses."

Van Kouver has quite monopolized her by this time; and she has not hesitated to assist him to that end, because she knows as well as he that he is not

in the matrimonial market, and will not suspect her of coquetting with him.

"He was a cowboy in those days——" he begins, when she interrupts with a pretty little exclamation of delight.

"A cowboy! In those days! Oh, how charming! Do say he is a college man, and that he went out there in disgrace, and returned with an immense fortune."

Van Kouver laughs. He knows that Miss Bridger is too familiar with the West to believe that story a common one.

"He certainly is a Harvard man; and five minutes with him will convince the most skeptical that he is of good family. That is all I know, however, and the disgrace and subsequent fortune must be imagined. Though I doubt the fortune."

"I begin to feel," says Miss Bridger, veiling her wonderful eyes behind their long lashes, in a pretty affectation of returning confidence, "that you are going to tell me a true story."

"Every word of it true," he answers. "It could be made into a very pretty story, but I shall make it brief. It was at the time Sitting Bull was making his last struggle with the white man. I knew nothing of the trouble, and one day was caught by ten of the scamps, far away from the men."

"Ugh!" ejaculates Miss Bridger, her eyes growing large with interest, and a little shudder of terror running over her; for she knows something of the horrors of Indian warfare.

"I knew by their hideous paint," he goes on, "that it was all over with me if no help came. It did come, however, just as I was stripped of my arms and tied to my horse. It came in the shape of a single cowboy.

"I shall never forget the picture of that man as long as I live." The languid air is gone, and a blaze of excitement is in its place. "He bore down on those painted devils as if he were bullet-proof himself—shooting as he came. Rifle at first; and then, as he got to short range, a revolver in each hand.

"Ping! ping! zip! zip! The air seemed full of bullets. It seemed a fool-hardy thing for the white man to do; but it was wisdom, since he had determined to make the attempt at all. The savages were paralyzed by his audacity. No doubt they thought he had more behind him.

"One, two, three, four! down they went. Not a bullet seemed to touch him. He was so near at last that I could see on his face the grimmest smile I had ever seen. The warriors whooped and answered his volleys; then became panic-stricken and took to their heels. But first they did what they could to end my troubles. They always seem to have presence of mind enough for such mischief. I was hit over the head with the butt-end of a rifle; and I should have been bald-headed to-day but for a bullet from the cowboy's revolver, which reached the Sioux's head just in the nick of time.

"The cowboy was Mr. Lake of Chicago; and here he comes now!"

Van Kouver's habitual air of languor returns to him as he makes the final remark; and he turns so that he can see the entrance of the horses better. But it is not easy for Marjorie Bridger to recover her calmness. Her brown eyes are still sparkling like stars, her moist lips are still parted, and her bosom still heaving with excitement, when the horses leap into the arena.

In the imperturbable rider of Hector, who is an ugly tempered brute, she sees her first hero; and she would give all she is worth at that moment to insure for him a victory over Crown Prince.

He sits his restive horse with a careless ease that compels admiring comments from the spectators. As he comes around the arena, he sees Van Kouver and smiles slightly, sees Marjorie Bridger, starts imperceptibly, looks again, and goes on.

CHAPTER II.

THE HIGH JUMP.

"He—aw—rides with too long a stirrup, don't ye know."

It is the Duke of Moorcroft who makes this comment.

"That is as the result shows," says Miss Bridger, quickly.

Van Kouver lifts his eyebrows at this sign of partisanship, and turns to the nobleman.

"Lake would ride in a long hunt with your English stirrup," he says; "but he thinks he can get most out of the horse with this compromise between the long and the short stirrup."

"Here comes Crown Prince! What a beauty!"

Every eye but that of the horse's owner is turned toward the lower end of the arena. Marjorie looks up at the speaker. It is Lord Sandowne, who has silently joined the group in the box again. His face is flushed, and an unpleasant smile hovers about his lips.

She turns and looks at Crown Prince, who is coming along the springy track walking as if it required but an effort to enable him to fly, so elastic and firm is his step.

He is even-tempered and steady, too, and that is half the battle in jumping. When any good horse will do the best he can, he is hard to beat. Marjorie looks at him with love and admiration; and he deserves both. Then her red lips come together, and this thought takes form:

"I never supposed I'd wish to see you beaten, Prince, but I do to-night."

A blush rises to her cheek even at the unspoken thought; but she carries it off with a pretty, defiant toss of the head.

"You'll get your gloves, Miss Bridger," said the

Earl of Sandowne, a faint ring of malice in his tone.

The flush deepens on her cheek, and there is a momentary gleam of anger in her eyes; then she turns to the speaker, and says, with an indifferent shrug of her pretty shoulders:

"It would not matter if I lost; for I never bet more than I can pay."

The sweetness of her smile and the indifference of her tone do not rob her words of their sting. No one who knows Sandowne believes he can pay his bet with Van Kouver if he loses it.

The others who have heard, hide a smile, and Sandowne bites his lip. Marjorie looks into the arena, where the preparations are being made for the high jump.

It is a very pretty sight; for a number of horses have been entered for the competition. The jump is comparatively low at first; and only a few of the horses are retired by it.

But the next lift of the bar sends out more; and in a little while the contest is narrowed down to four horses.

Crown Prince is easily the favorite. His jumping is clean and easy; and he goes at his work in a good-tempered way that wins him admiration from everybody. Hector is a brute, and from the first shows that he would do nothing if he were not forced; but he is forced, and the spectators murmur their admiration of the rider who is so masterful.

One after the other two other horses drop out, and leave the contest to Crown Prince and Hector. The bar is getting very high now; but Hector seems to have at last discovered that he must do as he is bidden. Crown Prince never seems to think that it is possible to swerve or balk.

He lopes up to the bar, rises like a bird, and skims over, always leaving daylight between his heels and the bar. Hector sometimes goes over in a bunch, just escaping the bar; and sometimes flies a foot too high. His rider sits imperturbable.

The bar steadily climbs toward the best record pin. The spectators begin to comprehend that it is

a contest between horse on one side, and rider on the other, and the interest becomes intense.

Harry Delancey is not as cool as Mr. Lake. He has lost something of his first confidence; and as the bar mounts higher, he casts frequent wondering glances at the other.

"Any other man would have lost long ago," cries Miss Bridger.

The Earl of Sandowne is quite white now, and beads of perspiration stand out on his forehead. But no one thinks of watching to see how he is affected. All eyes are fixed on Crown Prince, who is to make the first essay at the bar, which is now placed at the best record heretofore.

The good horse seems to realize the situation as fully as any one. He shakes his head a little as he starts, seems to collect his strength for a supreme effort, leaps forward, takes his stride, and in a moment has risen. For a moment there is doubt. The house is hushed. A faint click shows that his hind hoofs must have touched the bar. But the bar is not displaced; and the gallant horse is over.

The whole great crowd of spectators seems to take a deep breath at once; and the effect is singular—as if a great sigh of humanity had gone up to heaven.

Hector prances a little, then wheels about, and faces the bar. There is a second of hesitation, and no one knows whether he intends to face his work or not. His calm-visaged rider leans over and strokes his neck, as if he were alone on the prairie, and had no thought of spectators.

Hector gives a petulant bound forward, his glossy skin quivering under the play of powerful muscles. Then he settles soberly down, neither swerves, nor balks, rises at the bar, and clears it; not a sound to indicate a hoof too low.

A yell rises from the benches, and from the boxes comes a sound of muffled applause—clapping in gloves. But it is Marjorie Bridger who leads the applause with bare hands. She has torn her gloves off in her eagerness to be ready.

"Your Mr. Lake of Chicago is magnificent," she whispers to Van Kouver.

"I fancy Lord Sandowne doesn't think so," rejoins Van Kouver, who has just caught sight of the nobleman's face.

Marjorie flashes a glance at the earl, and then, with a shudder, looks back into the arena. The face of the nobleman might make any one shudder. If it were the face of a losing gamester it might be comprehensible; but it is not. It is the face, rather, of a demon who sees some evil work foiled.

Now to beat the record for the high jump! Can either Crown Prince or the rider of Hector do it? No one thinks of Hector as doing it. The feeling is that, whatever happens, Crown Prince is the better horse.

Harry Delancey understands all this, and it makes him grind his teeth whenever he looks at his composed rival. Perhaps he takes it too much at heart. A man who would get the best from a horse must give the best of himself. For the first time Crown Prince seems nervous. He fidgets as he is brought around to face the bar.

He breaks off into his magnificent stride, however, and rises fairly at the bar; but, somehow, his feet are a little heavy, and he knocks the bar off with the tip of his near fore-foot.

The face of Harry Delancey is white, but it is rosy compared to the livid face of Sandowne, who sees from behind Marjorie Bridger. Her heart sinks a little to see her gallant Prince fail; but it rises again, with a generous throb, as she hopes the other rider will be more successful.

Twice again Crown Prince makes the attempt, and each time fails; so he is out of it; and his rider sits him in sullen hope of a like defeat on the part of Hector.

The rider of Hector, meanwhile, has been watching keenly. He thinks his horse can do it; but it is a difficult feat, and he cannot be certain. He tries his stirrups by standing in them.

Lord Sandowne, if no one else, watches his movements with breathless interest. He notes a frown of annoyance on the face of Mr. Lake, of Chicago, and for a moment he ceases to breathe. Then, as

the word is given that all is ready, and Hector is brought up to the start, the earl breathes again.

Hector has thoroughly learned his lesson by this time. That is perfectly evident to everybody; for he leaps readily into his stride, and goes at the bar unwaveringly.

A tall man might walk under the bar; and it seems incredible that the horse can get over it. But now Hector is on his haunches, the great cords in his thighs standing out like ropes of iron. His rider leans forward, easing his weight by bearing on the stirrups.

Now Hector is in the air! his fore-feet are clear! his body skims the bar! The rider sways gracefully back! He has no grip. He is riding by balance, for the greater ease of the horse.

His whole weight is on the stirrups! Hector's hind legs are drawn up! He will clear the bar! Ah! what is that?"

Of a sudden that perfect rider has lost his balance, and will fall but for a marvelous grip with the thighs. But it is enough to make Hector drop his hind feet on the bar, and to bring him unevenly on his fore-feet.

The bars rattle to the earth. Hector makes a vain effort to keep his footing; and then goes down on his side, his rider still in position on his back.

Stifled cries go up from all over the garden. From Marjorie Bridger's box are two distinct cries. One from her, of terror; one behind her, stifled, but triumphant. Lord Sandowne thinks he has at least made a draw of that bet.

Hector is on his feet, snorting and terrified. His rider stands by his side, brushing the brown dirt from his clothes. He is pale, as Marjorie can see from where she sits; but he gives no sign of being injured. One of the judges springs forward, snatches something from the ground, and waves it in the air.

"A broken stirrup!" some one yells; and a roar rises from the assemblage of people, all in sympathy with the unhorsed rider.

"Aw—magnificently ridden!" drawls the duke.

"Any other might have been killed!" murmurs Van Kouver, with a white face.

Marjorie Bridger rises in her place, heedless of anybody, careless of remark. Her voice, high pitched, but melodious as a flute, reaches the judges, and is heard far over the garden.

"A stirrup leather from Crown Prince!" she cries.

They all know her, of course—this beautiful owner of Crown Prince. The judges comprehend in a moment; so does Harry Delancey; and if he has felt anger toward his rival before, it all disappears now, as he leaps from Crown Prince, and snatches a stirrup leather from the saddle.

Now the whole mass of spectators understand, and a roar goes up to the roof. It is an approval of all the actors in the little drama; but most of all for the unconscious girl, who stands with red lips parted, watching the action in the arena.

Mr. Lake has taken the broken stirrup leather from the judges, and, after a brief examination, has thrust it in his pocket.

He looks up at the sound of Marjorie's voice, sees her, comprehends, takes the sound leather from Harry Delancey with a bow and a grateful word; slips the leather into place, measures it with his arm, and permits himself to be assisted into the saddle.

"He is injured! he mustn't ride!" cries Van Kouver, rising to hurry down into the arena.

But Mr. Lake is urging Hector toward him. He sits as calmly as if there had been no accident. Marjorie sits now, awaiting his coming with scarlet cheeks and flaming eyes. She realizes what her excitement has betrayed her into.

"You are hurt! you must not ride!" says Van Kouver, as Mr. Lake comes near.

A singular smile flits over the calm face.

"I shall ride, and I shall make the jump," he says, incisively.

Then he turns to Marjorie, as if the other matter were disposed of. His cap is in his hand, and he is bowing low over the glossy neck of his horse.

"I would ride and win now," he says, "if only to show my appreciation of such courtesy."

It seems to Marjorie Bridger as if she cannot look up to meet the steady gray eyes which she knows are fixed on her; but somehow she does; and there is a sudden tangle of brown and gray, which two people feel will never be undone.

Hector makes a sudden bound, and is gone back to make another attempt.

"He will do it this time," says Van Kouver, in a tone of conviction.

Marjorie Bridger says nothing; but looks with all her eyes, and prays with all her heart.

Hector is very nervous and fidgety again; but a few leisurely turns up and down quiet him; and when he faces the bar once more he is ready to do his best. The face of the rider is pale and set.

Hector leaps forward, settles down into a long, springy stride. At the right moment the rider lifts him; he makes a prodigious effort, rises, seems poised in mid-air for a moment, and then comes easily down.

A great shout goes up! The record is broken!

It would almost seem that Hector knew it; for he paces proudly away from the bar, amid the deafening cheers of the multitude which always loves a gallant action. And none more gallant has been seen in many a day.

"See!" gasps Marjorie, in the ear of Van Kouver, "there is blood dripping from his boot! And the—he reels in the saddle!"

Van Kouver defies the rules and forgets his languor. He hurries from the box and makes his way into the arena, and runs to Mr. Lake.

"My God! Lake, you are injured! There is blood in your boot," he whispers.

Mr. Lake of Chicago stiffens in his saddle and smiles calmly down at Van Kouver.

"Who is the young lady you were sitting with?" he asks, quietly.

Van Kouver shrugs his shoulders. He knows it

will be useless to say any more about the injury, since his friend chooses to ignore it.

"She owns Crown Pince," he answers.

"Oh, I guessed that much. What is her name?"

"Miss Marjorie Bridger. She is one of our richest heiresses."

"I guessed that, too, from the size of her British contingent. Marjorie Bridger! She's pretty! well, I got the blue ribbon for Hector."

"You did indeed," replies Van Kouver. "No one else could have made the unwilling brute do it. That was a nasty fall, though. How did the stirrup leather happen to break? It was almost new."

"Cut," replies the other, laconically, as he rides through the exit to go to the stalls.

"Cut! By whom?"

"I don't know, but shall discover in a moment."

There is a look on Mr. Lake's face that Van Kouver has seen before in one or two trying situations, when grim determination was the only thing to be relied on.

All this is in whispers; for a crowd is gathering to congratulate Van Kouver, who is well known to all habitues of society; and to stare at Mr. Lake, who is not known at all.

It is a tradition that people who move in high social circles are never guilty of staring. It is only a tradition.

Mr. Lake dismounts from Hector by throwing his right leg over the saddle, and then sliding to the floor, coming down on his right foot. When he moves, his face turns a little paler, and he limps slightly.

"For Heaven's sake, Lake," murmurs Van Kouver, in distress, "do see how much you are injured."

"I know that; and there is something I don't know, which I shall know."

There are many around them, showering indirect compliments on the rider, through the horse and his owner. Van Kouver presents his friend to those nearest, and Mr. Lake makes due acknowledgment; but continues to search the stalls.

Presently his eye grows rigid, so to speak, and his head is ever so slightly thrown back, beckoning some one to come to him. Van Kouver, looking, sees a weazened little old man, who has been his chief groom for a long while.

There is perturbation on the cunning face, but evidently he does not consider it advisable to refuse to come at the beck of Mr. Lake. Van Kouver watches uneasily. He wonders if his friend will make a scene there. Mr. Lake gives him a glance which takes him to his side.

They two, looking as if they were talking about Hector, greet the little groom—Van Kouver by a nod and a glance; and Mr. Lake by a word.

“Well?”

The groom draws a deep breath and gulps something down in his throat as his eyes meet those of Mr. Lake. He touches his cap in regulation fashion. Mr. Lake puts his hand on the little man's shoulder, as if patronizingly; and Van Kouver knows there will be no scene, while the groom knows there will be no escape from that iron hand.

“Why did you cut my leather?” inquires Mr. Lake, in a low tone, in which there is no menace, but which somehow makes the little groom roll his eyes in terror.

“I—I—didn't—didn't——”

“I did not ask you if you did it; for I know you did,” interrupts Mr. Lake, coldly. “I asked why you did it. Tell me!”

“I—I was paid,” comes in a shamed whisper.

“By whom?”

“The Earl of Sandowne.”

Mr. Lake of Chicago looks inquiringly at Van Kouver.

“I believe him,” says the latter, although shocked at the revelation.

“You may go, Tommy,” says Mr. Lake, releasing him. “Now, Van, show me his lordship, for I have a curiosity to see a reptile of his sort.”

“Aw—er, Mr. Van Kouver, will you present us to the victorious rider?”

Van Kouver wheels about as if he has been stabbed in the back; suddenly checks himself in something he has on his tongue; and removes his hat—Mr. Lake does the same.

“Miss Bridger,” says Van Kouver, “permit me to present Mr Lake of Chicago.” Then very slowly: “Mr. Lake—Lord Sandowne.”

CHAPTER III.

MAKING LOVE TO MARJORIE.

Mr. Lake is evidently as quick as he is stoical; for the smile with which he has greeted Miss Bridger does not leave his face as he hears Van Kouver pronounce the name of Lord Sandowne. But he ignores the outstretched hand of the earl, and utters some commonplace in greeting.

He knows that his lordship must have seen the interview with Tommy, and has put his trust in Miss Bridger to save him from the exposure which otherwise is inevitable.

He sums it all up in this way: A crushed foot, which hurts frightfully, but which cannot be very bad; the sympathy of Marjorie Bridger, which somehow is very sweet to him; the blue ribbon for Hector. The scamp nobleman may go.

"I ought to be dreadfully angry with you, Mr. Lake," Marjorie says, smiling up at him in a way that is very fascinating. "But for you Crown Prince would have the blue ribbon."

"And yet," he answers, a thrill of delight running through him as he looks down into her brown eyes, "you helped me to victory. It was your stirrup leather that held me in the saddle."

He says that in a light way, but somehow it seems to Marjorie that he is secretly laying stress on her ownership in the leather. A flush dyes her cheeks, and she hastens to say:

"Why do you stand here?" She looks down at his wounded foot, and then up at his face. "I am sure you were hurt. Why don't you sit down?"

"I should like to, some other time," he says, innocently.

She laughs, and answers, quickly:

"Please do. I am always home on Wednesdays.

Mr. Van Kouver knows where we live. How did the accident happen?"

"The leather was cut by some one."

A startled look creeps into Marjorie's eyes, but they do not move from Mr. Lake's face.

"Are you sure?" she asks.

"Positive. I know by whom it was done, and at whose instigation. It was a dastardly trick—was it not, Lord Sandowne?" and he turns to the Englishman.

"So dastardly as to seem incredible," returns the nobleman, steadily, though there is a dogged look in his eyes. "What will you do about it?"

"Nothing at present. It is enough to know the scoundrel. I hope he will have the good sense to seek other pastures. He is evidently a low wretch, who has no business where decent men and women are."

Mr. Lake keeps his gray eyes fixed steadily on Lord Sandowne as he speaks; and each word drops from his lips with the incisiveness of a coin crisp from the mint.

Marjorie's eyes flit from one face to the other all the while; and Van Kouver, watching her, is convinced that she understands the full meaning of the dialogue.

"What have you done with my leather, Mr. Van Kouver?" she asks, suddenly.

Before he can reply, Mr. Lake turns his eyes from the Englishman, and answers for him.

"With your permission," he says, "it will remain with me as a memento of a kind act, gracefully done."

"Then," interposed Lord Sandowne, unblushingly, "you will have two mementoes; for I see the cut leather in your pocket."

"I shall keep both," replies Mr. Lake, looking inquiringly at Miss Bridger.

"Certainly," she says; and suddenly her eyes light up with a pleased expression as they see something beyond Mr. Lake. He feels an unaccountable pang, which, however, is immediately relieved by

her next words. "There is papa! Mr. Van Kouver, won't you tell him I am here?"

Van Kouver goes at once to bring the father to his daughter. Unmistakably a Western man, from a certain gauntness of form, and a bunch of snow-white chin-whiskers, Mr. Bridger is nevertheless a man of imposing presence; and one who will command the respect of those he comes in contact with.

There is on his strong face the constrained smile of a man not quite at his ease in high society; and his manner is not as easy as it would have been had he not spent the best years of his life roughing it on the plains, and in mining camps. But Miss Marjorie plainly loves and respects her father. The moment he has joined the group, she exclaims, eagerly:

"Papa, this is Mr. Lake, who was so unkind as to make Crown Prince lose the high jump."

"I saw it, sir," says Mr. Bridger, heartily; "and it was well done. By ginger, I whooped with the rest when ye did it. I tried to make myself believe ye learned the trick of riding out on the plains. But of course that war a mistake."

There is a puzzled look on his face as he says this, which is in marked contrast with the amused smile on the face of Mr. Lake. Marjorie, evidently on the alert for adverse criticism of her father, sees the smile, and is ready with a flaming glance to annihilate the scoffer.

"I had always supposed," says Mr. Lake, quietly, "that Dick Bridger would recognize an old friend anywhere."

Mr. Bridger thrusts his head forward and peers from under his shaggy eyebrows into the smiling face before him. Gradually his expression becomes one of unmixed delight, and he breaks into a silent laugh, at the same time slapping Mr. Lake on the shoulder with a force that would have thrown another man off his feet.

"By ginger, if it ain't Bob—Gintleman Bob. Madge, ye've heard me speak of him a hundred times. Well, well! Bob here! What was the name?"

"Mr. Lake," Van Kouver says.

"Mister Lake!" and Mr. Bridger shakes with mirthful recollections of times past.

"Well, Bob," he says, recovering himself, "I'm glad to see you here, or anywhere; for ye're one of them that's always at home where Dick Bridger's at home. You won't forget that?"

"Indeed I shall not," and Mr. Lake looks quickly at Miss Marjorie.

"I hope you won't forget it," she says, her eyes the least bit moist. "I know what papa owes you; and the debt is mine as well as his."

"That's right, Madge," says her father, approvingly; "but don't talk of it, or he'll run. Gratitude's the only thing ever did make Bob run; but it will do it every time."

Mr. Lake smiles.

"That debt was outlawed long ago, according to Eastern laws," he says; "and paid long ago according to Western ones. We must make a fresh start now."

But Miss Marjorie is not to be monopolized for too long a time, even by masterful Mr. Lake; and she is presently surrounded by all who can get near her.

She does contrive to renew her invitation to him to call on her, however; and he makes it perfectly plain that there is no danger that he will forget.

Then he and Mr. Bridger go on together to renew old acquaintance.

Mr. Lake goes home to his bed at Van Kouver's that night with his head full of one idea; a very sweet and bright idea—Marjorie Bridger. He lies awake until near dawn, at first incredulous, then wondering, then frankly admitting that he is in love with Marjorie Bridger.

He is no laggard in anything he has to do; and he is not in this. He purposes winning her love, and he sets about it without delay, ready to take advantage of anything that will help his cause.

And he has reason to feel as happy over the result as any lover will ever permit himself to feel as to the ultimate object of his hopes. Wherever he

meets Marjorie—and he meets her almost every night, and quite every day—she makes no secret of her preference for him.

Dick Bridger, too, the moment he has a suspicion of the state of affairs, tells Van Kouver, who repeats it to his friend, that if he had looked the world over for a husband for his Madge, Bob would have been the one he would have chosen.

And so it goes on for a matter of three weeks; and Mr. Lake has every reason to believe that Madge at least cares more for him than for any other man. And there is only one thing that troubles him—Lord Sandowne.

He would not have believed at the outset that that man of all others could have remained in opposition to him for a moment; but he finds now that, for some reason, Lord Sandowne is the one man who does trouble him.

Certainly Marjorie shows little liking for the Englishman. In fact, she often betrays the bitterest scorn for him; and yet Mr. Lake often finds him with Marjorie when he calls in the afternoon; and there seems to be some secret understanding between them.

It never occurs to him to think the worse of Marjorie for this; but he cannot avoid the feeling that she ought not to be so familiar with so miserable a fellow. He talks with Van Kouver about him, which is a great deal for him to do, for he is usually as reticent as an Indian.

“Has that fellow, Sandowne, ever paid his bet?” he asks, one day.

“Never.”

“Have you ever asked him for it?”

“No. Never do that sort of thing,” says Van Kouver.

“I meet him very often at Bridger’s,” says Mr. Lake.

“I wonder the old gentleman tolerates him,” is Van Kouver’s rejoinder, meaning really that he wonders Marjorie tolerates him.

“She detests him,” says Mr. Lake, comprehend-

ing, and replying accordingly. "I don't know why she receives him. If it were not for the peculiar——"

He stops.

"I understand," says Van Kouver, knocking the ashes off his cigar.

"I would tell him plainly that he must leave the city. He knows, the scoundrel, and shelters himself behind her. I wish I knew what it meant."

Van Kouver looks askance at his friend. It is odd to see him distressed and uncertain—he who has always been so calmly self-reliant. Moral, he thinks to himself, don't fall in love.

"I think," he says, slowly, "that I will send him a note asking him to settle up. I suppose, by the way, that you know what is being said?"

"No. I don't know. What?"

"It is said the earl is depending on a marriage with Miss Bridger to put him on his feet."

Mr. Lake rises and viciously kicks the hassock his feet have been resting on.

"I am going to see her to-morrow night, and I shall learn then what his chances of a marriage are," he says.

"And I," murmurs Van Kouver, "will dun a man for the first time in my life, to-night. He shall pay up or be posted."

CHAPTER IV.

AN ENGLISHMAN WITH A CINCH.

Van Kouver is as good as his word in regard to the bet; and that evening at the club Lord Sandowne receives a note asking him to pay. A malevolent expression settles on his face, and he sits down to think it all out.

In fact, his is a situation requiring thought. He owes more money than this; though this is a debt of honor, and must be paid at any cost. He knows that social ostracism, even with these foolish Americans, will follow a failure to pay.

That would not matter, except with such ostracism might go his chance of wedding a rich wife, who would liquidate his debts, and give him a new lease of life.

"I owe this to Mr. Lake," he mutters. "Well, I will make a stroke that will put me even with Mr. Lake, and make an end of the whole difficulty at the same time. Pretty Miss Marjorie shall eat humble pie."

That evening Mr. Lake is having a fill of soft happiness. He is at a ball where Miss Marjorie is, and no one has as many waltzes as he. There is not much opportunity for conversation of the sort that is on his mind, but he has not expected it, and so is not disappointed.

But he has made an appointment for to-morrow night, and his heart throbs as it did not when he made his famous charge on the Indians to rescue Van Kouver, because something in her manner makes him feel that he will not speak to her in vain when he sees her on the morrow.

All the next day he is like a man in the clouds; and Van Kouver secretly pities him. He can see that Marjorie Bridger is a very beautiful and entertaining girl; but he cannot comprehend losing one's

head over her. Especially when that head is such a marvelously cool one as Bob Lake has.

Then evening comes, and Lake makes such a toilet as would cause Van Kouver to smile if he did not feel more like weeping. His friend, however, looks no better, no worse for his elaborate toilet, having spent his time chiefly in humoring his imagination.

The Bridgers have a magnificent house on upper Fifth avenue, large enough for a state-house, Dick Bridger says; but not more than is needed to accommodate all the servants he pays. Money, however, is the last thing the Westerner thinks of. It is for Marjorie's sake, and nothing can be too good for her.

Mr. Lake takes a cab to the house, and pays the man a double fee when he dismisses him. His heart is in his throat as he goes up the broad steps. What if he has made a mistake all the time! Suppose Miss Marjorie has been merely trying her hand on him!

Well, he doesn't believe that. She may refuse him after all, but she is true and good, and will do it in a nice way. As if any way could be nice. He stops twice, wondering if he would be wise to turn back; to go away to Chicago again. The wild and lonely plains, where he spent some happy years when he was little more than a boy, seem very inviting to him.

He was never afraid of anything before, but he trembles in anticipation of a refusal from this girl, whom he loves with a passion so strange and absorbing that he does not yet know its magnitude.

The flunkey has plainly been instructed that his young mistress is at home to Mr. Lake, for he ushers the visitor into the drawing-room without previous announcement.

Mr. Lake enters the room with pleasant anticipations. Then stops short and quells a savage impulse to run forward and throw out of the window the man he sees there.

Lord Sandowne is there, standing in front of Marjorie. Lake cannot see her face, for it is away

from him; but on the face of the Englishman is a look of gloating triumph that makes him feel like doing murder. Sandowne sees him almost at once, and checks the words that are on his lips, saying, instead:

"Welcome, Mr. Lake. We have been speaking of you."

Marjorie turns quickly, and Lake can see that her face has a deathly pallor on it. She does not come forward to greet him in the way that has become dear and familiar to him, but stands where she is, as one might stand in the presence of a great misfortune.

Ordinarily no one is quicker of perception than Lake; but a lover is a most unreasonable and unreasoning creature. Lake sees Marjorie and Sandowne together in confidential conversation, as indeed he has seen them before, and he becomes frightfully jealous in a moment.

"Pray do not let me interrupt you," he says, icily.

"No interruption at all," cries Sandowne, with a grin of malice. "Marjorie and I are glad to see you."

Lake winces as the other calls her so familiarly by her name, and looks to see her resent it, as he knows she is capable of doing.

His anger and jealousy are swallowed up in such a pain as he has never known before.

"You are come just in time to be the first to learn of my happiness," Sandowne continues. "Miss Bridger and I are engaged."

Lake listens, and finds himself wondering how he is able to stand when everything is reeling around him. Then he wonders why he does not rush on that man and strangle such an infamous lie in his throat.

His gray eyes turn in mute and agonized inquiry to Marjorie, who stands before him like one bereft of life. Twice she opens her lips to speak, and no sound comes from them; then, in dry and husky tones, she says:

"It is quite true, Mr. Lake. I have promised my hand to Lord Sandowne."

Lake stares at her for a moment, hears the low, malignant laugh of the Englishman, and turns and goes out of the room and the house. He never knows just how, and he never knows where he has been, when at last he finds himself at the door of Van Kouver's house.

Van Kouver asks him no questions then, and none the next morning. He has heard at the club that Lord Sandowne has been the lucky winner of the pretty hand of Miss Bridger.

He has doubted until he looks at the face of his friend. Then he knows that it is true; and in his privacy shrugs his shoulders, and thanks Heaven he has never been a victim of the caprices of a woman.

"To think of accepting that blackleg, knowing him such," he mutters. "I am sure she knew it was he who cut that stirrup leather. And just because he has a beggarly title!"

About ten o'clock a servant comes to tell Lake that Mr. Bridger waits to see him. Van Kouver sees that his friend is about to send a refusal. It is seldom he interferes with anybody's affairs. He likes to do so less than ever since the writing of that note to Sandowne, for he traces a direct result from that to the engagement. But he believes Lake will make a mistake not to see so true a friend as Mr. Bridger.

"See him, Lake," he says.

"Why?"

"He likes Sandowne no better than you do."

"So you know?"

"Yes."

"Tell Mr. Bridger to come up here," says Lake, suddenly.

"Why up here?" inquires Van Kouver.

"Because there ought to be one cool head here. Heaven only knows what frame of mind Dick Bridger will be in," replies Lake.

It is patent at the first glance that Mr. Bridger is agitated. He comes in and stares around the room, and drops heavily into a chair. No one speaks until he does so.

"Well, Bob, why don't ye speak up?" he cries. "What's wrong between you and Madge?"

"I wish I could tell you, old man," is the answer, miserably given.

"To think o' her marryin' that—Oh, my lord! I could stan' most anything else. Did ye have a quarrel with her, Bob? If it's that, go to her and ask her parding. She's a high-spirited gal," he goes on, his vernacular becoming more pronounced as his emotion increases, "but she's true as steel. You're too brave to be afraid to 'pologize, Bob."

"No, Dick, I'm not afraid to apologize," the other says, in a low tone. "I would grovel in the dust before her if that would do good. I love her as I never dreamed it was possible to love; and I would do anything to win her. But, Dick, she didn't even give me a chance to tell her; though she must have known why I asked for an appointment. I went to the house and was told she was engaged to him. That was all there was of it."

"I don't believe she loves that Englishman," suggests Van Kouver, who feels that Bridger has more to tell than he has yet betrayed.

"Love him?" cries the old man, vehemently. "No. She despises him, fer she's as good as told me so."

"Then why should she be willing to marry him?" demands Van Kouver, Lake looking from him to the old man, and keeping silence.

"Heaven knows."

Van Kouver waits to let Lake speak. He wishes somebody else had the settling of this love affair. Lake is so supine and unlike himself.

"Look here, Mr. Bridger!" he says, "I did not intend to speak of this thing; but the truth is that no decent woman should have anything to do with that man."

"Why not?" demands the old man, eagerly.

"Hold on, Van Kouver," interposes Lake, "you needn't tell that."

"He's afraid I'll shoot," said Bridger, miserably. "You don't need; fer Madge swore she'd marry

him on the minit, if I didn't promise I wouldn't do no sich a thing. What is it?"

So Van Kouver tells all they discovered on the night of the horse show. And the old man, as he listens, goes almost frantic with rage. He swears awful oaths, that no such man shall ever wed his Madge.

Van Kouver listens until the old man exhausts himself and is silent. Then he speaks, quietly, and the others listen to him.

"Let us understand this thing," he says. "What do we know? Miss Bridger, quite aware, as we believe, of the vileness of the man, and despising him most heartily, yet consents to give up the man I verily believe she loves, in order to wed him. Now, what is the plain logic of that?"

"Yes," says Mr. Bridger, "what is the logic of it?"

"Is it possible," and he eyes the old man narrowly, "that he can have any power of coercion over her? You know all about what her past——"

"In Heaven's name, Van Kouver!" cries Lake.

"Don't misunderstand me, Lake! Mr. Bridger understands. Can you think of anything?"

The old man fumbles nervously with his watch-chain for a few seconds, then stiffens up and answers:

"Well, there's her brother."

"Your son," says Van Kouver, half-assertively, half-questioningly.

"Her brother," says the old man, doggedly, then, nervously: "Call him my son, but I don't call him no such, myself. He's disgraced my name—he ain't no son o' mine."

"You think, then," says Van Kouver, insisently, "that it is possible this brother of Miss Bridger may have something to do with this affair?"

"Anything is possible with him. Besides," he adds, with a sudden recollection, "that there varmint has been West and knows the boy."

"And Miss Bridger would do a great deal for her brother?" queries Van Kouver, with a distinct idea that he is on the right scent.

"Anything. She promised her mother, when she

died, that she would always stand between him an' harm. An' he'd let her, consarn him!"

Van Kouver reflects a moment.

"All Sandowne wants, or the most that he wants, is money," he says. "Why not try telling him that you will not give a cent to your daughter if she marries against your will?"

The old man shakes his head sorrowfully.

"No use. Madge is wuth as much as I am in her own right. Got it from her mother. Mother gave Madge everything. Even she wouldn't trust Dick."

Van Kouver rubs his chin in perplexity. He has gone along very well so far. Now he has only one suggestion to offer, and he does it hesitatingly.

"Let him have the money, since that is what he undoubtedly wants, and save your daughter."

Lake speaks now. A change has come over him as he listens. He sees the whole affair now, even more clearly than they. There is a feeling down in his heart that he has her love, notwithstanding what has happened. But, anyhow, there is a pure and noble girl to save from a wretch; and that is the sort of thing that appeals to the man as well as to the lover.

"You don't understand, Van," he says, in his old incisive way. "Of course Marjorie knows what a wretch he is, and is deliberately sacrificing herself for her brother. Do you suppose she has weighed her money against her heart for a moment? No; I know as well as if I had been there that she has offered to buy herself off with every penny she possesses. That scoundrel has a cinch somewhere, and is insisting on Marjorie as well as her money."

"By ginger!" cries the old man; "but that was spoken like a book, Bob. Mr. Van Kouver, he's getting his head to work in the old style. Give him time. Go on, Bob, an' work it out."

He speaks with an enthusiastic admiration of Lake which was born in him long ago, when he knew the young man as the coolest and shrewdest where coolness and shrewdness counted for more than anything else in the world.

Lake smiles a little sadly at the old man's hope-

fulness, but he is fast entering the domain of action, and his own spirits are rising.

"Do you know when the wedding is set for?" he asks.

"Two months."

"A great deal can be done in two months," says Lake, reflectively. "Where was your son when you last heard?"

"Marjorie told me yesterday that her last letter came from Arizona—Tombstone."

Mr. Lake is on his feet now; and there is a look on his face such as Van Kouver saw when he said he would ride Hector and win. The blood was dripping from his foot then—from his heart now; but it is a winning look.

