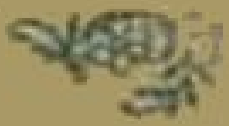
SILVER AND GOLD

A STORY OF LUCK AND LOVE IN A WESTERN MINING CAMP



DANE COOLIDGE

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SILVER AND GOLD

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE FIGHTING FOOL:
A Tale of the Western Frontier

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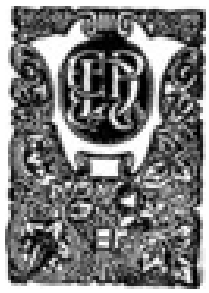
A Story of Luck and Love
in a Western Mining Camp

BY

DANE COOLIDGE

Author of “The Fighting Fool” Etc.



“Gold is where you find it, and Silver
in high places.”–*Miners’ Saying*.

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SILVER AND GOLD

THE PROPHECY

"You will make a long journey to the West and there, within the shadow of a Place of Death, you will find two treasures, one of Silver and the other of Gold. Choose well between them and both shall be Yours, but if you choose unwisely you will lose them Both and suffer a great disgrace. You will fall in love with a beautiful woman who is an artist, but beware how you reveal your affection or she will confer her hand upon Another. Courage and constancy will attend you through life but in the end will prove your undoing, for you will meet your death at the hands of your Dearest Friend."

SILVER AND GOLD

CHAPTER I
THE GROUND-HOG

The day had dawned on the summit of Apache Leap and a golden eagle, wheeling high above the crags, flashed back the fire of the sun from his wings; but in the valley below where old Pinal lay sleeping the heat had not begun. A cool wind drew down from the black mouth of Queen Creek Canyon, stirring the listless leaves of the willows, and the shadow of the great cliff fell like a soothing hand on the deserted town at its base. In the brief freshness of the morning there was a smell of flaunting green from the sycamores along the creek, and the tang of greasewood from the ridges; and then, from the chimney of a massive stone house, there came the odor of smoke. A coffee mill began to purr from the kitchen behind and a voice shouted a summons to breakfast, but the hobo miner who lay sprawling in his blankets did not answer the peremptory call. He raised his great head, turned his pig eyes toward the house, then covered his face from the flies.

There was a clatter of dishes, a long interval of silence, and then the sun like a flaming disc topped the mountain wall to the east. The square adobe houses cast long black shadows across the whitened dust of the street and as the man burrowed deeper to keep out the light the door of the stone house slammed. The day seldom passed when Bunker Hill's wife did not cook for three or four hoboes but when Old Bunk called a man in to breakfast he expected him to come. He stood for a minute, tall and rangy and grizzled, a desert squint in one eye; and then with a muttered oath he strode across the street.

"Hey!" he called prodding the blankets with his boot and the hobo came alive with a jump.

"You look out!" he snarled, bounding violently to his feet and

dropping back to a crouch; but when he met Bunker Hill's steely eyes he mumbled something and lowered his hands.

"All right, pardner," observed Hill, "I'll do all of that; but if you figure on getting any breakfast you'd better come in and eat it."

"Huh!" responded the hobo scowling and blinking at the sun and then without a word he started for the house. He was a big, hulking man, with arms like a bear and bulging, bench-like legs; but the expression on his face above his enormous black mustache was that of a disgruntled ground-hog. His nose was tipped up, his eyes were small and stubborn and as he ate a hurried breakfast he glanced about uneasily as if fearful of some trap; yet if Bunker Hill had any reservations about his guest he did not abate his hospitality. The coffee was still hot, there was plenty of everything and when the miner rose to go Old Bunk accompanied him to the door.

"Going to be hot," he observed as the heat struck through their clothes; but the hobo omitted even a nod of assent in his haste to be off down the trail.

"Well, the dadblasted bum!" exclaimed Bunker in a rage as the miner passed over the first hill and, stumping across the street, he rolled up the tumbled blankets. "The dirty dog!" he grumbled vindictively, hoisting the bed upon his shoulders; but as he started back to the house he heard something drop from the roll. He paused and looked back and there on the ground lay a wallet, stuffed with bills. It was the miner's purse, which he had put under his pillow and forgotten in his sudden departure.

"O-ho!" observed Bunker as he picked it up. "O-ho, I thought you was broke!" He opened the purse with great deliberation, laying bare a great sheaf of bills, and as his wife and daughter came hurrying down the steps he counted the hobo's hoard.

"Over eight hundred dollars," he announced with ominous calm. "Some roll, when a man is bumming his meals and can't even stop to say thanks—"

"He's coming back for it," broke in his wife anxiously. "And now,

Andrew, please don't—"

"Never mind," returned her husband, slipping the wallet into his pocket, and she sighed and folded her hands. The hobo was walking fast, coming back down the hill, and when he saw Hill by the blankets he broke into a ponderous trot.

"Say," he called, "you didn't see a purse, did ye? I left one under my blankets."

"A purse!" exclaimed Bunker with exaggerated surprise. "Why I thought you was broke–what business have *you* got with a purse?"

"Well, I had a few keep-sakes and—"

"You're a liar!" rapped out Bunker and his sharp lower jaw suddenly jutted out like a crag. "You're a liar," he repeated, as the hobo let it pass, "you had eight hundred and twenty-five dollars."

"Well, what's that to you?" retorted the miner defiantly. "It's mine, so gimme it back!"

"Oh, I don't know," drawled Bunker hauling the purse from his pocket and looking over the bills, "I don't know whether I will or not. You came in here last night and told me you were broke, but right here is where I collect. It'll cost you five dollars for your supper and breakfast and five dollars more for your bed–that's my regular price to transients."

"No, you don't!" exclaimed the hobo, but as Bunker looked up he drew back a step and waited.

"That's ten dollars in all," continued Hill, extracting two bills from the purse, "and next time you bum your breakfast I'd advise you to thank the cook."

"Hey, you give me that money!" burst out the miner hoarsely, holding out a threatening hand, and Bunker Hill rose to his full height. He was six feet two when he stooped.

"W'y, sure," he said handing over the wallet; but as the miner turned to go Hill jabbed him in the ribs with a pistol. "Just a moment, my friend," he went on quietly, "I just want to tell you a few things. I've been feeding men like you for fifteen years, right here in this old town, and

I've never turned one away yet; but you can tell any bo that you meet on the trail that the road-sign for this burg is changed. I used to be easy, but so help me Gawd, I'll never feed a hobo again. Here my wife has been slaving over a red-hot stove cooking grub for you hoboes for years and the first bum that forgets and leaves his purse has eight hundred dollars–cash! Now you git, dad-burn ye, before I do the world a favor and fill you full of lead!" He motioned him away with the muzzle of his pistol while his wife laid a hand on his arm, and after one look the hobo turned and loped over the top of the hill.

"Now Andrew, please," expostulated Mrs. Hill, and, still breathing hard, Old Bunk put up his gun and reached for a chew of tobacco.

"Well, all right," he growled, "but you heard what I said–that's the last doggoned hobo we feed."

"Well–perhaps," she conceded, but Bunker Hill was roused by the memory of years of ingratitude.

"No 'perhaps' about it," he asserted firmly, "I'll run every last one of them away. Do you think I'm going to work my head off for my family, only to be et out of house and home? Do you think I'm going to have you cooking meals for these miners when they're earning their five dollars a day? Let 'em buy a lunch at the store!"

"No, but Andrew," protested Mrs. Hill, who was a large, motherly soul and not to be bowed down by work, "I'm sure that some of them are worthy."

"Yes, I know you are," he answered, smiling grimly, "that's what you always say. But you hear me, now; I'm through. Don't you feed another man."

He turned to his daughter for support, but his bad luck had just begun. Drusilla was shading her eyes from the sun and staring up the trail.

"Oh, here comes another one," she cried in a hushed voice and pointed up the creek. He stood at the mouth of the black-shadowed canyon where the trail comes in from Globe–a young man with wind-blown hair, looking doubtfully down at the town; but when he saw them

he stepped boldly forth and came plodding down the trail.

"Oh, not this one!" pleaded Mrs. Hill when she saw his boyish face; but Bunker Hill thrust out his jaw.

"Every one of 'em," he muttered, "the whole works–all of 'em! You women folks go into the house."