"Gentlemen," he says, "to me it is clear that young Dick is at the bottom of this engagement. There is only one way to reach Marjorie—through him. Sandowne has done it; I will do it. If I am not here in two months, I shall probably be dead. There are sudden deaths in Arizona," he adds, with a smile.

The next moment he has left the room; and they know the next train out of New York will carry him on his way to save Marjorie from Sandowne.

CHAPTER V.

DEPUTY SHERIFF LAKE.

Quite according to the expectations of his friends, Mr. Lake is speeding toward the West, not, perhaps, in the first train out of New York, but in the one which will get him to Chicago the soonest.

Bob Lake has the strength of mind to wait a little when waiting is better than hurrying, and that is why he reaches Chicago a few hours before the train which left New York earlier.

There is not much to keep him in Chicago. It was only a comfortable, and not a large, fortune that he had brought out of the far West, and it is always in such condition as to allow him freedom of action. It is a saying of his that an amount of money which enslaves a man is not real wealth.

So the little that needs to be attended to is done, and again he is on his way to find young Dick Bridger.

Just what he will find when he finds that young man he does not know, but he cannot help being hopeful of Marjorie's brother, no matter to what depths he has sunk. And it seems quite likely that he has gone down rather farther than is generally considered advisable.

Such a young man is usually very difficult to manage, and Mr. Lake realizes this fact perfectly. But he has the utmost confidence in himself, and he enters the great West determined to succeed in his delicate enterprise.

Mr. Lake is a tenderfoot to all appearances when he reaches Tombstone, but he knows he can soon change that, and intends to do so if he finds it necessary. Not that a change of clothing will convert any man from a tenderfoot into a post-graduate Arizonian; but Mr. Lake knows how to establish his position.

He is not what might be called a drinking man—that is, one who drinks habitually and does other things incidentally; nevertheless, his first act on reaching Tombstone is to go and hang on the bar of the hotel with the air of one who knows the trick.

The barkeeper stares to see this well-dressed Easterner enact the old timer so well, and hands over to his customer that particular brand of liquid lightning which he calls rye whisky.

There is some desultory conversation, in which Mr. Lake shows, in an indirect way, that he is not altogether the tenderfoot he looks. Then he brings the talk easily to the subject he is at that moment so much interested in.

“Did you ever meet old Dick Bridger when he was down this way?” he inquires.

“You bet,” is the laconic answer.

“He’s a white man,” says Lake, in a tone of deep conviction. “I saw him not long before I left the East.”

“Pshaw!” ejaculates the bartender. “I allow he’s whoopin’ things up thar. He allus was fer holdin’ of hisself pretty darned high. But he’s white all the way through.”

“You bet he’s white,” says Lake, adopting the vernacular by easy degrees. “Not like that boy of his, eh?”

“Ye’re right thar, stranger,” says the bartender, stopping to aim over the bar at the door-sill with an accumulation of tobacco juice. “But Dick—the young un, I mean—ain’t goin’ ter give much more trouble in these hyar parts.”

“How’s that?”

The bartender makes a circular movement of his hand near his neck, and says, laconically:

“Jedge Lynch.”

His auditor starts, and with difficulty restrains himself; but he does so, and asks:

“What’s up?”

“Horse.”

“Where?”

It is hard to suppress his excitement, but he does.

"Over to Faro Gulch," answers the dispenser of drinks, composedly.

"Have they done it yet?" demands Lake.

"Why," says the man, looking at the clock behind the bar, "I allow he's in the jail yit, but I b'lieve the time's set fer two."

Lake looks at his watch, distrusting the battered clock. It is twelve nearly, and in two hours young Dick Bridger will trouble no one any longer.

Lake never thinks of doubting the story of the man. He knows just how such affairs are conducted, and it is quite probable that this man is correctly informed.

He hesitates a moment, for it does flash into his brain that with young Dick Bridger adorning a tree in Arizona he will no longer stand between him and Marjorie. But that is only for a moment, and he scorns himself for even that little lapse from high rectitude.

"I should think," he says, "that the sheriff would object to interference with his prerogatives. Who is sheriff now?"

"Hank Davis."

"Ah!" he ejaculates, a ray of hope flashing into his breast, for he knows the man well. "Hank has a mortgage on the office, I reckon."

"I reckon he has."

"He didn't use to let anybody do his hanging for him," says Lake.

The man laughs with keen enjoyment.

"Jest it," he says. "It's more devilment than justice with the boys. Hank's laid up with a bullet, and the boys has put up this joke on him. But anyhow," he adds, more soberly, "hangin' 'll do Dick Bridger good."

Making a hasty excuse, for he does not wish to excite suspicion, Lake hurries away to the house of Hank Davis, finding it without difficulty. They deny him admittance to Hank at first, but Lake insists, and is presently ushered into the presence of a gaunt, grizzled giant, who looks at him in no very friendly way, to say nothing of his mani-

fest disgust at finding his visitor a tenderfoot of the most pronounced type.

"Wall?" he queries.

Lake has too little time before him to waste any of it.

"Well, Hank Davis," he says, "have you forgotten Gentleman Bob, as they used to call me?"

"No?" is the sudden, incredulous query. "But it is, by gum! No wonder if I did, though," he adds, and then laughs and thrusts out his great hand with a heartiness that left nothing to be doubted. "Sorry I can't give ye a blow-out, Bob, but I had a little scrimmage t'other day, an' the lead ain't out o' me yet."

"I'm sorry, too, Hank," says Lake, "for I have another very pretty little scrimmage on hand, which I wanted you to take a hand in."

"No!" says the sheriff, eagerly. "Hold on! Mebby I ain't so doggone weak but I could get out."

Under the influence of his temporary excitement he tries to get up, but falls back with an oath.

"No use, Bob," he groans. "What war the nature of the difficulty?"

"There's a lynching party over at Faro Gulch at two this afternoon."

The fire flashes from the old man's eyes, and he tries again to rise, and swears terribly when he finds that he cannot.

"What's your interest in it?" he demands. "Who is the party, anyhow?"

"Young Dick Bridger's the man—a horse is the reason—and I love his sister. That's the story, Hank. And I'm going to set him free if it can be done."

"He's a wuthless lot, Bob, but if I was able to move I'd go with ye, an' cuss me if we wouldn't git him cl'ar. I'd do it fer you; an' I'd do it because I don't let nobody do my hangin' fer me. But I've got the drop on the whole biz, Bob. The boys is tryin' to get the laugh on me. Oh, if I was only able to move!"

"Send a deputy, Hank," suggests Lake.

"Ain't got a deputy with sand enough fer that ar job, Bob."

"Make me a deputy. I'll do what I can."

"That's the talk. Give me the papers. You do the handwrite. Thar's a book o' forms. Write now! Oh, if I could only be with ye!"

Lake snatches up the book and speedily finds the required form, which he writes out and hands to the sheriff to sign.

"Thar!" says Hank, putting his sprawling signature at the bottom. "It ain't as pretty as yourn, but it goes in this county. Thar's shootin' irons. Take 'em, fer I don't allow ye've come heeled. What's yer plan? I've got some head on me even if my legs ain't no use."

"I saw some of the old-timers as I came by Ramon's. I'll go back there and tell them who I am. I'll say I've just come from you, and that you are cut up terribly because the boys at Faro Gulch are going to get the laugh on you. Then I'll tell them that I have consented to act as deputy, and ask as many as will to come along and see the laugh put on Faro Gulch. It's only six miles, and an hour's hard riding over that road, if it's what it used to be, will get us there. How does it strike you?"

"The same old Bob!" cries the sheriff, admiringly. "Go it, Bob! Mosey now, and bring the cuss back here, and we'll have a hangin' as'll do you good to see."

"But I don't want him to hang," says Lake. "I want him to escape."

"Wall, I'm sorry for that, but I'll sacrifice my feelin's fer you, Bob. Do what you durn please. Take my calico mustang. He's like a singed cat—a durned sight better'n he looks."

CHAPTER VI.

FROM RILEY'S SHANTY.

Luck is against the bank at Ramon's, and the boys are happy. Lake is sorry for it. He knows it will be hard to draw them away from a winning game; but, on the other hand, Ramon will be glad to see the game close up.

He has borrowed a shirt and hat from Hank Davis. He is more particular as to boots, and has donned his own, which he has brought with him. He walks straight to the bar and leans both elbows on it as he faces the room.

"Boys!" he calls out, in a quick, sharp voice, which attracts immediate attention, "I hope some of ye will remember Gentleman Bob."

It is very evident that he has been a favorite, for after a struggle with memory, more than one grizzled miner springs up from the gambling-table and rushes up to shake his hand.

"Liquor!" cries Bob, above the noise. "Liquor for every mother's son that wants to drink with Gentleman Bob."

Such language is what his friends call "talking," and it will be dangerous for any one to refuse the invitation.

Every minute is valuable, and Lake chafes to see it wasted as the liquor is served; but he knows his men, and is ready to pounce on his opportunity. It comes when one of them asks him what he is doing out there again. It has been rumored that Gentleman Bob has settled down in Chicago.

"If ye'd asked me that question an hour ago, Tom," he says, in his clear, distinct tones that attract attention to him, "I could have given ye a short story. Now it's a little longer, and must be told quick if ye care to hear it."

"You bet! Get on, Bob!"

They crowd curiously around him, and he feels that he has what every orator strives for—the interest of his auditors.

“I haven’t been here an hour yit, boys,” he says. “The first man I go to see is old Hank Davis, for if there’s a man on the Pacific slope that I honor, it’s Hank Davis, the best sheriff this or any other county ever saw. Is that straight, boys?” and there is a sort of challenge in his tone, as if some one had doubted the statement.

“You bet it’s straight,” is the growling response from twenty throats.

As Lake knows, Hank Davis is the pride and admiration of Tombstone.

“Of course it’s straight,” he goes on, warming up and carrying his hearers with him. “But what do I find when I go to see him? Laid up with a bullet. Well, that’s all right. All of us expect that, and I reckon no one squeals when his turn comes. But I allow that no white man goes up to a man when he’s got a bullet cold in him, and takes advantage of it to kick him in the head. Eh, boys?”

A volley of excited oaths was the only response to this question.

“Boys,” he cries, his gray eyes flashing fire, “that there Hank Davis is lyin’ on his bed, groaning, not with bullets, but with shame, because some mean cusses have taken advantage of his wounds to play a mean trick on him. What trick? Boys, when I used to be out here it was known that Hank Davis, sheriff, could and would do his own hanging. Boys, he groaned and almost cried just now, as he told me that for the first time in his life somebody else was going to do his hanging, and only to get the laugh on him.

“Boys, I allow that any one that wants to get the laugh on Hank Davis had better try it on when he’s got his boots on. And I tell ye what my story is. I said to Hank, ‘Give me a paper to make me deputy, and by the piper that played before Moses, I’ll go to Faro Gulch alone, if I can’t get any of the boys who’ll go with me for old times’ sake. And, boys,

I'm going, and there'll be some fun in Faro Gulch inside of an hour."

Bob Lake knows his men. In fifteen minutes he is at the head of a party of ten men, armed to the teeth, and laughing with anticipatory glee over the surprise they are going to give the boys of Faro Gulch.

Of course there may be fifty men at the hanging, but it is not that which troubles Lake. Time has sped. Clocks differ. Faro Gulch time may be an hour ahead of Tombstone time, and Dick Bridger may be past helping at this very moment.

The thought makes Lake turn and scan his men more closely.

"Boys," he says, sharply, "there's no time to waste. Tom, Bill, Steve, Ike, you are the best mounted. Close up with me. The rest of you follow, and don't spare horseflesh. No man will suffer in pocket, though I know that's nothing to you when it comes to helping Hank Davis. We five will dash ahead, in case the boys at the Gulch get in a hurry with their work. Come on, boys!"

It is a rocky road, and an up and down one, between Tombstone and Faro Gulch, and nothing but a mustang or a mule would dare go over it at anything quicker than a walk.

Lake makes the pace as hot as he dares. He thinks of Marjorie, and wishes to tell her, in case anything happens to Dick, that he did his best.

His men will back him up in that. They recall how Bob was considered a perfect dare-devil in the old days, and they conclude that he has not altered much, as he whirls them over the road at a pace it has never been traversed at before.

But the thought only exhilarates them. They are men who will follow a leader anywhere—clear grit to the backbone.

Lake looks at his watch. Half-past one by it, and only Heaven knows what time the Gulch clocks are saying. Lake remembers a clock being pushed ahead because the sheriff had two hangings so far apart that he could not attend to both in time.

The distance is nothing, but the road is awful,

and the men are not used to such r ding. They are miners, not cowboys. Lake groans, but slackens the pace as they reach a stiff ascent.

"Isn't there a spot from which we can look down on the Gulch?" he asks one of the men.

"Riley's shanty," gasps the man.

"How far from here?"

"About a mile."

"Follow me as fast as you can, boys," he cries. "I am going on to reconnoiter."

He digs his heels into the sides of his lean calico pony, and the sinewy little creature leaps forward as if he had done nothing. Good riding tells in such a case.

Up the hill, and down again, and then Lake sees a long, hard hill that he well remembers now. Riley's shanty is just beyond the top, around a sharp curve. He puts the pony at it, and the wire-drawn legs carry him up as no thoroughbred bone and muscle ever could do.

He is glad he has the calico pony, instead of Hector, or even Crown Prince, under him. His sides swelling and falling like a blacksmith's bellows, the pony reaches the top.

Lake leaps off, and drags the tired brute after him around the curve. The sun is bright as only an Arizona sun can be. He shades his eyes and searches the valley below him.

"My Heaven!" he cries, and leaps like a cat into the saddle.

He has seen a group of men going in a compact body across the mesa below. In the center is one man easily distinguished even at that distance as a prisoner. His hands are tied behind him.

"That is the tree!" gasps Lake, his eyes on a solitary tree. "It will take me ten minutes—then five minutes. My God! What sort of story shall I tell Marjorie?"

CHAPTER VII.

THE ADVANTAGE OF SNAP-SHOOTING.

Although, usually, of a most imperturbable demeanor, his mind is always alert and rapid. Now he is cool, as a keen sword is cool, and his brain acts with almost incredible rapidity. His gray eye is flashing, and his well-cut lips are closed so tightly that they make a straight line. That grim look of the chin is intensified.

"If there were only a short cut," he mutters. Then a cry escapes his lips, for a girl has come leisurely into view around the curve. She will know. He approaches her at a bound; she staring at him with calm assurance. "Is there a short cut to there?" he demands, pointing to the plain.

She shades her eyes with her brown hand, and then looks at him with a leisurely calmness that is maddening at such a moment. Then she begins to answer, with the circumlocution of her class:

"Down thar to where them men be? Wall, that depends on——"

He has been studying her face as she talks. Now he interrupts her with:

"They're going to hang that man down there."

"All he's fit fer, I reckon," she drawls.

He leans over toward her, and says, with a deliberation all the more impressive because of the vehemence in his eyes:

"Maybe that's true, girl, but if I can get down there before he's dead I may win the woman I love. And, oh! I love her better than my soul!"

No true woman could have resisted that appeal. The girl starts as if she has been electrified, and snaps her brown eyes at him with approval.

"Wall, I'm darned!" she cries, but there is nothing incongruous or ludicrous in the expression. "Come on! I'll show ye, stranger. But ye can't go down on the critter. Never was but one feller done

it, an' he was a 'Pache. Thar! d'ye see thet trail? It'll save ye five minutes, but I reckon ye'll lose time on the level without yer pony. Lord! ye ain't never goin' ter try it on yer critter!"

He turns in his saddle as he heads for the trail.

"There'll be some men along here in a minute. Tell them where I am."

"You bet I will!" she answers, and gazes after him with admiration painted on her rough but comely face.

It is almost like leaping over a precipice to go down that trail, and the calico pony is disinclined for any such experiment. But there is no resisting his masterful rider, and after a moment of backing and sidling, he lets his fore feet slip over the edge, draws his hind feet well under him, and slides.

It seems a feat of pure fool-hardiness, but Lake, with the rapidity of lightning, has calculated his chances. It must be done if he would save Dick Bridger; it has been done, albeit by one of those demon horsemen, an Apache; Bob Lake does not yield even to an Apache.

So down he goes where it seems that the wiry little animal must turn heels over head at every moment. But there is a cool head and an iron hand in control; and so, sliding, leaping, stumbling, running, the two fly down the dizzy slope, now racing with, now dodging, the flying stones which they have dislodged in their swift course.

At the foot of the slope is a short level space, then a dry arroyo, from twelve to fifteen feet wide, and after that a bank, perhaps three feet high. The arroyo is not too wide to jump, nor the bank too high to clamber up; but the pony is exhausted, and his legs are quivering under him from excitement and unwonted strain.

Nevertheless, Lake decides that the arroyo must be leaped, the bank surmounted. He dares not stop at the foot of the slope to breathe the distressed animal, but he leans over and pats him gently on the neck.

"Good boy!" he murmurs. "Do this for me, and you shall live a life of ease. Now!"

Plucky little Calico, who has already done what no thoroughbred could ever accomplish, shakes his head in mild protest, but rises to the occasion and to the jump, and lands in a heap on the other side of the arroyo. Crown Prince or Hector would have tumbled over on his side and lain there, pumping his sides in agony, but Calico scrambles up somehow, and makes at the bank.

That is more in his line. He has no thought of jumping it, but cuts his stride short, and goes at it with little cat-like leaps, so that when he reaches it he clammers up it as if he belonged to the feline race.

One hundred yards away the solitary tree rises up out of the arid plain. Over a stout branch, which starts out at right angles to the trunk, a rope hangs in two lines. Both lines are taut. One makes a rigid direction perpendicular to the earth; the other makes an acute angle to the first.

Lake's heart rises in his throat. He knows exactly what that means. The rope is around Dick Bridger's neck, and several stalwart men hold the other end, ready to leap away at the signal.

They are only waiting to give Dick Bridger a chance to recall a forgotten prayer. The hanging is only a joke on Hank Davis, but even those grim humorists will not carry a joke too far.

"Ef ye know a pra'ar, Dick Bridger, say it now, fer it's yer last chance!"

Lake knows all this as well as if he stood in the crowd about the doomed man.

Mechanically he snatches one of Hank Davis' big revolvers from his belt, and at the same moment digs his heels into the steaming sides of Calico. Fortunately the alkali soil is soft, and the dull beat of the hoofs in it is not heard by the absorbed crowd about the tree.

Lake prays that Dick Bridger may have a good memory for the words he learned by his mother's knee. He looks down at the revolver. It is big and old-fashioned, but he knows that it is as true as Hank Davis himself. He has already satisfied himself that it is properly loaded. The bullet is almost as big as a modern rifle will carry.

The rope is still taut—the crowd motionless. Presently there will be a commotion in the crowd, as the men move aside to give way to those who leap away with the rope. Then there will be a pistol-shot, and then—the rope will quiver and throb.

Twenty-five yards away! They do not notice him yet! He hears the voice of the leader of the party.

“Dick Bridger, yer time’s up. Boys!”

The crowd opens silently.

“Don’t tell my sister how I died!”

Fifteen yards away! Lake’s face is white; his eyes blazing. Rascal, Dick Bridger may be, but he’s no coward; and he loves Madge. There might be a thousand of them now, and it would not matter.

The cruel curb brings Calico to a dead stand-still on his dripping haunches. A revolver rises out of the crowd! Ping! The sound is not the same in that dry air as in the moister atmosphere of the East. The men at the end of the rope leap to do their errand of death.

Ping! Dick Bridger stands in his place, the end of the severed lariat flicking his heels. The messengers of death, suddenly released from their horrid burden, plunge headlong into the alkali dust.

Rob Lake walks with calm deliberation through the crowd, and stands by the side of Dick Bridger, saying, coolly, to the man with the pistol:

“Snap-shooting comes in handy once in a while. I represent Hank Davis and the law. This man is my prisoner. Hank Davis does his own hanging.”

“Not by a darn sight,” is the answer, with a sardonic humor. “I reckon ye don’t know how over to Tombstone. Boys! close up, an’ we’ll show the depity how it’s done. Remove his weepens, fer they might go off accidental an’ hurt somebody.”

Lake flashes a swift glance up to the cliff where the short cut takes down. He sees a number of horses, and a girl waving a bonnet by its strings. If he can only keep them occupied for ten minutes! He knows his men are coming down the slope on foot.

CHAPTER VIII.

PALAVERING AND IRRIGATION.

Never more imperturbable than when the danger is most pressing, Bob Lake now stands by the side of Dick Bridger, and in the most deliberate and assured way, says:

"Wait a minute, boys! I reckon ye ain't afraid I'll eat ye all up if ye give me a chance to say a word from Hank Davis."

His calmness, following the rapidity of his previous movements, has its effect. The men check themselves, and the gaunt leader smiles quizzically at him.

"Wall," he says, "I reckon thar's time enough fer a little chin-music, stranger, ef it'll do ye any good. Ye seem reasonable, an' ye kin shoot. So go ahead with yer palaver."

Lake flashes a swift glance over at the trail, and a sudden gleam lights up his eyes. The men are nearer than he had supposed. He pushes his hat back so that his face is well exposed, in order that he may be recognized if there are any there who know him. Without vanity, he knows that the time was when Gentleman Bob's name was potent to conjure with on that divide.

"Wall," he says, dropping still more into the vernacular, "I don't allow thet palaverin's so much in my line, but I undertook this job fer Hank Davis, an' when Bob Lake says he'll do a thing he most generally tries ter do it."

"Bob Lake!" repeats the leader, in a tone of interest, and Lake is certain that several of the others are eying him curiously. "Not him as was known as Gintleman Bob?"

"At yer sarvice," says Lake, studying the gaunt face, cheerfully; "but I reckon ye've got the advantage o' me. Where did we meet? Hold on! Ye

wasn't in thet scrimmage over to the Cross-bones Claim."

"I reckon I were," was the delighted answer, for that little difference had been a very bloody one, and an honor to every participant.

"Shake!" says Lake, thrusting his hand out, and flashing a furtive glance over toward where his men should appear on the bank of the arroyo. "And if you ain't Red Jones, you're his twin, or I'm a liar. Which is it?"

"I reckon I'm Red," is the answer, with a grim laugh of pleasure.

There is nothing like the meeting of old friends to produce a general good feeling, and the prisoner, with his hands tied, and the rope around his neck, takes a long breath as he witnesses the hearty hand-shake. There is an odd expression on his face, too, as he looks at Lake out of eyes singularly like those of Marjorie Bridger.

Lake, however, knows the Western man pretty thoroughly, and in the midst of an apparent forgetfulness of the prisoner, he keeps his eyes stealing furtive glances toward the left.

Suddenly he becomes very voluble in a deliberate sort of way, and says a variety of things calculated to tickle the risibilities of the crowd, which is closing good-naturedly around him, some individuals endeavoring to recall a slight acquaintance, and others willing to commence one with a person so well known for reckless daring.

"Wa-al, Bob," says Red Jones, after a while, his tone dryly humorous, "I'm glad ye've shown up, even ef we can't oblige ye in this leetle matter. Ef ye'll excuse us fer a few minits we'll go over an' irrigate to old acquaintance. But bizness is bizness, ye know."

The men all laugh. It pleases their sense of humor mightily to do honor to a man like Bob Lake, while at the same time showing him that he is absolutely powerless.

For a moment a gleam of the same grim humor shows in Lake's face, too, but it changes quickly to a stern, alert expression, and his features all

harden like stone. When he speaks his tone is sharp and distinct.

"Yes, business is business, and as deputy sheriff this is my business. Boys, surround the prisoner!"

There is a sudden commotion in the crowd, and then somehow the prisoner is surrounded, and the whole affair enters on a new phase. Bob Lake is no longer alone to represent the law, which at once takes on a new majesty.

Lake and his men are outnumbered five to one, but they have the advantage. To resist now means bloodshed. Some of the Gulch men look sheepish, some grin, and some mutter half angrily, but no one threatens until Red Jones, piqued at being outgeneraled, fires off a volley of unique oaths, and reaches for his revolver.

"You're dead if you do!" Lake says, in his cold, grim way.

Red Jones looks for a hesitating moment into the face of the man who has a reputation for decision as much as for daring, then drops his hand by his side, casts a look over the crowd, expectorates a surprising volume of tobacco juice, for his jaws have been working vigorously for the past few seconds, and then says:

"Take the pot, Bob. Let's go irrigate!"

Lake understands his men, which is fortunate, for a very little lack of tact would precipitate the fight which now exists only in incoherent uneasiness. He laughs jovially, not at all triumphantly; puts his revolver in his belt, tucks his arm within that of Red Jones, and say:

"Thank ye, boys. My honor was at stake here, and only a little fun is spoiled for you. Let's irrigate! Then I must make tracks for Tombstone."

Under the circumstances "irrigation" is about as enjoyable all around as the lynching, but it has an element of uncertainty in it, and Lake is desperately anxious to be off with his prisoner. But every time he suggests such a thing he is told that a messenger has come in with intelligence that the Apaches are out on the war-path again.

Lake decides that he prefers the chance of meet-

ing a few Apaches to keeping Dick Bridger in sight of so many men bent on seeing how much liquid lightning they can consume. In a little while his own men will be beyond control, and then Red Jones may try his hand at a little persuasive oratory, for Lake is quite certain that he will not object to getting even.

Besides it is growing late, and that girl may become tired of holding so many horses up at Riley's. So he persuades his men to start with their prisoner, and leaves the Gulch an honored hero and deputy sheriff.

He has not said a word to Dick Bridger yet, and will not until the right time has come. So they travel slowly, and for the most part in silence, up the regular road to Riley's. The girl is there, and so are the horses; but she is not holding them.

She has found means of tying them, so that they may nibble on what scant green stuff there is about.

"Sa-ay!" she says to Lake, as the party mount and start to ride off.

She has received his thanks indifferently, and mostly in impatient silence, and he wonders what she has to say to him. He stops, and the others ride slowly on.

"Well?" he says, inquiringly.

For a moment the girl looks at him everywhere but in the face, and then turns a red, defiant visage to his, her breath coming and going with a difficulty that makes her full bosom heave perceptibly. She tosses her head with a reckless air that somehow makes her look queenly.

"They said," and she jerks her thumb toward the men, "yer name was Gentleman Bob."

"So they call me. My name is Bob Lake. May I ask yours?"

He would have asked before, but for her curt, distant manner.

"Didn't I tell ye? Well, no matter. Sa-ay!" and her eyes fell before his, "are ye very fond of that gal? His sister, ye know."

"I love her all I know how," he answers, earnestly. "Why?"

The girl draws a deep breath, and is slow in answering.

"Oh, well, I didn't know. Mebby I knowed a gal as could love a feller like you. So long!"

And she leaps over the bank, and is flying down the slope, but not before Lake has caught a glimpse of a quivering lip that haunts him for many a day.

CHAPTER IX.

FOR MARJORIE'S SAKE.

"Bob, thar's Injuns!"

On the frontier one learns to get used to surprises; and as Lake has resumed much of the nature he had acquired during his former residence, he is hardly surprised now.

Yesterday it would have meant nothing to be told that Indians had been seen outlying their trail; to-day it means whatever fate intends that it shall mean. Perhaps he will reach Tombstone; perhaps he will not.

"Where are they?" he asks, quietly, his eyes taking in the lay of the country almost instinctively; for he is an old campaigner, and knows the value of shelter under the circumstances.

The party is riding along very leisurely, for the sake of the horses, which had been pretty well fagged out by the hard ride of the early afternoon. Lake has walked part of the way, though the men have tried to induce him to make Dick Bridger do all the walking. The man who speaks so unconcernedly is the only one who has seen the Indians. He answers Lake without making any gesture to betray him to the watchful enemy.

"Look over the top of the big rock to the northeast. You'll see the glint of the sun on a gun-barrel. Consarn those varmints! they kin use an army rifle as well as any white man, but they never seem to l'arn how to keep it out o' sight."

He talks as Lake looks, with seeming carelessness, in the indicated direction.

"I see it, Jake. They are more than a hundred yards this side. It looks like a good-sized ambush. If we pass that rift yonder we'll be caught, and our hair will be hanging at some Apache's belt to-night."

"I reckon that's so, Bob."

"Just ahead of us is a good enough shelter, Jake. Go ahead of us, and stop the men when they reach there."

The place indicated is a sort of bay in the road, looking across a deep canon, the other side of which cannot be approached except under direct fire from Lake's men. It is so narrow that the revolvers of the party will be able to do good execution.

"'Paches, boys," Lake says, when they are all gathered there. "I didn't half believe them, over at the Gulch, when they said the cattle were on the war-path. It is dead sure now, though."

There is silence for a moment. No doubt the men are making calculations on the chances of being left on the road.

"Can't we turn back?" asks one of the men.

"Closed up behind," is Jake's sententious comment.

"How many of 'em altogether?" is the next query.

"Don't know. Hundred, mebbly. What d'you think, Bob?"

"Hundred, I should say," replies Lake.

A bullet flattens itself against the rock about a yard from him.

"The devils! How soon they know when they are found out!"

"Well!" growls one of the men, "are we going to stop here and be killed, like so many rats in a hole?"

Lake does not lose his composure. He answers the man by addressing them all.

"Boys, you enlisted to help me get this man away from the Gulch. Now a new sort of enterprise is encountered. There ought to be a leader who has the confidence of all. I resign."

"Not by a blamed sight, you don't," says Jake, a man known to be experienced in Apache warfare. "Boys, I nominate Gentleman Bob fer captain o' this here company. All in favor say so."

"Cert'nly. Who wants him to resign? I reckon he's as good as anybody."

It is an informal but unanimous election, under rather trying circumstances.

"All right, boys!" Lake says, curtly, and then turns to Dick Bridger, who has been a marvel of taciturnity during the whole journey. "Do you want to take a chance with us for your life?"

Dick Bridger looks at him with a smile, in which there is a keen sense of humor.

"Why," he replies, "I don't know as I care to save my life just fer the sake o' bein' hung."

Lake turns from him, to see how the men have taken this jest in the face of danger. He sees that they all look approvingly at the devil-may-care fellow, and he says, quickly:

"Boys, I reckon if he fights with us, that settles his difference with the law. Eh?"

"Don't the law say no man sha'n't be put in jeopardy twicet?" queries one of them, soberly.

Lake laughs quietly, and cuts the cords that bind Dick's hands.

"Now you're one of us," he says. "And here's one of my revolvers."

"Thanks to Madge fer this—eh?" whispers Dick, with a wink.

Lake stares for a moment; then understands. Lord Sandowne has written to Dick about him. That confirms his belief that Dick is at the bottom of Marjorie's engagement to Sandowne. He would like to take Dick aside and talk with him, but the hidden Apaches are keeping up a constant fire on them, and something must be decided on.

"Gov'nment lead an' powder," ejaculates one of the men, handling a flattened bullet.

"Ya-as," says Dick Bridger, taking his place among them with a nonchalance which is evidently one of his chief characteristics, "the cattle are givin' us what belongs to us."

"Boys!" says Lake, suddenly, "I think I understand the meaning of this. Those 'Paches are not wasting their lead. They're simply trying to keep us here until they can get the range of us from somewhere. Then they'll pick us off as they please."

"And there's the place, and there's the way,"

says Dick Bridger, in his indescribable manner, at the same time pointing to a tree the other side of the canon, toward which a painted savage is quietly making his way, keeping the tree between them and him, but without taking too much precaution, as if he knew they had no rifles among them.

"Shelter behind the horses!" Lake orders.

They are none too quick in executing the order, for a bullet wounds a horse a minute later, and the injured animal snorts and rears with pain, nearly stampeding the others.

"We must do something," Lake says. "If we remain here we shall be shot down, in spite of the horses, unless we kill the animals and lie down behind them. Anybody got any suggestions?"

"I'd a blamed sight rather take my chances in a rush down the hill," Dick Bridger says. "Lead the horses and shelter behind them. There's a gully about two hundred yards down. It's neck or nothin' anyhow, but if we can strike the gully there'll be a fighting chance for our lives."

"What de'ye say, boys?" demands Lake, quickly, for the plan pleases him.

The men would rather do anything than stand still to be shot down, and they approve at once.

"It'll have to be every man for himself," says Dick. "I'll lead the way through the gully, but after that those that are left'll have to scatter for Tombstone. The town won't be more'n six miles away."

Lake catches the calico pony by the head, and stands ready to leap out with him the moment the others are ready.

"Shelter behind me, Dick," he says.

It might be he would never have another chance to talk to Marjorie's brother, and it is necessary. Whether he lives or dies, Marjorie must be saved from Sandowne. Dick grins, as if he understands, and falls in behind Lake.

"Not any too soon," he says, coolly. "The devils will be swarming over there in five minutes."

Lake sees that all are ready.

"Go!" he cries, and smiles as he thinks how like a college foot-race it seems.

Now they know how well they have been watched, and can gain some idea of how many their foes number. A hundred is a small computation, they think, for the moment they dash out of their shelter the air is rent with yells, and bullets begin to rain on the column.

It is useless to look back, to see how the men are getting on. Lake has taken the post of danger, and is doing his best to be on the alert for trouble ahead. Calico is limping and stumbling. Poor little pony! He'll never live in the luxury Lake promised him. Down he goes.

"Up, over the rocks!" says a voice in Lake's ear, and he turns mechanically and begins to clamber up the rocks at the side of the road.

Somebody—ah! it is Dick—is beside him. There is a clattering of hoofs along the road, a pattering of bullets on the rocks around him, yells everywhere. Then a cry of pain. That comes from Dick.

"I'm done!" he hears Dick say. "Right over the rocks! Little rift! clear it! down the gully! Getting dark now! Mebby ye can do it. Tit fer tat! Tell Madge! You can't help me! You blamed fool! Go on!"

Lake has one hand securely clutching a root; the other has Dick by the arm.

"Together, or not at all," he says. "I came out here to save you for her sake. Come! we are losing good time!"

It is a wonder they have not been picked down by one of the sharp-shooting Apaches. Perhaps the rapidly coming dusk is their salvation. One of Dick's arms hangs limp by his side, broken by one of the bullets. Without Lake he must fall, but Lake exerts his extraordinary strength, and Dick is lifted to where he can grasp the root Lake holds. Then Lake scrambles quickly up, lies down, and with both hands lifts Dick.

"You've been useful to me to-day," the latter says, rather weakly, but with his half cynical humor.

"Well," replied Lake, assisting him to his feet, and half supporting him, as they run over the rocks, "I came out here expressly to have a talk with you, and I hate to leave you until it is done. Is that the gully you mentioned?"

"Yes."

"Can you move a little faster?"

Dick looks quickly about him, and sees half a score of Apaches making down from a pile of rocks to the right, intending to intercept them.

"You can do it alone," he says, quickly. "Is it worth while to risk your life for me, Lake? I ain't worth it. See here! If I'd known you were half so white I'd have——" He stops and laughs mischievously as he sees the eager look on Lake's face. "Look! I forgot that rift. They can't cross there. Come! I reckon we'll get to the gully, anyhow. And if it wasn't fer this arm o' mine I'd give a good account o' myself yit."

It is wonderful how his spirits hold out in spite of his wound, which must pain and hinder him, and of his danger, which is great enough. Lake finds it difficult to make him out. It is easy to see that he has excellent qualities for a companion in a time of danger; and Lake knows he must love Marjorie, or he would not have given her his last thought, when death was staring him in the face.

They reach the gully, passing unscathed, by some miracle, through the volley of bullets which the Apaches send after them. But it is growing darker all the time, and Dick is growing plainly weaker. Lake is almost carrying him now.

"Dead sure you want ter see this thing through?" says Dick, suddenly.

"I intend to stay by you as long as it's any use," replies Lake. "I would do that if you were not Marjorie's brother."

"Yes, I reckon that's so, Lake. Pretty bad lot, I am, I know. I didn't steal no horse, though, Lake. However, that doesn't count now. Could you get me up the gully anyhow?"

There is an ominous silence all about them now, and Lake hardly knows whether to try to do as

Dick wishes or not. The gully seems safest, and Dick is faltering a little in his speech, as if there were some fever in his blood. But the next words convince him that Dick is quite rational.

"You're thinking it's better to stay here," Dick says. "No. I know a place up there where we could hold out against a lot of those devils with our pistols. If it wasn't fer this arm——"

"Never mind! Which way, Dick? As soon as we are in a safe place I can set it for you. I know something about such things."

"Anywhere up here. I can't see a thing. Good thing you've got muscle, old man. Your arm is like iron. Muscle, and sand, and good looks! I don't wonder she liked you best."

He is certainly rambling a little now, but Lake is very happy to hear him say such things. He has his arm around Dick, and is literally carrying him most of the time. It is certainly well that he has muscles of iron, otherwise they never would find their way out of that gully.

He would like to make less noise, but that is not possible, and he stops occasionally to breathe and to listen. But, after all, he knows that if they are on his trail they are following with a footfall he cannot bear.

At last they reach the top. The light seems to rouse Dick. He looks about him, with a start, and pulls himself together.

"There it is!" he says.

Lake looks, and sees an irregular pile about two hundred yards away. Dick is getting limp again. Lake stoops under him, takes him over his shoulder, and staggers away with him. He does not know how soon the Apaches will rise up over the bank of the gully.

Ping! ping!

He knows now, and he notes a very unpleasant sound of triumph in the whoop that accompanies the bullets. But the rocks are not far away, and he has the two heavy revolvers. Perhaps he can give a good account of himself yet.

CHAPTER X.

DICK TELLS HIS STORY.

It is very nervous work to run away from ten well-armed, sharp-shooting Apaches, particularly so when one has the heavy burden of a man to carry.

Something of this occurs to Lake as he staggers along toward the pile of rocks, but he is chiefly sensible of a wonder why some of the bullets flying about him do not hit him. Then he feels a hot pain along his side, and has an absurd satisfaction in being struck at last, as if it were an assurance that the pursuers were doing their best, and not merely playing with him.

And now he has clambered over the rocks, has put Dick down behind them, and is looking through a crevice at the painted braves, who have cautiously stopped to consider how best to obtain these two scalps without taking any risks themselves.

Lake sees that they are out of pistol-shot, and turns to consider Dick, who is lying quite insensible. He feels of the broken arm, and finds that it consists of a compound fracture of the left forearm. Pain and loss of blood account for the weakness and swoon.

Keeping a sharp eye on the Apaches, which is more difficult as the darkness falls, he first cuts the sleeve from the wounded arm, and then tears the cloth in a long strip. It is useless to think of dressing the wound, or of finding splints to use on it, but he binds it with considerable skill, and lets it go with that.

"Those devils are scattering, and have some infernal trick to play me," he mutters. Then he looks at Dick. "There doesn't seem the ghost of a show for ever getting out of this place alive, but I'm just silly enough to want to know what Dick did to

persuade Marjorie to give herself to that blackleg, Sandowne. Whisky isn't the best medicine for a man in his condition, but it's all I have, and it may serve to bring him around so he can do a little fighting."

Still watching the Indians, who have almost disappeared from view altogether, he draws out his flask, and after sampling its contents, opens Dick's mouth and lets the revivifying liquid trickle into it and down his throat.

Whether because the whisky is unusually good, being some Lake has brought from Chicago, or that Dick is ready to come to his senses, cannot be said, but before a spoonful has found its slow progress down his throat, Dick has begun swallowing, and finally says, impatiently:

"For Heaven's sake, turn it on full."

So Lake lifts his head higher, and elevates the flask so that the whisky will flow freely, and Dick is evidently prepared to drain it to the last drop, but that Lake has no intention of letting him do.

"You've had enough," he says, with a grim laugh, for there is a quality in Dick that pleases him. "Now see if you can sit up and hold a revolver."

"Oh, I'm all right," he says, pluckily. "I've been this way before. Must have lost a bucketful of blood, though. But you're a mule team, three abreast and four deep. How in blazes ye ever got me here I don't know. How ye must love that pretty sister o' mine! Where are those greasy cattle?"

"Outside somewhere. They've scattered, and will be down on us in a little while. About ten of them, I reckon. There's no telling, Dick, if we'll ever get out of this. One of us may, but you've got a broken arm, and I've a little hole in my side."

"You ought to have Madge," is Dick's admiring comment.

"I'd like to have her, and if I thought I could, I'd make a fight for it if there were a hundred out there." And there is a ring in his tone that makes Dick chuckle with delight.

"Give me another pull at that flask," he says. Lake gives him the flask, and prepares to take it from him when he thinks he has imbibed enough.

"No tanglefoot there!" ejaculates Dick, as he returns the flask after a moderate drink. "We must not leave any of that for the 'Paches, if it comes to that. I s'pose what you want is something from me to help you git Madge."

"That's all I came out here for," replies Lake.

Dick wags his head reflectively, peers out into the gloom to see if there are any signs of the Apaches, takes another brief pull at the flask, and says:

"I allow ye must be what they call in love with Madge."

"Yes; if love is the word for a devotion that would make me sacrifice life and everything else worth having, to make her happy."

Dick leans forward a little in order to catch sight of Lake's face, surprises an expression of rapture and ecstasy on the usually imperturbable face, and gives vent to a low, prolonged whistle.

"Wa-al, Bob," he says, after a pause, during which both search for the Apaches, "I know nothin' about love, that's dead sure, though I've had a few difficulties about women in my time—once over a 'Pache squaw. That bullet's in me somewhere now.

Lake makes a slight gesture of impatience, and Dick hastens to add:

"Oh, I know, 'tain't the same thing. That's why I speak of it. What I was going to say was that now I know you're white clean through, I'm ready to do anything I can to get Madge fer ye."

"You are responsible for her engagement to Sandowne?" queries Lake, quickly.

"Yep. I thought I was doing the right thing by Madge, ye see. She's been a good girl from the word go, and if there's anybody in God's world I care for, it is Madge. Not jest es you do, I reckon, but she never would shake me, and I don't allow es I'll ever go back on her."

"Sandowne's a brute and a blackleg," says Lake.

"I reckon ye're about right, Bob. Consarn those 'Paches! why don't they show up?"

"Probably intend to scatter and come down on us from all sides. Well, if you agree that Sandowne is a scoundrel, why do you wish him to have Marjorie? Don't you know he will make her life a long misery?"

"Hah!" ejaculates Dick, under his breath, as he looks keenly out through a hole in the wall. "One of those varmin'ts is crawling along toward us on his stomach."

"I can see two over there," says Lake.

"Let them get nearer, and then shoot—eh?" says Dick. "Make her life a misery! Oh, I don't know. He's a lord, you see, and they'll have plenty of money. Besides, it 'ud take more than Sandowne to break Madge up, if it came to that."

"She despises him," says Lake. "I'm going to shoot. Are you ready?"

"Oh, well," replies Dick, sighting along his revolver carefully, and speaking slowly in consequence, "that's all over now, anyhow. She can do as she pleases."

"You can break it off, eh?" demands Lake, eagerly.

"With a word. Now, then! Let her go!"

The shots followed in quick succession, and two yells broke the stillness of the night. Lake fired again, and another yell rose up. Then all was as silent as the grave.

"Only seven now," says Lake, slipping two cartridges in the chambers in place of the exploded shells. "And you will break it off, Dick?"

"If we get away alive."

"You are sure you can break the engagement?"

"Dead sure."

"Then we'll get away alive. If there were twenty I could do it. How do you feel?"

"I've felt better. Give me another taste of the fire water. Ah! that's good stuff, Bob. See here! I don't feel so cock sure of getting away from here. I'll tell you the whole story, and you kiu

straighten the matter out as you think best if I'm not on hand to do it."

"Can I?"

"Sure. But if I'm dead it won't need any straightening out. She thinks she's marrying him to keep me out of trouble."

"Ah, I thought so. And it isn't so?"

"I reckon I don't need any one, especially a gal, to keep me out of trouble. No; that's his scheme. Fact is, Bob— Look out on your side?"

"I'm looking. Go on!"

Dick laughs recklessly.

"'Fraid a bullet will cut my story short, eh? I reckon we've got half an hour before us."

"Perhaps, but the story won't be better for keeping it."

"It'll have to keep now for a while anyhow. I never knew 'Paches to make a rush, but blame me if I don't think it's what they're going to do."

Lake wishes he had that story, be it what it may. He would feel stronger in going back to Marjorie, though he realizes that what Dick says is probably true. If he dies there will no longer be any need for her to sacrifice herself. But the Apaches are plainly intending to rush on them, and there will be no time for extended story-telling. Suddenly he cries out:

"Clever imps! We might have known they would take no chances on an open rush. Do you see that, Dick? Now go on with your story."

The Apaches had come boldly to within pistol-shot, and had then stopped for a moment. What had not been visible before became so now. Each Indian had a large boulder, which he rolled in front of him as he lay extended on the ground, with some effort, no doubt, for the progress was slow, but which effectually sheltered him from the fire of the two men behind the shelter.

"There are only seven of them," says Dick. "Ah, if my arm was only right. You know the old man—I mean Dick Bridger, senior—and Madge are half owners in the Twilight Mine. Own it all between them, I mean."

"Yes. I didn't know it, but no matter," says Lake.

"Wa-al— Consarn those red devils! I'd like to get a shot at one o' 'em. Wa-al, the mine is rich. It put the old man on his feet, and made Madge a lady, as she always was wanting to be. I won't tell ye all about how white Madge has always been to me—you know her, an' kin guess it."

"I know. Promised your mother," says Lake.

"Promised mother! That didn't count. Would a-been anyhow. Poor little gal! She tried mighty hard, I tell ye, to keep me straight, but I've got ter die with my boots on, Bob; and I'm in luck if I die like this."

"You're not dead yet."

"No. Wa-al, to make my story short, there was an Englishman—Bill Oakhurst, as we knew him—found out in some roundabout way that there'd been a mistake in the survey, and that all the ore that Twilight was turning out came from a lead in the Spoke Claim. See?"

"I see. Your father and Marjorie are poor instead of rich."

"Just that. Wa-al, the Englishman, by the death of somebody, becomes Lord Sandowne. I found out afterward that he had intended buying the Spoke out, and then going to law. See?"

"I see."

"Wa-al, I told him ef he did I'd perforate him, and he took my word fer it. Him and me was partners in a way, and I had a way of knowing all he was up to. Then he said he would keep still ef he could git Madge to marry him."

"Ah!" ejaculates Lake, comprehending the whole affair now.

"You know Madge," Dick goes on. "If she'd had any idea of the truth it would a-been just like her to hunt those Spoke people out and give the whole thing away."

"Just like her, thank God!" murmurs Lake.

"But I wasn't going to let anything like that happen, so I agreed to Sandowne's plan, and wrote

Madge that he held my life in his power, and would make an end of me if she didn't marry him."

"Pretty bad job that, even for you, Dick, I should say," comments Lake.

"Oh, I don't know. See what she gets! A fortune, a title, and a fixed position for life."

"And everlasting unhappiness."

"Wa-al, I allow I was mistaken, Bob. You know all about it now, and you can fix it to suit yourself. If I live I'll help ye. If I don't, tell Madge that I was a bad lot all the way through, but that I died game, and thinking of her. I tell ye, Bob, I kin remember that little gal when she was a bare-footed, tow-headed little critter, and I reckon she's the nighest to an angel I'll ever see. White all through, Bob. You two'll suit each other. Here they come!"

CHAPTER XI.

SALLIE JONES.

Faro Gulch is always liveliest about midnight. To-night it is rather more so than usual, for the boys, having come to a realizing sense of the way they were cheated of their fun, are drinking and gambling with rather more than customary fervor. And the feeling of indignation against Bob Lake is deep, if not loudly expressed.

Red Jones, in particular, has the feeling that if ever he meets Bob Lake face to face there will be an exhibition of snap-shooting that will discount what took place that afternoon, when Lake cut the rope with a pistol-ball.

Perhaps his anger is all the greater because of something he learned when he went home to his supper that evening. It was Mrs. Jones who brought the matter to the surface by saying to her daughter, who served the meal in a sort of sullen silence that always exasperated the tired woman:

"In the name o' common sense, Sal, why don't ye say somethin', 'stead o' goin' round like a mummy."

"Oh, leave the gal alone!" says Red Jones, testily.

"That's right!" cries Mrs. Jones, flaring up in her turn. "Allus take her part. It don't make no diff'rance to you if I'm clean dragged out with workin', while she's trapesing the mountings all the afternoon."

"What's she trapesing the mountains fer?" demands Jones, willing to make a quarrel with Sal if necessary.

"Wasn't doin' no trapesing," says Sallie, sententiously. "Went up fer a walk, an' staid to hold some horses."

"What horses?" demands Red Jones, wheeling about in his chair with a savage look on his face.

Sallie looks back at him quite unconcernedly, and answers, leisurely.

"You know. Belonged to them that came to stop the lynchin'."

"An' you—my darter—held them horses?"

"Why not?" she demands, sarcastically. "There was a dozen o' them all told, an' fifty o' you uns. I reckoned you'd eat 'em up. An' mebbly ye would ef that thar Bob Lake hadn't been to the head of 'em."

"What do you know of Bob Lake?" he asks, sulkily, rather for the purpose of escaping gracefully from the discussion than for any other reason.

"Wa-al, I know he's the clearest grit of anybody I ever see. He slid down that thar trail, whar they said no one but a 'Pache could go; an' him half drunk. I knew he'd take Dick Bridger from ye when I saw him take that trail. An' he did."

There is such a ring of triumph and admiration in her voice that her father gives vent to an oath and bids her "shut up!" which she does with a scornful uplifting of the eyebrows.

But Sal is not disposed of, although she says nothing at the time. It is after midnight, however, before she again vexes her father.

He is then in Casey's bar-room, where it is against all etiquette for any of the women of the place to appear.

Jones is haranguing a number of the men, laying down both general and particular principles concerning a variety of matters, when the door is flung violently open, and Sal leaps in, her face all aflame with excitement. She catches her father's astonished eyes, and cries:

"The 'Paches is out, dad!"

"Wa-al, s'pose they are. What then?"

The older men are eying her with displeasure, and secretly thinking she is altogether too forward. The younger men find her rather pleasant to look at, though even they are surprised at her conduct in coming there. One stalwart fellow in particular edges nearer to her.

"That there Bob Lake's party has been attacked," says Sal.

"Who says so?" is the instant demand. "How d'you know?"

"One of 'em turned up at the shanty, wounded bad," she replies, speaking in a quick, excited way, and in high, shrill tones.

"Wa-al, what does he say?"

"He says he don't know what became o' Bob Lake," replies Sal.

"Bob Lake!" cries Jones, impatiently. "Bob Lake wa'n't the only one."

"He was the likeliest," snaps Sal, her eyes flashing. "What're you goin' ter do?"

"Can't do anything, es I see," is the answer. "But you go home. I'll be thar in a minit an' see the man."

"I'll go home when I know what ye're goin' ter do," says Sal, quite oblivious of the frowning faces about her. She has just one thought in her mind, and pursues that.

"You'll go home now," says her father, angrily. "This ain't no place fer you. You go home; d'ye hear?"

"Yes, I hear, dad, an' I'm goin'. But I'm goin' to tell you men somethin' straight before I go. D'you know what they'll say over to Tombstone ef ye don't go out to the rescue? They'll say ye was glad ter have the 'Paches do what ye couldn't do fer yerselves."

"Go home! d'ye hear?" roared her father, beside himself with anger.

Sal looks searchingly into the faces about her, then turns and leaves the room. She does not doubt the result of her stinging words. She hurries along the rough street, but looks back at the sound of heavy footsteps behind her. Then she stops and waits.

"Oh, Sam! That you?"

"I reckon it is. You didn't look at me just now, Sal," he says, in a tone of injury.

"Why should I?" she retorts, quickly. "You

didn't speak up an' say you'd lead a party, did you?"

"I would if I'd a-thought of it," he replies.

"Pshaw!" she says, cuttingly. "I'll bet if Bob Lake had been in your place he'd had a party out by this time."

"You seem to think a mighty sight o' that thar Bob Lake."

"What you got ag'in him?" she demands, half fiercely.

"Nothin'; only——"

"Only nothin'. You're mad because he got the best o' yer this mornin'. What are them men goin' ter do?"

"I reckon they'll get up a party."

"I should hope so. Wa-al, I can't stand here talkin' all night. Go back there, Sam, an' hurry up."

"Jest fer all the world like a cyclone," soliloquizes Sam, as he stares after her, and then turns to do her bidding as well as he can.

She is only a rude, untutored girl, who has hardly been conscious of possessing a soul before to-day, and who certainly never before dreamed of interfering with the affairs of the men. But she has interfered, and is distinctly conscious of having moved them to action.

And so she has, but it is not an easy matter to organize such a party as is needed for this duty; and Jones is not able to make a start until near daylight. Indeed, as they stop at Riley's shanty and look down at the Gulch the first red rays of the morning sun are gilding the roofs of the shanties.

"Is that thar gal o' yourn coming all the way?" queries one of the older men, in a sour tone of voice.

Jones utters a violent oath as he looks back and sees Sal, mounted on a horse, and calmly riding by the side of Sam Morgan. He digs heels to his animal, and is presently by the side of his daughter.

"You, Sal! go home!" he says, peremptorily.

He hardly knows what to expect from her in the way of a retort, but judging from his experience of

yesterday, he rather looks for a storm of refusal, and to tell the truth, he is wondering what he can do if she refuses point-blank. But her mood is different. She looks slowly up at her father, and says, gently:

"Mebby some o' them will be found—sick, dad. I won't be in yer way; honor bright, I won't. You won't send me home, dad, will yer?"

"I'll take keer on her, Red," says big Sam Morgan.

"Wa-al," says Red Jones, delighted to have his authority recognized where he expected to have it defied, "I don't know es any harm kin come. But it ain't no place fer ye, Sal."

"Ye may be glad I came, dad," she says, in her softest manner, and big Sam is not at all surprised to have Jones say, gruffly, that she may come along if she wishes.

The party is too large and too well armed to fear any Apaches that may be lurking in the mountains, and they go along briskly, though with such precautions as the warier ones deem necessary.

By and by they come upon a mutilated body of one of the men. The sight fills them with fury, and all the natural hatred of the frontiersman for the aborigine breaks out. They are anxious now to come upon some trace of the Apaches, so that they may follow them.

But presently there are three more bodies, with horses strewn all along the roadway. And finally they stop at where a calico pony lies on his side, cold and stiff. A stifled scream startles and angers the men, and they all look at poor Sal, whose face is very white, and whose eyes are very wide open as they look at the pony.

"It was his'n," she whispers.

"Whose?" demands her father.

"Bob Lake's."

"Got him on the brain," mutters Jones, and then says, aloud: "Wa-al, ef it's his'n, I reckon we'll find him some'eres around here."

For a moment Sal cowers and puts her hands before her face. Then she rouses herself, and stands

quite still while the party make a search up and down the road for some sign of Bob Lake, who has resumed in their minds all the proportions of a good fellow, clear grit all the way through.

Suddenly there is a cry from Sal. She had turned her back on the sight of poor Calico, and had caught sight of some marks on the wall by the roadside. They all look, and see her scrambling up the wall with the activity of a girl born in the mountains. Sam Morgan is near her.

"What's the matter, Sal?" he asks.

"He clim up here," she replies, huskily.

By this time Sam has come to a jealously keen understanding of her pronoun, and he clambers up, too, and looks at some marks in the softer earth at the top.

"How d'you know?"

"Size of his foot," replies Sal, unconscious of the pang she is giving Sam.

The others come up and study the signs with the eyes of experience.

"Sal's right," says her father; "Bob an' one of the other boys came up here. Some o' you stay here. The rest on us will follow the trail."

So the trail is followed. Sam keeps by the side of Sal, and she clings to him. It is blind, but they do not lose it, though they have a hard time in the gully, and might miss the direction, but for the eyes of Sal. She shows where they have climbed out. Once out of the gully, the rest is easy, for the pile of stones is in full sight, with three Apaches lying stretched out at pistol-shot this side of the pile.

Immediately there is a run for the pile of stones. Sam is outstripped by Sal, but Red Jones is the first to leap to the top, and look down into the small inclosure.

"Great Scott!" he gasps.

There is a heap of bodies there—two white men and seven Apaches.

"Bob Lake an' Dick Bridger! Both dead!"

But while he and some of the others, who have reached the spot, are staring down at the ghastly

sight, Sal has leaped down and is dragging an Indian from the body of Lake.

Then she leans over him, lifts his head as tenderly as a mother might lift her first-born babe, and gazes half frantically into his face. Then a quick change shoots across her features, and she cries out, in an ecstasy:

“He’s alive! alive!”

CHAPTER XII.

A SALTED MINE.

Yes, there is just a spark of life left burning in Lake's breast, but it is altogether probable that that spark would go out were it not for the fact that Sallie Jones is at hand to insist, with all the strength of her woman's will, that it shall remain.

The men, in their mistaken kindness, would move him, but Sallie seems to know intuitively what to do. She forbids them to touch him, but has them take all the other bodies away; has a screen made of coats, to keep the sun from shining full on him, and has water brought.

She does not ask permission to take charge of him, but does so in a matter of course way that carries conviction. A man seldom disputes the office of nurse with a woman. So she gives orders, keeps up a constant laving and chafing, and examines his injuries.

He has some ugly wounds and has bled freely. She washes the wounds, and binds them up. Small quantities of whisky are poured down his throat, and after a while her efforts are rewarded—he shows more pronounced signs of life.

At last he opens his eyes, but there is no recognition in them. He is in a raging fever, which seems to have been waiting only for some life to feed on, for he begins to rave almost the moment his eyes open.

"All on your account, Marjorie," he says. "Heaven knows I love you, but I'm not selfish. If you were to be happier I could let you go. What's that? The Spoke Mine? Hush! there's a fortune in it. But they don't know it."

"What in thunder is he talkin' 'bout, Sal?" queries Jones, with a puzzled expression.

"He's saying something 'bout the Spoke, dad,"

is the whispered answer, for delirium is a thing that always awes an unwonted person.

"The Spoke! I thought so. Said it had a fortin' in it, didn't he?" and Red Jones laughs sardonically, as he thinks that the only fortune in it is the good money he has wasted in trying to get something out of it.

"He's dead now, Marjorie, and we won't think hard thoughts of him. But that whelp of an Englishman! Ah! I'll—well, I won't do anything, if you say not to, Marjorie. But what shall we do about the Spoke?"

"Huh!" grunts Jones, turning on his heel, and walking away, "speakin' of Englishmen; I know what I'd do with the Spoke ef I had half a chance. I'd salt her, and sell her to some tarnation Englisher."

"Marjorie!" murmurs Sallie Jones. "What a pretty name! I wonder," she mutters, half fiercely, "what they wanted to call me Sal fer. Why does he talk of the Spoke in the same breath with Marjorie?"

She knows that Marjorie is the sister of that Dick Bridger who lies dead out there, but who might have died with a rope around his neck but for her. She had helped Bob Lake to gain that much of a lien on the gratitude of Marjorie Bridger, and she wonders, as she sits there, what manner of girl this Marjorie is.

Lake is babbling on in his delirium, talking incoherently about the Spoke and the Twilight; about Marjorie, and Dick, and the accursed Englishman. Sallie bathes his hot head with the cool water they have brought her. But she is not taking any heed of his words. Some other thought is stirring her. She looks up and catches the eye of Sam Morgan fixed wonderingly on her.

The truth is he is puzzling himself to know why Sallie is so devoted to Bob Lake, and why she is so different from the Sallie of yesterday. She was imperious enough then; now she is not imperious, but is far away from him, even when she is close by his side.

But she beckons to him, and he goes over to her, very much as a great, faithful dog goes to the master who is sometimes harsh with him. Sallie keeps up the constant, tender laying of the hot brow, and makes that the reason for not looking up as she talks.

"Sam," she says, "who is that thar Bridger out thar?"

Sam is delighted. He had a misgiving that he was to hear something unpleasant.

"A bad lot, Sal. It is a mighty lucky thing fer him——"

"Oh, I know all about that," she interrupts, petulantly. "I mean his father, and his—his—sister. He has a sister, hasn't he?"

"Oh, them!" ejaculates the obtuse giant. "Old Dick Bridger is white enough. He struck it rich, ye know. Why, him an' her——"

"Who's her?"

"Why, his gal, ye know."

"Go on. And don't be so everlastin' slow, Sam. You do try my patience so. What about her? Did ye ever see her? Is she purty?"

"Never did see her, Sal, but I've heard she's mighty purty. An' they say she's kickin' up the dust in the East."

"That's on account o' havin' Twilight turn out rich," says Sallie, fiercely. "Why was that her luck? Why couldn't the Spoke turn out the same, so's I could have a chance? Ain't I purty 'nough, Sam?"

"Purtiest I know," replies Sam, beginning to be uneasy lest the excitement and fatigue have affected her mind. "Purty 'nough fer me, Sal."

"Never mind that," she snaps at him, unexpectedly, just as he thinks he has a license to compliment her a little. "I hate flattery. Why is it, Sam, that them two mines kin be so clust together, an' one rich while the other's poor?"

"I don't know, Sal, ceptin' it often happens that way. Can't all be rich, ye know."

"Well, I'd like ter be. I reckon she wears silk most o' the time, Sam."

"Who?"

"Oh! you make me so hoppin' mad, Sam Morgan. Stupid! Who! Go tell dad he kin git that litter ready jest es soon es he likes. I'm tired o' sittin' here in this hot sun."

Sam goes, wondering what his offense is, and Sallie bends lower over Lake until her lips graze his face. And two big drops roll down her cheeks and fall on his eyes.

"Why, why," she moans, softly, "didn't I hev her chance?"

The men meanwhile have been making a sort of litter, intending to transport Lake to Tombstone on it. They bring it after a while, and Sallie stands by giving her orders quietly.

"I reckon," says her father, "thet you'd better go on ter Tombstone with us."

"Tombstone!" repeats Sallie, quietly, though her lips twitch, "you're not goin' to take him to no Tombstone. He goes back to the Gulch."

"His friends are at Tombstone, Sal; an' I reckon——"

"You don't want ter kill him, do ye? What d'you know 'bout sickness? Take him right back to the Gulch."

It is odd how they do not disobey her. Somehow she feels that she dare do anything, rather than let him go away from her. The going away will be soon enough, she feels, and she gulps down something that rises in her throat.

So they start back for the Gulch, but it is a hard journey for the sick man, in spite of all Sallie's fierce tenderness for him. Before the Gulch is finally reached the men are mostly of the opinion that Sal Jones is a terror, and perhaps Sam Morgan is the only one who holds true to his belief that she is some sort of an angel. But his ideas of angels are vague.

When they finally reach the Gulch, it is suggested by one of the men that, inasmuch as the Jones family has already accommodated one sick man in the already small enough shanty, it would be well to take Lake to some other house.

"No," says Sallie, flashing an angry glance on the man; "this one goes with us. The other one can be taken some'eres else. This one's sickest."

Again it is done as she orders, and Lake is at last put down in a bed, which is none of the softest, and which has coarse, unbleached sheets to cover it, but it is the best the Jones family knows anything about, and Lake is in no condition to care where he is put.

A doctor is found after a while, and he shakes his head as he examines Lake. He dresses his wounds, however, and gives him some medicine, leaving directions with Sallie, since she seems to be completely in charge.

So Sallie is installed as nurse—she who has never known before what it is to confine her free limbs in the house for two consecutive hours. But she acquits herself admirably, so far as Lake is concerned. And she never doubts that he will pull through. She has a feeling that not even death can take him away from under her care.

Nevertheless he remains delirious a long time, and it is so some ten days later, when Jones enters the room, ushering in a well-dressed Easterner. In a moment Sallie recognizes him as a tenderfoot, and surmises that he is a friend of Lake.

Then, as he bends over the tossing man, and looks steadily at the emaciated face, she gets the feeling that he is not a friend after all. She wonders what he is there for, and why he stares so hard at Lake, and, not being restrained by any polite scruples about asking questions, she demands:

"Wa-al, what's wanted? Ye kin see he's sick 'thout starin' at him all day."

"I only wanted to be sure it was my friend Lake, my good girl," is the answer, in the broad accents, which even Sallie recognizes as English.

"Your friend!" she repeats, remembering the constant talk of the delirious man about an Englishman who seems to be engaged in taking Marjorie from him.

"This is Lord Sandowne, Sal," says Jones, in a tone that is remarkably mild for him.

Sallie looks his lordship over from head to foot, then turns to her father, and says, "Oh!" in a tone that conveys some disparagement to the Englishman, and to her father conveys the idea of comprehension.

"Yes," says Sandowne, rubbing his hands softly together, as if a pleasant thought has possession of him, "I came out to look at a mine your father has for sale"—Sallie looks up at her father—"and I heard that my friend Lake was ill. Seems to have had a close call."

"Close enough," replies Sallie, curtly. "I reckon ye've seen him all ye need. Tain't good fer him ter have visitors."

Sandowne shrugs his shoulders, and follows Jones out of the room. Sallie gives the bed-clothes a few of those needless touches, which women like to indulge in about a sick-bed, and then follows them out.

"Sa-ay!" she says, in the drawling tone of assumed indifference.

"He," jerking her head in the direction of the sick-room, lest the Englishman may not comprehend the exclusive use she has put the pronoun to, "talks all the time 'bout some one named Marjorie. D'ye happen to know her?"

Sandowne notes the drawling tone, and the half-defiant expression of her face, and passes his hand over his mustache to hide a smile that is forming on his lips.

"Marjorie Bridger," he says. "Oh, yes, I know her."

Sallie hesitates. Something tells her that she is doing an unwise thing, but a passion stronger than wisdom impels her on.

"Is she—is she purty?" she demands.

It is Sandowne's turn to hesitate now. He is making a mental calculation. It seems to him that everything is secure, but the one weak spot is the doubt of how long the man in the other room will remain in bed.

"Are you really interested to know?" he asks, after a moment's pause.

Sallie will not admit, for the world, that she is really interested.

"Oh, I don't know. I jest asked. I allowed she must be purty to make a man keep talkin' of her all the time."

"I happen to have a picture of her," says Sandowne. "Would you like to see it? I have it with me."

Sallie's eyes answered before her tongue.

"I allus like to look at picturs," she says.

Sandowne takes a photograph from his pocket and shows it to Sallie. Sallie looks at it, and bursts into a short exclamation, which contains too many emotions to be described. Then she turns her back on Sandowne, and examines the picture more at her ease. Presently she murmurs:

"I don't wonder! I don't wonder! I ain't got no sort o' show with her. I reckon," she says, aloud, "that she dresses like that all the time."

"Yes," replies Sandowne, comprehending; "but there was a time when she dressed no better than you. Clothes make a great difference. Why, you'd hardly know yourself if you wore such dresses as Madge Bridger."

"Tain't my luck," says Sallie, choking down a sob.

"Oh, I don't know," says the Englishman, carelessly, "if your father takes my offer for his mine, I don't see that you need to worry about that."

"The Spoke?" queries Sallie, eagerly.

"Yes, I believe that is the name of the mine," is the answer.

A flush of joy overspreads Sallie's face. She knows that her father will refuse no offer for his mine; and she remembers how he has threatened to salt it for some Englishman. The morality of it does not greatly trouble her. Sandowne reaches out for the picture, saying, carelessly, as he does so:

"Pretty, isn't she? If our friend in there should not happen to get East within the next three weeks, she will be married before he sees her again."

"She will be married?" gasps Sallie, her face white.

"Yes."

Sallie turns away, her bosom heaving, and her eyes set in a painful stare. She understands now. The Englishman is the one Lake raves about, and he is trying to tempt her into a compact. There is a prolonged silence, during which Jones waits impatiently on the door-step. Then Sallie turns, and looks at the floor as she says, in a low tone:

"He won't be able to leave here inside of a month."

BOOK TWO.

LADY SANDOWNE OF NEW YORK.

CHAPTER XIII.

A WESTERN CONSCIENCE.

Lake's recovery is slow. If it were not for an iron constitution he would not recover at all, with so much against him. He does recover at last, however, and one day he wakes up rational. Weak as a new-born babe, but on the road to complete recovery.

He is very much surprised to find himself where he is. His last recollection is of fighting over the body of Dick Bridger in the stone inclosure. He stares about him wonderingly, and his eyes fall upon the grave face of a girl, who seems somehow familiar, yet is quite unknown to him. Then Sallie bends over him, and asks, in a cooing voice, which Sam Morgan has never heard in all his life from her lips:

"Do you feel very weak?"

He tries to move before answering, finds he cannot, and answers, with a faint smile:

"Weak?—yes. Where am I? Where's Dick? Who are you?"

Sallie bites her lip. He has completely forgotten her.

"I am Sallie Jones. I showed you the way down the short-cut that day. Don't you remember? You are in our shanty."

It takes him some time to recall the events of

that day sufficiently to remember her, but he does, after an effort, and then smiles at her.

"Now I remember, but you look different. Where's Dick?"

"Paches," she answers, softly.

"Oh, yes. How was I found?"

"I found you."

"You?" he says, but he is too weary, by this time, to grapple with that problem, and to her dismay, he turns his head and shuts his eyes.

But afterward she understands how weak he is, and the sting is taken away. He grows strong rapidly now, and asks many questions. He does not see many people, besides Sallie, and those few she warns not to speak of the length of his illness.

"If he knows how long he's been sick," she says, "he will be for hurrying back East, and he ain't fit to move."

So nothing is said to him, to let him know how long a time he has lain there, but as he grows stronger, and is able to move about a little, he becomes impatient to know something of how matters are in the East. He has scrawled a line to Van Kouver, but receives no reply, because Van Kouver has been called to Florida, and his letters are not to be forwarded.

But all this while he has been growing to like Sallie very much. He is grateful to her, and her devotion touches him. But she knows that there is not a particle of the feeling in his breast that agitates hers, and the thought makes her desperately unhappy.

Besides, as the days go by, and the time approaches when Marjorie Bridger will be lost to him, she has a strange feeling of remorse in her heart, and she almost dreads to have him look at her. And when he praises her for her kindness, she sometimes rushes from the room and flings herself on her own little bed, in a passion of tears.

But the worst of all comes one day, when Lake, by asking questions, discovers that he has raved, all through his delirium, about Marjorie. At first he is shy of saying anything about it, but he finds

omething so winning in Sallie that, with the blindness of a man, he starts in to make her his confidante.

He tells her how he had come out there to see Dick Bridger, in order to win the sister through him. He tells how beautiful and sweet Marjorie is, and Sallie listens, with a heart like lead, and with averted face. He tells, too, that he has a rival who is likely to marry Marjorie, if he does not get back in time to prevent him.

Sallie's bosom is heaving convulsively, as she listens, but she says nothing; and Lake goes on, rejoiced to have some one to talk to about the matter. He tells exultantly how he has discovered the secret by which the Englishman is coercing Marjorie, and he talks all the time as if he had lost but a few days. At last Sallie turns on him in a way that makes him think she is angry about something.

"How do you know she won't be glad to marry the Englishman?" she asks. "You talk as if you were the only man."

He is a little stunned at this, and thinks he is misunderstood.

"I don't think she loves him," he says. "And I don't believe he will make her happy. I know, Sallie, that I must seem a selfish wretch to you, because I talk so much about myself"—Sallie wishes he did talk about himself, instead of about Marjorie—"but I swear to you that I love her so much that, if I could believe she would be happier with him than with me, I would do everything to bring them together. But you don't know what a thorough-paced scoundrel the fellow is."

Sallie thinks she does know, but she does not lay much stress on that. She is chiefly conscious of receiving new ideas into her brain. Would he be as unselfish as that? Would he sacrifice himself for Marjorie's happiness? And she, Sallie, is sacrificing him!

She is busy with this problem, and does not speak for some time. He feels ashamed of having said so much about Marjorie. He wishes he had

not done it. How can he expect Sallie, an ignorant frontier girl, to take much interest in his love affair.

"By the way, Sallie," he says, abruptly, "I want to ask your father something. I wonder if he is anywhere around."

"What do you want ter ask him?"

"Oh, about a certain mine."

"What mine?"

He smiles at her peremptory tone, not seeing the trouble in her face.

"The Spoke is the name, I believe."

"I kin tell you anything you want ter know 'bout it."

"You! Why, what do you know of it?"

"It did belong to dad," she answers, her breath coming and going painfully.

"Did belong!" he cries, with a start. "How long ago? Who owns it now?"

Sallie is biting her lip to keep back the tears that are very near the surface. She finds herself frightened.

"Bob," she falters, "kin ye stand a bit of bad news?"

"Bad news! What should you have to—to—to—— For Heaven's sake, Sallie! what is the matter?"

Sallie does not try any longer to check her sobs. She is afraid he will hate her. That is the one thing she dreads now.

"Dad—dad—sold the Spoke a few—few days ago. Salted it, an' sold it to an—an Englishman."

"An Englishman! Heaven! His name?"

Lake is standing up now, his hand on the back of a chair, and there is a look in his eyes, something like what Sallie saw the minute before he plunged over the short-cut on Calico.

"Bob!" she falters, deprecatingly. "It was Lord Sandowne."

Unconsciously Lake hurls the chair across the room, and strides to Sallie's side. He puts his hand on her round arm, and says, hoarsely:

"What do you know of Lord Sandowne? Tell me everything you know."

"I will, Bob," she sobs. "God help me, I will. You've been sick many—days."

"Many days!" he gasps. "Yes, go on!"

"Weeks, Bob, altogether," she whispers."

"Weeks! Oh, Heaven! How many weeks?"

She ignores the question. She is trembling and cowering under his touch and glance. She is afraid of him, but it is too late to go back now, even if she would.

"He marries her in four days, Bob!" she gasps.

"In four days! My God! And you knew it! Four days! Four days!" His hand is wandering about his face in a tremulous way. Then he turns to her, and his eyes seem to pierce her through and through, while his hand, strong enough even now, grips her arm till it pains. "Why did you keep it from me? Did you want to kill me? Do you hate me?"

A strange, strangling cry breaks from her lips:

"Hate you! God help me! I loved you! I wanted you for myself!"

He stares at her a moment, then flings her away from him, and staggers from the room, muttering:

"Four days! I can get there yet!"

CHAPTER XIV.

FINDING A MESSENGER.

Red Jones, in the vigor and simplicity of his frontier manners, has occasionally manifested his anger toward his daughter by administering a cuff of profound sincerity. But the result has always been stimulating, rather than corrective. On such occasions Sallie has risen before him, with such a blaze of wrath and defiance in her eyes as to cause him to wonder how he ever had the courage to do it.