CHAPTER II
BIG BOY

He was a big, fair-haired boy, blue-eyed and clean limbed, and as he came down the trail there was a spring to his step that not even a limp could obliterate; and at every stride the great muscles in his chest played and rippled beneath his shirt. He was a fine figure of a man, tall and straight as an Apollo, and yet he was a hobo. Never before had Bunker Hill seen a better built man or one more open-faced and frank, but he came down the trail with the familiar hobo-limp and Bunker set his jaws and waited. It was such men as this, young and strong and full of blood, who had kept him poor for years. Hobo miners, the most expert of their craft, and begging their grub on the trail!

"Good morning," nodded Hill and squinted down his eyes as the young man boggled at his words.

"Good morning," replied the hobo and then, after a pause, he straightened up and came to the point. "What's the chance to get a little something to eat?" he inquired with a twisted smile and Bunker Hill sprang his bomb.

"Danged poor," he returned, and as the hobo blinked he spoke his piece with a rush. "I've got a store over there where you can buy what you want; but I've quit, absolutely, feeding every hobo that comes by and batters my door for grub. I'm an old man myself and you're young and strong–why the hell don't you get out and work?"

"Never you mind," answered the hobo, his eyes glowing angrily; and as Old Bunk went on with his tirade the miner's lip curled with scorn. "That's all right, old-timer," he broke in with cold politeness–"no offense–don't let me deprive you. I don't make a practice of battering on back doors. But, say, I'm looking for a fellow with a big, black

mustache–did you see him come by this way?"

"Did I *see* him?" yelled Hill flying into a fury, "well you're danged whistling I did! He came in last night and bummed his supper–my wife had to cook it special–and I gave him his bed and breakfast; and this morning when he left he didn't even say: 'Thanks!' That's how grateful these hoboes are! And when I went out to pick up his blankets a thumping big purse dropped out!"

"Holy Joe!" exclaimed the hobo looking up with sudden interest, "say, how long ago did he leave?"

"Not half an hour! No, not ten minutes ago–and if my wife hadn't been there to hold me down I'd have run him till he dropped. And when I opened that purse it was full of money–there was eight hundred and twenty-five dollars–and him trying to tell me he was broke!"

"That's him, all right," declared the hobo. "Well, so long; I'll be on my way."

He started off down the trail at a long, swinging stride, then turned abruptly back.

"I'll get a drink," he suggested, "if there's no objection. Don't charge for your water, I reckon."

It was all said politely and yet there was an edge to it which cut Old Bunk to the quick. He, Bunker Hill, who had fed hoboes for years and had never taken a cent, to be insulted like this by the first sturdy beggar that he declined to serve with a meal! He reached for his gun, but just at that moment his wife laid a hand on his arm. She had not been far away, just up on the porch where she could watch what was going on, and she turned to the hobo with a smile.

"Mr. Hill is just angry," she explained good-naturedly, "on account of that other man; but if you'll wait a few minutes I'll cook you some breakfast and—"

"Thank you, ma'am," returned the miner, taking off his hat civilly, "I'll just take a drink and go."

He hurried back to the well and, picking up the bucket, drank long

and deep of the water; then he threw away the rest and with practiced hands drew up a fresh bucket from the depths.

"You'd better fill a bottle," called Bunker Hill, whose anger was beginning to evaporate, "it's sixteen miles to the next water."

The hobo said nothing, nor did he fill a bottle, and as he came back past them there was a set to his jaw that was eloquent of rage and disdain. It was the custom of the country–of that great, desert country where houses are days' journeys apart–to invite every stranger in; and as Bunker Hill gazed after him he saw his good name held up to execration and scorn. This boy was a Westerner, he could tell by his looks and the way he saved on his words, perhaps he even lived in those parts; and in a sudden vision Hill beheld him spreading the news as he followed the long trail to the railroad. He would come dragging in to Whitlow's Wells, the next station down the road, so weak he could hardly walk and when they enquired into his famished condition he would unfold some terrible tale. And the worst of it was that the boys would believe it and repeat it to all who passed. Men would hear in distant cow camps, far back in the Superstitions, that Old Bunk had driven a starving man from his door and he had nearly perished on the desert.

"Hey!" called Bunker Hill taking a step or two after him, "wait a minute–I'll give you a lunch."

"You can keep your lunch," said the man over his shoulder and strode doggedly on up the hill.

"Gimme something to take to him," rapped out Hill to his wife, but the hobo's sharp ears had caught the words and he wheeled abruptly in his tracks.

"I wouldn't take your danged lunch if it was the last grub on earth," he shouted in a towering rage; and while they stood gazing he turned his back and passed on over the hill.

"Let 'im go!" grumbled Bunker pacing up and down and avoiding his helpmeet's eye, but at last he ripped out a smothered oath and racked off down the street to his stable. This was an al fresco affair,

consisting of a big stone corral within the walls of what had once been the dancehall, and as he saddled up his horse and rode out the narrow gate he found his wife waiting with a lunch.

"Don't crush the doughnuts," she murmured anxiously and patted his hand approvingly.

"All right," he said and, putting spurs to his horse, he galloped off over the hill.

The old town of Pinal lay on a bench above the creek bed, with high cliffs to the east and north; but south and west the country fell off rapidly in a series of rolling ridges. Over these the road to the railroad climbed and dipped with wearisome regularity until at last it dropped down into the creek-bed again and followed its dry, sandy course. Not half an hour had passed from the time the second hobo left till Old Bunk had started after him, yet so fast had he traveled that he was almost to the creek bed before Bunker Hill caught sight of him.

"Ay, Chihuahua!" he ejaculated in shrill surprise and reined in his horse to gaze. The young hobo was running and, not far ahead, the Ground Hog was fleeing before him. They ran through bushy gulches and over cactus-crowned ridges where the sahuaros rose up like giant sentinels; until at last, as he came to the sandy creek-bed, the black hobo stood at bay.

"They're fighting!" exclaimed Bunker with a joyous chuckle and rode down the trail like the wind.

After twenty wild years in Old Mexico, there were times when Bunker Hill found Arizona a trifle tame; but here at last there was staged a combat that promised to take a place in local history. When he rode up on the fight the young miner and the Ground Hog were standing belt to belt, exchanging blows with all their strength, and as the young man reeled back from a right to the jaw the Ground Hog leapt in to finish him.

"Here! None of that!" spoke up Bunker Hill menacing the black hobo with his quirt; but the battered young Apollo waved him angrily aside and flew at his opponent again.

"I'll show you, you danged dog!" he cursed exultantly as the Ground Hog went down before him, "I'll show you how to run out on me! Come on, you big stiff, and if I don't make you holler quit you can have every dollar you stole!"

"Hey, what's the matter, Big Boy? What's going on here?" demanded Bunker of the blond young giant. "I thought you fellers were pardners."

"Pardners, hell!" spat Big Boy, whose mouth was beginning to bleed. "He robbed me of all my money. We won eight hundred dollars in the drilling contest at Globe and he collected the stakes and beat it!"

"You're a liar!" retorted the Ground Hog standing sullenly on his guard, and once more Big Boy went after him. They roughed it back and forth, neither seeking to avoid the blows but swinging with all their might; until at last the Ground Hog landed a mighty smash that knocked his opponent to the ground. "Now lay there," he jeered, and, stepping over to one side, he picked up a purse from the ground.

It was the same bulging purse that he had forgotten that morning in his hurry to get over the hill, and as Bunker Hill gazed at it two things which had misled him became suddenly very plain. The day before had been the Fourth of July, when the miners had their contests in Globe, and these two powerful men were a team of double-jackers who had won the first prize between them. Then the Ground Hog had stolen the total proceeds, which accounted for his show of great wealth; and Big Boy, on the other hand, being left without a cent, had been compelled to beg for his breakfast. A wave of righteous anger rose up in Old Bunk's breast at the monstrous injustice of it all and, whipping out his pistol, he threw down on the Ground Hog and ordered him to put up his hands.

"And now lay down that purse," he continued briefly, "before I shoot the flat out of your eye."

The hobo complied, but before he could retreat the young miner raised himself up.

“Say, you butt out of this!” he said to Bunker Hill, waggling his head to shake off the blood. “I’ll ’tend to this yap myself.”

He turned his gory front to the Ground Hog, who came eagerly back to the fray; and once more like snarling animals they heaved and slugged and grunted, until once more poor Big Boy went down.

“I can whip him!” he panted rising up and clearing his eyes. “I could clean him in a minute–only I’m starved.”

He staggered and the heart of Bunker Hill smote him when he remembered how he had denied the man food. Yet he bored in resolutely, though his blows were weak, and the Ground Hog’s pig eyes gleamed. He abated his own blows, standing with arms relaxed and waiting; and when he saw the opening he struck. It was aimed at the jaw, a last, smashing hay-maker, such a blow as would stagger an ox; but as it came past his guard the young Apollo ducked, and then suddenly he struck from the hip. His whole body was behind it, a sharp uppercut that caught the hurtling Ground Hog on the chin; and as his head went back his body lurched and followed and he landed in a heap in the dirt.

“He’s out!” shouted Bunker and Big Boy nodded grimly; but the Ground Hog was pawing at the ground. He rose up, and fell, then rose up again; and as they watched him half-pityingly he scrambled across the sand and made a grab at the purse.

“You stand back!” he blustered clutching the purse to his breast and snapping open the blade of a huge jack-knife; but before Old Bunk could intervene Big Boy had caught up a rock.

“You drop that knife,” he shouted fiercely, “or I’ll bash out your brains with this stone!” And as the Ground Hog gazed into his battle-mad eyes he weakened and dropped the knife. “Now gimme that purse!” ordered the masterful Big Boy and, cringing before the rock, the beaten Ground Hog slammed it down on the ground with a curse.

“I’ll git you yet!” he burst out hoarsely as he shambled off down the trail, “I’ll learn you to git gay with me!”

“You’ll learn me nothing,” returned the young miner contemptuously

and gathered up the spoils of battle.

CHAPTER III
HOBO STUFF

"Young man," began Bunker Hill after a long and painful silence in which Big Boy completely ignored him, "I want to ask your pardon. And anything I can do—"

"I'm all right," cut in the hobo wiping the blood out of one eye and feeling tenderly of a tooth, "and I don't want nothing to do with you."

"Can't blame ye, can't blame ye," answered Old Bunk judicially. "I certainly got you wrong. But as I was about to say, Mrs. Hill sent this lunch and she said she hoped you'd accept it."

He untied a sack from the back of his saddle, and as he caught the fragrance of new-made doughnuts Big Boy's resolution failed.

"All right," he said, making a grab for the lunch. "Much obliged!" And he chucked him a bill.

"Hey, what's this for?" exclaimed Bunker Hill grievously. "Didn't I ask your pardon already."

"Well, maybe you did," returned the hobo, "but after that call down you gave me this morning I'm going to pay my way. It's too danged bad," he murmured sarcastically as he opened up the lunch. "Sure hard luck to see a good woman like that married to a pennypinching old walloper like you."

"Oh, I don't know," observed Old Bunk, gazing doubtfully at the bill, but at last he put it in his pocket.

"Yes, that's right," he agreed with an indulgent smile, "she's an awful good cook–and an awful good woman, too. I'll just give her this money to buy some little present–she told me I was wrong, all the time. But I want to tell you, pardner–you can believe it or not–I never turned a man down before."

The hobo grunted and bit into a doughnut and Bunker Hill settled

down beside him.

"Say," he began in an easy, conversational tone, "did you ever hear about the hobo that was walking the streets in Globe? Well, he was broke and up against it–hadn't et for two days and the rustling was awful poor–but as he was walking along the street in front of that big restaurant he saw a new meal ticket on the sidewalk. His luck had been so bad he wouldn't even look at it but at last when he went by he took another slant and see that it was good–there wasn't but one meal punched out."

"Aw, rats," scoffed Big Boy, "are you still telling that one? There was a miner came by just as he reached down to grab it and punched out every meal with his hob-nails."

"That's the story," admitted Bunker, "but say, here's another one–did you ever hear of the hobo Mark Twain? Well, he was a well-known character in the old days around Globe–kinder drifted around from one camp to the other and worked all his friends for a dollar. That was his regular graft, he never asked for more and he never asked the same man twice, but once every year he'd make the rounds and the old-timers kind of put up with him. Great story-teller and all that and one day I was sitting talking with him when a mining man came into the saloon. He owned a mine, over around Mammoth somewhere, and he wanted a man to herd it. It was seventy-five a month, with all expenses paid and all you had to do was to stick around and keep some outsider from jumping in. Well, when he asked for a man I saw right away it was just the place for old Mark and I began to kind of poke him in the ribs, but when he didn't answer I hollered to the mining man that I had just the feller he wanted. Well, the mining man came over and put it up to Mark, and everybody present began to boost. He was such an old bum that we wanted to get rid of him and there wasn't a thing he could kick on. There was plenty of grub, a nice house to live in and he didn't have to work a tap; but in spite of all that, after he'd asked all kinds of questions, Old Mark said he'd have to think it over. So he went over to the bar and began to figger on some

paper and at last he came back and said he was sorry but he couldn't afford to take it.

"'Well, why not?' we asks, because we knowed he was a bum, but he says: 'Well gentlemen, I'll tell ye, it's this way. I've got twelve hundred friends in Arizona that's worth a dollar apiece a year; but this danged job only pays seventy-five a month–I'd be losing three hundred a year."

"Huh, huh," grunted Big Boy, picking up some folded tarts, "your mind seems to be took up with hoboes."

"Them's my wife's pay-streak biscuits," grinned Bunker Hill, "or at least, that's what I call 'em. The bottom crust is the foot-wall, the top is the hanging-wall, and the jelly in the middle is the pay streak."

"Danged good!" pronounced the hobo licking the tips of his fingers and Old Bunk tapped him on the knee.

"Say," he said, "seeing the way you whipped that jasper puts me in mind of a feller back in Texas. He was a big, two-fisted hombre, one of these Texas bad-men that was always getting drunk and starting in to clean up the town; and he had all the natives bluffed. Well, he was in the saloon one day, telling how many men he'd killed, when a little guy dropped in that had just come to town, and he seemed to take a great interest. He kept edging up closer, sharpening the blade of his jack-knife on one of these here little pocket whetstones, until finally he reached over and cut a notch in the bad man's ear.

"There," he says, "you're so doggoned bad–next time I see you I'll know you!"

"Yeh, some guy," observed Big Boy, "and I see you're some story-teller, but what's all this got to do with me?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing," answered Old Bunk hastily, "only I thought while you were eating—"

"Yes, you told me two stories about a couple of hoboes and then another one about taming down a bad man; but I want to tell you right now, before you go any further, that I'm no hobo nor bad man neither. I'm a danged good miner–one of the best in Globe—"

"Aw, no no!" burst out Bunker holding up both hands in protest, "you've got me wrong entirely."

"Well, your stories may be all right," responded Big Boy shortly, "but they don't make a hit with me. And I've took about enough, for one day."

He started back up the trail and Bunker Hill rode along behind him going over the events of the day. Some distinctly evil genius seemed to have taken possession of him from the moment he got out of bed and, try as he would, it seemed absolutely impossible for him to square himself with this Big Boy.

"Hey, git on and ride," he shouted encouragingly, but Big Boy shook his head.

"Don't want to," he answered and once more Bunker Hill was left to ponder his mistakes. The first, of course, was in taking too much for granted when Big Boy had walked into town; and the second was in ever refusing a hobo when he asked for something to eat. True it amounted in the aggregate to a heart-breaking amount–almost enough to support his family–but a man lost his luck when he turned a hobo down and Old Bunk decided against it. Never again, he resolved, would he restrain his good wife from following the dictates of her heart, and that meant that every hobo that walked into town would get a square meal in his kitchen. Where the cash was coming from to buy this expensive food and pay for the freighting across the desert was a matter for the future to decide, but as he dwelt on his problem a sudden ray of hope roused Bunker Hill from his reverie. Speaking of money, the ex-hobo, walking along in front of him, had over eight hundred dollars in his hip pocket–and he claimed to be a miner!

"Say!" began Bunker as they came in sight of town, "d'ye see those old workings over there? That's the site of the celebrated Lost Burro Mine–turned out over four millions in silver!"

"Yeah, so I've heard," answered Big Boy wearily, "been closed down though, for twenty years."

“I’m the owner of that property,” went on Bunker pompously. “Andrew Hill is my name and I’d be glad to show you round.”

“Nope,” said the future prospect, “I’m too danged tired. I’m going down to the crick and rest.”

“Come up to the house,” proposed Bunker Hill cordially, “and meet my wife and family. I’m sure Mrs. Hill will be glad to see you back–she was afraid that something might happen to you.”

The hobo glanced up with a swift, cynical smile and turned off down the trail to the creek.