Lake, in his unconscious vehemence, has flung her away from him. He is too weak for violence, even if he intends it, and he is too much a gentleman for that; but feeble as his gesture is, it sends Sallie in a heap to the floor, where she crouches, cowering and white-faced.

She has not only lost him by her tardy repentance, but she has lost his liking even. He will despise her now, just as she will despise herself. She has a wretched feeling that the eyes of her soul are opening. She cowers and quivers there, but she is growing into conscious womanhood with swift strides.

But she hardly exists for Lake now. The loss of Marjorie drives every other thought out of his mind. He forgets Sallie's kindness, and her piteously confessed love is a hateful thing. She combined with Sandowne to rob him of Marjorie. That is all he thinks.

But he dwells very little even on that. He is a man of action, and is chiefly concerned now with ways and means of getting to New York. Four days! The thing is possible. Besides, there is the telegraph! There must be an office in the Gulch.

He is out of the house, and hurrying toward the center of the town, when Jones comes upon him. He stares at the sick man. And no wonder! Lake

is out in the broiling sun, without any hat on, and his expression is wild. That is because he is so thin, that his eyes are naturally large. Besides, he is already nearly exhausted.

"Come back inter the shanty, Bob," he cries. "You ain't no call to be out here now. I reckon Sal'll be mad."

He takes him by the arm to enforce his command.

"Stop, Red! Is there a telegraph office in this place?"

"Office, yes; but them 'Paches has cut the wires."

A sickening pain shoots to Lake's heart. But he keeps his wits.

"Wires cut," he murmurs, reflectively, and no longer offers any resistance while Jones leads him back to the house. "What about the road to Tombstone? Is that dangerous?"

"What way?" asks Jones.

"I must send a telegram East. Could I get a messenger to carry one on horseback?"

"I reckon ye couldn't do that, Bob. Thar ain't so much danger ef thar's two or three; but I allow I wouldn't care ter do it myself."

"And every moment an eternity!" cried Lake. "Well, I am going myself, anyhow, Jones," to the astonished man; "this is more than a matter of life and death to me, and you must help me. I can't mount a horse yet, but I can ride in a mulé wagon. You must get me one, and find an escort. I'll pay any money. Don't stop to argue. I tell you it must be done."

"You'd oughter know," Jones says. "I kin git ye the team an' th' escort. Ef I'd only knowed a few days ago! I went over myself to settle up my dicker with the Englishman. Thar! what in thunder am I sayin'?"

"Lord Sandowne?" queries Lake, quickly.

"Yes. You know 'bout it, then?"

"You sold him the Spoke Mine. How much?"

"Wa-al, I don't know es that's your business, Bob; though I don't mind tellin' ye. He gev me fifty thousand," and Jones thrust his tongue in his

cheek and closed one eye in most effective pantomime.

"A million would have been cheap for that mine, Jones," says Lake, furious to think that Sandowne has been so successful in everything.

"Ye're off, Bob," says Jones, composedly.

Lake puts his hand to his forehead to steady his thoughts.

"Stop a moment," he thinks to himself. "Sandowne would not have been idiot enough to come out here on a fool's errand; but if he bought that mine without providing for the past he has simply overreached himself. Red," he says, aloud, "I am interested in that Englishman. It—it means a great deal to me perhaps to know just what he has done. Did he—did he," his voice trembles with eagerness, "did he make any special arrangement with you in the purchase?"

Red Jones chuckles and expectorates with the air of a man who has something humorous to tell.

"Oh, yes," he says, shaking all over with mirth, "he was very particular to buy all the claims the Spoke ever did have, or would have, or could have. In fact," he goes on, without noticing Lake's look of rage, "he seemed to care a darned sight more about what was past than what was to come, and no man ever took more pains than I did saltin' a mine, nuther."

Lake feels that it is useless to tell Jones what he has given away in selling his salted mine to the Englishman. So he merely groans, and turns away. He knows what it means: Sandowne has become alarmed in some way, and has determined to make certain of the fortune he gets with his bride. But where did the fifty thousand dollars come from?

This is not the time to ponder that, however. The more cunning and determination displayed by the Englishman, the more imperative for him to lose no time in checkmating him. Those accursed Apaches! If there were only some way of getting a telegram to New York!

"Red," he says, hoarsely, "for Heaven's sake get

me a wagon and an escort as soon as possible. I'll pay any money."

"All right, Bob; I'm off," and he starts to go.

"And, Red," says Lake, desperately, "don't you think you could induce somebody to carry a telegram if I paid the price?"

"It would be suicide, Bob," replies Jones, argumentatively. "If ye warn't so blamed sot on it ye'd know that without my tellin' ye. I wouldn't ask no man ter do it alone; an' ef it came ter gettin' more'n one, why, I don't see as ye'd gain much time over takin' it yerself."

"Get the wagon, Red," says Lake, sinking wearily into a chair, his strength almost gone from him.

Jones goes out, intent on doing what he sees will be a service to Lake, and the latter lets his head fall on his arms, on the table before him. He wishes to shut out everything while he thinks. Then the hopelessness of thinking almost overwhelms him. It is doing that will count, and he unable to do! Ah! if he were only strong enough to mount a horse.

"If I could only send that telegram!" he cries out. "There would be an answer before I left Tombstone."

A light touch on his shoulder causes him to look up. Sallie stands there, a piteous, pleading look in her large eyes.

"Bob," she says, humbly, "ef ye'll give me that thar telegram, I kin git it ter Tombstone fer ye."

He studies her face mechanically, a bitter, perhaps a suspicious, expression in his eyes. At any rate she thinks she sees suspicion in his eyes, for tears spring into her own, and she puts out her hand deprecatingly, as she says:

"Ah, Bob! don't ye be hard on me, though I reckon I ain't no call to complain, whatever ye think. But, Bob, suppose I was to hold that telegram back, ye wouldn't be no worse off. Won't ye give it ter me, Bob?"

In fact, he has no doubt whatever of the honesty of the girl.

"Whom could you get to take it, Sallie?" he asks. "Your father says it will be unsafe."

"I know somebody who'll take it," she answers, eagerly. "Don't ye fret about that. You jest write the telegram, an' I'll see to the rest."

"I shall want to see him before he goes," Lake says. "So you go fetch him, while I write the message. And thank you, Sallie," he adds, holding out his hand, as if in assurance that by-gones should be by-gones.

Sallie draws back, her bosom heaving irregularly, and her white teeth biting her red lip.

"After the telegram goes I'll shake hands with ye, Bob," she says, huskily. "An' ef ye don't mind, ye can give me the d'rections, an' I'll deliver 'em."

"Well," he says, seeing that she does not wish him to see the messenger, and knowing no reason why he should insist, "I suppose you can give my directions as well as I can. Who'll you get to take it."

"I reckon I'll find some un ter do it," she replies. "You leave it ter me. Th' won't be no time lost."

He immediately looks about for paper and pencil; Sal gets them for him, and he writes two telegrams, which he hands to her unfolded, saying:

"You'd better read them, Sallie, if you're going to give them to the messenger. He will have to know what they say in case the operator should not be able to read my writing. It is a little shaky, you see."

Sal's own hand shakes somewhat, as she takes the telegrams. The other hand presses on her bosom. She is evidently reluctant to read; but she finally does. Absorbed as he is in the matter, Lake forgets what Sal's relations to him are, and he follows her unsteady voice, intent only on assuring himself that she can read every word of the messages.

She is abasing herself to prove her repentance for the injury she has done to the man she loves, but even through her humility there struggles the sense of being tortured, in being forced to read these telegrams aloud.

There is something of Lake's own indomitable spirit in the girl, however, and she reads without finching, only an occasional choking gulp, showing how hard it is for her. The first is to De Peyster Van Kouver.

"For Heaven's sake, stop the wedding! Say I have proofs that S. has no claim. The brother died three weeks ago."

This is the telegram to him. The other is to Marjorie Bridger. Sal's breath comes and goes very quickly, as she reads the name; her nostrils dilate, and her head goes erect with a sort of fierce pride, as she forces herself to read the message.

"I shall be in New York as soon as possible after this. Will you not postpone wedding until then? Claim made on you by S. is fraudulent. Dick died by my side, like a hero, three weeks ago. With death staring him in the face, he told me the whole story. Please wait?"

"Thank you," says Lake, gratefully. "Be sure that the messenger——"

But Sal has left the room with a stamp of the foot and a flash of the eye that are incomprehensible to Lake, who, with the easy facility of a man, has swept aside everything that does not directly bear on the matter in hand. Perhaps, too, his weakness makes him a little dull, for he is very weary, and throws himself on the bed in the other room as soon as Sal is gone.

CHAPTER XV.

THE DEAD HORSE.

"Men are either cruel or stupid," mutters Sal, as she sweeps through the town with a swift, free, springy step that betokens a perfect development of limb.

Her eyes are snapping, and her cheeks, which were so pale a few minutes before, are flaming. She is angry, but notwithstanding her muttered words, it is not really toward Lake that her wrath is directed, but toward the girl in New York, whom she has never seen, and whom she characterizes to herself in terms more forcible than elegant.

Sam Morgan, lounging out of the bar-room of the hotel, sees her coming, and his face lights up with pleasure. He watches her swift, swinging gait, and as she comes nearer, sees the flame in her eyes and on her cheeks. He thinks she is Diana and Venus combined, only for lack of acquaintance with these goddesses, he does not express the idea to himself in that way.

"But, holy Moses! ain't she mad," he mutters, as she comes near enough for him to catch the expression of her face.

"Oh, Sam!" she says, abruptly, "I was lookin' fer ye. I want ter borrow yer bronco."

"Not Ginger?" replies Sam, interrogatively, although Ginger is his only horse.

"Yes, Ginger," she says, sharply. "Why not?"

"Wa-al," he answers, in an embarrassed way, "I 'lowed I'd use him myself ter-day. Ye see, I've jest agreed to jine yer dad in 'scorting Bob Lake over the mountings."

"You kin git another animal," she says, shortly. "I want Ginger. Are ye goin' ter let me have him or not?"

"Why, I s'pose—— What ye goin' ter do with him, Sal?"

"I reckon 'tain't none o' yer bisness, Sam Morgan," she answers, wrathfully, rather glad, if the truth be told, to make the man who loves her pay the penalty for the man who does not love her. "Ginger ain't th' only horse in town, an' I reckon thar's them willin' enough to lend without askin' more questions than a lawyer. Keep yer horse, Sam Morgan."

She turns on her heel, and is striding rapidly away. Sam overtakes her with a few long steps, and keeps pace with her as she hurries on, saying, deprecatingly:

"Ye kin have Ginger. What's the use o' bein' so all-fired peppery, Sal?"

"I kin git horses 'nough without beggin' fer 'em on my bended knees," retorts Sal, without checking her rapid walk.

"Sal," says Sam, desperately, "will ye take Ginger or not? You do pick a feller up so blamed quick!"

"You ain't no call ter make me beg," replies Sal, uncompromisingly. "Yes, I'll take him."

"I'll go get him fer ye," says Sam, in a tone of relief.

"No, ye won't. I'll get him myself. I know where he is, I reckon. And, see here, Sam! ye needn't tell dad I've borrered him. Understand?"

"All right," replies Sam, a little sulkily. "But I don't see why I can't go with you to get th' critter. I ain't seen much o' ye sence that 'ere Bob Lake come ter town."

"Bob Lake had ter be nussed," retorts Sal, turning on Sam so angrily that he steps back involuntarily. "Don't go ter mixin' my name up with his'n."

"I don't want ter mix it up with his'n," mutters Sam. "I only said I hadn't seen much o' ye sence he came here."

"He didn't come; he was brought," retorts Sal, captiously. "An' what's more, he's tryin' his best ter git away as quick es he kin."

"Oh!" cries Sam, with a sudden burst of light, "an' that's what makes ye so mad."

It seems for a moment as if Sal will choke with anger. Her bosom heaves, she swallows violently, and she stamps her foot twice before she can find speech, and when she does it is almost superfluous, her eyes tell so much.

"You—you—" she gasps. "Sam Morgan, how dare ye say sech a thing es that ter me? I—I——" and then from a fury she turns into a woman, and bursts into tears.

Sam wants to run, he wants to take her in his arms and soothe her, he wants to kick himself. But he does nothing he would like to do; he simply stands helplessly looking at Sal, and muttering unquiet oaths in condemnation of himself.

And he would stand there till doomsday if Sal did not extricate him from the dilemma. She does it suddenly, in a way that puzzles him as much as her quick transition from anger to tears. She stops crying all at once, looks up at him with a sad smile, and puts out her hand to him.

"Thar, Sam! ye mustn't mind me. I reckon I'm kind o' tired with nursin'. Good—good-by, Sam!"

He takes her hand eagerly if awkwardly, and holds it very much as if it were a delicate piece of China.

"I reckon thar ain't no call ter say good-by, Sal," he says, for want of anything more to the point.

She bites her lip, and her face is quite pale.

"No, I s'pose not, Sam," she falters. "Only yer goin' across the mountings, an' thar's 'Paches out. I—I thought as how somethin' might happen, an' we mightn't meet again. An' I didn't want ye ter think, Sam, I was onmindful of how much likin' thar's been between us."

She catches her breath, and chokes back a sob, and Sam realizes for the first time in his rough life how delightful weakness is in a woman. They are where no one can see them now, and on the impulse of the moment Sam dares to let his arm steal near her waist. But she draws gently back, and takes both his hands in hers.

"I said likin', Sam, not lovin'," she murmurs, kindly. "Good-by!" and with a look of gentle womanliness that has never been in her eyes before, she leaves him, and he goes away wondering at the variety of strange moods a woman can have in a given space of time.

Sal's movements are feverish now, and a trifle stealthy. She saddles Ginger, shortening the stirrups. Then she feels to assure herself that her revolvers are in her belt; leads Ginger out, and mounts him man-fashion.

She rides well, as a girl should who has done it from infancy. At first she goes along in an indifferent, careless way, as if she has no especial object in view. She reaches a spot from which she looks at her father's shanty. There she pulls Ginger in, and looks intently. Then she heaves a sigh, digs her heels into Ginger's sides, and dashes into an arroyo, which conceals her from view.

When she reappears where she is visible to any one in the valley below, she is near Riley's shanty, at the spot she had stood and directed Lake how to take the short cut, when he was striving to win the girl he loved.

"Oh, Bob!" she sobbed, "why wa'n't Sal Jones thet gal?"

* * * * *

Lake is sorry not to see Sal, to bid her good-by; but he fancies she prefers to absent herself for her own reasons; and, after all, he realizes that he is saved a scene, perhaps. He leaves word with Mrs. Jones that he is very grateful for all Sal's care, and then climbs into the mule wagon and dismisses Sal from his mind, excepting so far as she is included in the uneasy wonder if the telegrams have been sent.

They make the best time they can toward Tombstone, Lake urging them by every means in his power. As they go farther away from the Gulch there are signs that make Jones call out to Lake:

"Blamed good thing ye had th' escort, Bob. Been 'Paches along here to-day."

Lake thinks of his telegrams, and the man Sal

was to send with them. He hopes nothing has happened to the messenger.

"Do you see sure signs, Red?" he asks.

"Dead sure. An' some o' the boys says thar's been a pursuit, from the looks o' things."

"My God!" mutters Lake. Then aloud to Jones: "Sal took those telegrams I spoke of this morning, and said she could find some one to take them."

"The duse you say! Wa-al, I reckon it's him. Ef so, thar'll be one fool less in the world afore night, ef not already," and Red Jones goes off to add this bit of information, in order to increase the interest in the study of the signs along the road.

The men wonder who the "tarnation idiot" was that took the telegrams alone, and try to guess; but they can think of no one, and would doubt if any had, but for the plain signs of a pursuit along the road.

"Wa-al," drawls Jones, coming to the wagon after a while, "he's givin' a good account o' hisself. Two 'Paches toes up so far."

He points them out to Lake in a moment, and Lake feels sick at the sight of them.

"The others was in too much of a hurry to hide 'em," Jones says, calmly. "The chase was mighty hot here. I reckon we'll know who he was in a little while."

"Why?"

"His horse is goin' lame about here."

"How many in pursuit?"

"Six, now."

But they don't find the body of the white man. A mile farther on, however, they come upon a dead horse, and gather about curiously. Sam Morgan is the first to spring from his horse, and is examining the saddle.

"Do you recognize it?" asks Lake, who has come up in the wagon.

"By thunder, Sam!" drawls Jones, "if the critter ain't the livin'—the dead image, I mean, o' your Ginger."

"It is Ginger!" says Sam, hoarsely, his eyes fixed fiercely on Lake.

"Then," says Lake, with deep interest, "you will know who the man was. To whom did you lend him?"

Sam rises slowly from the animal, and goes with slow menace over to Lake, the others looking at him with only mild curiosity, for they see nothing strange in his expression.

"Don't you know?" Sam asks of Lake, in slow, measured tones.

"No. Certainly not. Do you?"

"Do I? Curse you, Bob Lake! I let Sal Jones have that thar critter, an' so help me God! ef that gal ain't in Tombstone when we arrive thar, I'll have yer life!"

"Sal Jones!" gasps Lake, and after staring incredulously at Sam for a moment, he comprehends everything.

He covers his face with his hands, and groans. The other men gather around, in curious silence, for they have not heard.

"She bid me good-by!" says Sam, huskily.

"Who did?" demands Jones.

"Yer darter Sal," replies Sam, turning his burning eyes on the startled father. "She rid that 'ere horse. . She did it fer him, an', by the Eternal! it's his life fer her'n!"

Red Jones looks with a terrible expression from Sam to Lake. Then turns away, saying, hoarsely:

"Boys, ride like fury! Look out fer side trails! Ef the gal ain't in Tombstone thar'll be a lynchin'."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ANSWER.

Lake understands perfectly how the matter seems to Sam and Red Jones. He knows that his life is in deadly peril; that the threat made against him is not an empty one.

But as the heavy mule wagon goes rattling and jolting over the rough road he is not thinking of himself, but of the girl who has probably given her life in the effort to right a wrong done by her.

Not a word more is said to him by his escort. The mule team is now urged on at its best pace, without the least regard to his comfort, and the men gallop in stern silence about the wagon.

Nothing further is seen on the road to give any clew to Sal's case, and she is generally given up. Only Jones, who knows her best, has any vestige of hope left, but even he is in a very vengeful mood; and, illogically enough, he begins to recall the events of the lynching, and grows angrier and angrier as he gallops on by the side of Sam.

Sam, never very much given to words, is quite silent until he is at last addressed by Jones.

"Tell me all about Sal—how she come to git the horse," he says.

So Sam tells circumstantially all that had passed between him and Sal, concealing nothing, because it is no secret that he has been in love with Sal for a long time. And Jones listens in silence, excepting for an occasional ejaculatory oath, until the story is told, when he says, solemnly:

"She knowed blamed well, Sam, when she said good-by, thet she wa'n't goin' ter see you again."

"I s'picioned she war soft on him all along," says Sam, jerking his thumb sullenly toward the wagon.

"She war a leetle headstrong," says Jones, reflect-

ively; "but a better gal no man never had. Nor a handier. Nor a pootier."

"Pootiest gal in Arizony," acquiesces Sam, half-fiercely. "An' I'll never forgit the look that was in her eyes when she says good-by. It war jest like she see more'n thar war in this world."

"I've heard tell," says Jones, in a low tone, "that them that's goin' ter die does see things in that way."

It is dusk when, tired and dusty, the whole cavalcade, the mule wagon in the center, dash at a weary gallop through the main street of Tombstone.

"To the telegraft office?" says Jones, grimly. "We ain't goin' ter be too quick. Ef she got here she took them blamed telegrams whar they belonged. That was her sort."

They come to a sudden halt at the telegraph office, and Jones whispers to two of the men, who dismount and climb into the wagon.

"Ef he makes a move, or says a word to anybody, shoot him through the head," says Jones, in a low growl, quite audible to Lake, however.

Lake glances wearily from Jones to the two men. He is too worn out from the hard ride to make any remonstrance against a course so illogical and unreasonable. He hopes Sal will be found. He hopes the telegrams have gone.

Jones and Sam stride into the telegraph office. They are going to make inquiry merely as a matter of justice. They expect to stride out again with very little delay. The operator is a girl, and she stares at them with languid interest.

"Say, sis!" ejaculates Jones, gruffly, "any telegrams come in here to-day, from a feller by the name o' Lake?"

"Why do you ask?" she queries.

"Wa-al, I've got a good reason fer askin'. Any objections to answerin'?"

"What is your name, please?"

"Jones. Red Jones, some calls me."

The girl nods and smiles, and then stoops and disappears from sight. Jones and Sam look at each other doubtfully, and the former is making ready

to utter some unnecessary words, when a slight commotion behind the counter ensues, and the operator reappears, accompanied by another girl.

"Hello, dad! ye got here, eh?"

It is Sal. Her face is pale, but otherwise she appears to be unharmed. The two men first gasp with astonishment, and then break into a series of muttered oaths.

"Got him here all O K, did ye?" she asks, ignoring their surprise.

Red Jones now has a revulsion of feeling, and becomes paternally angry.

"Oh! ye're safe, are ye?" he growls. "Wa-al, I'd like to know what ye mean by cuttin' up sech a dido es this here. Do you know what we was blamed near doin'? In about ten minits more Bob Lake 'ud a-been dancin' on air."

There is a little gate that serves to let the young woman operator in and out of her inclosure. At her father's words a sudden passion flames in Sal's eyes, and with a bound she sits on the counter, swings her feet to the other side, and is facing the two men. She has no time to fuss with a gate.

"Hang him! For what?"

"We thought you was killed by the 'Paches," answers Jones.

"S'posen I was—what then? Who said he had anything to do with it?"

"He said he'd given you the telegrams," replies Jones, uneasily, conscious that his parental anger does not hold out.

"Oh!" ejaculates Sal, and turns her flashing eyes on Sam, as if to demand what he has to say for himself.

He glances at Jones, shifts his feet, jams a revolver a little snugger into his belt, and says, sulkily:

"I knowed 'twas Ginger the minit my eyes lit on him."

"Oh!" Her tone is concentrated scorn. "Wa-al, I reckon I kin raise the price somehow. So ye wanted ter lynch him, did ye?" This to her father. "Remember how he euchred ye out o' Dick Bridger,

I reckon—eh? An' he's kin' o' weak now—eh? Whar is he?"

She pushes past them without waiting for the answer, which is slow in coming. Sam is completely crushed, but fuller than ever of admiration and love. But Jones is recovering his parental temper as he writhes under the sting of her words, and he strides after her and pulls her about by placing his heavy hand on her shoulder.

"Look a-here, Sal," he says, angrily, "I want somethin' besides sass from you. What call you got ter come over here, anyhow? Who told ye to come?"

"He didn't," retorts Sal, quite undaunted by the wrath in her father's face. "He ain't that sort. You told him the' wa'n't a man 'ud take them telegrams. It was my fault they needed to go. Oh, I ain't goin' ter tell ye why; but I tell ye it war my fault. So I brung 'em."

"An' war blamed near bein' tuk by them 'Paches fer a squaw," interjects her father.

"They don't want me fer no squaw," she retorts, fiercely. "I ain't the kind they're lookin' fer."

"Who killed them two we see on the road?" demands Jones.

"I did. Whar's Bob?"

"He's out thar in the waggin. What did ye do when yer critter war shot?"

"Jumped on t'other one," replies Sal, impatiently, quite unconscious of the fact that she is rapidly rising to the proportions of a heroine in the eyes of her father, while Sam is ready to fall down on his knees and worship her.

"What other one?" demands Jones.

"Why, I'd grabbed one o' them that belonged ter one o' the deaders. I stuck ter Ginger es long es I dared, fer I knowed"—looking at Sam scornfully—"thet his owner 'ud be asking about him, an'—"

"Ye ain't no call ter say thet, Sal," cries Sam, in indignant distress. "Ye know blamed well thet yer welcome to all I've got. It warn't Ginger; 'twas you I cared fer."

"Wa-al, I'm safe enough, an' I've got a telegram

fer Lake, ef ye haven't lynched him. Oh! ef he was well ye'd lynch him, wouldn't ye?" and she sweeps out of the room and into the street.

The mule wagon is there, with the escort lounging about it. But she does not see them. Her eyes have caught sight of him inside, his head leaning wearily against the side of the wagon. She snatches a paper from her pocket and leaps up on the tongue of the wagon, crying:

"Bob! Oh, Bob! Here's yer answer."

He opens his eyes, and stares incredulously.

"Safe, Sal! Oh, Sal! what made you take such a risk? Thank God, you're safe!"

Sal's voice quivers for the first time. He has been concerned for her safety. Oh, it was worth while to do what she did to make him feel that way.

"Oh, that's all right, Bob!" she says, with a tremulous effort at indifference. "Here's the answer?"

She thrusts the message into his hand, and he takes it mechanically.

"If I had known what you were contemplating," he says, "you should never have stirred a step."

"Wa-al," she chuckles. "ye didn't know, an' I came. Read yer answer."

"What does it say?" he asks, fumbling nervously with it.

"Don't know," she replies, curtly. "I wouldn't read it."

He tries to read the writing on the message form, but there is not light enough to enable him to do so.

"Come inside whar thar's a lamp," Sal says.

He makes the attempt to rise, but is too weak, which Sal sees; and with a womanly tenderness which few have ever seen in her, she gives him her hand to assist him; and then helps him down with her arm around him.

Supporting himself by her arm, he walks unsteadily into the office, and approaches the light. The two men, seeing how weak he is, steal shamefacedly out, followed by a scornful glance from Sal.

Lake opens the telegram, wondering whom it is from; doubting, hoping, fearing. There is a sickening moment of hesitation, which he is too weak to

endure. He passes his hand over his forehead, where great beads of perspiration stand, and reads.

Sal watches him with clenched hands and heaving bosom. It is to her as if her sentence were being read. She sees his eyes fly back and forth over the paper; sees him turn pale and totter.

“My God!” he gasps. “My God!”

She catches him, and lets him sink gently on the wooden bench behind him. The paper has fluttered to the floor. She picks it up, and reads it:

“The wedding took place at two o'clock this afternoon. Bride and groom sail for Europe on Etruria. DE P. VAN KOUVER.”

CHAPTER XVII.

MAN AND WIFE.

Sandowne is triumphant. A combination of a great deal of good luck and a small amount of good judgment, together with utter unscrupulousness and considerable cunning, have resulted in making him the husband of the rich and beautiful Marjorie Bridger.

But it has been a very trying time for him, and not for one instant has he been sure that he was safe from the operation of some unforeseen accident. He had been made uneasy in the very first moment of his triumph by the sudden disappearance of Lake.

He had not at first, however, suspected the true cause of that disappearance. But when a little later the desultory correspondence he had had with Dick Bridger ceased entirely, he felt that there was some connection between that cessation and Lake's absence.

Then there was that debt to Van Kouver, which must be settled. He had, indeed, seen Van Kouver, and had told him in an off-hand way that his remittances were a trifle behind, but would be along in a day or two, when he would settle. But the day or two had lengthened into half a dozen already, and but for one circumstance Lord Sandowne would have been posted and discredited; Van Kouver could not bring himself to disgrace and discredit a man who would, nevertheless, be the husband of Marjorie Bridger.

Sandowne was just the sort of scoundrel to comprehend quickly the operation of Van Kouver's mind on that subject; and as the days went by without his being posted, he knew that he owed his immunity to his relation to Marjorie. It was char-

acteristic of him that he hated Van Kouver for his very generosity.

But it was the silence of Dick Bridger that gave him his real anxiety. If Lake had gone out there and won Dick Bridger there was a certain end to his nefarious plot against the happiness of Marjorie. So he spent a great many bad quarter hours pondering the matter, and as a result sought and found a willing tool in an impecunious countryman of his.

This man he had sent out to Tombstone to make cautious inquiries concerning both Dick and Lake; and in a very short time he had received a telegram which had caused him to turn gray with apprehension. Dick Bridger had died by the side of Lake, and Lake was recovering from his wounds over at Faro Gulch.

It became neck or nothing with Sandowne. He knew well enough that if Marjorie learned what he knew she would instantly break the engagement with him. He was determined that she should not discover the death of her brother if he could prevent it; and, moreover, he was bent upon a new bit of treachery, which the death of Dick rendered possible.

It was at this time that he conceived the idea that it would be a good plan for him to own the Spoke Mine, so that in case Lake should turn up at an inopportune time he would still have the money, though he lost the girl.

A man who cannot pay a small debt can hardly be expected to raise enough for the purchase of a mine; but matters were rather different with Sandowne now than they had been. Dick's death was at once a loss and a gain to him.

He telegraphed his man to remain in Tombstone, and immediately sat down to compose some letters. As a preliminary, he got out all the letters he had ever received from Dick, and studied them very carefully. He studied the style, the peculiarly Western phraseology and spelling; and he wrought with great care at reproducing Dick's chirography.

Some days later Marjorie found an opportunity

to whisper to him at a ball to which her father had taken her:

"I have received a letter from Dick. I would like to see you for a moment alone. I have put you down for the next quadrille. Come to me, then, and we will go where we can converse uninterruptedly."

Sandowne shrugged his shoulders slightly as if it were a matter of indifference to him; but that was unnecessary overacting, and Marjorie's red lip curled scornfully as she left him. He was by her side when the quadrille music began, and she put her hand on his arm, and walked away with him.

"You knew I had heard from Dick?" she said, rather than asked.

It would have been more natural for him to lie, but a second thought convinced him that the truth would be wiser.

"Yes."

"Then you know that he wishes me to give you sixty thousand dollars to take to him?"

"Yes."

"Why can I not send it to him?" she demanded.

He flushed, and bit his lip. It was decidedly unpleasant to have his *fiancee* show her distrust of him so unreservedly. Nevertheless, he shrugged his shoulders, and drawled:

"I think you had better not insist upon an answer to that question. Believe me, Dick knew precisely what he wanted done with the money. Of course," he added, "it will come very hard on me to have to be away from you for so long."

Her lip curled, as it so often did in his presence, and she replied, coldly:

"That sort of thing between us is both offensive and unnecessary."

A very evil expression shot into his eyes, and if he had dared, he would have gripped the white shoulder by his side, till it was black and blue; but as he did not dare, he merely showed his teeth in a snarling sort of smile.

"How and when shall I give you the money?" she asked, after a short pause.

"The sooner the better for Dick," he replied;

"and I think a certified check would be the best form."

They were very large stakes that Sandowne was playing for, and he knew that he might any morning wake up to find himself proclaimed liar, forger, scoundrel; but his affairs were at such a pass that he had no choice from his point of view but to take the risk.

So he had taken it; had gone to Arizona; had bought the Spoke Mine; had done what he could to keep Lake out there as long as possible; and yet every day was a day of terror to him until he was actually married to Marjorie. He became so frightened at last, that he had even resorted to another forged letter to Marjorie, begging her to hasten the wedding.

And Marjorie, poor girl! had done it. Ah, if she had only known that by insisting upon the day originally set, she would hear from Lake! Hear from Lake! That had been the one thought she had lived on during all the days.

She had suspected at once that Lake had gone away to do something to save her from Sandowne. She loved the man, and that was why she could guess that he had gone away to help her in some way. How, she did not pretend to guess. But she had such faith in him.

Then the days go by, and she loses hope, and becomes very cold and unapproachable. She has felt the tacit sympathy of Van Kouver, and at first has found a happiness in it; but finally, when Lake remains so long silent, and not a whisper of him is heard, she becomes cool to Van Kouver, and although he comprehends, he does not dare to say a word.

After waiting for three weeks he determines to go out to Arizona and learn something; for his letters remained unanswered. Then comes an urgent message from his mother to go to her in Florida. She is very ill, and he remains there until within a few days of the wedding.

Not a line from Lake yet, and no time to communicate with him. Besides, what will be the use?

So he goes to the wedding, and with a heavy heart sees Marjorie Bridger become Lady Sandowne.

He is quite confident that Sandowne is celebrating some bit of villainy, and he is certain that he is very uneasy and furtive until the ceremony is over, when his demeanor changes perceptibly, and he is cool and sardonic, as becomes a successful scoundrel.

"Have all letters and telegrams for Lady Sandowne sent to the steamer to wait for her," Van Kouver chances to overhear Sandowne say to the butler.

"All letters and telegrams!" murmurs Van Kouver to himself, but he has made up his mind that the time for interference of any sort is past, and he shrugs his shoulders, and takes his place in the throng at the wedding breakfast.

Very many go down to the steamer to see the bride off, and there is a great pile of flowers in the saloon for Marjorie. A great deal of champagne is drunk on the steamer, and Sandowne certainly does all he can to make the occasion seem a very joyous one.

But somehow no one takes away the idea that there has been anything especially joyous in the affair, for Marjorie, so capable of rollicking fun and merriment, has been rather scornfully calm throughout.

It is not a time of the year when many are going over the water, and they have been able to secure the best state-room on the steamer. They all flock down to look at it. It is odorous with flowers, and looks like a bower.

"Oh!" cries one of the young ladies, whose sharp eyes have been searching for novelties, "here is a telegram for Miss Marjorie Bridger."

Sandowne changes color and steps forward rather more quickly than politely, and snatches it from the hand that holds it.

"It will be something for Lady Sandowne to read when you have all left her," he says, and places it in his pocket.

"I will take it," Marjorie says, with quiet coldness.

He bites his lip and looks at her. She returns his glance with calm, cold insistence. He has nothing to do but yield. He hands her the telegram, with a smile.

"I thought you might be without a pocket in your dress," he says.

"I can hold it in my hand," she replies.

She does not doubt that it is a telegram of congratulation, for she has already received a number; and she holds it carelessly in her hand, snipping off small bits in an absent-minded way. But somehow, she does not read the message, until the steamer has cast loose from the dock, and she has seen the last of her friends' faces.

Then she almost forgets it, but is reminded of it by its being in her way when she wishes to take some flowers from her waist. She opens it, and reads. She is unconscious that her husband's eyes are watching her intently; she is unconscious of everything, and has no notion of the varied expressions that chase each other over her lovely face.

Suddenly, she looks up, and his face is the first thing she sees. Her bosom is heaving tumultuously, and her eyes are distended. She lifts the telegram with a hand that quivers.

"Read it," she says to him.

He takes it, and reads. He changes color, but is not greatly surprised. In fact, he finds some sort of relief in having the worst present itself in a form so seemingly harmless.

"Poor Dick!" he says.

She eyes him with a strange glance. That telegram from Lake means more to her than anybody could comprehend. That marvelous thing, woman's intuition, makes her say:

"You knew he was dead."

Sandowne makes a rapid calculation of the chances for and against, and concludes that the time has come when he may safely let Marjorie understand her true relation to him as his wife.

"Come down to the state-room," he says. "This

is hardly the place for a conversation that promises to be interesting."

It is rather in Sandowne's way to bully a woman; and he has no serious doubt of his ability to let Marjorie see that the time has come to drop her airs and graces of manner in her intercourse with him.

"Well," he says, when the state-room is reached, "you want to know if I knew Dick was dead. Yes. What of it?"

She shrinks back very much as if he had tried to strike her, and a curious expression fills her blue eyes.

"You knew he was dead before we were married?" she queries.

"Certainly. He has been dead three weeks and more."

"Three weeks and more! Then that letter——"

"Come, come, Lady Sandowne!" he says, with a sneer; "spare me and yourself any scene. We are married now. It was a game of wits, and I won."

"Married!" repeats Marjorie, looking at him with unconcealed scorn and horror. "Yes, we are married; but you have a very inadequate conception of the woman you have tricked, if you believe she will submit to being your wife. Lord Sandowne, let us understand each other now. I despise you utterly, and I will never be more of wife to you than I am at this moment. I do not choose to cause a scandal, and it rests with you whether our separation shall be public or private. Either you will procure another state-room, or I shall."

CHAPTER XVIII.

TAMING AN AMERICAN GIRL.

An evil smile curls Lord Sandowne's lip as he listens to Marjorie. He has heard women in heroics before, and as he looks with a cold stare at the flushed, indignant face of his bride, it passes through his mind that he has tamed an angrier woman than this.

Perhaps it is with some satisfaction that he proceeds to essay the task with Marjorie, for he does not forget the many rebuffs he has received in the course of his rather unusual courtship.

A sense of power enables him to remain cool—cold, rather, and that is a very great advantage for him.

The sneer remains on his lip much in the same way that a snarling dog will keep his lips drawn up to show his teeth.

"What you say, Lady Sandowne," he says, "looked very pretty and bold in the book in which you read it, I have no doubt; but you should know that in real life a wise wife obeys her husband."

"What I have said," replies Marjorie, her eyes betraying a mixture of emotions of which shame, scorn, and anger are parts, "is my deliberate conviction. In marrying you I was the victim of a gross deception, and I repeat that I will never be any more your wife than I am at this moment."

Lord Sandowne is angrier than he will betray, but contrives to maintain a calmness in consonance with his theory of taming a woman. He reflects that nothing is more terrifying to a woman than the prospect of physical violence. His teeth shut tighter and his lips open a little more, giving him a very evil expression, indeed.