“I see you’ve got your eye on my roll,” he observed and Bunker Hill shrugged regretfully.

CHAPTER IV
CASH

It was evident to Bunker Hill that no common measures would serve to interest this young capitalist in his district; and yet there he was, a big husky young miner, with eight hundred dollars in his pocket. That eight hundred dollars, if wisely expended, might open up a bonanza in Pinal; and in any case, if it was spent with him, it would help to pay the freight. Old Bunk chopped open a bale of hay with an ax and gave his horse a feed; and, after he had given his prospect time to rest, he drifted off down towards the creek.

The creek at Pinal was one of those vagrant Western streams that appear and disappear at will. Where its course was sandy it sank from sight, creeping along on the bed-rock below; but where as at Pinal the bed-rock came to the surface, then the creek, perforce, rushed and gurgled. From the dark and windy depths of Queen Creek Canyon it came rioting down over the rocks and where the trail crossed there was a mighty sycamore that almost dammed its course. With its gnarled and swollen roots half dug from their crevices by the tumultuous violence of cloudbursts, it clung like an octopus to a shattered reef of rocks and sucked up its nourishment from the water. In the pool formed by its roots the minnows leapt and darted, solemn bull-frogs stared forth from dark holes, and in a natural seat against the huge tree trunk Big Boy sat cooling his feet. He looked younger now, with the blood washed off his face and the hard lines of hunger ironed out, and as Bunker Hill made some friendly crack he showed his white teeth in a smile.

"Pretty nice down here," he said and Bunker nodded gravely.

"Yes," he said, "nice place for frogs. Say, did you ever hear the story about Spud Murphy's frog farm? Well Spud was an old-timer,

awful gallant to the ladies, especially when he'd had a few drinks, and every time he'd get loaded about so far he'd get out an old flute and play it. But it sounded so sad and mournful that everybody kicked, and one time over at a dance when Spud was about to play some ladies began to jolly him about it.

"'Well, I'll tell you,' says Spud, 'there's a story connected with that flute. The only time I ever stood to make a fortune I spoiled it by playing that sad music.'

"'Oh, tell us about it,' they all says at once; so Spud began on his tale.

"It seems he was over around Clifton when some French miners came in and, knowing their weakness, Spud dammed up the creek and got ready to have a frog farm. He sent back to Arkansaw and got three carloads of bull-frogs–thoroughbreds old Spud said they was–and turned them loose in the creek; and every evening, to keep them from getting lonely, he'd play 'em a few tunes on his flute. Well, they were doing fine, getting used to the dry country and beginning to get over being homesick, when one night Murph went up there and played them the Arkansaw Traveler.

"Well, of course that was the come-on–Old Spud stopped his story–and finally one lady bit.

"'Yes, but how did you lose your fortune?' she asks and Spud he shakes his head.

"'By playing that tune,' he says. 'Them frogs got so homesick they started right out for Arkansaw–and every one perished on the desert.'"

"Huh!" grunted Big Boy, who had been listening intolerantly. "Say, is that all you do–sit around and tell stories for a living? Why the hell don't you git out and work?"

"Well, you got me again, kid," admitted Old Bunk mournfully, "I'm sure sorry I made you that talk. But I was so doggoned sore at that pardner of yours that I kinder went out of my head."

"Well, all right," conceded Big Boy, "if that's the way you feel about

it there's no use rubbing it in, but you certainly lost out with me. My hands may be big, but I never broadened my knuckles by battering on other people's back doors. At the same time if I have to ask a man for a meal I expect to be treated civil. When I'm working around town and a miner strikes me for a stake I give him a dollar to eat on, and if I happen to be broke when I land in a new camp I work my face the same way. That's the custom of the country, and when a man asks me why I don't work—"

"Aw, forget it!" pleaded Bunker, "didn't I ask your pardon? Didn't my wife tell you why I said it? But I'll bet you, all the same, if you'd fed as many as I have you'd throw a fit once in a while, yourself. Here's the whole camp shut down, only one outfit working and they're just running a diamond drill–and at the same time I have to feed every hobo that comes through, whether he's got any money or not. How'd you like to buy your grub at these war-time prices and run a hotel for nothing, and at the same time keep up the assessment work on fifteen or twenty claims? Maybe you'd get kind of peevish when a big bum laid in his blankets and wouldn't even get up for breakfast!"

"Ah, that man Meacham!" burst out Big Boy scornfully. "Say do you know what that yap did to me? We were drilling pardners in the double-jack contest–it was just yesterday, over in Globe–and in the last few minutes he began to throw off on me, so I had to win the money myself. Practically did all the work, and while they were giving me a rub-down afterwards he collected the money and beat it. I'd put up every dollar I had in side bets, and the first prize was seven hundred dollars; but he collected it all and then, when I began looking for him, he took out over this trail. Well, I was so doggoned mad when I found out what he'd done that I didn't even stop to eat, and I followed him on the run until dark. When I ran out of matches to look for his tracks I laid down and slept in the trail and this morning when I got up I was so stiff and weak that I couldn't hardly crawl. But I caught the big jasper and believe me, old-timer, he'll think twice before he robs me again!"

"He will that," nodded Bunker, "but say, tell me this–ain't half of that money his?"

"Not a bean!" declared Big Boy. "We fought for the purse, the winner to take it all. He saw I was weak or he'd never have stood up to me–that's why he was so sore when he lost."

"I'd never've let him hurt you!" protested Old Bunk vehemently, "I had my gun on him, all the time. And if I'd had my way you'd never have fought him–I'd have taken the purse away from him."

"Yes, that's it, you see–that's what he was fishing for–he wanted you to make it a draw! But I knew all the time I could lick him with one hand–and I did, too, and got the money!"

"You did danged well!" praised Bunker roundly, "I never see a gamier fight; but I thought at the end he sure had you beat–you could hardly hold up your hands."

"All a stall!" exclaimed Big Boy proudly. "I began fighting his way at first, but I saw I was too weak to slug; so, just for a come-on, I pulled my blows and when he made a swing I downed him."

"Well, well!" beamed Old Bunk, "you certainly are a wise one–you know how to use your head. I wouldn't have believed it, but if you're as smart as all that you've got no business working as a miner. You've got a little stake–why don't you buy a claim and make a play for big money? Look at the rich men in the West–take Clark and Douglas and Wingfield–how did they all get their money? Every one of them made it out of mining. Some started in as bankers, or store-keepers or saloon-keepers; but they got their big money, just the same as you or I will, out of a four-by-six hole in the ground. That's the way I dope it out and I've spent fifteen years of my life just playing that system to win. Me and old Bible-Back Murray, the store-keeper down in Moroni, have been working in this district for years; and, sooner or later, one or the other of us will strike it and we'll pile up our everlasting fortunes. I hate the Mormon-faced old dastard, he's such a sanctified old hypocrite, but I always treat him white and if his diamond drill hits copper he'll make the two of us rich. Anyhow, that's what I'm waiting

for."

Big Boy looked up at the striated hills which lay like a section of layer cake between the base of the mountains and the creek and then he shook his head.

"Nope," he said, "it don't look good to me. The formation runs too regular. What you need for a big mineral deposit is some fissure veins, where the country has been busted up more."

"Oh, it don't look like a mineral country at all, eh?" enquired Bunker Hill sarcastically. "Well, how do you figure it out then that they took out four million dollars' worth of silver from that little hill right up the creek?"

"Don't know," answered Big Boy, "but you couldn't work it now, with silver down to fifty-two cents. It's copper that's the high card now."

"Yes, and look what happened to copper when the war broke out?" cried Bunker Hill derisively, "it went down to eleven cents. But is it down to eleven now? Well, not so you'd notice it–thirty-one would be more like it–and all on account of the metal trust. They smashed copper down, then bought it all up, and now they're boosting the price. Well, they'll do the same with silver."

"Aw, you're crazy," came back Big Boy, "they need copper to make munitions to sell to those nations over in Europe; but what can you make out of silver?"

"Oh, nothing," jeered Bunker, "but I'll tell you what you *can* do–you can use it to pay for your copper! You hadn't figured that out, now had you? Well, here now, let me tell *you* a few things. These people that are running the metal-buying trust are smart, see–they look way ahead. They know that after we've grabbed all the gold away from Europe those nations will have to have some other metal to stand behind their money–and that metal is going to be silver. The big operators up in Tonopah ain't selling their silver now, they're storing it away in vaults, because they know in a little while all the nations in the world are going to be bidding for silver. And say, do you see that line of hills? There's silver enough buried underneath them to pay the

national debt of the world."

He paused and nodded his head impressively and Big Boy broke into a grin.

"Say," he said, "you must have some claim for sale, like an old feller I met over in New Mex.

"'W'y, young man,' he says when I wouldn't bite, 'you're passing up the United States Mint. If you had Niagara Falls to furnish the power, and all hell to run the blast furnace, and the whole State of Texas for a dump, you couldn't extract the copper from that property inside of a million years. It's big, I'm telling you, it's big!' And all he wanted for his claim was a thousand dollars, down."

"Aw, you make me tired," confessed Bunker Hill frankly, now that he saw his sale gone glimmering, "I see you're never going to get very far. You'll tramp back to Globe and blow in your money and go back to polishing a drill. W'y, a young man like you, if he had any ambition, could buy one of these claims for little or nothing and maybe make a fortune. I'll tell you what I'll do–you stay around here a while and look at some of my claims; and if you see something you like—"

"Nope," said Big Boy, "you can't work me now–you lost your horse-shoe this morning. I was a hobo then and you told me to go to hell, but now when you see I've got eight hundred dollars you're trying to bunco me out of it. I know who you are, I've heard the boys tell about you–you're one of these blue-bellied Yankees that try to make a living swapping jack-knives. You got your name from that Bunker Hill monument and they shortened it down to Bunk. Well, you lose–that's all I'll say; I wouldn't buy your claims if they showed twenty dollar gold pieces, with everything on 'em but the eagle-tail. And the formation is no good here, anyhow."

"Oh, it ain't, hey?" came back Bunk thrusting out his jaw belligerently, "well take a look up at that cliff. That Apache Leap is solid porphyry—"

"Apache Leap!" broke in Big Boy suddenly sitting erect and looking all around, "by grab, is this the place?"

“This is the place,” replied Old Bunk wagging his head and smiling wisely, “and that cap is solid porphyry.”

“Gee, boys!” exclaimed Big Boy getting up on his feet, “say, is that where they killed all those Indians?”

“The very place,” returned Bunker Hill proudly, “you can find their skeletons there to this day.”

“Well, for cripe’s sake,” murmured Big Boy at last and looked up at the cliff again.

“Some jump-off,” observed Bunker, but Big Boy did not hear him–he was looking up at the sun.

“Say,” he said, “when the sun rises in the morning how far out does that shadow come?”

“What shadow?” demanded Bunker Hill. “Oh, of Apache Leap? It goes way out west of town.”

“And does it throw its shadow on these hills where your claims are? Well, old-timer, I’ll just take a look at them.”

He climbed out purposefully and began to put on his shoes and Old Bunk squinted at him curiously. There was something going on that he did not know about–some connection between the Leap and his mines; he waited, and the secret popped out.

“Say,” said Big Boy after a long minute of silence, “do you believe in fortune-tellers?”

“Sure thing!” spoke up Bunker, suddenly taking a deep breath and swallowing his Adam’s apple solemnly, “I believe in them phenomena implicitly. And, as I was about to say, you can have any claim I’ve got for eight hundred dollars–cash.”

CHAPTER V
MOTHER TRIGEDGO

"Well, I'll tell you," confided Big Boy, moving closer to Old Bunk and lowering his voice mysteriously, "I know you'll think I'm crazy, but there's something to that stuff. Maybe we don't understand it, and of course there's a lot of fakes, but I got this from Mother Trigedgo. She's that Cornish seeress, that predicted the big cave in the stope of the Last Chance mine, and now I *know* she's good. She tells fortunes by cards and by pouring water in your hand and going into a trance. Then she looks into the water and sees a kind of vision of all that is going to happen. Well, here's what she said for me–and she wrote it down on a paper.

"'You will soon make a journey to the west and there, in the shadow of a place of death, you will find two treasures, one of silver and the other of gold. Choose well between the two and—"

"By grab, that's right, boy!" exclaimed Old Bunk enthusiastically, "she described this place down to a hickey. You came west from Globe and when you went by here the shadow was still on those hills; and as for a place of death, Apache Leap got its name from the Indians that jumped over that cliff. Say, you could hunt all over Arizona and not find another place that came within a mile of it!"

"That's right," mused Big Boy, "but I was thinking all the time that that place of death would be a graveyard."

"Sure, but how could a graveyard cast a shadow–they're always on level ground. No, I'm telling you, boy, that there cliff is the place–lemme tell you how it got its name. A long time ago when the Indians were bad they had a soldiers' post right here where this town stands, and they kept a lookout up on the Picket Post butte, where they could heliograph clear down to Tucson. Well, every time a bunch of Indians

would go down out of the hills to raid some wagon-train on the trail this lookout would see them and signal Tucson and the soldiers would do the rest. It got so bymeby the Indians couldn't do anything and at last Old Cochise got together about eight hundred Apaches and came over to wipe out the post. It looked easy at the time, because there was less than two hundred men, but the major in command was a fighting fool and didn't know when he was whipped. The Apaches all gathered up on the top of those high cliffs–it's flat on the upper side–and one night when their signal fires had burned down the soldiers sneaked around behind them. And then, just at dawn, they fired a volley and made a rush for the camp; and before they knowed it about two hundred Indians had jumped clean over the cliff. They killed the rest of them–all but two or three bucks that fought their way through the line–and now, by grab, you couldn't get an Indian up there if you'd offer him a quart of whiskey. It's sure bad medicine for Apaches."

"Isn't it wonderful!" exclaimed Big Boy, "there's no use talking–this sure is the place of death. And say, next time you go over to Globe you go and see Mother Trigedgo–I just want to tell you what she did!"

"All right," sighed Old Bunk, who preferred to talk business, and he settled down to listen.

"This Mother Trigedgo," began Big Boy, "isn't an ordinary, cheap fortune-teller. Those people are all fakes because they're just out for the dollar and tell you what they think you want to know. But Mother Trigedgo keeps a Cousin-Jack boarding house and only prophesies when she feels the power. Sometimes she'll go along for a week or more and never tell a fortune; and then, when she happens to be feeling right, she'll tell some feller what's coming to him. Those Cousin Jacks are crazy about what she can do, but I never went to a seeress in my life until after we had that big cave. I'm a timber man, you see, and sometimes I take contracts to catch up dangerous ground; and the best men in the world when it comes to that work are these old-country Cousin Jacks. They're nervy and yet they're careful

and so I always hire 'em; but when we were doing this work down in the stope of the Last Chance, they began talking about Mother Trigedgo. It seems she'd told the fortune of a boy or two–they were all of them boarding at her house–and she was so worried she could hardly cook on account of them working in this mine. It was swelling ground and there were a lot of old workings where the timbering had given way; and to tell you the truth I didn't like it myself, although I wouldn't admit it."

"Well, it was the twenty-second of April, and all that morning we could hear the ground working over head and when it came noon we went up above, as we says, for a breath of fresh air. But while we were eating, there was a Cousin Jack named Chambers fetched up this old talk about Mother Trigedgo, and how she'd predicted he'd be killed in a cave if he didn't quit working in the stope; and when our half-hour's nooning was up he says: 'I'll not go down that shaft!'

"We were all badly scared, because that ground was always moving, and finally we agreed that we'd take a full hour off and work till five o'clock. Well, we waited till after one before we went to the collar and just as I was stepping into the cage the whole danged stope caved in!"

"Well, sir, I went back to my room and got every dollar I had and gave Mother Trigedgo the roll. I could easy earn more but if I'd been caught in that cave they'd never even tried to dig me out. That was the least I could do, considering what she'd done for me; but Mother Trigedgo took on so much about it that I told her it was to have my fortune told. Well, she tried the cards and dice and consulted the signs of the Zodiac; and then one day when she felt the power strong she poured a little water in my hand. That made a kind of pool, like these crystal-gazers use, and when she looked into it she began to talk and she told me all about my life. Or that is, she told me what she thought I ought to know, and gave me a copy of the Book of Fate that Napoleon always consulted. And here it ain't three months till I make this journey west and find the place she prophesied."

"Yes, and silver, too!" added Old Bunk portentously, "she hit it, down to a hickey. And now, if you'd like to inspect those claims—"

"No, hold on," protested Big Boy still pondering on his fate, "I've got to find these treasures myself. And one of them was of gold. What's the chances around here for that?"