He has no need to move to touch Marjorie; in the

narrow state-room they are already unpleasantly near together for two people who dislike each other as much as these two; but for effect, he takes a stride that brings him close by her side. His hand closes tightly and painfully on her round arm, and his voice is husky with passion.

"Lady Sandowne," he says, his face bent near to hers, although she draws her own away, "it is time we understood each other. The law is with me, and I purpose taking advantage of that fact. Do not forget that you are no longer a free girl, at liberty to insult the man you are to marry. Do not forget that I bore your insults, your silly whims before; but that from this time forward I will have none of them. I am your husband, and I forbid any more such childish exhibitions of temper."

He looks very ugly—even terrifying, and Marjorie does not know how far the law of her own or of his country will uphold him in endeavoring to make her submissive. But it does not matter much how ugly he is, nor what the law may say. She has made up her mind, and cannot conceive of altering it for him or for the law. As a matter of fact, most women are superior to the law, though not all women are superior to brute force exerted by the man who is also the husband.

Marjorie is in pain from the grip on her arm, as he intends that she shall be, brute that he is; but, except that her face pales a little, she gives no sign of suffering; though she does say, with that cutting contempt of which the American girl is pre-eminently capable:

"You are hurting me." Then she adds, with a slight change of tone: "But you do not frighten me, which I fancy is your object."

Lord Sandowne perhaps recalls now that the women he has tamed in the past were not American girls. He tightens his grasp on the tender arm, and his eyes blaze with anger. The calmness of conscious power is leaving him.

"I will frighten you, and I will tame you!" he says, his voice broken with anger.

"Neither," she says, in the same scornful way.

"You may hurt me, because I am not disposed to descend to a struggle with you; but the more you betray your brutality the more fixed I am in my determination that you shall be nothing more than a name to me."

If Lord Sandowne follows his inclinations at this moment he will strike the proud, beautiful face a blow with his fist, but a variety of considerations restrain him, not one of them a worthy one.

He flings Marjorie away from him with sufficient violence to cause her to stagger and fall against the side of the state-room, and he gives vent to an oath, possibly with the thought that bad language will effect what pain will not.

Marjorie is filled with shame and self-scorn; but the expression in her blue eyes is wholly one of contempt for this unmanly man whom she has married. And in her breast is such an anger as a woman is capable of when she is unrestrained by fear. And Marjorie has not an iota of that feeling at this moment.

"You will find yourself powerless, after all," says Sandowne, between his closed teeth. "Do not forget," he goes on, with the sudden thought of insulting her, "that your Mr. Lake cannot help you. You may regret him, but you cannot have him, and he cannot do anything for my wife, unless——" and he stops, with a sneer.

The innuendo is not lost on Marjorie, and makes the hot color flush her cheeks.

"Mr. Lake," she says, quickly, "will never attempt to assist me unless I ask him. But if I should ask him, I think he would know how to do it without compromising me. I recall the time when he refrained from saying that you had had his stirrup leather cut in order that you might win a paltry bet."

Sandowne had not hesitated to commit the act of which Marjorie now accuses him so scornfully; but he emphatically does not like to be told of it. He has no answer to it, however, and retorts, irrelevantly:

"It is a great pity that so clever a man was not able to win you for his wife, I should say."

"An honest man, however clever, is often at a disadvantage with a knave," replies Marjorie.

Sandowne finds himself unequal to a war of wits with the woman he was going to tame, and snarls:

"You are not complimentary to your husband—to the man whose name you bear."

Marjorie talks, but she is thinking hard all the while. The situation she finds herself in is even more hideous than she had supposed it would be. And she even begins to realize that it was wrong and foolish to have made such a sacrifice, even for Dick.

"I do not intend to compliment you," she says. "I intend to tell you exactly how I feel toward you."

"Pray do!" he interjects, angrily.

He, too, is wondering what the end of this will be. The only thing he is quite sure of is that he will not tame her; but he finds consolation in remembering that he has the deeds for the Spoke Mine in his pocket, and that the deeds contain a clause giving him the right to all claims of the mine.

"Yes," Marjorie says, her ideas crystallizing as she goes on, "I am sure there can be no better time than now for a complete understanding."

"I agree with you, Lady Sandowne," he says.

"I married you believing that by so doing I was saving my brother from the consequences of some act of his. There was no pretense of love or even liking between us. You knew that I must despise you. My marriage with you was a mere bargain, in which you were to receive me as an equivalent for your silence as to this act of my brother."

"You have quite a legal way of stating it, Lady Sandowne."

"In a bargain," Marjorie goes on, growing more calm, perhaps more desperate, as she talks, "it is always understood that there shall be the fulfillment of an agreement on the part of each. I went so far as to go through the ceremony of marriage with you; you have failed to do anything agreed

upon, and, in fact, cannot do as you agreed. Moreover, you knew it at the time of the wedding. Therefore you have been guilty of a deception, and the bargain between us is canceled."

"Your argument is beautiful," he sneers. "I beg you will go on to the conclusion—the peroration, so to speak."

"I will do so," she replies. "Before the world I am willing to be known as your wife——"

"I am so glad," he interrupts.

Marjorie does not hesitate an instant, but goes on as if saying the thing she had intended to say from the first:

"——because I had fortified myself from the beginning against the shame and degradation of that. But it must be understood fully and plainly between us that I am no more your wife than if we had never met."

"And you expect me to accept such a situation?" he queries, angrily.

"Oh," she replies, contemptuously, making him writhe internally, "I shall pay you for doing so. You may think this over, and decide upon a sum which will be satisfactory to you—an annual sum, I mean. If satisfactory to me also, I will pay it, and then our real lives may be far apart, while we still keep up a semblance of the relation which the world may believe to exist between us."

A sardonic smile curls Sandowne's lip. For reasons of his own, he has decided to keep the story of the Spoke Mine untold for a while, but Marjorie's unexpected rebellion renders it unnecessary to do so now.

"You are very liberal with what does not belong to you," he says. "Perhaps you will condescend to fix the sum which you wish me to allow you."

"Is this a poor jest, or a new piece of knavery?" demands Marjorie.

Sandowne bites his lip.

"It is merely the preface to the statement of fact that all that you suppose yourself possessed of really belongs to me."

Then he explains to her the flaw in the lines of

the two mines, and she listens, incredulous, and yet doubtful. Then something suggests itself to her.

"And the money you bought this mine with was that which you——" She stops and starts back. "Then the money you procured from me on the plea that it was for Dick was used to buy this mine. Did Dick know?"

He dares not tell her the whole truth yet.

"Of course he knew. He knew all I did."

"I do not believe you," she says, with sudden suspicion. "Nor do I believe your story about the mine. Father would never have made such a mistake. At any rate, I will do nothing without consulting him. You have awakened a new suspicion within me, and I doubt many things. Oh, what a silly fool I have been!"

"Your father, I think," says Sandowne, "will be very glad to make a compromise with me. By all means consult with him."

Marjorie looks him full in the face.

"And in the meantime," she says, "I will pay you a certain sum in quarterly installments. And now, Lord Sandowne, I think our interview has lasted long enough. No doubt you will know how to make arrangements for another state-room."

CHAPTER XIX.

L A T E O F A R I Z O N A .

"DEAR MADGE:—I would have answered your letter long ago, but the truth is that I was so broke up by the wedding that I lit out of New York the very next day, and put for the West, where I staid until a week ago.

"I never thought of you writing, and I'd left word that only certain letters should be sent after me; so yours waited until I came back. However, I'll answer it now; and I don't suppose any harm has come from your not receiving an answer sooner.

"You don't say anything about it, and I won't any more'n just this. I reckon you ain't over and above happy with that Sandowne. You know you can call on the old man whenever you want him, and for whatever you want. As Bob Lake says, it's too late now for anybody to interfere; but you know you can call on me.

"Now, about that Spoke Mine that Sandowne took so much trouble to buy up. He got nothing when he bought it. There was some trouble in the old days over the claims, and there was more'n one lively scrimmage over it; but it was finally settled in my favor, and even Red Jones allowed it was right.

"So Sandowne paid fifty thousand dollars for nothing; and the only good that has come out of that deal is that Red Jones has struck it rich since, and is just piling up the rocks.

"I'm talking just as if you knew Jones, which I reckon you don't all the same. Bob Lake knows him, though, and I must tell you about that; for I hope some good will come to Lake out of it. I tell you, Madge, Bob Lake is the whitest man I ever knew.

"And I suppose I might as well begin by saying that he's reconciled me and Dick. Poor Dick's dead, but if ever we do meet, I'll beg his pardon sure. He died fighting Injuns with Bob. Bob had just rescued him from a lynching which Red Jones was engineering. Bob did it all to get you out of the clutches of that Sandowne; and I reckon it would have worked all right, only Bob fell sick and was out of his head.

"However, that is all past and gone, and what I was going to say was that Sal Jones, a mighty likely girl, too, nursed Bob all through his illness; and they do say she and Bob will make a match of it. I reckon you'll be glad to hear it, for Bob worked mighty hard to do you a good turn.

"Maybe you'll see Sal over there some time. She's going over to spend some of Red's money, and I reckon she'll do it up brown. But she don't altogether know the ropes, and if she turns up near you, do the right thing by her, and set her straight.

"Bob Lake talks some of going over, too. Or did the last time I see him. I never saw a man so broke up by sickness as Bob.

"Your loving daddy,

RICHARD BRIDGER."

Lady Sandowne lets the letter fall into her lap, where, indeed, it has rested more than once during the perusal of it, and stares out of her window on the blue waters of the Mediterranean, for Lord and Lady Sandowne have left England for the Riviera.

Only Lady Sandowne remains in Nice, while his lordship seeks a somewhat gayer life at Monte Carlo.

The beautiful face is pale, and the blue eyes are no longer filled with that spirit of mischief and merriment which only a few months earlier had made them famous in New York. But it is only when the face is in the repose that it is now that this is so noticeable, for the proud heart of the duped American girl will not let her display to a curious world the hidden sorrow that is gnawing within.

During the months since her marriage to Sandowne she has gone over all that she has been able to discover, and has added suggestions to that, and has at last been able to make a fair guess at all the perfidy of the man she has wedded.

And now this letter comes, and with its half disclosures almost completes the story as it actually occurred. And she now knows to a certainty that the only man she loves or can love would have won her but for some treachery on the part of Sandowne. She does not comprehend what the treachery was, but is sure of it.

And now Lake is going to marry the girl who nursed him through his illness. Sal Jones! Oh, what a name! But then it will be all right as Mrs. Lake. "A likely girl," her father says. Well, what does it matter? She has no right to think of Lake. If there is a pang in her heart she must pretend, even to herself, that it has nothing to do with him.

So Marjorie, with a deeper paleness in her face, and a sadder look in her blue eyes, gets hurriedly up from her chair and begins to pace the floor and to battle with herself in a way she would have bitterly condemned in a married woman in the days before she knew what sorrows a wife might have to bear.

And while this silent warfare is being waged in the luxurious apartments of Lady Sandowne, the host of the hotel is bowing and writhing before two American ladies, in the endeavor to convince them that he has obeyed their telegraphic order to give them the best rooms in the hotel regardless of cost.

Their French, or rather the French of the younger lady, is bad, and the English of mine host is worse, so that they are having a terrible time of it. Although the landlord has this advantage—that, however he stumbles with his tongue, he is eloquent with his gestures.

His shoulders, his hands, his elbows, his eyebrows—yes, his very scalp, and even his marvelous legs—speak for him when his tongue stops before some particularly difficult passage in the vile language of the people who put the most money in his pocket. Until at last the young lady, who has finally seated herself, gives a few moments to painful reflections, and breaks out:

“*Eh bien! Ca va faire!*” and the landlord, with a sigh and a bow of humility and deprecation, hastens from the room.

“I wonder, ma—mamma, I mean—if I said the right thing, then. Well, anyhow, he got out. Where on earth is Colette? What is the use of having a French maid if she is not on hand to get you out of a scrape? What’s that? Letters? Who from? Dad? Papa, I mean?”

“Yes, Sal——”

“Sara, mamma. You always forget.”

“Wal, Sara, then. Yes, it’s from yer father. And who d’ye think’s coming here?”

Sallie—her pardon! Sara Jones rises from her seat slowly, her bright and really beautiful face becoming pale. A row of white teeth press into a full, red under lip for a moment before her self-control is obtained.

“Not—not Bob Lake?” she falters.

“Yes, Bob; but that ain’t all,” and there is a ring of exultation and pleasure in her mother’s tone that makes Sara suddenly open her eyes and cry out in

utter forgetfulness of the new language of elegance which she is struggling to use:

"Great ginger, ma! You ain't never going to tell me that Sam Morgan is coming, be ye?"

"I reckon ye've got it straight, Sal—Sary, I mean. Yer dad says Sam is coming on, to keep us from feeling homesick."

Sara walks to the window and looks out on the blue, dancing waters, very much as Marjorie did a few minutes earlier. She does not look like the girl who held Lake's horses, who found him half dead in the mountains, who cowered before his wrath in her father's hut at Faro Gulch. Notwithstanding the deficiencies of her pronunciation and vocabulary, she is a good type of the bright, beautiful, robust American girl from the West.

Her air is not queenly, but it is self-reliant; and her beauty is pronounced enough to make men glad to look at her. For her own reasons she has determined to be a lady, and so far as taste in dressing is concerned, she has learned her lesson. She is learning other things by degrees, and the sweet womanliness that underlies her character keeps her from too many gaucheries.

She looks out of the window for a little while, her mother reading the letter in the interim. There is a soft, dreamy look in Sara's eyes, which suddenly fades out, while the short upper lip curls scornfully.

"He'll do us proud, won't he?" she cries, turning toward her mother.

"Who will?" demands Mrs. Jones.

"Why, Sam Morgan. Just imagine him here! Great Scott! ma, why couldn't he have staid in Arizona? They need him there."

"Why, Sal!" cries Mrs. Jones, in severe reprobation. "If getting high-toned is going to make you go back on yer friends, it lets me out. I'm glad he's coming, and you'd oughter be."

"I'm not, all the same," retorts Sara; "but if he's coming I'll treat him decent. Oh, here's Colette. Come, help me dress, Colette. Where have you been, anyhow? Say, mamma, when are they—is Sam coming?"

"The letter don't say; but any time, I reckon."

"Do they go to England first?" demands Sara, with a little choke in her voice.

"Yes."

Sara's head goes up with a little toss, and her white, even teeth shut tightly together.

"She's a married woman," she mutters. "Come along, Colette!"

Colette wonders why mademoiselle is so very particular about her toilet this afternoon. She is usually good-tempered and easily suited. She is not precisely cross now, but nothing seems to suit, and Colette is obliged to change and change again, until at last she goes into the other room and expostulates to the trunks.

"What is the matter with Mademoiselle Sara?" she murmurs, with her pretty shoulders drawn up. "This will not do, that will not do; nothing will do. I think to myself that she has had some bad news about a lover. Pff!" and Colette tosses her hand with a gesture of disdain.

Then she returns to Sara, and is all patience and anxiety to please, until at last her young mistress is pleased to be pleased. And she may well be, for of her type it would be hard to find anything sweeter or lovelier than Sara Jones, late of Arizona.

And her mirror is kind enough to tell her so, which is gratifying to Sara, and she smiles her approval at it. She is thinking that if anybody who knew her last in Faro Gulch should see her now, he would surely think there was a great change in her.

Then she goes in to see that her mother, whose taste is not always to be relied on, has been properly kept in check by her maid. That maid, by the way, is the one great misery of the good woman's life. And it was a long time, in fact, before she could bring herself to make her toilet in her presence without blushing with modesty and shame.

That time is past now, however, and Mrs. Jones feels the same sort of triumph in her self-conquest that the far Western Congressman did when he finally learned to eat olives without making a wry face.

Sara finds her dressed as she should be, and together, when the time comes, they go down to the dining-room. But now there is a *contretemps*, as Sara takes care to call it. Provision has not been made for them, and there is no suitable table for these American ladies, who wish and can pay for the best of everything.

The head-waiter is in despair; everybody stares at the new-comers; Sara gazes about the room with that easy manner which is natural enough to her, and which is supposed to be the result only of the highest breeding.

As she does so she catches the eye of a very beautiful woman who is seated alone at a table large enough to accommodate four. The lady smiles pleasantly, and indicates her table by a motion of her beautiful head. Sara smiles back and leads her mother over there, the head-waiter hastening to get there first in order to adjust the chairs and make his apologies.

He has the good sense to keep quiet, however, when he sees that the ladies are not thinking of him, but are intent on mutual explanations.

"It is very kind of you," says Sara, feeling sure that the lady is American.

"Your ladyship will forgive," is all the head-waiter ventures, and then darts away; but he has told Sara and her mother that the lady is an Englishwoman of title.

The lady smiles pleasantly at Sara and her mother.

"I was sure you were American," she says, "and I was glad to have you come."

"How on earth everybody finds that out beats me," says Mrs. Jones, affably.

"It was kind of you, all the same," says Sara, admiring the exquisite beauty of the lady. "May I introduce my mother and myself? Mrs. Jones, Miss Sara Jones," and she smiles gayly.

The other starts and turns a little paler.

"The girl he will marry," she thinks.

"My name," she says, unconscious how her tone grows cold and formal, "is Lady Sandowne."

“The woman he loves!” is the thought that rends Sara’s heart.

And then the two women study each other with bitter, jealous eyes.

CHAPTER XX.

JEALOUSY.

Both Marjorie and Sara have too much self-control to betray what they feel as they sit facing each other. After a quick look into each other's eyes they exchange commonplaces, but all the while wondering how much or how little to say to each other.

Marjorie knows perfectly well that she should say to Sara at once that she has heard of her through her father; but there is a strong feeling in her breast that if she does the conversation will surely turn on Mr. Lake, and she does not feel that she can bear to discuss him with this young woman.

Miss Sara, on her part, does not intend to be the first to mention Mr. Lake, but she resents it that Marjorie should not do so.

"Huh!" she says to herself, "she loves him just as much as she ever did. I'd like to know what right she, a married woman, has to be thinking of him."

But nothing alters the fact that Marjorie is the most beautiful woman she has ever seen; and she is ready to grind her little teeth with jealous rage at the thought that Lake may come along at any time and see Marjorie.

Nevertheless these two sit and smile at each other all through the meal, and contrive somehow to keep up a steady flow of conversation. But as the time goes by and nothing is said of Mr. Lake, Marjorie has a bitter, humiliating sense of having been guilty of a great error.

She should have spoken of Mr. Lake at once, for the more she talks with Miss Jones, the more certain she becomes that that young lady knows not only that Mr. Lake once was her lover, but that he still holds a large place in her heart. In other

words, she has given this crude, but very astute, Western girl a very great advantage over her.

And the worst is that she is forced to confess to herself that she does care more for Mr. Lake than she should. She will never let him know, of course, but it is horrible to her that she cannot put all the past away from her. She has a sickening sense of her own weakness, and, with a sublime disregard of logic, she hates Sara for it.

"Silly, vulgar creature!" she says to herself. "The idea of calling herself by the name of Sara! And she hasn't even educated her mother up to it yet. You can see 'Sal' trembling on her lips every time she addresses her. I wonder what he can see in her. Well, it is no concern of mine."

And then, because they hate each other so cordially, these two arrange to be together during the evening, so that they may listen to the music. And Marjorie is at once kind, courteous, and carelessly superior.

Several times Mrs. Jones threatens to throw a bomb-shell into the camp of the smiling enemies by making some enthusiastic mention of Sam or Lake; but each time, Sara, with an address worthy of a complete society education, catches her words before they have been fairly uttered, and to use her own expression, "side-tracks" them.

But Marjorie is aware each time of what has happened, and becomes at once defiant and desperate. And when they separate for the night they arrange to see more of each other on the following day.

When Marjorie is in her own room, and has dismissed her maid after being undressed, she paces up and down, up and down, thinking it all over. Hard, angry thoughts of Sara form in her mind; pity and reproach for herself; and then at last she throws herself on the bed and sobs.

But the next day they are together just as much as they had planned, and for a reason, which each understands, but which only Sara dares confess to herself, they will not lose sight of each other.

Marjorie by this time has come to suspect what Sara knows—that Mr. Lake may come at any time.

And neither will leave the other if she can help it. And Marjorie despises herself.

But it does not matter if she does; she continues doggedly to wait for his coming. She longs piteously to see him once more, and keeps promising herself that once she has seen and talked with him she will be so cool and distant that he will never suspect what place he has occupied in her heart. Not for worlds would she let him know now how her heart had almost broken in the sacrifice she had made for Dick's sake, and not even her hatred of Sara shall induce her to do anything she would not do if she were a loving and loved wife.

They are all sitting together, looking out on the water, and Marjorie, in her soft, sweet voice and patronizing manner, is telling Sara, as one tells an ignorant child, many of the peculiarities of the Riviera, when suddenly Mrs. Jones, with a joyous return to the customs of Arizona, springs to her feet with a cry of:

"Land o' Liberty, Sal! Here they be! Sam Morgan, howdy! Bob Lake, yer a sight fer sore eyes!"

Sara rises with a beating heart. The moment has come, which for her is fuller of importance than any she has ever faced before. Within five minutes the whole battle of her life will be fought. She does not put it in those words, but her nerves are conscious of the fact.

Marjorie has changed to a deathly white; her heart is beating, too, and so hard that it actually pains her. But she does not rise from her chair. She sits still, composing herself, and waiting, listening.

Sam Morgan, not improved by the garments of civilization, if the truth be told, but looking heroic in his bigness, honest in his simplicity, and prosperous in the diamonds, which no remonstrance of Lake's will induce him to hide, comes forward the first, beaming with delight, and gives his great hand to Mrs. Jones.

"Wa-al!" he cries, in his hearty voice, "blame me ef I ain't glad ter see ye! Sal, how goes it?"

The young lady graduate from Faro Gulch turns

red, and offers the tips of her fingers to Sam. Mrs. Jones, who is deeply interested in the success of Sam's courtship, and who sees that he has made a mistake, whispers rather too audibly:

"Don't call her Sal, Sam. It's Sary now. Spell it S-a-r-a."

Sara turns to Lake, knowing as well as if she has looked, that Marjorie's short upper lip is curling scornfully at Mrs. Jones' audible instructions. Sara recovers, however, the moment she feels the hand of Mr. Lake holding hers.

She looks up into his face to know how he is affected by what improvement she has made in arts feminine. She dreads to see a certain quizzical expression there, but, no, the steady gray eyes are fixed on her with kindly approval. Lake knows at once what a success she has achieved. He bows in his easy, courteous way, and says:

"We hoped to find you here, Miss Jones. How are you, Mrs. Jones?"

Sara is prepared now for what must come, and, like a good general, she advances to meet the enemy half-way. She steps aside, and in the most conventional tones, says:

"Mr. Lake, permit me to present you to a lady who has been very kind to us—Lady Sandowne."

Then she watches them with keen, fearful eyes. Marjorie knows she is being watched; she knows that Sara is watching his face, too. But a moment ago she was firm in her determination to greet Mr. Lake with calm, quiet courtesy—even with a little coolness.

But now, as she rises to her feet and puts out her hand to him, everything is changed. Resentment at Sara in the first place, perhaps, but now, it is probable, because of the gray eyes which are bent on her; she does not look up for a moment, and when she does, her blue eyes are full of beseeching.

It is always hard to take Lake off his guard. He has expected to see Marjorie somewhere on the Continent, and after a quick, fleeting pallor, his face is composed to meet the wife of Lord Sandowne—to meet the woman who is forever lost to him.

But when the little hand is put out the head remains fearfully bent, and then, when the beautiful blue eyes he remembers so well are uplifted, with that look in them, he almost groans aloud, for he sees all at once, not the woman who is lost to him forever, but the woman he loves, and who—God help them both!—who loves him.

“Lady Sandowne!” he murmurs.

“Mr. Lake!” she whispers.

And Sara knows that Lake is no nearer to loving her than he was the day she told him how she had kept him in ignorance of the day of Marjorie’s wedding. Oh, how she hates Marjorie at that moment!

CHAPTER XXI.

ANGRY PASSIONS.

Mr. Lake and Marjorie have nothing to say to each other before so many. If they had met without witnesses there might have been much to say, for their hearts are perilously full. Mr. Lake turns quickly to Sara.

"I am glad," he says, "that you met Lady Sandowne. I suppose she hunted you out. Her father told me he had written of your being here," and he looks at Marjorie.

Marjorie detects a sarcastic smile on Sara's lips, and it angers her. She knows she is being justly punished for her error, but the knowledge brings no contrition. In fact, it urges her on to retaliate on Sara—to do the thing she ought of all things not to do. She determines to show Sara that she has no hold whatever on Lake.

"No," she says, sweetly, "I did not tell Miss Jones that I had been told to look for her. Accident brought us together, and I have been enjoying her company for her own sake. How pleasant it is for Americans to meet abroad! You have brought an old family friend with you, I fancy," and she glances at Sam.

Sam, who is growing rather tired of the exclusive society of Mrs. Jones, takes the opportunity offered by Marjorie's glance to bow and smile. And when Lake at once presents him to Marjorie, he says, heartily:

"I saw yer old man before I came away. He was looking pretty tolerable. I say, Sal—I can't work my tongue round Sara, nohow—ye're lookin' well. Who'd think, to look at ye, that ye was the same gal thet——"

Lake interposes suddenly, to save Sara the morti-

fiction of a reminiscence of the days he very well knew she wishes forgotten.

"By the way, Sam, what do you say if we take a little promenade with the ladies? That is, if the ladies do not object?"

"Not in the least," Marjorie hastens to say. "I am sure Miss Jones will have many questions to ask about her old friends at—at—Faro Gulch, is it? Let us go, by all means. Shall we lead the way, Mr. Lake?"

All this because of her anger at Sara, and in defiance of an inward monitor, which was telling her to beware of playing with fire. Lake looks puzzled at the flippant tone, which he has never noticed in Marjorie before; but he has heard enough of her relations to Sandowne to make him believe that her manner is only a mask for an aching heart.

With a smile at Sara, Marjorie goes on ahead with Mr. Lake, leaving the less ready Sara to follow with what heart she may. But after she has gone a few yards with Lake, the peculiarity of her position comes over her, and frightens her.

What has she done? What will he think of her? How shall she extricate herself—without giving Sara cause for triumph? Anyhow, she must say something—anything.

"You are looking well, Mr. Lake."

"Yes, I am quite well now," he replies.

"You have been sick, then?" she queries, in surprise.

"You did not know?" he asks. "But how should you? I was thinking Miss Jones might have told you. But you did not know each other. Besides, she hardly would."

"Oh," she exclaims, with sudden comprehension, and with deep interest. "Was it out there in Arizona? Had it anything to do with Dick?"

Then both suddenly realize whither this conversation is leading them, and both are embarrassed, until Marjorie, with a defiant expression in her eyes, turns to him, and says, with frank courage:

"Mr. Lake, you can tell me something I must know. You saw Dick out there?"

"Yes, and he gave me a message for you. Shall I tell you now?"

"No, not now. I—I don't think I could bear it now. I am not in the right mood for it. But this evening—during the music—perhaps you would tell me. We can be more alone then."

"Certainly," Mr. Lake says, a great deal of trouble in his heart as he studies the face that must always be so dear to him.

"I—I would not ask it," she goes on, in a low tone, "only perhaps it will be the only opportunity."

"I understand," he replies, loyally. For he does understand that it will be wiser that they do not meet often.

He realizes it more fully during these past few minutes than before he met her. He has counted a great deal on his self-control, but he finds that it does not help him to conquer his feelings as he had believed it would. It has been very difficult to walk calmly by the side of Marjorie, knowing what might have been.

And, somehow, the old feeling of anger at Sallie for what she did returns to him. He had forgiven her wholly and freely after her reckless ride over the mountains with his telegram; but now that he is face to face with his loss, the anger comes back, and the thought shapes itself:

"But for her, Marjorie might be mine."

This feeling unconsciously shows itself to Sara when the party comes together again. She feels it because she is so sensitive to all that concerns him, although he endeavors to act as naturally as before.

And because she feels it she hates Marjorie with renewed bitterness.

"Either you or I will go under in this scrimmage, Madge Bridger," she says to herself, and she is in a fit mood to do anything ugly.

Jealousy sharpens her eyes, and she is certain that the two have arrived at some sort of understanding. They separate, and Lake devotes himself alternately to Mrs. Jones and Sara; but the latter is convinced that they have agreed upon something. She will learn what.

In the evening Marjorie does not join them to listen to the music; and Lake, in a little while, excuses himself, and saunters off to smoke, he says. Sara is furious. Marjorie is married. Why does she not let Mr. Lake alone? What right have they to meet in such a way?

Neither of them is thinking of her, however. Marjorie is waiting for Mr. Lake, to hear from him about Dick. She has persuaded herself that that is all she is there to listen to, but she wonders now and again how much of the mystery of the telegram will be told.

"Thank you for coming, Mr. Lake," she says, with formal politeness, as he approaches her, where she sits alone in a distant corner of the hotel piazza.

"Thank you for permitting it," he replies.

She leans forward.

"Mr. Lake," she says, hurriedly, as if she does not dare trust herself to dwell long on what she is saying, "perfect frankness between us is best. What is past is all past and dead, but for the best of reasons it will be better if we understand that this shall be our last interview, except as we meet casually. I am sure you agree with me—will help me," she adds, tremulously, as if her courage were hardly equal to the strain put upon it.

"I understand you," he replies, his voice low and uneven. "Please trust me fully. And please believe that whatever I may say to-night, the one great desire of my existence is the preservation of your happiness—as much as may be. I say this because I feel as you do that this is a last opportunity."

She does not answer, and he goes on:

"I left you in New York, and went to Arizona, determined to find your brother Dick, and learn from him the truth. I do not need to be more explicit. I was fortunate in extricating him from a great danger at once."

"I hope there is some one who can tell me just what you did," she says. "Dick was very dear to me, and anything done for him was done for me."

"What I did for him was done for you," he re-

plies, quickly. "After the event I speak of, Dick and I encountered a deadly peril together. A truer, braver companion in danger no man ever had than Dick; and I believe that had he outlived that horrible night he would have lived truer to his nature."

"I am glad you say that," she murmurs. "I always knew that, under his wayward actions, Dick had a good nature."

"We were attacked by the Apaches, and he fought a noble fight. It was then that he talked of you. He sent his dearest love to you, and his last word was of you. 'Dear little Madge,' was the last thing I heard."

He ceases talking, for he knows Marjorie is weeping. He does not speak again until she has dried her tears, and says to him:

"He said more. I think I have a right to know, even now, that there is no remedy for what is done. Nothing can alter my relations to—to my husband. Please tell me everything."

So Lake tells her all that passed between him and Dick, and tells further how he lay sick for weeks, and how the telegram was sent. He tells all the good that Sallie did him, but says nothing of that one evil thing which resulted in the marriage of Marjorie to Sandowne.

Marjorie listens at first with jealousy to his account of how kind Sallie was, and there is a sharp pang in her heart at the account of the ride the latter took. But Lake tells of it in so cold a way that Marjorie is set thinking, and at last leaps to a conclusion not far from the truth.

She is sure that Sara—her lip always curls at the name—is her evil genius; and she wonders if the time will ever come when Lake will end it all by taking that Western girl to his home.

In the meanwhile the Western girl is working herself into a state of mind to fit her for a veritable genius of evil. She does not attempt to seek the two persons who occupy all her thoughts, but she busies herself imagining what they are saying, and her wrath grows apace.

Sallie has great capabilities for good or for evil,

because her nature is a strong one, and because it is an ungoverned one. She is one to sacrifice herself for the one she loves; but she is very likely to render the sacrifice useless before she makes it.

Her anger is at white heat, and is in a perfectly malleable state, when her eyes fall on a face which seems familiar, and as if it were somehow associated with her present trouble.

She turns her eyes away, then looks again. The face is that of a rather handsome man, who carries not only in his countenance, but in his attitude and movements, all the marks of long-continued dissipation. He comes nearer to where she sits, and his face is turned toward her.

"Lord Sandowne!" she mutters. "He is looking for his wife."

Her face grows white and set, and she keeps her eyes fixed on Sandowne until he has the feeling that he is being looked at steadily, and turns and stares at Sara with the cool insolence of men of his class.

She bows and smiles at him, and he, with a puzzled look, returns her salutation. He turns away, and is seemingly searching his memory for the face he has seen. It evidently eludes him, for he turns once more and looks at her.

She smiles in the manner of one enjoying the discomfiture of another. She is pretty, and well-dressed, though so plainly an American that he fears she may be a friend of Marjorie's. Nevertheless, he goes over to her, and in the easy, suave way which comes to the *roue*, and which good women often call "a lovely manner," says:

"It is my good fortune to have met you before. It is unpardonable that I—"

"Quite pardonable," interposes Sara. "When you last saw me I was a frontier girl."

He looks at her again, and studies her face with a little anxiety mingled with his interest, for there are frontier girls he would not care to meet in Nice. This cannot be one of them, however, or he would recall her face easily.

"I can't guess," he says.

"Do you remember the Spoke Mine?" she asks.

"Ah!" he cries at once. "You are the girl who nursed Lake."

"Yes," she replies, in a low tone; "you owe me a wife."

"And do you owe me a husband?" he asks, with a sort of sardonic humor that belongs to him.

She flushes deeply, and her eyes fall for a moment before the now bold and familiar stare of Sandowne.

"No," she says; "why should I? It was not of me that the sick man talked."

Sandowne stares at her with a half-angry, half-suspicious flush on his cheek. Is she merely giving him a sly thrust, or does she mean more than she says?

"Ah!" he says, carelessly; "of whom did he talk, then?"

"Don't you remember?" queries Sara, with very well assumed innocence. "The name was Marjorie Bridger, I think. You showed me her picture."

"Oh, yes," Sandowne says, carelessly, and then straightens up, as if tired of bending over to talk.

As he stands erect his eyes wander over the large room, as if searching for something. Presently he bends over Sara again, and asks, in an indifferent way:

"Where is Lake now? I haven't seen him since that day, when he was sick."

"Didn't you know?" she exclaims, with a look of surprise. "He is here. I saw him not more than a few minutes ago. He went out to smoke, I think."

A strange look passes over Sandowne's face, and he says:

"I think that is an excellent idea. I believe I will go out and smoke myself. Did he go out toward the court?"

"Yes."

Sara watches him go out, and as he disappears through the door, half starts up as if to follow him. Then, with a set jaw, she sits down again and watches the people, without seeing one.

Lord Sandowne, meanwhile, with a very vicious

expression, wanders about until he sees two persons, a lady and a gentleman, sitting together in a dim corner of the piazza. He saunters near enough to be sure that they are the persons he is seeking, and then approaches.

Lady Sandowne starts and half rises at the sight of the approaching figure, then reseats herself, and waits quietly for what is to come.

CHAPTER XXII.

HUSBAND AND LOVER.

Lord Sandowne is not in a pleasant frame. In fact he has not been in many months; but he is in an especially unpleasant temper just now, because he has been losing money at Monte Carlo.

He has come down to Nice with the intention of letting Marjorie know that he is tired of waiting for her father to give his opinion of the Spoke Mine matter. Like every gambler, he believes that if he only had sufficient money to give his system a fair chance, he would come out a winner.

But that is quite aside from his feeling toward Marjorie. That has grown into a pure and unmingled hatred, and is a thing dissociated from the money side of their relations.

As for Lake, he has always hated him. He hated him mildly when he saw him for the first time at the horse-show, riding to beat Marjorie's jumper. And of course he hated him bitterly after his (Lake's) discovery of the author of the cut stirrup leather.

As he approached Marjorie and Lake, all these various emotions combined to make his feeling what an Englishman would call "nasty."

He is not certain just what he will do or say. That will depend upon Lake, somewhat. He certainly does not feel like doing anything that will call for or justify any action on the part of Lake; for he has heard and seen enough of Lake to make him feel a decided respect for him.

But there is something in Sandowne which enables him to say and do things of the most insulting and exasperating sort, without laying himself open to being held responsible. He knows this well enough to make him feel now that he has an opportunity to insult the man he hates.

And he remembers, too, how Lake was always ready in those other days, to hinder him in his project of winning Marjorie and her millions. He thinks of how Lake loved Marjorie, and how they both undoubtedly love each other yet.

He has an opportunity for revenge of a sort to please a little mind like his, and he is resolved not to miss it.

So it is with a strong dash of gleeful malice, mingled with his ugly temper, that he stops before the two and says:

“Am I mistaken, or is this Lady Sandowne?”

Lake starts at the sound of the voice, which is instantly familiar to him, for dislike will impress anything upon the mind quite as deeply as a friendly feeling. He rises from his seat, and bows in a cold, formal way.

Sandowne does not notice him at all; but keeps his eyes fixed on Marjorie, who also has risen, and who replies, with forced calmness:

“Yes, it is I, Lord Sandowne.”

She has not seen so very much of him since their married life, but she has learned to know him well during that time; and she is certain that he intends using the situation in which he has found her, to say some vile thing. So she steadies her nerves to receive what he may say without betraying her own feeling.