"Danged poor," grumbled Bunker as he saw his hopes gone glimmering, "don't remember to have seen a color. But say, old Bible Back is drilling for copper and that's a good deal like gold. Same color, practically, and you know all these prophecies have a kind of symbolical meaning. A golden treasure don't necessarily mean gold, and I've got a claim—"

"Say, who's that up there?" broke in Big Boy uneasily and Old Bunk looked around with a jerk.

An old, white-haired man, wearing a battered cork helmet, was peering over the bank and when he perceived that his presence was discovered he came shuffling down the trail. He was a short, fat man, in faded shirt and overalls; and on his feet he wore a pair of gunboat brogans, thickly studded on the bottom with hob-nails. A space of six inches between the tops of his shoes and the worn-off edge of his trousers exposed his shrunken shanks, and he carried a stick which might serve for cane or club as circumstances demanded. He came down briskly with his broad toes turned out in grotesque resemblance to a duck and when Bunker Hill saw him he snorted resentfully and rose up from his seat.

"Have you seen my burros?" demanded the old man, half defiantly, "I can't find dose rascals nowhere. Ah, so; here's a stranger come to camp! Good morning, I'm glad to know you."

"Good morning," returned Big Boy glancing doubtfully at Bunker Hill, "my name is Denver Russell."

"Oh, excuse *me*!" spoke up Bunker with a sarcastic drawl, "Mr. Russell, this is Professor Diffenderfer, the eminent buttinsky and geologist."

"Ah–so!" beamed the Professor overlooking the fling in the

excitement of the meeting, “I take it you’re a mining man? Vell, if it’s golt you’re looking for I haf a claim up on dat hill dat is rich in auriferous deposits.”

“Yes,” broke in Bunker giving Big Boy a sly wink, “you ought to inspect that tunnel–it’s unique in the annals of mining. You see the Professor here is an educated man–he’s learned all the big words in the dictionary, and he’s learned mining from reading Government reports. We’re quite proud of his achievements as a mining engineer, but you ought to see that tunnel. It starts into the hill, takes a couple of corkscrew twists and busts right out into the sunshine.”

“Oh, never mind *him*!” protested the Professor as Bunker burst into a roar, “he will haf his choke, of course. But dis claim I speak of—”

“And that ain’t all his accomplishments,” broke in Bunker Hill relentlessly, “Mr. Diffenderfer is a count–a German count–sometimes known as Count No-Count. But as I was about to say, his greatest accomplishments have been along tonsorial lines.”

A line of pain appeared between the Professor’s eyes–but he stood his ground defiantly. “Yes,” went on Bunker thrusting out his jaw in a baleful leer at his rival, “for many years he has had the proud distinction of being the Champion Rough-Riding Barber of Arizona.”

“Vell, I’ve got to go,” murmured the Professor hastily, “I’ve got to find dem burros.”

He started off but at the plank across the creek he stopped and cleared his throat. “Und any time,” he began, “dat you’d like to inspect dem claims—”

“The Champeen–Rough-Riding–Barber!” repeated Old Bunk with gusto, “he won his title on the race-track at Tucson, before safety razors was invented.”

“Shut up!” snapped the Professor and, crossing the plank with waspish quickness, he went squattering off down the creek. Yet one ear was turned back and as Bunker began to speak he stopped in the trail to listen.

“He took a drunken cowboy up in the saddle before him,” went on

Bunker with painful distinctness, “and gave him a close shave while the horse was bucking, only cutting his throat three times.”

“You’re a liar!” yelled the Professor and, stamping his foot, he hustled vengefully off down the trail.

“Say, who is that old boy?” enquired Big Boy curiously, “he might know where I’d find that gold.”

“Who–him?” jeered Bunker, “why, that old stiff wouldn’t know a chunk of gold if he saw it. All he does is to snoop around and watch what *I’m* doing, and if he ever thinks that I’ve picked up a live one he butts in and tries to underbid me. Now I’ll tell you what I’ll do, I’ll get you a horse and show you all over the district, and any claim I’ve got that you want to go to work on, you can have for five hundred dollars. Now, that’s reasonable, ain’t it? And yet, the way things are going, I’m glad to let you in on it. If you strike something big, here I’ve got my store and mine, and plenty of other claims, to boot; and if there’s a rush I stand to make a clean-up on some of my other properties. So come up to the house and meet my wife and daughter, and we’ll try to make you comfortable. But that old feller—”

“Nope,” said Big Boy, “I think I’d rather camp–who lives in those cave-houses up there?”

He jerked his head at some walled-up caves in the bluff not far across the creek and Old Bunk scowled reproachfully.

“Oh, nobody,” he said, “except the rattle-snakes and pack-rats. Why don’t you come up to the house?”

“I don’t need to go to your house,” returned Big Boy defiantly. “I’ve got money to buy what I need.”

“Yes, but come up anyway and meet my wife and daughter. Drusilla is a musician–she’s studied in Boston at the celebrated Conservatory of Music—”

“I’ve got me a phonograph,” answered Big Boy shortly, “if I can ever get it over here from Globe.”

“Well, go ahead and get it, then,” said Bunker Hill tartly, “they’s nobody keeping you, I’m sure.”

“No, and you bet your life there won’t be,” came back Big Boy, starting off, “I’m playing a lone hand to win.”

CHAPTER VI
THE ORACULUM

The palpitating heat lay like a shimmering fleece over the deserted camp of Pinal and Denver Russell, returning from Globe, beheld it as one in a dream. Somewhere within the shadow of Apache Leap were two treasures that he was destined to find, one of gold and one of silver; and if he chose wisely between them they were both to be his. And if he chose unwisely, or tried to hold them both, then both would be lost and he would suffer humiliation and shame. Yet he came back boldly, fresh from a visit with Mother Trigedgo who had blessed him and called him her son. She had wept when they parted, for her burdens had been heavy and his gift had lightened her lot; but though she wished him well she could not control his fate, for that lay with the powers above. Nor could she conceal from him the portion of evil which was balanced against the good.

"Courage and constancy will attend you through life'" she had written in her old-country scrawl; "but in the end will prove your undoing, for you will meet your death at the hands of your dearest friend."

That was the doom that hung over him like a hair-suspended sword–to be killed by his dearest friend–and as he paused at the mouth of Queen Creek Canyon he wished that his fortune had not been told. Of what good to him would be the two hidden treasures–or even the beautiful young artist with whom he was destined to fall in love–if his life might be cut off at any moment by some man that he counted his friend? *When* his death should befall, Mother Trigedgo had not told, for the signs had been obscure; but when it did come it would be by the hand of the man that he called his best friend. A swift surge of resistance came over him again as he gazed at the

promised land and he shut his teeth down fiercely. He would have no friends, no best of friends, but all men that he met he would treat the same and so evade the harsh hand of fate. Forewarned was forearmed, he would have no more pardners such as men pick up in rambling around; but in this as in all else he would play a lone hand and so postpone the evil day.

He strode on down the trail into the silent town where the houses stood roofless and bare, and as he glanced at the ancient gallows-frame above the abandoned mine fresh courage came into his heart. This city of the dead should come back to life if what the stars said was true; and the long rows of adobes now stripped of windows and doors, would awaken to the tramp of miners' boots. He would find two treasures and, if he chose well between them, both the silver and the gold would be his. But neither wily Bunker Hill nor the palavering Professor should pull him this way or that; for Mother Trigedgo had given him a book, to consult on all important occasions. It was Napoleon's Oraculum, or Book of Fate; and as Denver had glanced at the key–with its thirty-two questions covering every important event in human life–a thrill of security had passed over him. With this mysterious Oraculum, the Man of Destiny had solved the many problems of his life; and in question thirteen, that sinister number, was a test that would serve Denver well:

"Will the FRIEND I most reckon upon prove faithful or treacherous?"

How many times must that great, aloof man have put some friend's loyalty to the test; and if the answer was in the negative how often had he avoided death by foreknowledge of impending treachery! Yet such friends as he had retained had all proved loyal, his generals had been devoted to his cause; and with the aid of his Oraculum he had conquered all his enemies–until at last the Book of Fate had been lost. At the battle of Leipsic, in the confusion of the retreat, his precious Dream Book had been left behind. Kings and Emperors had used it since, and seeresses as well; and now, after the lapse of a hundred years, it was published in quaint cover and lettering, for the

guidance of all and sundry. And Old Mother Trigedgo, coming all the way from Cornwall, had placed the Book of Fate in his hands! There was destiny in everything, and this woman who had saved his life could save it again with her Oraculum.

Denver turned to the Mexican who, with two heavily-packed mules, stood patiently awaiting his pleasure; and with a brief nod of the head he strode down the trail while the mules minced along behind him. Past the old, worked-out mine, past the melted-down walls of abandoned adobe ruins, he led on to the store and the cool, darkened house which sheltered the family of Andrew Hill; but even here he did not stop, though Old Bunk beckoned him in. His life, which had once been as other people's lives, had been touched by the hand of fate; and gayeties and good cheer, along with friendship and love, had been banished to the limbo of lost dreams. So he turned across the creek and led the way to the cave that was destined to be his home.

It was an ancient cavern beneath the rim of a low cliff which overlooked the town and as Denver was helping to unlash the packs Bunker Hill came toiling up the trail.

"Got back, hey?" he greeted stepping into the smoke-blackened cave and gazing dubiously about, "well, it'll be cool inside here, anyway."

"Yes, that's what I figured on," responded Denver briefly, and as he cleaned out the rats' nests and began to make camp Old Bunk sat down in the doorway and began a new cycle of stories.

"This here cave," he observed, "used to be occupied by the cliff-dwellers–them's their hand-marks, up on the wall; and then I reckon the Apaches moved in, and after them the soldiers; but when the Lost Burro began turning out the ore, I'll bet it was crowded like a bar-room. Them was the days, I'm telling you–you couldn't walk the street for miners out spending their money–and a cliff-house like this with a good, tight roof, would bring in a hundred dollars a night, any time that it happened to rain. All them melted-down adobes was plumb full of

people, the saloons were running full blast, and the miner that couldn't steal ten dollars a day had no business working underground. They took out chunks of native silver as big as your head, and it all ran a thousand ounces to the ton, but even at that them worthless mule-skinners was throwing pure silver at their teams. They had mounted guards to ride along with the wagons and keep them from stealing the ore, but you can pick up chunks yet where them teamsters threw them off and never went back to find 'em.

"Did you ever hear how the Lost Burro was found? Well, the name, of course, tells the story. If one of these prospectors goes out to find his burros he runs across a mine; and if he goes out the next day to look for another mine he runs across his burros. The most of them are like the old Professor down here, they wouldn't know mineral if they saw it; but of course when they grab up a chunk of pure silver and start to throw it at a jackass they can't help taking notice. Well, that's the way this mine was found. A prospector that was camping here went up on that little hill to rock his old burro back to camp and right on top he found a piece of silver that was so pure you could cut it with your knife. That guy was honest, he gave the credit to his burro, and, if the truth was known, half the mines in the west would be named after some knot-headed jackass. That's how much intellect it takes to be a prospector."

"No, I'll tell you what's the matter with these prospectors," returned Denver with a miner's scorn, "they do everything in the world but dig. They'll hike, and hunt burros and go out across the desert; but anything that calls for a few taps of work they'll pass it right up, every time. And I'll tell you, old-timer, all the mines on top of ground have been located long ago. That's why you hear so much about 'Swede luck' these days–the Swede ain't too lazy to sink.

"That's my motto–sink! Get down to bed-rock and see what there is on the bottom; but these danged prospectors just hang around the water-holes and play pedro until they eat up their grub-stakes."

"Heh, heh; that's right," responded Bunker reminiscently, "say, did

you ever hear of old Abe Berg? He used to keep a store down below in Moroni; and there was one of these old prospectors that made a living that way, used to touch him up regular for a grub-stake. Old Abe was about as easy as Bible-Back Murray when you showed him a rich piece of ore and after this prospector had et up all his grub he'd drift back to town for more. But on the way in, like all of them fellers, he'd stop at some real good mine; and after he'd stole a few chunks of high-grade ore he'd take it along to show to Abe. But after a while Old Abe got suspicious–he didn't fall for them big stories any more–and at last he began to enquire just where this bonanza was, that the prospector was reporting on so favorable. Well, the feller told him and Abe he scratched his head and enquired the name of the mine.

"'Why, I call it the Juniper,' says the old prospector kind of innocent; and Abe he jumped right up in the air.

"'Vell, dat's all right,' he yells, tapping himself on the chest, 'but here's one Jew, I betcher, dat you von't nip again!' Get the point–he thought the old prospector was making a joke of it and calling his mine the Jew-Nipper!"

"Yeah, I'm hep," replied Russell, "say who is this feller that you call Bible-Back Murray–has he got any claims around here?"

"Claims!" repeated Bunker, "well, I guess he has. He's got a hundred if I've got one–this whole upper district is located."

"What–this whole country?" exclaimed Denver in sudden dismay, "the whole range of hills–all that lays in the shadow of the Leap?"

"Jest about," admitted Bunker, "but as I told you before, you can have any of mine for five hundred."

"Oh hell," burst out Denver and then he roused up and a challenge crept into his voice. "Do you mean to tell me," he said, "that he's kept up his assessment work? Has he done a hundred dollars worth of work on every claim? No, you know danged well he hasn't–you've just been doing lead-pencil work."

"That's all right," returned Bunker, "we've got a gentlemen's agreement to respect each others monuments; and you'll find our

sworn statements that the work has been done on file with the County Recorder."

"Yes, and now I know," grumbled Russell rebelliously, "why the whole danged district is dead. You and Murray and this old Dutchman have located all the ground and you're none of you doing any work. But when a miner like me blows into the camp and wants to prospect around he's stuck for five hundred dollars. How'm I going to buy my powder and a little grub and steel if I give up my roll at the start? No, I'll look this country over and if I find what I want—"

"You'll pay for it, young man," put in Bunker Hill pointedly, "that is, if it belongs to me."

"Well, I will if it's worth it," answered Russell grudgingly, "but you've got to show me your title."

"Sure I will," agreed Bunker, "the best title a man can have–continuous and undisputed possession. I've been here fifteen years and I've never had a claim jumped yet."

"Who's this Bible-Back Murray?" demanded Denver, "has he got a clean title to his ground?"

"You bet he has," replied Bunker Hill, "and he's got my name as a witness that his yearly assessment work's been done."

"And you, I suppose," suggested Denver sarcastically, "have got *his* name, as an affidavit man, to prove that *your* work has been done. And when I look around I'll bet there ain't a hole anywhere that's been sunk in the last two years."

"Yes there is!" contradicted Bunker, "you go right up that wash that comes down from them north hills and you'll find one that's down twelve hundred feet. And there's a diamond drill outfit sinking twenty feet a day, and has been for the last six months. At five dollars a foot–that's the contract price–Old Bible-Back is paying a hundred dollars a day. Now–how many days will that drill have to run to do the annual work? No, you're all right, young man, and I like your nerve, but you don't want to take too much for granted."

"Judas priest!" exclaimed Russell, "twelve hundred feet deep?

What does the old boy think he's got?"

"He's drilling for copper," nodded Bunker significantly, "and for all you and I know, he's got it. He's got an armed guard in charge of that drill, and no outsider has been allowed anywhere near it for going on to six months. The cores are all stored away in boxes where nobodv can get their hands on them and the way old Bible-Back is sweating blood I reckon they're close to the ore. But a hundred dollars a day–say, the way things are now that'll make or break old Murray. He's been blowing in money for ten or twelve years trying to develop his silver properties; but now he's crazy as a bed-bug over copper–can't talk about anything else."

"Is that so?" murmured Denver and as he went about his work his brain began to seethe and whirl. Here was something he had not known of, an element of chance which might ruin all his plans; for if the diamond drill broke into rich copper ore his chance at the two treasures would be lost. There would be a big rush and the price of claims would soar to thousands of dollars. The country looked well for copper, with its heavy cap of dacite and the manganese filling in the veins; and it was only a day's journey in each direction from the big copper camps of Ray and Globe. He turned impulsively and reached for his purse, but as he was about to plank down his five hundred dollars in advance he remembered Mother Trigedgo's words.

"Choose well between the two and both shall be yours. But if you choose unwisely, then both will be lost and you will suffer humiliation and shame."

"Say," blurted out Denver, "your claims are all silver–haven't you got a gold prospect anywhere?"

"No, I haven't," answered Old Bunk, his eye on the bank-roll, "but I'll accept a deposit on that offer. Any claim I've got–except the Lost Burro itself–for five hundred dollars, cash."