“I looked for you in the hotel, and could not find you,” he says, with a sneer that is quite perceptible in his tone, even though the dim light out there prevents a good view of his face. “I fancied I should find you in some such”—he pauses to give effect to his words—“place.”

Marjorie flushes to the roots of her hair. She is not as self-controlled as she fancied she could be. Perhaps the story she heard from Lake has unsettled her more than she knows. Perhaps she forgets that a wife can have no champion as against her husband.

Instead of replying to the insinuation of her husband, Marjorie goes through a complicated process of reasoning, remembering and desiring all at once;

and before she knows it has turned to Mr. Lake and has said, with a meaning which is somehow subtly present:

“You know Lord Sandowne, Mr. Lake?”

Her words have the effect of an introduction; but they bring the blood in a furious tide to the usually livid face of Sandowne. They bring up to him, with increased vividness, all the memories he has himself just been going over.

It is very much as if Marjorie has rehearsed all the wretched story of the cut strap, the forged letter from Dick, and all the rest.

Lake sees this, too; and knowing better than ever the relations existing between the two, but without comprehending them fully, thinks to take the sting out of her hasty words by doing what nothing on earth but a regard for her would induce him to do. He holds out his hand to Sandowne, saying:

“How do you do, Lord Sandowne?”

The insulting grin that parts Sandowne’s lips is lost in the dim light; but there is no mistaking the meaning of the manner in which he puts his hands behind him; or, if there were, his words would make his intentions quite clear.

Placing his monocle in his eye, he stares at Lake and draws:

Aw! Lake! He rode a horse in the show, I believe.”

“Yes,” says Lake, keeping perfect control of himself, for Marjorie’s sake, “I rode one of the horses.”

But Marjorie, having given way a little, seems unable to hold herself in check any longer. She has a sense of security in Lake’s presence, of which she is not in the least conscious.

Poor girl! her calm intentions are to submit with womanly dignity and patience to the burden she was so foolish to take upon herself. She has reasoned it out that it shall be her punishment for her folly.

And up to this time she has been all that she has promised herself to be. But her position is an anomalous one. To all the world she is a wife; as

a matter of fact, she is still Marjorie Bridger, only tied to a man whom she hates.

The talk with Lake has made her still more like the Marjorie Bridger of old; has made her yoke more than ever hateful; and she has not that restraint upon her which she would have had had she been in truth the wife of the man whose name she bears.

She is indignant with Sandowne for daring to insult Lake; and her voice swells a little at first, and then grows caustic as she goes on.

"You cannot have forgotten Mr. Lake," she says. "If you think a moment, you will remember that it was his stirrup leather that was cut by some scoundrel, who might easily have been a murderer."

Sandowne chokes with rage. This is so new a phase in Marjorie's character that he loses that vicious equanimity which is absolutely necessary to a man who wishes to insult another without exposing himself to trouble.

He understands perfectly that Marjorie is saying these things because her spirits have been affected by the sight of Mr. Lake. The only wrong he does Marjorie is to believe that she and Lake have come to some understanding.

"Oh!" he says, with an ugly snarl, "cut stirrups, broken oars, and sudden fits of illness are things which often come to men who are afraid they cannot win."

What does it matter if the insinuation is absurdly false? It is the patent intention to say an insulting thing which counts; and Marjorie is ready with a quick rejoinder.

But Lake, with a cooler head, sees that matters are taking a course which must not be permitted. He comprehends Marjorie better than she does herself, and he feels very pitiful toward her.

To see her losing her self-control in this way gives him a better idea than before of her sufferings with this man. His blood boils, and if it might be, he would pick him up and throw him over the railing of the piazza.

Not that he feels that that particular act would

serve to alter the man who tortures Marjorie, but simply because he feels toward Sandowne as he would toward any ill-conditioned, snarling cur.

Instead of giving way to his feelings, however, Lake does what he thinks is best under the circumstances. He raises his hat and says:

"No doubt you will excuse me, Lady Sandowne, if I go look for my friends. Good-evening, Lord Sandowne!"

"I will go inside, too, if you please," Marjorie says.

She understands precisely why Lake is leaving, and she knows that it is at once the wisest, easiest thing to be done under the circumstances. But with that pertinacity of obstinacy which sometimes overwhelms the best of us, she insists upon spoiling his well-intended plan.

"By all means," Lake replies, sorry she has said it, but comprehending her, and quickly determined to bear her out to the limit of his ability.

But Sandowne is not to be pushed aside in that fashion. He has some rights, and is determined to assert one of them in a way to make them both wince.

"One moment," he says, in a harsh, abrupt tone. "Lady Sandowne, I wish to speak with you in private. If you can spare me her society for a little while, Mr.—er—Lake, I shall be obliged. No doubt she will meet you again."

This is such an open insult to Marjorie that Lake takes a quick step forward, as if he would lay hands on the wretch. Sandowne steps back, not relishing the thought of an encounter with Mr. Lake, who has impressed him as being possibly the worst man in the world in such a case.

Then Marjorie gives a little gasp of terror.

Personal violence is always a terrifying thing to a refined woman. She knows Lake can break Sandowne in two if he shall choose to do so; but the revulsion has already taken place in her woman's mind.

She sees everything that may result from an encounter between her husband and her—lover.

Yes, that is her own thought; and it makes her so wretched, so unhappy, and so humble that she gasps, quickly:

“Very well. Lord Sandowne, if you wish to speak with me, I will remain. I beg you will excuse us, Mr. Lake?”

It seems to Lake that she is begging him not to excuse her, but to try to understand her, and to comprehend why she is so changeable. And he would give a year of his life to say to her:

“Marjorie, I understand how you are suffering; I know that you have lost your self-control because your heart is breaking.”

But he cannot say it to her, and it is not possible for her to read it in his eyes. So he can only take it for granted that she realizes it without its being said.

He raises his hat and goes away with an aching heart, thinking bitterly that a false convention prevents him from espousing her causes as he would like. And the worst reflection of all is that the conditions of her life are such as must in the very nature of things endure.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ONE WAY.

For a moment after Lake is gone it seems to Marjorie that she must drop into her chair and cry. She has never before felt the same sensation of helplessness and loneliness.

She has always been self-reliant. She has always felt that she must face and conquer her own difficulties. And when she was Marjorie Bridger, even when she was forced to decide about marrying Sandowne to save Dick, it did not seem difficult.

It never is as difficult to push the boat out in the rapids as it is to stem the rapids afterward. A strong and skillful arm at the oar is then a blessed boon.

Since that first day of the wedding, when she discovered Sandowne's infamous treachery, she had been able to keep good courage and fight her woe-ful battle alone; but to-night, somehow, she feels that she must have some one to lean on.

Lake is gone, and she realizes all at once that she has been giving her trust and confidence to him; that she almost gave away the self-reliance which was hers before.

And she is at once frightened and humiliated. She tells herself that it is because she loves Lake so wholly; and she is too true to her own standard of right to find any justification for herself.

She sinks into a chair before Sandowne, her heart thumping painfully, and her conscience crying out that she has been recreant to her duty.

"I am this man's wife," she thinks, "and I owe it to myself to put any other man out of my heart."

So she is in a very humble spirit, and if the man before her only knew it, he could obtain almost anything from her now, by treating her in the right way. Will he treat her so?"

"Well, Lady Sandowne," he says, between his teeth, his voice having a very vicious tone, "so your lover has come after you at last. I wondered how long it would be before it happened."

Marjorie gasps as if ice-cold water has been thrown on her. She swallows a lump that rises in her throat, and opens and shuts her eyes with a strange feeling; she realizes that this man's speech has given root to a dreadful thought in her brain.

The particular thought does not formulate itself at first, even though it seems to be burning itself in somewhere; but other thoughts, questions, and answers, flash through her brain so quickly that there is no pronounced hesitation in her reply.

Her lover? Yes, he is her lover. Has he come over with the thought that he can make her forget her duty? No, that is not like him. Could he make her forget it? Merciful Heaven! is it possible that she cannot answer herself at once? Does she love him? Yes, she worships him!

"Did you come here only to insult me?" she asks Sandowne, but there is not the right ring of indignation in her tone; and she quivers with shame just as much as if Lake knew she was torturing herself about him.

"Is it an insult to say what is the plain truth?" he asks, with a sneer.

He has not the least notion of how he is hurting her or he would be very happy. Even he cannot conceive of Marjorie as anything but heroically pure and good. He simply knows that if she were a free woman she would marry Lake.

Marjorie is trying to remember how she would have answered such a thing yesterday. She is afraid that she will say something that will surely let this man see into her mind. She fears she will not say or do what she should do. How indignant ought she to be? How much may she permit herself in the way of silent contempt?

"Have you nothing else to say but this?" she asks, in a tone that makes him furious.

He thinks she is calmly superior to his taunts. She is wondering, with misery in her heart, if he

won't notice how tamely she submits to his virtual accusation.

"No," he replies, "I did not come here to say these things at all; but I suppose if a husband, even so little of a one as I, sees his wife in close conversation, in a dim corner, with a man whom he knows she loves, he is at least justified in expressing the natural thoughts that are in his mind."

Marjorie is all intent on her mental examination, and does not reply to him. She has her pure soul stretched on the rack, and is torturing it as no one else could. And at length she comes to a conclusion which gives her a measure of peace.

"I will tell him that we must not meet again. He is so good, so noble that he will understand; and he will do what is right and best."

She says this to herself, but says nothing to Sandowne; and he stands there before her, hating her more and more. No man likes to be despised. Sandowne would like to be feared; and perhaps it is his greatest grievance against Marjorie that she is not at all afraid of him.

"Well," he says, venomously, "is it not worth while even to explain why I find you two making love in this corner? Is it not necessary that you should at least so conceal your fondness for this Western bully and cowboy, that the very guests may not talk of it?"

Marjorie's lip curls. This is too puerile to trouble her. No one could talk of what has not existed.

"Was it from the guests of the hotel, then," she asks, "that you learned of these altogether impossible and insulting things?"

"I was directed here by one of the guests," he incautiously replies, intent chiefly on wounding Marjorie by making her believe that she is talked of.

But Marjorie has had her woman's weakness restored to her all at once. She knows as well as if she had seen, that Sandowne was sent after her by Sara Jones. In her jealousy the girl had done this contemptible thing.

"It is not the first service Miss Jones has done you, I believe," she says, with cutting scorn.

"Ah!" he exclaims, angry at the way he has betrayed himself; then with sudden enlightenment: "You two have had a love-feast, indeed. So he has explained all about why he did not get on in time to save you from your awful fate," he adds, sneeringly.

"He told me what I had a right to know," Marjorie replies. She rises from her chair, sincerely anxious to be alone. "If you have nothing more than this to say to me, I will go to my room."

Sandowne has been exasperated many times by Marjorie, and many times the brute instinct to strike her has gained almost uncontrollable strength within him. Now it comes on again, but he does not really strike her. He merely thrusts out his hand and pushes her roughly.

She falls back into her chair, quivering and shrinking. She has expected nothing less than a blow several times, and has nerved herself to receive it. It has seemed to her that a blow would somehow change their relations.

And now something of the sort has happened, and it does not have the effect she had believed it would. She had intended to receive it with calm scorn. She does not know how she is receiving this.

It has come suddenly, and he is going on in a rough, dictatorial way, while she still shrinks in her chair, a struggle going on within her.

"I tell you, Lady Sandowne," he says, rejoicing to see how she cowers, "that this has gone far enough. I am the master! You have presumed on my complaisance; you have abused it by absurd and unheard-of conditions: you have finally dared to meet your lover by stealth, caring nothing for my honor. I do not know, but I believe that you invited him to come over here, misled by my mildness.

"Now there shall be a change. Do you hear me, Lady Sandowne? There shall be a change, and a radical one. I have humored you as far as I intend to. To-night—do you hear me?—to-night you will instruct your maid to admit me."

He has gone on, elated and exultant, as if the

victory were already achieved. He has struck other women—the dastard!—and has seen them wilt before him in the same way. He has always been held in check before by a feeling that to strike Marjorie might result in something not quite conceivable.

But now, perhaps, owing to the fact that he is not able to see her face, he has had the courage to strike her, and behold! the result is what it should be. She has cowered before him, and she has listened to his authoritative discourses to the end.

“You did not know me,” he goes on, “but now you do. Another thing is that you shall tell that fellow, Lake, that you have seen enough of him.”

Marjorie rises slowly from her chair, and stands before him, her head thrown back, and a look in her blue eyes that would startle him could he see it.

“Lord Sandowne,” she says, in a low, broken voice, “I have expected this before. I have felt that some day you would raise your hand against me, and would make me suffer the indignity of a blow.

“I do not know what I must do, now that the time has come. I have not been used to dealing with men of your stamp. I do not know why Heaven has seen fit to give me this terrible experience. I will go, now.”

She starts to go from him; but he does not comprehend, or the blood that has gone to his head has taken permanent possession.

“Lady Sandowne,” he says, between his teeth, “sit down! Have you not had your lesson yet? Do you think I will any longer be controlled by your heroics? Have you not heard what I said? Sit down!”

He has her by the arm, and is gripping it in a way that makes her think of her wedding-day; only now the brute in him seems quite unrestrained, and she knows that he will proceed to any lengths. Nevertheless, she does not sit down, but moves a little aside from the chair, so that when he pushes her she staggers back.

Then he takes her by both arms, and pulls her angrily. She does not resist, but there is a terrible feeling in her heart toward him. A feeling that has

never been there before, and which frightens her even while it overmasters her.

Sandowne, meanwhile, like the ungoverned brute that he is, grows steadily more frenzied in his rage, and goes on from pulling her, to swearing at her; and from that to lifting his hand to strike.

"Don't do that!" Marjorie says, in a hollow voice.

"Ah! I will do it, and you shall yield me obedience," he answers, with an oath of a horrible sort.

His hand has almost touched the pale, fixed face, when it is caught in a grip of iron, and a voice that is low and hoarse, says in his ear:

"Release her, or, by the living God, I will kill you!"

"I knew you would come." Marjorie says, and falls lifeless in the arms of Mr. Lake.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A REHEARSAL.

For a moment, as Lake stands out there on the piazza, holding Marjorie in his arms, he cannot speak; and he is conscious of two distinct feelings; one of awful wrath against Sandowne, and the other of joy that Marjorie is in his arms.

Her almost voiceless words, "I knew you would come," have graven themselves deep on his heart, and have convinced him, if he needed such convincing, that he is as much to her as she to him.

But it is with Sandowne, and somewhat with the future, that he has to concern himself now. He can hardly find voice or words to address the former, but after a moment he says, in a low tone:

"You despicable cur! It only needed this."

Sandowne is afraid of Lake. There is no doubt even in his own mind about that. He fears Lake's physical strength, of which he has seen examples before, and of which he has just had a convincing proof; but what most holds him in awe is a certain masterfulness in Lake which stronger men than he have recognized and submitted to.

But in proportion as he fears him, he hates him; and if at that moment he had the weapon to do it with, he would undoubtedly kill him. Unconsciously Lake had thrown him against the railing of the piazza when he thrust him aside to take Marjorie; and there he stands, his hot, angry breath coming and going quickly.

And he is thinking as he stands there that if he only had a pistol, and a witness to declare that he saw Lake holding his wife in his arms, how easy it would be to shoot Lake and declare he did it to defend his outraged honor.

And that thought puts such a devilish idea into

his head that he almost indulges in a smile. Moreover, it gives him a currish sort of courage; for even a whipped cur will show its teeth and snap and snarl.

"Yes," he says, slowly, "it only needed this. It only needed ocular demonstration of what I was morally certain of before. I only suspected your relations before; now I am sure of them."

"Scoundrel!" cries Lake. "Dare to insinuate such a thing against this angel of purity again, and, as I live, I will make you repent it."

Sandowne moves farther away, and more into the light, raising his voice as he goes; for at a little distance he sees some of the guests of the hotel, out promenading, and he wishes to attract their attention.

"You do well to protest her virtue, you libertine!" he says. "But this matter shall not rest here. Carry her to her room, since she lies there so contentedly in your arms, but——"

Lake comprehends the stratagem at once. It fills him with horror to think of a man sunk so low; but he does not lose his presence of mind. With a quick movement he places Marjorie in a chair, whispering, in an agonized tone:

"Marjorie! I beg you to rally yourself! You are threatened by a great danger!"

Then he springs toward Sandowne, who is continuing his tirade in a loud, distinct tone. The promenaders are hastening toward them with all the eagerness of idlers, to whom a scandal is the sweetest morsel in all the world.

With a swiftness that seems all the more remarkable in a man so ordinarily deliberate and self-contained, he catches Sandowne by the throat, so as to stop his talk, and interposes himself between him and the approaching persons.

"Stop that infamous talk, you hound!" he whispers, fiercely. "If you say any more, I will kill you where you stand, though I hang for it the next minute!"

Then he turns and links his arm in that of Sandowne, and bursts into a loud and prolonged laugh.

"Very well done, indeed, my dear Sandowne!" he cries, sufficiently loud for the approaching people to hear. "If you will do half as well on the stage, you will be a perfect success. I mean what I say," he whispers again. "I would hold your life, and mine with it, cheap enough, as the price of her spotless reputation. I repeat that if you say anything before these people to cast a reflection on your wife's purity, I will kill you!"

He drops Sandowne's arm and returns to Marjorie. He leaves Sandowne ghastly and quivering.

Sandowne had heard a great deal about Lake while he was in Arizona buying the Spoke; and he had gained an ineradicable impression that Lake was even better than his word.

Besides, there is something in the intentness of Lake's manner, which is very impressive; and, with the feeling that those fingers of steel are still pressing his windpipe, Sandowne turns and moves away.

He has apparently been defeated this time, but he has the savage consciousness that he has really made a beginning toward the end he has in view. He is well enough satisfied, though furious.

He has no doubt that some of the persons approaching will have at least a speaking acquaintance with him. He hopes so, and, to give them every opportunity, he moves slowly.

"Been having a rehearsal, Lord Sandowne?" queries an Englishwoman, who is rejoiced to have the opportunity to show her friends that she is on speaking terms with a lord. "We could not make out what it was at first. I had heard nothing of any private theatricals. I hope you won't forget me."

"Ya-as," he drawls, "we have been rehearsing the first act of the 'Injudicious Wife; or, the Injured Husband.' Perhaps you have heard of the play."

"I say, Sandowne," calls out Lake, "don't lose any time, will you? We'll be along right away. I will do exactly as I said."

Sandowne moves on without a reply. Lake cannot force him to reply in a way to destroy the effect

of his innuendo. Perhaps his reply to the inquisitive Englishwoman will not bear fruit at once, but it surely will in good time.

"You are cursed clever," he mutters to himself, as he saunters toward the entrance; "but I will dig a pit for you and her to fall in, or I am mistaken. Curse you! I will yet have your life, and her honor and money, clever as you think yourself."

"Marjorie," whispers Lake to her, "can you stand? We must follow him to the hotel at once. Then you must leave me, and act as nearly as possible as usual."

She shudders, and rises to her feet.

"What will he endeavor to do?" she asks. "I guess a part; but I did not hear what he was saying."

Shall he tell her? Yes; better do so than risk having her make a mistake which may give that scoundrel an advantage over her.

"Take my arm!" he whispers. "And, Marjorie, trust me! I know what you must have suffered, and I fear you have yet much to go through. But you can do it nobly. I know why you did it, and I say you did right. Let what is between us give you strength, but never any uneasiness."

"How noble you are!"

"I am true to you, Marjorie," he replies. "That wretch will endeavor to compromise you by linking your name with mine. Therefore I shall leave here to-night. There is a train that goes to Monte Carlo. I don't wish to go too far away. And I shall telegraph for your father as soon as I reach there."

"I cannot thank you," she says, in a low tone.

"You do not need to, Marjorie. I have seen into your heart. If you need friends, for any reason, do not hesitate to call on the Joneses, or on Morgan. They are a little rough and peculiar, but at heart good and true."

"It was Sara Jones who sent Lord Sandowne to find us," Marjorie says.

Lake groans. It does not need that Marjorie should explain or tell why she believes so. Lake is certain that she is right the instant she speaks.

"Poor girl!" he says.

"Ah!" cries out Marjorie, as if a mortal pang shoots through her heart, "do you only pity her for it?"

"I must pity her, because I understand her," he replies, gently.

In her weakness Marjorie has been leaning on his strong arm, such a sweet sensation of security possessing her. She can even let him go away when she needs a friend so much, because she knows that it must be best since he says so. But when he replies that he must pity Sallie because he understands her, her little hand slips from his arm until it barely touches it.

Her step becomes firmer, too, and her face is white, indeed, but proud and firm, as she enters the hotel by his side.

"I will say good-evening now," she says, dropping her hand altogether from his arm. "I think I will go to my room."

He looks wonderingly at her. Clever as he is, he has not yet mastered the intricacies of a woman's mental processes. He cannot comprehend why she should be so suddenly changed from the clinging, timid woman.

"But you will show yourself for a while in the parlors?" he queries.

"No, I think not. I do not believe it will be necessary. Thank you very much. You say you go to-night? Then I shall not see you in the morning. Do not waste all your money at Monte Carlo."

She smiles, and is moving away. His face is white as chalk as he listens; and there is a pain in his heart because he cannot comprehend this sudden flippancy. And yet he understood so well out there on the piazza. But that was when her every emotion, even what was concealed, was true to her best womanly nature.

There are many persons moving about, and he cannot make any pointed demonstration; but yet he cannot take leave of her with that tone in her voice, that look on her face.

"Marjorie," he says, "make one tour of the parlors with me. I ask it as a favor. Then go if you will."

She looks at him a moment, and he, watching her intently, is surprised to see her bosom heave convulsively for a moment, while a look as if she were about to burst into tears passes over her face.

But this she controls, and the next expression is one of meek obedience. She puts her hand on his arm again, and together they pace slowly about the rooms.

"Is anything wrong that I can right?" he asks.

"Nothing," she replies, in a low tone. "You must forgive me if I appear strange. It is because I—I am so disturbed."

"And you will remain here for a while at least, won't you?"

"Yes. I will do what you think best."

"Thank you. Shall I leave you here? Do you know these people at all?"

"Yes, I know them. Are you—must you go? Yes, I know you must. If—if I should need—want—if there should be any occasion——"

"My address will be the Hotel Imperial, Monaco," he says.

CHAPTER XXV.

A PUZZLE.

As Lake leaves the parlors he meets Sam Morgan. The latter has his brow all furrowed into knots of perplexity.

"Great Scott! Bob, but I'm pisen glad to see you," he exclaims.

"Why? What is the matter?"

"Wa-al, I've been gittin' a drink. Sal—Sara, blame the new name!—has turned so all-fired queer it upsets me to be whar she is. So I says to her, 'I reckon I'll go lick'er up.' She says, 'I 'low that's what you need, Sam,' so I started to get it."

"Well?"

"Wa-al, I don't know how I ever got something, but I did—brandy, and blamed good brandy, too. But I'm darned if I kin find my way back to whar them wimmen be. Why in thunder do they want to speak a lingo nobody understands? I've tried Spanish an' good Arizony on 'em, but it's no go. Find 'em for me, will ye, Bob?"

So Bob, having time enough, though not inclined to talk with Sallie now, takes Sam and searches about until he finds Mrs. Jones and her daughter. There is a man talking with Sallie as they approach, but he leaves immediately.

"That English lord that bought Spoke," chuckles Sam, as he sees the man raising his hat to Sallie.

Lake presses his lips together, as if he fears they will say something in spite of him.

"Sam lost himself," Lake explains. "I have come to say good-by for a while. I go to Monte Carlo to-night."

"Do you?" cries Mrs. Jones. "So do we. That is, we go in the first train to-morrow. What started you?"

"You go to Monaco?" queries Lake, looking at Sallie.

Her pretty face is set, and her resolute little chin is thrust out in a way that says unmistakably that she is responsible for the sudden movement.

"Yes." says Sallie, but avoids the keen gray eyes, in spite of her resolute expression.

"Wa-al," interposes Sam, "I ain't half-sorry fer that, fer I kin play roulette in any language under the sun. Is it a square game they play there, Bob?"

But he sees that Bob has approached nearer to Sallie, and is speaking to her in a low tone. Something of the old uneasy feeling that Lake and Sallie are too friendly, altogether, comes over Sam; but he stifles it with true heroism, and saunters off by the side of Mrs. Jones, letting Lake and Sallie follow, some distance behind.

The fact is that Sam's courtship is rather a vicarious affair. Mrs. Jones is rejoiced to see him, and assures Sam that Sallie is, too.

So Sam, not finding Sallie at all accessible, gives most of his attention to the mother. And the general effect of his presence with them is as if they had a great, faithful mastiff along with them for protection.

Lake has taken his place by Sallie's side with the air of one who has authority, and will use it if need be.

"Why do you go to Monaco?" he asks.

"Because it pleases us to go," she answers; sulkily. "Why shouldn't we go? What is there peculiar in our going?"

"Miss Jones," says Lake, unconsciously using the formal title he has given her.

"Don't call me Miss Jones," she says, stamping her little foot.

He eyes her with a singular expression in his steady gray eyes.

"Sallie," he corrects himself, quietly, and there is a very kind tone in his voice, "you don't need me to tell you that you ought not to have anything to do with Lord Sandowne."

She turns on him with flashing eyes, her anger

making her brave a glance she dreads more than anything else in the world. She tries vainly to speak for a moment; then says, in a strangled voice:

“Why not? You have to do with the wife.”

A flush of color and a twinge of pain show on Lake's countenance, but his eyes never lose their steady, compelling glance on the pretty, defiant face.

“I thought that brave ride of yours over the mountains was the end of that, Sallie.”

She turns her face away, and seems to be looking at the moonlight on the water below them. He waits patiently, as if he knows what the result must be. Suddenly she turns toward him, and her full bosom is heaving unsteadily.

“Nothing is the end of it, Bob Lake,” she says, with a fierce sob. “You know that, or you wouldn't be standing there making me turn my heart inside out for you. You talk of that ride! Didn't I do all I could to get her for you?”

“Did I care if I dropped when I reached thar?” She is dropping into Faro Gulch vernacular now. “No, I didn't. I wanted to ef th' answer war what you wanted, Bob Lake. Ef it warn't, I wanted to be on deck.

“I know blame well it war my fault in th' beginnin', but I did what I could, didn't I? You forgave me yer own self, Bob Lake; an' said it was all over, an' jest as ef I'd never done nothin'. Isn't that straight? Am I sayin' anythin' that ain't jest es it was?”

“It is all true, Sallie. I said then that you were a true-hearted little woman, and I hope I never shall say anything else.”

Poor Sallie! she stands out there under the soft, cool night sky of the Riviera; but she is away back in Tombstone, with her old calico on again, listening to Bob Lake tell her she is the bravest, best-hearted girl in Arizona.

“Yer an honorable man, Bob Lake. Nobody could ever say ye wa'n't,” she goes on, her eyes

looking past him, as if she could not bear to meet the steady gaze yet.

"I try always to be that," he says, gently.

"Do honorable men love other men's wives?" she asks, quickly. Not at all as if she is trying to catch him; but as if asking for information.

"I don't know that love can be controlled, Sallie," he answers, something like a vibration in his voice making her steal a swift glance at his face; "but an honorable man will never do anything that will compromise a woman; and he will never speak to a married woman of love, though he be dying of it."

"But she is married," Sallie cries, vehemently, "an' you've got ter stop lovin' her. She is married, an' you can't have her. What d'ye suppose I studied French fer? What d'ye suppose I tried to get the hang o' your way o' talkin' fer? Why did I take off the calico, an' throw away my six-shooter? Why did I put on these here things? Why didn't I stick to plain Sal? You know, Bob Lake. I did it because, God help me! I'm a blamed little fool."

There is such a look of pain on Lake's face as would come into the face of any clean-souled man. It is not new to him. He has known it all along, but he has hoped it would change. He does not think how he clings to his own love.

"Sallie," he says, in a low tone, and reaches over and takes her two hands in his. "I want you to look me in the face the way you did the day we had the talk in Tombstone."

"I won't," she says, defiantly. "You want to make me promise something."

"Please look me in the eyes, Sallie," he says. "You and I must understand each other, or there will be bitter sorrow for both of us."

"Well, thar, then" and she turns and seems to look in his eyes, without really doing it.

He doesn't speak, but holds her hands steadily, and keeps his eyes on hers until they meet his with a wide-open, steady gaze.

"Sallie," he says, then; but she snatches her hands from his grasp, puts them to her face, and

begins to sob in a low, broken way that is heart-rending to hear.

He cannot bear to speak while she is sobbing, and there is silence between them until she suddenly stops and says, very humbly:

"You needn't say a word, Bob. I know it's all my own fault. I will do anything you want me to."

"I don't want you to do anything, Sallie," he says.

"I reckon I ain't half-fitter live," she says. "I don't believe there ever war a gal with sech a temper. It's—it's like my good English," she adds, with a hysterical little laugh, "I never have it when I need it."

"You won't have anything more to do with that man Sandowne, will you, Sallie?" Lake asks, coaxingly.

"I don't believe he's going to hurt me," she answers, evasively.

"He won't do you any good, Sallie," is his rejoinder. "Let me tell you something about him. When he came out where I was with her"—he sees her wince as with pain—"telling her about how nobly Dick Bridger died, and how nobly you saved me——"

"And I reckon," she interposes, humbly and hopelessly, "it slipped out how I kept you from sending her a message."

"Yes, Sallie," he responds, gravely, "I told her that, and I told her of the ride you took, which not a man in Faro Gulch would have taken."

"Did ye tell her that, though?"

"Yes. But while I was talking to her, that—wretch came out——"

"Sent by me," she interjects.

"Yes, sent by you, Sallie," he acquiesces. "He came out and talked in such a way that I thought it best to leave them. But I could not do anything but walk about uneasily, for I knew the sort of man he was. Once I went where I could just see them, and I was sure something was wrong. Well, I went nearer. I saw him strike her once, and I saw him lift his hand to strike again."

"I'll bet he didn't do it!" cries Sallie, turning her flashing eyes on Lake with an assured, adoring look.

"No," replies Lake, quietly, "I stopped him."

"Of course you did."

"Now, Sallie," he goes on, persuasively, "you don't intend to have anything whatever to do with him, do you?"

"I ain't afraid of him, Bob," she replies, with a sort of doggedness that troubles him. "If he should try his hand hitting me, I reckon he'd hear something drop."

Lake recognized the hidden scorn of Marjorie in this defiance; but he takes no notice of it.

"Only evil can come of having anything to do with his sort, Sallie," he says.

Sallie's face is very pale now, and her eyes refuse to look up into his.

"I guess I can take care of myself," she says, doggedly.

So Lake gives up trying to persuade her, satisfied that she will at least do no more harm to Marjorie, and sure that he can guard her against any evil that can come from Sandowne.

He says good-by to Sallie, expresses the hope that they will meet soon again, and hurries away to get ready for his departure.

"We'll meet to-morrow in Monte Carlo, Bob," she murmurs. "Ah! Bob, you only make me love you better all the time; but it ain't in human nature for me to love her as long as you do."

The last thing Lake sees as he leaves the hotel for the train is Sallie Jones, walking about the grounds, her hand on Sandowne's arm, her head close to his.

"She is a puzzle to me," he murmurs; as if there was any woman who was not!

CHAPTER XXVI.

SANDOWNE'S PLAN.

It seems that Lord Sandowne is as much inclined toward Monte Carlo as the others; for he is there the next day. He seems in very good spirits; though his eyes glance hatred at Lake when they fall on him.

"I thought he would stay over there near her," he mutters. "Well, it doesn't make a great deal of difference. The right seed has been sown. It only remains now to talk the thing over with Murray."

He goes into the Casino, where the tables are already filled with eager gamblers, and walks along from table to table in search of Murray; but it is hard work to pass the different tables, for he is an inveterate gambler, and the very silence of expectancy at the tables stirs his blood.

Mrs. Jones, Sara, and Sam Morgan are among the devotees at the tables. Mrs. Jones and Sam have no eyes for anything but the little ball as it makes its fateful circuit on the disk.

Sara, however, looks up at him and smiles in a bright, eager way. Lake, who is not playing, sees the exchange of greeting, and his heart sinks. What does it mean? he wonders.

Sandowne crosses over to Sara, and, after watching her play for a moment, offers a word of advice. She redistributes her counters at his suggestion. He nods approvingly, and whispers:

"Will you and your mother go for a drive this afternoon? If you have never been over the Corniche road it will be worth your while."

Her delighted glance at him would be answer enough, but she adds to that her verbal assurance that she will be delighted.

He glances slyly over at Lake with a little smile

of triumph on his lips, and goes on until he reaches a table where an Englishman of the upper class, but with the prominent nose and small eyes of the sharper, is sitting at play.

He is losing, as Sandowne sees the moment he looks at him. So Sandowne stands a little distance away, and watches his friend, with a cynical smile. One gambler will often do that to another, and he in his turn smiled at.

It is the peculiarity of the game of roulette that it keeps each individual confirmed in his belief that he is gradually acquiring an infallible system. It is seldom that one sees a gambler who cannot tell just how to always win at roulette. Nevertheless it is a peculiar fact that the owners of the gambling establishment divide nearly ten million dollars a year among them.

So Sandowne, knowing that if Murray is losing, he must be near the end of his purse, and of his credit, too, waits patiently for the time when his friend will be forced to yield up his seat.

A great many times he thrusts his hand into his pockets which seems to be well filled with bank-notes, and is about to tempt fortune, but each time has the courage to resist.

"No," he mutters, "if I begin I do not know when I shall end. I will wait at least until I have finished this matter. Somehow, though, I feel as if I should be lucky to-day."

Then, at last, his patience is rewarded. With a muttered oath, Murray pushes his chair back, and rises. Then it is seen that he is of the military profession. His manner proclaims that as loudly as if he had a man by his side to call out the fact.

He does not see Sandowne, and swaggers down between the tables and out of the Casino, his energies all bent to maintain the air of one who may lose or win with equal indifference.

Sandowne follows him at a little distance, and does not overtake him until he is on a lonely little path that winds about and overlooks as peaceful and smiling a prospect as one would wish to see.

"Ah, Murray, old man! how goes the game to-day?" he says.

"Oh! is that you, Sandowne?" Murray carelessly replies. "Dused luck! I played a combination that ought to win; but the fates were not with me."

He stops, and examines Sandowne's face for a moment, as he sees something peculiar in it; then goes on:

"You look as if the fates had been rather kinder than usual to you. Did your dear wife open her purse-strings? I should think you would push that claim of yours. By Jove! Sandowne, what a plunge you could make with it!"

"Yes," replies Sandowne, exposing a roll of notes with an unwonted freedom; for it is the unusual custom of these dear friends to say as little as may be of the possession of any wealth, "my wife refused to see me, but she sent me this proof of her existence."

"Didn't speak of that mine affair, then?"

"Not a word. To tell you the truth, Murray," replies Sandowne, seating himself on a bench in a leisurely way, "I don't see how I can sue her as long as she is my wife."

Murray glances at him out of his little eyes, and studies him before speaking.

"Oh! as long as she's your wife! Ah! Well, if you are going to disclose this latest bit of diplomacy to me, do it without making me ask questions. And say, Sandowne, did you have an object in showing me that wad of notes?"

Sandowne smiles at this exhibition of astuteness in his friend.

"You see as far through a mill-stone as anybody, don't you, Murray?"

"Aha!" ejaculates Murray, a slight sneer curling up the corner of his mouth. "He flatters me! Let me beware!"

"Yes," says Sandowne, "it is an affair requiring considerable skill in the handling, and I knew of no one who would or could do it so well as you."

"Ah!" says Murray, suggestively turning an

empty pocket inside out, as if to free it from the particles of lint that adhered to it.

"A thousand francs," says Sandowne, with a smile of comprehension.

"A thousand francs! Then it is dangerous. Courage comes higher than that, Sandowne. Of course you cannot be expected to know, because it is a commodity that you do not deal in; but——"

Sandowne flushes, and looks angrily at his friend.

"Why do you need to harp on that? I make no pretensions to being a bully," he says.

"Then don't ruffle your feathers in that way, my lord," replies Murray. "Come! you need me. I know it, from all the signs. I knew it when you stood in the Casino watching me, and fingering your bills without putting any down. I knew it when you followed me out to this spot, which I purposely selected, so that we might not be interrupted. When you deal with me, Sandowne, be square!"

"You are keen, Murray," says Sandowne, in a conciliatory tone.

"I can take care of my own interests," is the curt reply.

"Well, suppose I let you name your figure?" says Sandowne.

"Suppose you do. Thank you for nothing, my lord! Suppose you tell me what is to do, and give me a chance to know what it is worth. Come! unburden!"

Sandowne hesitates for a moment. He is not certain how much to confide to this friend, who is really so little of a friend. But he has had so much experience with his shrewdness, that he decides to tell him all, or nearly all.

"Well, the truth is," he begins, when Murray interrupts him sardonically:

"Oh, if you begin in that way, I despair of hearing the truth."

"You are in too merry a mood, Murray," says Sandowne, sulkily. "If you wish to stand in with me in this affair, please listen."

"Ah!" says Murray, with a malicious smile, "it has something to do with your wife, or you would

not revert to your Americanisms. 'Stand in!' Well, go on! I won't interrupt."

"Yes, it has to do with my wife," Sandowne replies, in a low tone. "You know that I have been hoping for a settlement of some sort on account of my ownership in the Spoke Mine."

"Bought with your wife's money. Yes."

"She has refused all the time, on the score of not yet having heard from her father. I suppose it is by his advice that she holds off in this way. Well, under the circumstances, I can hardly sue, can I? She would bring up some very unpleasant things, which the London papers would air; and I should lose caste."

"You haven't a great deal to lose, you know," suggests Murray.

"Perhaps not. My plan is this: I will compromise her with an old lover of hers, and get a divorce. Then I will put in my claim for the money taken out of the mine, and will win it. I consulted a lawyer on that while I was West."

"Compromise her! How will you do that?"

"The lover was in Nice last night, and it is very certain that he and she are as much lovers as ever, only in a highly virtuous and platonic way. To-day he is in the Casino, as it happens, by good luck. I will show him to you."

"Ah! then I am to have something to do with him?" queries Murray, with a keen side glance at Sandowne.

"Yes. Already I have whispered a story in Nice to the effect that my wife is fonder of him than she ought to be as a good wife; and I do not doubt everybody in the city knows about it."

"But he has come on here. Does he suspect?"

"He suspects nothing. I have no doubt he has come on here in a spasm of lofty virtue, to be out of the way either of temptation or of gossip, I don't know which, and don't care."

"What an ideal husband!"

"But I intend to bring them together in such a way that she will be completely compromised. And here is the plan:

"There is a young lady here, also American, who has had the good taste to appreciate me, but who has had the bad taste to be jealous of my wife. Don't misunderstand me. She is not jealous on my account, but on account of this man Lake, who is an old lover of hers."

"Lake," says Murray, musingly. "Oh, yes, a quiet, well-built, gray-eyed gentleman. I saw him this morning. I didn't like him. Go on!"

"Well, Lake is such a paragon of virtue that he not only would refuse to do anything wrong himself, but he will certainly try to prevent my harming his old flame. The young lady herself, with good taste, is not as averse to me as she might be.

"I shall take advantage of the fact, and be so attentive to her that Lake will feel called upon to say a word of remonstrance to me. He already has done the same thing in vain with Miss Sara."

"What a confounded prig the fellow must be!"

"Quite so. Well, you know I am not a fighting man; and it is just here that I need your services. When he comes to talk with me, I wish you to be on hand. He will naturally desire a private conversation with me. I will say you are my friend, and may hear anything he has to say.

"You must then find your opportunity to insult him, so that he will have to fight."

"A duel?"

"Yes. He will challenge, or you, as the case may be, but anyhow the place of meeting must be Villeflor, that lonely little place about fifteen miles from Nice. The duel need not be deadly—in fact, I don't wish him dead yet. All you need do is to wing him, hurt him enough to lay him up for a night.

"He can be taken, at your suggestion, to a little cottage not far from the field of honor. After that my work comes in. I will imitate his writing, of which I have obtained a scrap, and will write my wife a note, purporting to come from him, saying he is very ill in this place, and begging her to come to him."

"She won't fall into such a simple trap as that," says Murray, scornfully.

"You don't know her," replies Sandowne. "She loves that fellow so madly that she will not stop to reason a moment. She will rush down post-haste, even if it were midnight."

"Suppose I don't wing him," suggests Murray.

"You will; but if you should not, it won't matter very much. I shall write the note, and my wife will be there to expose her infatuation; and I shall be there with witnesses."

Murray, who, to do him justice, is far more cunning than Sandowne, smiles and says:

"And if she should come down, and it should turn out that I had not winged my man, that note of yours saying he was wounded would be straight evidence of a plot against her."

Sandowne bites his lip. It is an absurdly weak point in his infamous plot. He looks at Murray.

"What would you suggest, then?" he asks.

"Have the duel take place late in the afternoon. It is not quite according to rule, but what of that? Then write and say that there is to be a duel. Then if he should not be hurt, and there came up any question of who wrote the note, he will hardly dare to show it, because it will make it seem that he was desirous of having the duel stopped."

"Yes, you are right. She would come as quickly to stop the duel as if he were ill."

"The next thing," says Murray, "is, will he fight? He may be too virtuous for that, too."

"I think he will fight," Sandowne replies. "He is not a coward, by any means."

"Then it only remains to fix the price for this bit of work," says Murray.

"Well, what is it worth?"

"I will take ten thousand francs," replies Murray, as coolly as if he were discussing the price of property; "and I will put a bullet through his right shoulder."

"He is probably a fair shot himself," says Sandowne.

"Pshaw!" says Murray, contemptuously, "it doesn't matter how good a shot he may be. If he hasn't stood up before a pistol once or twice, his

nerves will be unsteady. I don't care how good a shot he is."

Sandowne with difficulty suppresses a smile at the thought of Lake's nerves being unsteady because a pistol is pointed at him. He remembers the stories he has heard of Lake's icy calmness in the face of danger that would make Murray turn white with fear, and Murray is not a coward.

But he says nothing of what Lake has done in the fighting way; for the thought comes to him that it won't matter a great deal, under the plan laid out by Murray, if Lake should kill him. In fact, he sees many advantages in having Lake a murderer at the same time he is co-respondent in the divorce suit.

In fact, it seems to him that the affair is actually shaping itself for him in such a way that success is bound to be his in any case.

"Well," queries Murray, "how does the price suit you?"

"I will give it."

"Half in advance, if you please," says Murray, holding out his hand.

"Say a quarter of it, Murray. Half is too much."

"Half or nothing, Sandowne. And, for Heaven's sake, don't bargain over an affair of honor."

Within fifteen minutes Colonel Murray, late of Her Majesty's Army, is testing his combination at one of the tables in the Casino.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SAM MORGAN ASSISTS.

It troubles Lake very much to see Sallie and her mother going off that afternoon for a drive with Sandowne; but he feels powerless to do anything more than he has done. He has faith in Sallie, but he feels as one does who sees a child playing with edged tools.

Miss Sara, on her part, looks the picture of contentment as she sits beside Lord Sandowne, while her mother sits behind, where she cannot hear a word.

"I wonder," murmurs Lake, with real pain showing on his face, "if it can be that that foolish girl thinks to retaliate on poor Marjorie by flirting with her husband."

It is not at all strange that he has this thought; for as Sallie and Sandowne sit up there on the driver's seat, they have the appearance of finding each other very interesting.

As a matter of fact, it enters Sandowne's head more than once, that this ignorant Western girl, with her newly acquired wealth and her appreciation of him, might not be a bad substitute for the Lady Sandowne who so despises him. Something like this he ventures to say at once, when Sallie gives him a reasonable opportunity.

"I wonder," says Sallie, smiling at him and showing her double row of white, even teeth, "what Lady Sandowne would think of this?"

"Lady Sandowne would probably be furious," he replies; "but I suppose that if she takes your lover from you, you have a right to take her husband from her," and he looks at her to see if she is going to take offense at this peculiarly worded exposition of the case.

She flushes rather deeply, but shrugs her pretty shoulders and says:

"You make two mistakes, Lord Sandowne. She has not taken any lover from me. Mr. Lake is not my lover. If he can get along without me, I can get along without him. And I have not taken Lady Sandowne's husband from her. Those are your two mistakes," and she smiles at him in a way to make him wonder how much is ignorance and how much is *savoir faire*.

"Are you sure," he asks, lowering his tone to make it confidential, "that you won't change your mind as to Mr. Lake?"

She looks at him with a very calm glance.

"Lord Sandowne, if Mr. Lake were to ask me to marry him to-day, I would refuse him. I don't know why you ask that; but there is the plainest answer I can give."

"Ah!" he murmurs, "what a pity we cannot rearrange matters to suit ourselves."

"And suppose we could," she asks him, "what changes would you make?"

"May I tell you?" he eagerly asks, scanning her face to see how far he dares to go.

"Of course. Why shouldn't you?" she queries, in mild surprise.

"The first change I would make would be to convert Lady Sandowne back into Marjorie Bridger."

"Would you, really?"

"Yes; and the next change would be to convert somebody else into Lady Sandowne," he says.

She laughs gayly, her white teeth glistening, and her eyes sparkling like jewels.

"Is the next one picked out yet, then?" she asks. "Do tell who she is."

He looks at her very steadily, and sees her eyes shift a little before his. He knows by that that his answer is anticipated by her; so he does not hesitate to answer in a low tone:

"If I might have my choice, the next Lady Sandowne would be she who sits by my side. Ah! Miss Sara, forgive me, but I could not help it."

She does not look as angry as she should. Per-

haps it is passing through her brain that if it is right for Mr. Lake to have confidential talks with the wife, it is right for her to have the same with the husband.

Sallie turns her head away with a deeper red on her cheeks, and a low laugh breaks from her red lips. He watches her, wondering what the end of this is to be, and even beginning to speculate on the possibility of not making her Lady Sandowne after all. For his is a mind into which infamy finds entrance without difficulty.

When Miss Sara turns her face so that he can see it again there is a smile on it which may mean anything or nothing. She is from the West; but she has learned some things since she left there.

"Well," she says, "that is a very pretty compliment to me, but it is such a very cheap one. You are very little likely to convert Lady Sandowne into Marjorie Bridger: so I won't permit myself to be too happy over the prospect."

He looks at her for a moment, trying to make out all that is hidden behind the laughing eyes. Then he says, very seriously:

"Perhaps it is not so unlikely as you think. If it should happen, may I hope that you will not be averse——"

His tone is low and tender, and in his eyes is a look that has been there often before, when he was trying to persuade some woman that she was more to him than anybody else. Sallie interrupts him with a short laugh.

"Ask me when the time comes. Will it be soon?"

"It can hardly be too soon to please me," he replies, with latent savagery.

On the whole, he is very well pleased, indeed, with the result of the afternoon drive, and he looks it as he drives into the hotel court. Sallie, too, looks as if the air and sunshine had done a great deal to raise her spirits, for she is smiling and vivacious.

Lord Sandowne lets the footman assist Mrs. Jones to alight, but descends from his seat to perform that duty himself for Miss Sara.

But as he is looking up, with as much devotion as

he dares to put into his face, and is reaching out his hand to take hers, he is almost lifted from where he stands, and turns furiously around to look into the stern face of big Sam Morgan.

"I'll take her down," says Sam, curtly. "I reckon I kin take keer on her. Give me yer hand, Sal."

So it is neither Sara, nor by your leave, but the plainest "must" that ever Sam Morgan has used to Sallie. She looks at him in amazement, hesitates a moment, and gives him her hand.

When she is on the ground she turns to Sandowne, who is suppressing a volley of curses with difficulty, and says, with a smile that does a great deal to soothe him:

"I am so much obliged for the ride, Lord Sandowne, I enjoyed it all so very much."

"In that case," rejoins Sandowne, "I trust it will be repeated."

Before Miss Sara can reply, Sam Morgan, in a very masterful way, but without any roughness whatever, puts her hand on his arm, and says, sternly:

"You and me's got ter hev a talk before ye says anything to thet, Sal."

She looks up into his face with a very singular expression in her eyes, and answers, quietly:

"I shall be very glad to talk with you, Mr. Morgan. Lord Sandowne, I will see you again."

She walks away with Sam, and Sandowne watches them with a vicious look in his eyes.

"Ah!" he mutters, "I think I have done pretty well in that quarter."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE COLONEL TAKES HIS CUE.

"Bob Lake put you up to this, Sam Morgan," is the first thing Miss Sara says to her escort when they are where no one will overhear.

"I haven't talked to Bob Lake about you to-day, or any other time, Sal," he replies; "an' nobody ain't put me up to anything. But I don't wanter talk here. Wait'll we git up to your parlor."

His face is very stern, and unlike that of humble, pleading Sam Morgan; but Miss Sara smiles with the cheerfulness of one who is far more amused than frightened. Mrs. Jones has reached the parlor, and is sitting down when they reach there. Sara removes her wraps and her hat very leisurely, and gives them to the waiting maid. Sam looks out of the window and waits, a dignified, noble figure, in spite of a certain uncouthness that no elegance of clothing can remove from his big frame.

"Now then, Mr. Morgan," says Sara, with cheerful unconcern, and Sam turns and looks at her.

She is very charming to look at from any point of view, and from his point of view she is better worth looking at than any other woman in the world. Nevertheless, there is an expression of deep pain on his face as he looks. Mrs. Jones looks from one to the other with a mother's speculative eyes; and she is convinced that they two make the finest-looking couple her eyes have ever rested on.

"Mrs. Jones," says Sam, turning gravely to her, "I've got a leetle suthin' to say to Sal. Will——"

"Sara, Sam," interposes Mrs. Jones, anxious that he shall not injure his chances by his forgetfulness. But Sam ignores the correction.

"Will you give us a few minits alone?"

"Sartin, Sam," replies Mrs. Jones, but shakes her head, as she thinks that Sam is going at his court-

ing in a manner altogether too cold-blooded to suit her ideas.

She goes out, and they are left alone. Sara curls herself up on a divan, and rests her chin in her hands as she looks smilingly at Sam. He stands in the middle of the floor, looking at her with trouble, but with determination, in his face.

"Well, Sam," she says, seeing that he hesitates about opening the conversation, "this isn't just like Arizona, is it?"

She laughs as she says it, and he feels that she is mocking him. That gives him the courage to begin, and he does, with true Western bluntness.

"Yer right it ain't, Sal. If it war, I wouldn't a-stopped with a word to thet thar varmint of a lord. Ye ain't doin' yerself no good, Sal, when ye go out with him.

"I reckon ye're saying to yerself thet I'm pre-soomin'. But I ain't, all the same. Yer daddy ain't here, Sal, an' I'm tryin' ter take his place. I don't claim no right to speak because thar's any-thing between us, 'cause I don't know thet thar is.

"All I know is that ye hadn't orter be seen with Lord Sandowne; an' I reckon ye won't any more," and the firm set of his mouth says that he means far more than his words.

But Sara, though seeing and comprehending fully, only smiles at him, and replies, with good-humored mockery:

"That air of command becomes you, Sam. I never noticed it before. I suppose it is your idea of the way dad would look. It really is calculated to frighten any woman. I think, however, that I won't cut Lord Sandowne just yet."

Sam looks at her as he might gaze at a problem in calculus. He does not comprehend her at all, but he had hardly expected to. He had acted as he had, with a definite idea in his mind; but that idea had not included making her submissive.

He knows he has not expressed himself in the best way to persuade a girl like Sal, and he feels that so far as she is concerned, he is utterly defeated. Nevertheless he has deemed it his duty

to do as he has done, and it only remains to explain on what he places his main reliance.

"I never hev been yer equal in brains, Sal," he says, sadly, "and I've done some darn fool things in my courtin' o' you. I know thet; an' I reckon I ain't much chance o' gettin' you. I've seen thet purty plain sence I've been here. And I don't want ye fer to think I'm doin' this out o' jealousy, or any low-down thing like thet. I'm jest doin' what Red Jones 'ud do if he was here."

"And what would he do, Sam?" she asks, in a tone of raillery, though her eyes have something in them that belie the levity of her words and manner.

"He would shoot thet varmint; an' so help me! thet's wot I'll do!"

Sara rises from the divan and goes over to Sam. He watches her uneasily. He remembers several outbursts of temper in Faro Gulch, in which Sal had used her woman's tongue in a way to make him writhe.

But Sara has learned new ways since then. She puts her hand—a very pretty, white little hand, now—on his arm, and says, very quietly:

"You won't do anything of the sort, Sam. You will not interfere with me in the least. I don't think you will."

And the singular fact is that Sam goes out of the parlor after nearly half an hour more of spirited talk, and the look of determination has faded away from his face. He goes to the Casino, and takes his place at the first table where there is an opening for him, and plays with unusual intentness.

And after that he plays all the time, paying as little attention to what Sara is doing as he very well can. This goes on for a week, and more, and Lake is an uneasy spectator all the while.

He does not interfere with Sallie, and he does not say anything to Sam. He has hoped that the latter would see and discover for himself. He dares not speak to Mrs. Jones, for he knows very well that Sallie would overrule her without difficulty.

There remains but one thing to do, and that, as

Sandowne foresaw, he does. He places himself where he will meet Sandowne, and waits for him. A great many things pass through his brain as he sits waiting on the path he has noticed that Sandowne and his friend Murray often walk in.

He thinks of Marjorie and her sorrow; he thinks of old Dick Bridger and his fury when he learns what Sandowne has done; he wonders if the old man will be able to come at once, because in such a case, he ought to be in Nice at almost any moment; he wonders why Sallie, who has such noble traits of character, should have so much to do with a man like Sandowne.

The only answer is that Sallie is not herself, but is warped and twisted in her judgment of right and wrong by her furious temper.

Then he looks up, and Lord Sandowne and his friend, Colonel Murray, are coming along the path. And it seems to Lake that both of them are very merry, with a suspicion of insolence toward him. This puts him on his guard in a moment, and he is imperturbable, impenetrable Bob Lake in an instant.

"Lord Sandowne," he says, rising as the other approaches, with an air of insolent affectation of not seeing him, "I wish a word with you."

Sandowne stops, adjusts his eye-glass in his left eye, and looks leisurely at Lake before answering. It is as insulting a thing as he can be guilty of, but Lake stands with the utmost coolness, awaiting a word from him.

"Aw!" says Sandowne, at last, playing his part very well, but feeling, perhaps, a memory of certain fingers that once held him in an iron grip by the throat, "I believe I have seen you before. What can I do for you?"

"I wish to see you alone," replies Lake, without the least show of anger, but quite ignoring Colonel Murray, who is glaring at him with military fierceness.

"Haven't the time, really," replies Sandowne, with his insolent drawl. "This gentleman is a

friend of mine, and is privileged to hear anything you can possibly have to say to me."

"No one has the privilege to hear what I have to say," Lake calmly replies. "I wish to speak with you alone, and if your friend is a gentleman, he will permit me to do so without delay."

This is the colonel's cue. He steps close up to Lake, his little eyes flaming with wrath, for wrath is a thing the ex-military gentleman has always ready for an emergency.

"Do you mean to insinuate that I am not a gentleman, sir?" he demands. "Confound you, sir, I have a mind to pull your nose."

Lake looks into the colonel's fierce eyes, and a grim smile is faintly visible in the corners of his mouth.

"It does not require mind as much as it does a certain ability to perform that interesting feat," he says, quietly. "I beg you will move on and not annoy me any further."

He turns away with a little gesture of weariness that is particularly exasperating to the colonel, who is accustomed to frightening such persons as he threatens. It is the colonel, in fact, who loses his self-control.

He emits a sort of bellow of rage, and catches Lake by the arm with one hand, with the evident intention of performing the operation of tweaking Lake's nose. Lake turns toward him quickly indeed, but with no appearance of heat, flashes a swift glance about him, and then catches the astonished and furious ex-militaire by both arms, and tosses him over a low wall that crowns a sloping bank at the side of the road.

Then, without stopping to watch the undignified effort of the fire-eating colonel to regain his feet during his roll down the steep slope, Lake turns to Sandowne, who stands by in pallid fear, and says, sternly:

"Now we are alone, and I will tell you what I have to say. Stop! don't dare to try to escape hearing. You are not again to speak to, or be seen with Miss Jones, on pain of being publicly horsewhipped."

Sandowne recovers some of his insolence, if none of his courage.

"That would be a choice way of getting the young lady's name before the public," he says.

"Don't think me so foolish," says Lake, grimly. "If I horsewhip you it will be for such things as will remove the gaze of the public very effectually from anything and everything but you.

"I shall publicly announce, so that it will spread over England and the Continent, that I horsewhip you for procuring my stirrup strap to be cut in New York. And I will show an affidavit of the horse-boy to that effect. No woman's name shall appear in the matter. Believe me, Lord Sandowne, I am quite able to manage this affair."

CHAPTER XXIX.

IN THE AMERICAN FASHION.

"Have I the honor of addressing Mr. Robert Lake?"

The speaker is an English gentleman plainly enough; though his handsome face bears the unmistakable signs of dissipation. Lake looks at him calmly.

"That is my name," he replies to the query, and looks at the card that has been handed to him. The name on it is, "Honorable George Beresford-Dare."

"I have come," says Mr. Beresford-Dare, in a ceremonious manner, "as you probably suspect, to demand on the part of Colonel Murray, either an apology or such satisfaction as is common between gentlemen in such cases."

"Please be seated, Mr. Beresford-Dare," says Lake, politely, though there is a lurking smile on his lips. "Does the person whom you represent specify what I have done to demand either an apology or satisfaction in some other form?"

"No, it is not necessary," is the formal and somewhat haughty reply. "Between gentlemen, it is often the most honorable course not to specify the injury."

"I can see reasons for it in this case, anyhow," says Lake, dryly.

"Is it your wish to apologize?" inquires the other, formally.

"I don't see how I can very well," replies Lake. "No; on the whole, I think I will meet your principal."

"That is as it should be," says Mr. Beresford-Dare, stiffly, not quite liking Lake's tone. "If you will

kindly refer me to some friend who will undertake to treat for you, I will call upon him."

"One moment, first," Lake says. "I believe there is no objection to my having something to say on the subject myself?"

"None whatever, although it is customary to leave details to the seconds."

"I believe I have choice of weapons?" Lake says.

"Certainly, but I would suggest that as my principal is not practiced in the use of foils, fairness would demand that they be left out of consideration."

"Oh, I prefer pistols; but, being an American, I am naturally biased in favor of certain American institutions."

The Honorable Mr. Beresford-Dare looks very uneasy at this exordium, for his ideas of American customs make him dread almost anything; the particular style in his mind being a duel in balloons with rifles, of which he had read in the account of an American correspondent to a London daily.

"Naturally, of course; but, ah, I would say that anything *outré*—odd, you will understand," he explains, fearing that Lake's French might not be equal to the occasion, "should be avoided, as likely to bring, perhaps ridicule, perhaps too much notoriety."

"What I shall suggest will bring no ridicule on us," Lake says, grimly. "It is simply that the weapons shall be any large caliber revolvers of American pattern and make."

"That I will unhesitatingly accede to," is the reply.

"The conditions are that we shall be placed thirty yards apart, and that the firing may—not must—commence on the dropping of the handkerchief; and that the firing shall continue until either one of us is dead, or both revolvers are exhausted. Also that neither shall recede a step at any time, but may advance at his pleasure."

The Honorable Mr. Beresford-Dare looks at Lake as he quietly recites these conditions, and mentally decides that, while he is no coward, he is very glad

that he is not to stand up before those serene gray eyes and take his chances with six bullets fired under such conditions.

He bows and rises. Mr. Lake does the same.

"I can see no objection to the conditions," the Englishman says, "although I must admit that they are a little peculiar, and calculated to end in the death of one of the principals, which is always a result to be deplored."

"That is the American idea," Lake replies, suavely. "In my country we do not play at getting satisfaction for wounded honor. The man who asks me to stand up before him to be shot at, must expect nothing less than death."

"Well, well!" says the Englishman, a trifle nervously, for it begins to look like a very serious affair to him now, with a coffin in it. "We all have our peculiar ways of viewing matters. What did you say was the name of your friend?"

Lake gave him the name of Sam Morgan, and told where he was to be found, and Mr. Beresford-Dare goes to find him, while Lake, with a smile, resumes his book and cigar.

Sam is at one of the tables when the Englishman finds him, and is winning a great deal of money. It is the first time Dame Fortune has been with him, and he is pushing his advantage to the utmost, knowing, like others who have played the game, that the time to pursue Fortune is when she smiles.

"What?" he exclaims, petulantly, when the Englishman leans over him and asks if his name is Mr. Samuel Morgan. "Yes. What of it?"

Mr. Beresford-Dare whispers enough in Sam's ear to let him comprehend the serious nature of his business. So Sam sighs as he thinks of what he is called upon to give up, but rises heroically, and follows the Englishman to where they can talk without interruption.

Then Sam listens with interest while the whole affair is explained to him. He shakes his head when he hears Lake's conditions.

"Bob must have it down on the colonel," he says.

"I beg your pardon," says the Englishman, not

comprehending Sam's phraseology. "I didn't quite catch it."

"Bob's goin' ter turn the colonel's toes up," Sam explains. "Kill him. I'm sorry fer thet, too, fer I reckon we'll have ter make ourselves scarce about here after it's over; and I'd struck such a lead, pardner! Wa-al, I s'pose it can't be helped now."

"I do not understand," says the Englishman, a little stiffly, "why you should mourn over my principal with such certainty."

"That," says Sam, in perfect good faith, "is only because ye don't know Bob Lake. He's a dead-shot at fifty yards with a good weapon. Why, he'll put the bullets into your man just where he wants to. It'll be a mighty pretty exhibition, an' don't ye forget it, Mr. Dare. I wouldn't miss it fer all I'd win at one sittin', though I'd like blamed well ter hang around here for a spell longer."

Mr. Beresford-Dare makes all necessary arrangements with Sam, and leaves him with the feeling that it is rather a funeral than a duel he is arranging. If either Lake or Sam had indulged in bragging it would have been different; but the one had been calm to indifference, and the other had spoken with merely earnest conviction.

Besides, the American is still looked upon in the old country as a peculiar being, and it does not surprise Beresford-Dare to find one who proposes to place bullets in his antagonist, just where he wants to.

Colonel Murray, however, has not heard what Beresford-Dare has, and he is simply thirsting for Lake's blood. If Lake is contemplating his death, Murray is doing no less as to Lake. It is nothing to him now that Sandowne wishes Lake to be merley wounded.

He has seemed to see nothing but the ludicrous spectacle of himself rolling down that slope, snatching handfuls of turf in his progress; and, being a fire-eater, he can stand anything better than being ridiculous.

The time is set for the afternoon, and the place is just where Sandowne wishes. Therefore he writes

the letter he has already concocted and practiced on, and sends it by messenger in such a way that Marjorie shall receive it in time to reach the spot soon after the duel, or perhaps while it is in progress.

The poorest result of his plan, he thinks, will be to compromise Marjorie somewhat; and he is strongly in hopes that Lake will be wounded, so that Marjorie will lose her presence of mind in her distress, and give him the opportunity he seeks.

Miss Sara shows that she knows what is going on by watching the departure of Sam and Lake from behind the curtains of her window, and murmuring:

"I hope Bob won't kill him. The idea of that Englishman standing up in front of Bob Lake!"

The only thing the Englishman is afraid of, however, is that Lake may finally decide that he will change his mind; and it is a sincere relief to him when he sees him come upon the ground.

"He's very foolish," says Beresford-Dare, when he sees that Lake is smoking a cigar. "How is your hand, Murray?"

"Steady as a church."

"Be sure to reserve your fire at first, and wait for him to advance," says Beresford-Dare, who is considered, even by Murray, as an authority in such matters.

"If he comes within twenty yards," mutters the colonel, "I will drop him."

Lake, meanwhile, dressed in a plain black suit, with frock coat, which sets off his athletic figure to advantage, is leaning against a tree on the edge of the open, smoking his cigar, in seeming forgetfulness of the others.

Nor is this affectation with him. He is no more concerned with the result than if he were not a principal. He knows exactly what he can do, and is confident of what the end will be. What troubles him now, as it has all along, is, how he can help Marjorie.

"Step up to the scratch. Bob," is Sam's informal way of acquainting Lake that all is ready.

"Infernal fool!" mutters the colonel, between his

teeth, while an evil smile distorts his lips. "He thinks he can scare me with bravado. Do you see, Sandowne," for Sandowne is there, "he keeps his cigar in his mouth? I couldn't shoot with one in my mouth."

"Ready, gentlemen!" says Beresford-Dare, and a moment later his white handkerchief flutters to the ground.

CHAPTER XXX.

ENGAGED.

"Come, ma!"

It is but a moment after Lake and Sam have left the court-yard, that Sara addresses her mother in this peremptory way. But Mrs. Jones shows that she is ready to obey her daughter's wishes, by appearing in the door-way with her wraps on.

Mrs. Jones is a trifle bewildered by reason of being in the calm center of the little cyclone which has been whirling around her for several days past; but she is otherwise serene.

She does as Sara asks her to do, because her admiration of her daughter has grown to very large proportions, owing to the manner in which she has adapted herself to the social exigencies of their existence.

It is for this reason that she has to-day held herself in readiness for a hurried departure for some unknown place. But now that Sara has made a start, she asks:

"Whar in the land o' the livin' air we goin' ter, Sara?"

"To Nice, mamma," Sara replies, quietly, and without seeming to notice her mother's start of surprise.

"Nice! What air we goin' ter do thar?"

"Don't ask me any questions, mamma, or you'll rattle me," replies Sara, evidently under considerable strain, notwithstanding her air of serenity.

Therefore Mrs. Jones retains her astonishment for a more opportune time, and takes the ride to Nice with as much enjoyment as possible. When they reach Nice, they are driven, by Sara's order, to the hotel at which they had stopped when there before.

"I wish to see Lady Sandowne," Sara says, at the office; "but I will go up without being announced. She is expecting me."

So, followed by her mother, she goes up to Lady Sandowne's apartments, and knocks at the door, which is opened by Marjorie's maid. She starts a little at the sight of Sara; for, like a good maid, she knows that her mistress is not friendly to the American girl.

"I will see if her ladyship is in," she says.

"Her ladyship is in," Sara says, with a slight lifting of her eyebrows; and pushes unceremoniously past the maid, very much to the latter's indignation.

"If I didn't do it," Sara mutters, "she might not see me."

Marjorie is in the parlor which overlooks the water, and is startled and annoyed at having her privacy invaded in this way. She rises and regards her visitor with an air of haughty inquiry.

Mrs. Jones drops into a chair without waiting for the tardy invitation to do so; but Sara stands, with erect head, and a glance as haughty as Marjorie's own. Let come what will, she knows that she can never like Marjorie. There is an insurmountable barrier between them, and, with a twinge of bitterness, Sara feels that she stands alone on one side while Marjorie and Lake stand together on the other.

"This is an unexpected——"

Marjorie hesitates a moment, and Sara says, sarcastically:

"Pleasure. Yes, it is unexpected. I would not have come if I could have helped it."

Marjorie looks at Sara in a way that asks as plainly as words:

"Did you come here to quarrel with me?"

And Sara, with a little defiant toss of the head, says, frankly:

"I don't wonder you think I'm ugly. But it's a fact that I came here in a good temper, to do you a good turn."

Marjorie pales a little. Somehow Sara seems to

be entangled in the woof of her life; and at one time it is through Sandowne, while at another it is through Lake. But not for worlds will she betray this feeling to Sara.

"I did not know that I was so much in need of assistance," she says, with ungracious pride.

Sara bites her lip. It would be so much easier to let things take their own course. Not even Lake need know; and no one would attach the least blame to her. She has a quick, fierce temper, which Marjorie does nothing to mollify. Besides, she knows that Marjorie is perfectly well aware of the fact that she, Sara, can never win Lake's love, and that consciousness is more galling than anything Marjorie can do or say.

It was easy enough to make her good resolves and keep them while she was at Monaco; but now that she is face to face with Marjorie it is very different. So a fierce battle is waged within her breast during the instant that intervenes before her answer to Marjorie; but the latter sees nothing more than a proud, disdainful face, and a pair of flashing eyes.

"You are more in need of assistance than you know," Sara replies, slowly, conquering herself completely as she speaks. "I suppose you and I will never like each other, and I am not going to pretend that I am doing this for your sake."

She pauses a moment, and Marjorie sees now that Sara is under a great mental, perhaps equally moral strain, and some alarm mingles with her growing wonder.

"Won't you sit down?" she says, all her natural, sweet courtesy asserting itself.

Perhaps the trouble that shows in Sara's face tells her that the latter is hopeless of ever winning Lake. She will not permit herself to think of Lake as anything to her; but she dares to feel happier at the thought that no one else may have him.

"I don't want to sit down," Sara replies. "I came here to warn you of a plot against you; and I did not intend to say a word besides; but perhaps I had better, now that we are together."

Marjorie instinctively feels that Lake is to be brought into the conversation, and she makes a gesture as if about to protest against such a thing before Mrs. Jones.

"Oh!" cries Sara, comprehending at once, "you needn't mind ma——"

In her intensity she drops, for a moment, into the Western vernacular, but recovers instantly, which indicates that she is not losing her self-control. "She won't understand half I say; and won't speak of what she understands."

Mrs. Jones bridles a little at this, and says, in a somewhat acid tone of offended dignity:

"Es fer thet, Sara, I must say yer about kerrect. I ain't understandin' much o' what's goin' on, right under my nose, too; an' I reckon I might es well go somewheres whar I won't be a fifth wheel."

"Oh, pshaw! mamma," replies Sara, cavalierly; "you're no fifth wheel. Don't get on your ear for nothing! I couldn't do without you."

Mrs. Jones subsides at this; for there is something serious in Sara's manner, in spite of her seemingly flippant words. Marjorie looks from one to the other in a troubled way. Sara goes on as if she had not been interrupted.

"I fancy you know," she says, looking fixedly out of the window at the water, where the sunlight is dancing merrily, "that if it hadn't been for me, Lake would have got to New York in time. You don't need to say anything. I know you know it."

"I tried to make it right afterward, but didn't—couldn't. You know as well as if I'd told you that I was glad of it afterward. Then, I met you, and"—she stops and looks squarely into Marjorie's flushed face—"well, I didn't fall in love with you."

"Oh! I know I was mighty unreasonable. I don't blame you—no, really, I don't; but it was hard to see him—— Well, I won't say anything about it, if you don't want me to. Only I sent Lord Sandowne out to find you that night. Oh!" and she pauses again, "you knew that, too."

"Well, Lake and I had a talk after that; and, of

course, he had the best of it. I was all wrong—always am wrong, I reckon. My temper is pretty rough. You got out of the West in time; I staid too long, and got its ways well ground in. But this isn't what I was going to say.

"You saw Sam Morgan?" she keeps her eyes on Marjorie's face, and lifts her shapely head in a defiant sort of way. "I am engaged to him. I don't know when we'll be married. Soon, now, I reckon."

She turns her head away, and looks out of the window again. Marjorie, without comprehending the cause of this visit, gets her first glimpse of Sara's real nature. She presses her hand to her bosom, swallows a lump in her throat, and is by Sara's side. Her arm is around her, and she is whispering, brokenly:

"You are better than I am, no matter what you've done. I gave him up when I could have had him, and I have no right to think of him now. Don't wreck your life by marrying the wrong man. Take him, take him!"

Ah! such odd creatures as women are! A few minutes ago they were at daggers drawn; now they are clasped in each other's arms, crying with pitiful sympathy for each other. Sara recovers first, and pats Marjorie's plump shoulder lovingly.

"Take him!" she repeats, with a short laugh, which has the remnants of a sob in it; "I can't do that. You can't give and take Bob Lake in that way. And I don't suppose I would want him, if you could. I reckon babies would want the moon if they could get it. Anyhow," and she tosses her head, "Sam has the same right to me that you and Lake have to each other. He loves me, if I don't him."

"Don't speak so of Mr. Lake and me," Marjorie says, in a low tone of pain. "He and I are far, far apart."

Sara looks at her with a faint smile of something like amusement hovering on her lips. Then she says:

"You are nearer to him than I am, anyhow; and that is something. Ah!" and she starts back and

listens, "here is something for you, which will bring me to the object of my visit here."

Marjorie's maid has entered the room with a note in her hand. She gives it to her mistress, and stands waiting while the color comes and goes on Marjorie's face, as she scans the superscription.

"One moment!" says Sara, as Marjorie starts to tear open the envelope. Marjorie looks at her. "Won't you let the maid wait outside for the answer?"

The maid, who is a faithful girl, looks daggers at Sara; but obeys the nod of her mistress, and goes out.

"Now open it, but don't be troubled by what you read," says Sara.

Marjorie stares, but opens and reads the note. In spite of Sara's reassurance, however, she pales and totters a little as her eyes scan the lines.

"Do you know?" she gasps. "How can you know?"

"It says Bob Lake is wounded, doesn't it?" asks Sara, with a calm, rather contemptuous smile; "and asks you to come to him?"

"Yes." And Marjorie's lip quivers.

"Well, you don't need to worry about him," Sara says, quietly. "That note isn't from him at all; though I suppose it looks as if it was. Your—Lord Sandowne wrote that precious note. He got up a quarrel between Lake and an English colonel; and he was so sure the colonel would hit Lake that he wrote that to get you to go on there, and compromise yourself. Don't you see that you would get there after dark?"

Marjorie looks aghast at Sara; then examines the note as if it were a viper that might sting her.

"It is not his first forgery," she says, her face pale, but a firm line developing about her mouth.

"No," replies Sara, very cool and quiet now. "I fancy he has a gift at that sort of thing. He's a pretty bad lot. Lady Sandowne—no, I reckon I'll call you Marjorie, if you don't mind. Well, you won't go, will you?"

Marjorie looks at Sara, but does not see her. She is trying to decide something in her mind.

"Why won't the colonel be able to hit Mr. Lake?" she asks; and Sara smiles at the betrayal of where Marjorie's thoughts are.

"Because Lake is as cold as ice at such a time; and is a dead shot. Why, my dear, he could fill that Englishman with lead while the other was trying to make up his mind what had happened to him. Ah, Marjorie! I wish you could have seen the way he cut the rope that was going to hang your brother Dick. It was altogether the prettiest thing ever was seen out Arizona way. And," she goes on, her eyes flashing fire at the recollection of those days, "I'll bet all I'm worth, and all dad's worth, that the best fight ever seen was that one where he and Dick Bridger stood off the 'Paches. They were piled up all over—— But I reckon you don't care to hear about that now. Well, you don't need to fear for Bob Lake. I reckon the fight's about over by now."

Sara sighs as she realizes that she is talking to the woman who has Lake's heart; for the thought of all that Lake is among men, makes her long for him. And Marjorie understands; for she puts her arm around Sara, and stands so for a moment without speaking. Then she says:

"I wish I could be sure that it is as you say."

"Well, you may be sure; for I told Sam to send a swift messenger to us here, if anything did go wrong."

"How kind you have been!" Marjorie says, in a low tone.

Sara laughs in a constrained way.

"I thought it was about time," she replies.

She refuses to accept Marjorie's invitation to remain all night, alleging that she has something to do in Monaco; but she stands with her at the window, watching the shadows of the setting sun fall on the glistening water. Mrs. Jones has heroically fallen asleep in her chair.

"Now I may go and take mamma with me," Sara says, at last. "If there had been anything wrong,

Sam would have let us know by this time. Good-by! I'll see you again soon. Maybe I'll have something interesting to tell you when I see you again."

CHAPTER XXXI.

ANOTHER ENGAGEMENT.

Lake and the colonel stand in their places; the handkerchief has fallen, and they are at liberty to kill each other, according to the code of honor. The seconds stand aside and wait; Sam Morgan with calm unconcern, and the honorable gentleman who represents the colonel, with nervous distress.

It is not at all his idea of the way gentlemen should stand up to shoot each other for honor's sake. He has whisperingly begged Sam to request his principal to put away his cigar; and Sam has answered, with a stare of surprise:

"What fer? Don't you fret yer gizzard about Lake."

Therefore, not with any regard for his "gizzard," but because there is no remedy for it, the honorable gentleman accepts the situation.

Lord Sandowne, with white face and tremulous hands and lip, is nearly out of sight behind the colonel, but well out of line of any chance bullets. He is in the woods surrounding the place of meeting.

Neither of the principals moves for a moment. Lake puffs calmly at his cigar, but the colonel notices that the smoke is never in his opponent's eyes. The colonel waits for Lake to move; and then, seeing no indication of such an intention on his part, studies his man well, decides where he will aim at, and how far he will walk before shooting.

Then he steps forward until he has reached the place fixed in his mind for the shot, watching his man warily all the while. Lake stands carelessly at rest, and looks with an indifferent eye at the approaching colonel. The colonel stops, turns his side

toward Lake, covers him with his keen eye, and lifts his pistol for a steady aim. Then, no one can tell just how, there is a flash and a report from Lake's end, which is almost simultaneous with a report from the colonel's pistol. An oath breaks from the colonel, and his pistol falls to the ground. Lake is taking a puff from his cigar.

"I hope the colonel can use his left hand," Sam Morgan murmurs, with a note of admiration in his voice.

The colonel, in fact, is stooping to pick up the revolver with his left hand; his right, hanging limp by his side, his lips curled in a snarl of pain. Lake is neither elated nor otherwise disturbed in his demeanor. He smokes his cigar as if that were his chief business on the ground.

The colonel stands still now. He has learned a lesson, and hopes to profit by it. Lake shall move first. He is half-inclined to believe that the first shot was a mistake, however. No man ever shoots like that. So he remains quiet, wishing savagely that his hand did not bleed so freely. He knows that he is being weakened by the loss of blood.

Then it occurs to him, as he looks at Lake and notes his indifferent air, that the latter may be counting on the weakness resulting from the wounded hand. If he dared, he would insist upon the duel ending. For the first time in his life, he has a coward fear that he is being played with as a cat plays with the mouse it has caught.

He looks around with a swift glance to catch a sight of Sandowne, but does not see him. He groans with a feeling of being deserted. Lake puffs at his cigar, until the man by the side of Sam Morgan mutters nervously:

"He means to kill the colonel."

The colonel knows that he is being weakened by every moment he waits. He dreads to take a step now, lest he should waver a little, and so betray his condition. Then comes a fear that he will faint, perhaps; though he has had worse wounds and laughed at them. The truth is that Lake has impressed him as he has impressed so many before.

Lake watches him with a sort of languid interest that is far less exasperating than affrighting. The colonel desperately raises his pistol to aim. He has always taken care to practice with his left hand, and is not afraid of the result, so far as that is concerned.

But— Again there are two reports. The weapon falls from the colonel's hand, which is shattered by the bullet from Lake's revolver. The colonel is at the mercy of his opponent.

What! Lake totters! He falls! It is not noticed at first, in the wonder at his shooting. The first to see it is the colonel, who has just uttered an oath of despair; for he feels that he deserves and will receive no mercy from the American.

He sees Lake clutch at his side, and fall. A cry like that of a wild beast escapes the colonel's lips, and he stoops to pick up his revolver. His hand is shattered and bleeding; but he finds that he can use one finger and the thumb. Never mind the agony of cocking the hammer! Nothing matters now.

"Go away from him!" he cries, hoarsely, as Sam at that moment rushes to Lake.

Sam turns a wicked eye on the colonel, looks at Lake's pale face, and groans:

"My God, Bob! I've got ter let him shoot."

He puts Lake down on the grass, and moves away, more murder in his heart than ever was there before in his worst moments; for he knows that the English colonel will take every advantage.

The colonel, in fact, has rushed up, the very lust of blood in his face, and looks down at Lake. He sees the calm, gray eyes looking steadily up into his face, and knows that Lake is not dead. That is all he needs to know, excepting that, in the first spasm of his wound, Lake has dropped his pistol.

"For Heaven's sake, colonel!" cries the truly honorable English gentleman, who has seconded him, "you would not shoot now. It would be murder!"

A grim smile distorts the colonel's lips.

"Oh, I won't murder him; but if he lives, it will be with hands that will not put mine to shame."

They all understand, and shudder. He intends shooting Lake in both hands. It is not the spirit of an English colonel, but of an American Indian. His second protests.

"You must not," he says.

Sam Morgan merely turns his back. He feels that he has no right to say a word. Lake looks from one Englishman to the other; a smile passes over his pale lips.

"It is his right," he gasps; "but he'd better hurry."

Then he fixes his eyes on the colonel and waits. The second turns his head. The colonel uses both hands to aim with, and points the muzzle of his weapon at the hand which Lake has let fall on the grass.

CHAPTER XXXII.

HOW MANY SHOTS DID THEY FIRE?

The colonel is slow in pulling the trigger. This is not because the trigger is a hard one, but because the colonel's aim is very unsteady. Perhaps the calm, contemptuous gray eyes on him have as much to do with it as the loss of blood.

But he has his aim now. His trembling hands grow steadier, and a vindictive look fills his eyes. He pulls the trigger. But the bullet is buried in the soft ground instead of in the hand that stoically waits to receive it.

The colonel staggers, too, and his pistol falls from his hand. He screams a curse on Sam Morgan, who has turned suddenly and knocked his revolver aside. But Sam merely looks into Lake's half-angry face, and says, sententiously:

"I had a idee."

With that he stoops and takes up both pistols before the colonel can recover his. The colonel rages, and the other Englishman stands aloof, watching. He is rejoiced that there has been an interference, but he will not be concerned in it.

"Is this American fair play?" demands the colonel.

"How many shots did you fire, Bob?" asks Sam, without answering the colonel.

"Two," is the motion made by Lake's lips.

Sam looks at the colonel's second, who has become interested, and is listening.

"Does that tally with your reckoning?" he asks him.

"I believe there can be no doubt of that," is the answer. "My principal bears cruel evidence of the fact."

"What does all this mean?" demands the colonel,

savagely. "Is this some of your Yankee smartness?"

Still Sam pays no attention to him, though he glances uneasily at Lake, who has closed his eyes, while an ashen gray has usurped the usual color in his cheeks.

"Will you examine this revolver, which I think you will agree was Bob Lake's," and he hands Lake's revolver to the other second, who takes it with a bow.

"Yes," he replies, "this is your principal's revolver. May I ask why——"

"Just look an' see how many bar'ls there is empty," Sam says, briefly.

"The shells in two chambers," replies the Englishman, with accuracy, "are empty."

"Now take this one," goes on Sam, "and before you look at it, tell me how many shots the colonel fired."

"Two, undoubtedly," is the prompt answer.

"Examine it," says Sam, his teeth bearing hard against each other, and his chest heaving.

The colonel looks disdainfully on while the man who has stood as his second glances at the revolver.

"My God!" the Englishman cries, "only one chamber is empty."

"Sam," says the feeble voice of Lake.

Sam leans over him.

"Wal, pard?" and his voice quivers, for he thinks he is taking a farewell of his friend.

"I suspected it. Don't betray the wretch. He's her husband. She bears his name."

Sam gulps down a big lump in his throat.

"I won't betray him, Bob." Then he turns away and mutters: "But, curse him! I'll cut his heart out."

"What is the meaning of it?" demands the English second, half speaking to Sam, half threatening his principal.

Lord Sandowne is one of the group now. His face is as white as chalk, and his lower lip is quivering. But he contrives to say:

"It is plain enough. The colonel's weapon did

not discharge the first time. I heard but one report."

The colonel looks at Sandowne, and then turns away. His second looks from him to Sandowne with a puzzled expression. He is not able to comprehend anything beyond the fact that his side of the duel has not come out as it should.

"Colonel," he says, sternly, "there is something in this that I do not understand. It seems to me like foul play. I hope you can clear yourself of any participation in it."

The colonel turns. His head is erect enough, and he meets his second's eye firmly.

"On my honor," he replies, "I thought I had fired two shots. That is all I can say."

Sam is paying no more attention to any of them. He is bending over Lake, trying to coax a word from him. But Lake is unconscious. Then Sam looks up mournfully at the Englishman, and says:

"I reckon yer a white man, pard. Will yer find out whar thar's a cottage near by to take him to? You understand their palaver. How bad is it, doc?" he asks of the surgeon, who has been examining Lake.

"Pretty bad," is the answer, in French, which Sam only understands because of the tone, and of the gesture which accompanies the words.

The Englishman speaks a few words to the surgeon in French, which the latter answers. Then the former turns to Sam.

"There is a cottage not far from here, to which the surgeon will direct us. He says it will not hurt your friend if we carry him carefully."

A little later Lake is lying on the rude bed of a French peasant. The surgeon is put in charge, promised any money he chooses to ask, and then left alone. The Englishman paces the little room for several minutes in manifest perturbation. Suddenly he goes over to Sam, and says, in a low tone

"Sir, this is a most unfortunate affair."

"Ye kin bet yer life it is," Sam replies, earnestly.

"I trust you exonerate both me and my principal," the Englishman goes on.

"Yes, of course," Sam replies, rather absently.

"It is quite plain that your friend was shot by some one off the field," the Englishman says, "but I must admit that I do not understand how it could be."

Sam looks at him steadily for a moment, then mutters under his breath:

"Blame me if I didn't allow as how I was stupid enough; but this beats me."

"I beg pardon," says the Englishman.

"I said it was blamed queer," replies Sam.

"Yes, certainly. Of course you will not think it strange if I leave you alone with your friend," the Englishman says, in his formal way. "If I could do any good I would not hesitate to remain; but of course you understand that if anything serious comes of this I shall be compromised, according to the French law. I trust you will see the necessity of my instant departure."

"Sartin! Skip jest as soon es ye're a mind to. Oh! will ye do me a favor?"

"Anything. Command me."

"I want to send a message to a young woman over to Nice. What's the best way? It's got to go quick."

"Let me take it," is the unexpected reply. "It will be on my way. In any case I would take it. It is to some one who—who is interested in him, no doubt."

"Jest so," Sam responds. "Thank ye. It's to Miss Sara Jones, an' all ye need say is that Bob Lake is wounded bad."

"And where shall I find her?"

"Wal," replies Sam, hesitatingly, "it's most likely ye'll find her with Lady Sandowne. I reckon it won't be hard to find where she is stopping. Blamed if I ain't fergot the name o' the hotel."

The Englishman opens his eyes a little at the name of Lady Sandowne, but makes no other comment than:

"I shall have no trouble in finding the hotel."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ROBERT.

Marjorie is standing where Sara left her. She has had her dinner, but has returned to the window as if she found a sort of companionship there. It is easier to think there of the things she wishes to think of.

"Milady," interrupts her maid, "there is a gentleman—an English milord, I think—who wishes to see you, but does not give his name."

The maid stands expectantly, her lips pursed, and her eyebrows elevated, as if she already knew the terms of the refusal to see a gentleman who would not give his name. Marjorie presses her bosom with a sudden gesture of fear.

"Show him up," she says.

The maid does not venture to display her surprise; but revenges herself in the corridor outside by a muttered disquisition on the oddity of her mistress. Marjorie turns to look at her visitor when he is shown up.

"You wished to see me?" she asks, in a tremulous tone.

The Englishman has heard more than once of the American girl who wedded Lord Sandowne, and he gazes at her with interest.

"Pardon me," he says; "not precisely you; but I have a message to Miss Sara Jones, and I was told to come to you to find her."

"A message!" cries Marjorie, starting toward him with a little gasp of fear. "From whom?"

"Really, I cannot remember the gentleman's name," is the response; "but he is an American, and, I fancy, from the Western part of the country."

"Sam Morgan?" queries Marjorie, her face quite pale now.

"Ah! that is it," he responds.

"What is the message? Tell me!" she cries, wringing her hands unconsciously. "Oh, sir! is he wounded?"

"Mr. Morgan? Oh, no. It is a friend of his. He sent the message. I was to tell Miss Jones that Bob Lake was badly wounded."

"Badly wounded," gasps Marjorie. "Is he— is he—dead? Oh, do not deceive me."

"No, not dead; only badly wounded."

Marjorie suddenly recalls Sara's story of the treachery of Sandowne, and she wonders—she even hopes, that this is another device merely to get her to go to the little village, in order that her name may be compromised. She goes closer to her visitor, and looks searchingly in his face.

It is an honest face, and betrays its sincerity. Marjorie gets no hope from it. She totters a little, for she already sees Lake dying; and she has not prepared herself for the blow.

"Oh, sir!" she cries, "I cannot believe you would deceive me. You look like a gentleman who would not lend himself to anything so small and mean as a woman's undoing."

The Englishman draws himself unconsciously up to his full height, and looks very noble and handsome as he replies, with fine dignity:

"On my honor as a gentleman, I am a simple messenger. If you will permit me I will tell you all that happened. Then you will comprehend better."

She sinks into a chair, and fastens her eyes on his face as he tells the story of the duel as he had comprehended it. But as he goes on she sees the truth; and when he has finished, she is standing, waiting for the last word.

Her face is flushed, and her eyes excited, but the signs of woman's weakness are gone.

"Thank you," she says. "I understand everything now. Please let me tell you that I shall always be grateful to you."

The Englishman bows very low.

"If you will permit me," he says, sincerely, "I will gladly perform any other service for you."

"Thank you! there is nothing you can do unless you will order a carriage to take me to this place. You could tell the driver better than I how to reach it."

"Pardon me! you will not go alone?" he says.

"I will take my maid."

* * * * *

"Mr. Morgan, in mercy tell me how he is."

Marjorie is in the little cottage, clinging to Sam's arm, and looking up into his face with agonized eyes. Sam shakes his head kindly.

"No, he ain't dead," he replies, his words softened by his tender manner; "but he is pooty bad."

"Does he know I was sent for?" she asks, in a tremulous whisper.

"No; I didn't know fer sartin ye'd come. I thought mebbe ye might not care ter take the risk o'——" He stops, and looks what he does not wish to say.

A smile, very sweet, and somehow very proud, too, flits over her face.

"Nothing could have kept me away. Let me go to him."

"I'll speak to the doctor," Sam says, and goes to the little room adjoining, and beckons the attendant doctor. "You ask him," Sam says to Marjorie. "I believe roulette is about the only French I know."

"I wish to see the sick man," Marjorie says to the doctor, in perfect French. "I am an old friend. I will be very quiet. Is he in a dangerous condition?"

The Frenchman shrugs his shoulders.

"There is always hope, you know," he replies, with professional caution. "He has a magnificent constitution. We cannot tell till the end. Oh, yes, you may go in. He is conscious. I think he has heard your voice, but I do not know."

"Ah!" he mutters, as Marjorie disappears through the door-way, "that is the kind of man the women go wild over."

Marjorie stops for a moment as she crosses the

threshold, and a flood of emotions almost overwhelms her. Then she closes her eyes for a moment. When she opens them again she is stronger. She can think of the man lying there, and not of herself now.

She glides softly to the bedside, and bends over him. He opens his eyes and smiles up into her face quite as if he had been expecting her. In fact he says, in a faint tone:

"I was sure you would come, Marjorie. I suppose they think this is the end of it."

Big tears roll down her cheeks, but she does not answer him. He goes on as much in his natural manner as is possible:

"Don't cry. I'm not gone yet. Anyhow, Marjorie—you don't mind if I say Marjorie?"

"No."

"Anyhow, I have something to say to you before I do go—if go I must. Marjorie, you must break the tie that holds you to Sandowne. I don't say this because I hope to profit by a separation. I have thought it all over, and even if I live your good name requires that we should not meet any more. You understand me, dear Marjorie?"

"Yes."

"And you will separate from him? I can't tell you why; but you must do it."

"I know why," she says, in broken tones. "It was his bullet that hit you. I had decided to do it."

Lake smiles at her.

"Of course you would think of it," he says. "Marjorie, I almost wish I were dying. Anyhow, it is worth it to have you here, and be able to let you know without shame that I have always loved you."

"Oh, Robert!"

She has whispered his name in her dreams a thousand times; but has never spoken it before. He lets one of his hands fall on hers as they rest on the bed covering.

"I have often wondered how it would sound on your lips," he murmurs.

Whatever she would say is choked by her sobs now. If he were not so strong and serene she

would be able to control herself, but when she realizes that he does not need her support she breaks down.

"Oh, my love! my dearest love!" she wails, and buries her golden head in the pillow by the side of his.

He strokes it gently, and his face is very full of happiness as he does so. He is realizing in a measure what he has dreamed of. What of it if it is but for a moment? He has often told himself that for less than has fallen to his lot in these few minutes he would willingly die. Yes, he is very happy.

"Don't feel so badly, Marjorie," he says, softly. "I am not going to die. I am sure of it. Marjorie, dear— Hark! what is that noise out there? Get up, Marjorie! Ah! that wretch is playing his last card. Yes, yes, I understand now. Do you hear his voice, Marjorie?"

"Lord Sandowne," she says, calmly, as she rises. "I do not fear anything he can do. Robert, I do not know what may chance after this; so here is my farewell to you."

She bends over and kisses him on the brow, and then goes out into the other room.

"Oh!" moans Lake, "why is there no light ahead?"

Marjorie closes the door behind her as she leaves the room. She fears something will be said that will excite Lake. Something tells her that there is a crisis impending in her life.

In the outer room stands Sandowne, two gendarmes by his side, and Sam Morgan between them and the room.

"Blamed if et ain't handy not to understand their lingo sometimes," Sam mutters. "I know what they want, I reckon, but es long es they can't tell me, they can't hold me responsible. Oh!" he exclaims, as Marjorie appears.

Marjorie passes him, and faces Sandowne.

"Well," she asks, contemptuously, "what new revelation of baseness are you going to make now?"

Sandowne turns to the officers by his side, and says, in French:

"That is the woman! Arrest her!"

Sam comprehends by the actions of the men rather than in any other way what is contemplated, and he steps between her and them, saying, in his thundering voice:

"By Heaven! I'll break ye in two ef ye touch her."

"Do not interfere," says Marjorie, gently. "It is better to let this matter go on."

"Let them arrest ye, an' him dyin' in thar?" cries Sam. "Killed, too, by thet thar varmint, cuss him!"

"Hush! never mind that," she says, and turns to the officers; "I will go with you."

Sam stands dumfounded at the spectacle of the two men leading her away, as if she were a felon. He mutters a curse on French law, and stands with clinched fists, furious, but impotent.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

SARA'S SURPRISE.

Sara had been quite right in saying that her mother would not comprehend more than half of what she heard. But that half Mrs. Jones had understood, and it had whetted her appetite for more. When they were in the cars, on their return to Monaco from Nice, she said to Sara:

"Is that dead sure about Sam? Engaged? you two?"

"Yes, ma."

"Yer dad'll be glad to hear it."

"I reckon he will."

"An' what's all this here about Bob Lake an' Lady Sandowne?"

"Oh, ma! please don't talk to me," cries Sara. "I'll tell you all about it later; but not now."

So Mrs. Jones subsides into her corner, her accommodating disposition enabling her to content herself with the fact that Sal was at last engaged to Sam Morgan. Sara, on her part, looks serene enough, but there is, in fact, considerable fever in her blood.

It is late when they reach Monaco, and Mrs. Jones retires to her room after ordering dinner to be served there. She is contemplating an easy evening after the fatigues of the afternoon, but her hopes in that direction are rudely disturbed by Sara, who suddenly asks:

"Tired, mamma?"

"Not so very," is the self-sacrificing response.

"Then I want you to go over to the Casino with me. If I don't play roulette, or something of the sort, I shall go crazy."

Mrs. Jones sighs softly at having to give up her quiet evening, but Sara seldom asks sacrifices of

her, and she makes no complaint. Sara is not in the habit of tempting the goddess of fortune, either; but her mother thinks very little of her doing so now, if she wishes it, for she has become accustomed to seeing women sit at the green tables. Indeed, she has done it herself a few times. But the gambling spirit is not in her, and she has not often repeated the experiment.

Sara sits down in the first vacant place at one of the tables, and begins to bet, with the air of intending to drive every other thought from her mind. Mrs. Jones watches her until a chair near her is vacated, when she sits down, too, and begins to bet.

Sara is very successful from the start, and very soon her play is being copied by those small fry who are always swimming carefully about in the deep waters of the Casino. But she plays on, oblivious of everything but her own play, and seemingly successful in banishing the other thoughts from her mind.

She has a considerable pile of glittering coins in front of her, and as many more staked on the squares of the board, when some one touches her lightly and deprecatingly on the arm from behind. She does not heed at first, but at last looks around with a start. A man who bears unmistakable evidences of being somebody's valet stands there.

"Oh!" she says. "Is it you? Has he come back? Anything the matter?"

The man bends over to whisper, but as he talks, his eyes are glued on the board and his ears are alert to hear the announcement of the man at the wheel. He is a gambler, pure and simple. He whispers to Sara:

"He is back. He is exultant, but in a fright about something. He has ordered a carriage to take four persons, and to be out all night. And he has gone to the magistrate's."

"Do you know what has happened?" asks Sara, turning pale with apprehension.

"Fourteen is called," murmurs the man, his eyes

and thoughts on the board. "You have won everything. What luck! Rake it in?"

Sara rakes in her winnings as they are deposited on the board, and turns impatiently.

"Never mind the board!" she says, sharply, knowing his weakness, apparently. "If you know anything more, tell me."

"Mr. Lake was wounded."

"Impossible!" gasps Sara.

"He was," the man goes on, eagerly. "I don't know any of the particulars, only his lordship is much agitated, and I noticed that one chamber of his revolver was empty. When he took it away with him it was fully loaded."

"How could he have shot him?" asked Sara, in a sort of bewilderment.

She is for the moment what she would call "rattled," and, woman-like, skips her reasoning and jumps at her conclusion. She understands what the man means to imply, and says it out plainly.

"Sh-h!" the man says. "I don't know. I only know what I have told you."

Sara shivers a little, and recovers her presence of mind. She gets up from her chair, and motions to him to take it.

"Keep what is there," she says to him. "I know what to do now."

He would overwhelm her with thanks, but she is gone over to her mother, and is whispering:

"Come, ma! you've lost. Come with me!"

"Not another expedition?" protests Mrs. Jones.

"Yes; but the last, I think," replies Sara.

Mrs. Jones hears certain tones that tell her Sara is what she is wont to describe as "on the war-path," so she says nothing more.

Sara leads her rapidly out of the Casino, but instead of going to their own rooms she goes to one of the least aristocratic and perhaps least respectable of the hotels, and proceeds without hesitation to one of the upper rooms, at the door of which she knocks.

A shabby-genteel, querulous-faced woman opens the door, and stares at Sara with a look in which

curiosity and apprehension are mingled. Sara enters with her mother, and closes the door behind her.

"What's the matter now?" the woman asks, in a tone that denotes that she believes herself to be a very much injured creature.

"I think," says Sara, in a way that is more melodramatic than she realizes, and which greatly impresses her astonished mother, "that the time has come."

"Oh, dear!" whines the woman, "I don't believe I have the courage"

"I have enough for both," replies Sara, curtly. "Put your things on, and come along. We have no time to waste."

"Where are we going?"

"To a little village some miles from here. Hurry!"

* * * * *

Sam Morgan is still swearing and undecided, and the officers, respectfully accompanying their extraordinary prisoner, are just across the threshold of the cottage in which Lake lies, when a fresh young voice, with a ring of triumph in it, exclaims from out of the darkness immediately in front of the party of which Marjorie is the center:

"Stop! where are you taking that lady?"

"Do not interfere with the law," is the stern answer.

"Is that you, Marjorie?" is the next question.

"Sara," Marjorie cries. "Yes, it is I."

"Are you being arrested as the wife of Lord Sandowne?"

"I suppose so. I did not question, for I know the French law gives the right to the husband under such circumstances."

"Then tell those men that they must release you, since you are not the wife of Lord Sandowne, and never have been."

This is a bomb-shell which Sara has been preparing with the greatest care, meaning to explode it with the greatest circumspection. She had intended to first prepare Marjorie, and she had intended to

get Sandowne in such a position that he would be unable to retreat without a complete exposure.

She has all along promised herself the pleasure of telling Lord Sandowne that she has never forgiven him for making a tool of her at the time that Lake lay sick in the cottage at the Gulch.

And now she has, in her excitement, exploded her shell, and is unable to see the face of the wretch whom it most affects. She knows it will be a great surprise to him, since he is unaware of the existence of this real wife, and she hopes now that he will insist upon an indentification. And in this she is right. She first catches a little gasp from Marjorie, and then hears the scornful voice of Sandowne.

"What sort of nonsense is this?" he demands.

"No nonsense sir," Sara responds. "Your wife, Annie Morgan, of Butte City, is here by my side, and Marjorie Bridger is Marjorie Bridger. Tell those men, Marjorie, and make them take you back into the cottage."

Marjorie asks the men to step back into the cottage. They do so, and the whole party crowds back; the real Lady Sandowne taking care to shelter herself by the side of Sara, for she is one of those who taught Sandowne to believe that he could tame any woman. She is mortally afraid of the brute.

Marjorie is half dazed. She does not dare believe what she has heard, and yet she does believe, and her thoughts are whirling about the man who lies in the little bed in the room beyond.

The moment they are in the room where there is light enough to see by, Sandowne seeks eagerly for the face of the woman who claims to be the wife he believed to be dead. Sara forces her to disclose herself, and the distorted face of Sandowne, as he looks at her, betrays the truth.

"Tell these men they are not wanted any more," says Sara, peremptorily to him.

He smiles wickedly. It occurs to him at once that he can make himself still very disagreeable to Marjorie by insisting that she be taken to Monaco.

The men are under orders to do so, and will do it unless he says they need not.

"The men have their orders to take her before the magistrate," he says. "If this woman is what she pretends, she must prove it. I can prove that the woman named Annie Morgan died five years ago." Then he turns to the men and says. "You will take her at once."

Sara bites her lip. She sees what he intends to do, and realizes that she is powerless to prevent his doing it. She looks at Sam, as if hesitating whether or not to call on him to help her by main force. He, who has not heard the first part of the interview, stares in wonder, but stands ready to do anything Sara asks him to.

"Sam," she says, desperately, "Marjorie Bridger is not his wife, and this woman is, as he very well knows. He is only having his mean little revenge on her by having her taken in custody."

It is in Sam's nature to use his muscles instead of his brains in any sudden emergency, and he steps forward now, his brow contracted in a frown, and his hands working as if preparing to do execution on the two officers. They evidently anticipate violence from him, and step back in alarm, their hands seeking the weapons they carry concealed.

Gigantic Sam frightens them by his bulk.

Then Sam suddenly stops, and his face lights up with the brightness of an idea. Since Marjorie is not Sandowne's wife why——"

"See here, you skunk!" he says, with sudden and inelegant force, addressing Sandowne, "ef ye don't send them cusses away, by thunder, I'll have ye arrested fer murder. It was you shot that man in thar, an' I kin prove it."

Sandowne pales suddenly. Sara speaks up quickly;

"And I can prove it, too. The bullet that is in Bob Lake will be found to correspond with the kind in his revolver, and I can prove that that revolver went with this man fully loaded, and came back home with one chamber exploded. You'd better say the word, Lord Sandowne. We have the cinch

on you. Oh, you half rascal, half fool! You used me once in your vile game, but I have turned your weapons on yourself. It was only a chance that discovered this poor creature to me, but even if I had not found her I would have been too much for you."

"You bet you would," ejaculates Sam, admiringly.

Sandowne looks around on all the faces there, mutters an oath, and says to the officer:

"You needn't arrest her. It is a mistake. Come with me!"

He sees that they go with him, for he is afraid that if he leaves them behind they may be used to apprehend him.

* * * * *

Lake has never intended to die, and he doesn't. He grows well and as strong as ever under the careful nursing of Marjorie Bridger, whose father has fortunately reached her to take care of her. Their wedding tour, like that of Sara and Sam, is back to America.

[THE END.]

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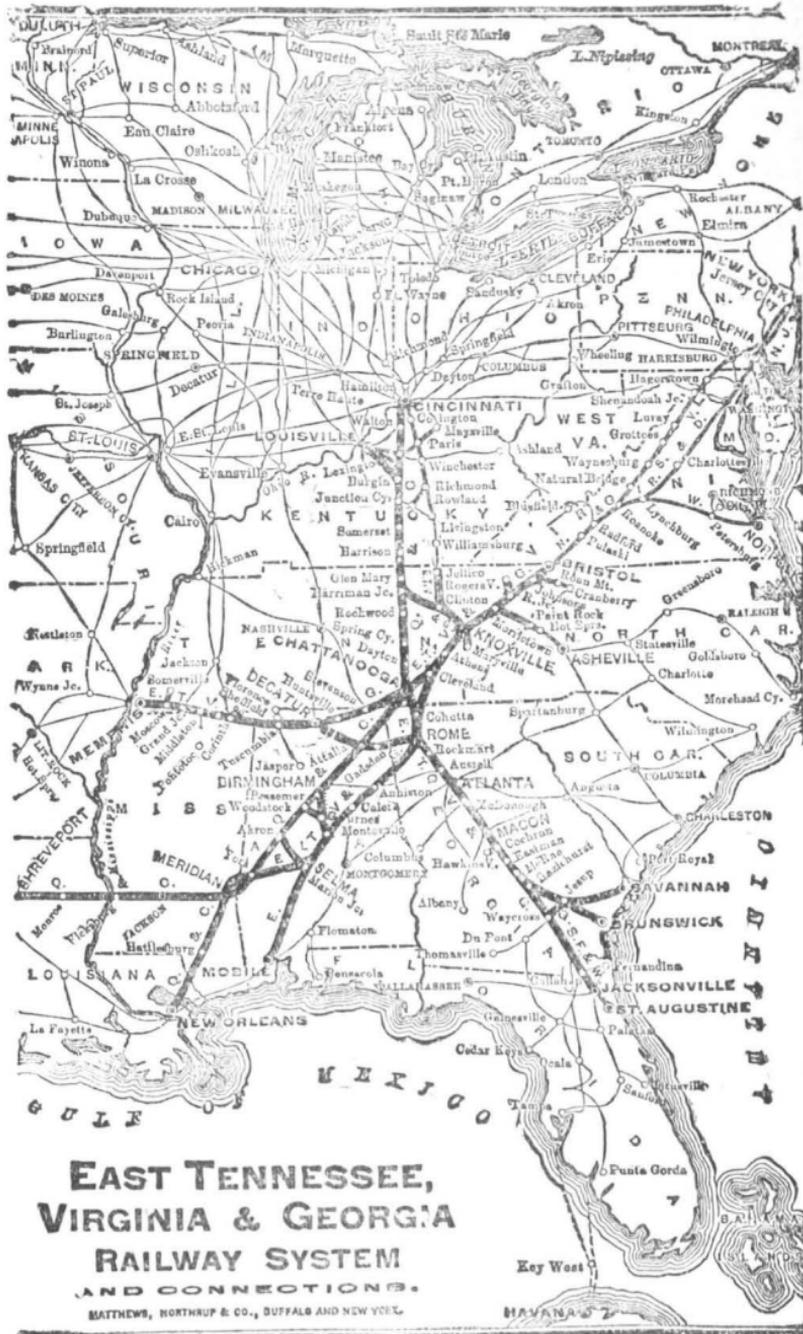
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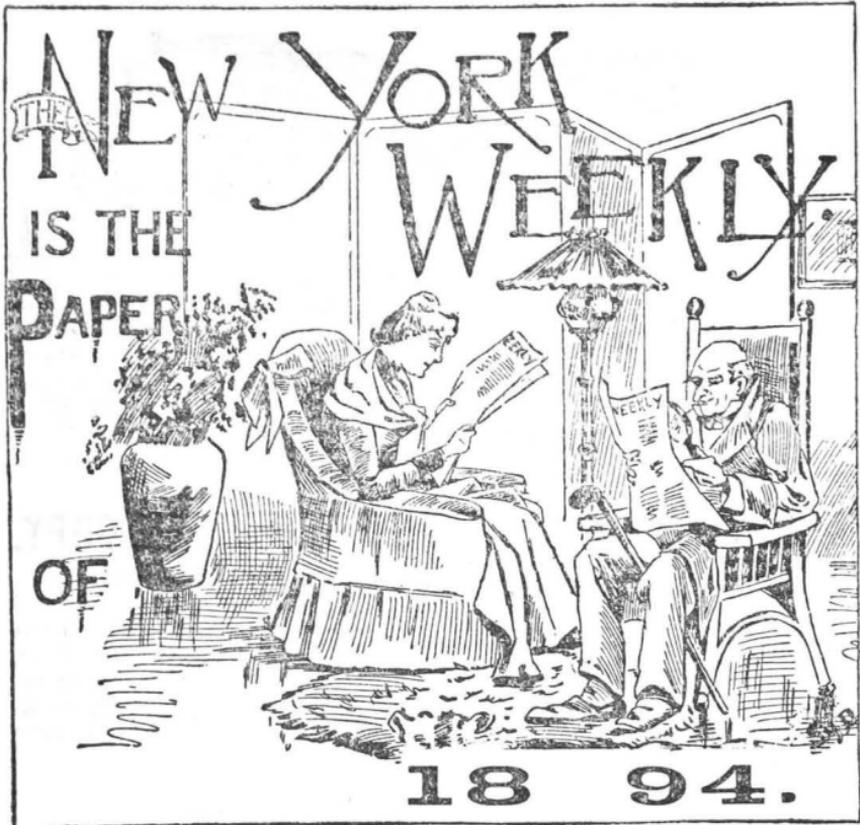
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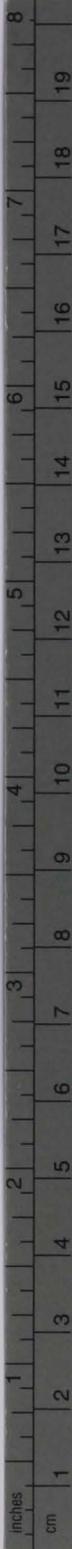
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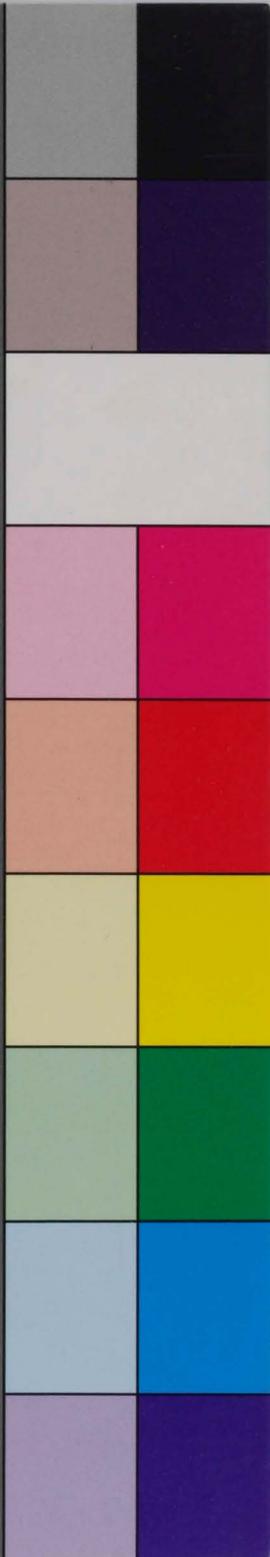
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