"How long is that good for?" enquired Russell cautiously and Bunker slapped his leg for action.

"It's good for right now," he said, "and not a minute after!"

“But I’ve got to look around,” pleaded Denver desperately, “I’ve got to find both these treasures–one of silver and one of gold–and make my choice between them.”

“Well, that’s your business,” said Bunker rising up abruptly. “Will you take that offer or not?”

“No,” replied Denver, putting up his purse and Old Bunk glanced at him shrewdly.

“Well, I’ll give you a week on it,” he said, smiling grimly, and stood up to look down the trail. Denver looked out after him and there, puffing up the slope, came Professor Diffenderfer, the eminent buttinsky and geologist.

CHAPTER VII
THE EMINENT BUTTINSKY

That there was no love lost between Bunker Hill and Professor Diffenderfer was evident by their curt greetings, but as they began to bandy words Denver became suddenly aware that he was the cause of their feud. He and his eight hundred dollars, a sum so small that a shoestring promoter would hardly notice it; and yet these two men with their superfluity of claims were fighting for his favor like pawnbrokers. Bunker Hill had seen him first and claimed him as his right; but Professor Diffenderfer, ignoring the ethics of the game, was out to make a sale anyway. He carried in one hand a large sack of specimens, and under his arm were some weighty tomes which turned out to be Government reports. He came up slowly, panting and sweating in the heat, and when he stepped in Bunk was waiting for him.

"O-ho," he said, "here comes the Professor. The only German count that ever gave up his title to become an American barber. Well, Professor, you're just the man I'm looking for–I want to ask your professional opinion. If two white-bellied mice ran down the same hole would the one with the shortest tail get down first?"

The Professor staggered in and sat down heavily while he wiped the sweat from his eyes.

"Mr. Russell," he began, ignoring the grinning Bunker, "I vant to expound to you the cheology of dis country–I haf made it a lifelong study."

"Yes, you want to get this," put in Bunker *sotto voce*, "he knows every big word in them books."

"I claim," went on the Professor, slapping the books together vehemently, "I claim dat in dis district we haf every indication of a

gigantic deposit of copper. The morphological conditions, such as we see about us everywhere, are distinctly favorable to metalliferous deposition; and the genetic influences which haf taken place later—"

"Well, he's off," sighed Bunker rising wearily up and ambling over towards the door, "so long, Big Boy, I'll see you to-morrow. Never could understand broken English."

"Dat's all righd!" spat back the Professor with spiteful emphasis, "I'm addressing my remarks to dis *chentleman*!"

"Ah–so!" mimicked Bunker. "Vell, shoodt id indo him! And say, tell him about that tunnel! Tell him how you went in until the air got bad and came out up the hill like a gopher. Took a double circumbendibus and, after describing a parabola—"

"Dat's all righd!" repeated the Professor, "now–you think you're so smart–I'm going to prove *you* a liar! I heard you the other day tell dis young man here dat dere vas no golt in dis district. Vell! All righd! We vill see now–joost look! Vat you call *dat* now, my goot young friend?" He dumped out the contents of his canvas ore-sack and nodded to Denver triumphantly. "I suppose dat aindt golt, eh! Maybe I try to take advantage of you and show you what dey call fools gold–what mineralogists call pyrites of iron? No? It aindt dat? Vell, let me ask you vun question den–am I righd or am I wrong?"

"You're right, old man," returned Denver eagerly as he held a specimen to the light; and when he looked up Bunker Hill was gone.

"You see?" leered the Professor jerking his thumb towards the door, "dot man vas trying to *do* you. He don't like to haf me show you dis golt. He vants you to believe dat here is only silver; but I am a cheologist–I know!"

"Yes, this is gold," admitted Denver, wetting the thin strip of quartz, "but it don't look like much of a vein. Whereabouts did you get these specimens?"

"From a claim dat I haf, not a mile south of here," burst out the Professor in great excitement; and while Denver listened in stunned amazement he went into an involved and sadly garbled exposition of

the geological history of the district.

"Yes, sure," broke in Denver when he came to a pause, "I'll take your word for all that. What I want to know is where this claim is located. If its inside the shadow of Apache Leap, I'll go down and take a look at it; but—"

"But vat has the shadow of the mountain to do with it?" inquired the Professor with ponderous dignity. "The formation, as I vas telling you, is highly favorable to an extensive auriferous deposit—"

"Aw, can the big words," broke in Denver impatiently, "I don't give a dang for geology. What I'm looking for is a mine, in the shadow of that big cliff, and—"

"Ah, ah! Yes, I see!" exclaimed the Professor delightedly, "it must conform to the vords of the prophecy! Yes, my mine is in the shadow of Apache Leap, where the Indians yumped over and were killed."

"Well, I'll look at it," responded Denver coldly, "but who told you about that prophecy? It kinder looks to me as if—"

"Oh, vell," apologized the Professor, "I vas joost going by and I couldn't help but listen. Because dis Bunker Hill, he is alvays spreading talk dat I am not a cheologist. But him, now; *him*! Do you know who he is? He is nothing but an ignorant cowman. Ven dis mine vas closed down I vas for some years the care-taker, vat you call the custodian of the plant; and dis Bunker Hill, ven I happened to go avay, he come and take the job. I am a consulting cheologist and my services are very valuable, but he took the job for fifty dollars a month and came here to run his cattle. For eight or ten years he lived right in dat house and took all dat money for nothing; and den, when the Company can't pay him no more, he takes over the property on a lien. Dat fine, valuable mine, one of the richest in the vorld, and vot you think he done with it? He and Mike McGraw, dat hauls up his freight, dey tore it all down for junk! All dat fine machinery, all dem copper plates, all the vater-pipe, the vindows and doors–they tore down everything and hauled it down to Moroni, vere they sold it for nothing to Murray!

"Do you know vot I would do if I owned dat mine?" demanded the Professor with rising wrath. "I vould organize a company and pump oudt the vater and make myself a millionaire. But dis Bunker Hill, he's a big bag of vind–all he does is to sit around and talk! A t'ousand times I haf told him repeatedly dat dere are millions of dollars in dat mine, and a t'ousand times he tells me I am crazy. For fifteen years I haf begged him for the privilege to go into pardners on dat mine. I haf written reports, describing the cheology of dis district, for the highest mining journals in the country; I haf tried to interest outside capital; and den, for my pay, when some chentleman comes to camp, he tells him dat I am a barber!"

The Professor paused and swallowed fiercely, and as Denver broke into a grin the old man choked with fury.

"Do you know what dat man has been?" he demanded, shaking a trembling finger towards Bunker's house, "he has been everything but an honest man–a faro-dealer, a crook, a gambler! He vas nothing–a bum–when his vife heard about him and come here from Boston to marry him! Dey vas boy-und-girl sveetheart, you know. And righdt avay he took her money and put it into cows, and the drought come along and killed them; and now he has nothing, not so much as I haf, and an expensive daughter besides!"

He paused and wagged his head and indulged in a senile grin.

"Und pretty, too–vat? The boys are all crazy, but she von't have a thing to do with them. She von't come outdoors when the cowboys ride by and stop to buy grub at the store. No, she's too good to talk to old mens like me, and with cowboys what get forty a month; but she spends all her time playing tunes on the piano and singing scales avay up in G. You vait, pretty soon you hear her begin–dat scale-singing drives me madt!"

"Oh, sings scales, eh?" said Denver suddenly beginning to take an interest, "must be studying to become a singer."

"Dat's it," nodded the old man shaking his finger solemnly, "her mother vas a singer before her. But after they have spent all their

money to educate her the teacher says she lacks the temperament. She can never sing, he says, because she is too *dumf*; too–what you call it–un-feeling. She lacks the fire of the vonderful Gadski–she has not the g-great heart of Schumann-Heink. She is an American, you see, and dat is the end of it, so all their money is spent."

"Oh, I don't know," defended Denver warmly, "what's the matter with Nordica, and Mary Garden and Farrar? They're Americans, all right, and I've got some of their records that simply can't be beat! You wait till I get out my instrument."

He broke open a box in which was packed with many wrappings a polished and expensive phonograph, but as he was clearing a space on a rickety old table the Professor broke into a cackle.

"Dere! Dere!" he cried, "don't you hear her now? 'Ah, ah, ah, oo, oo, oo, oo!' Vell, dat's what we get from morning till night–by golly, it makes me sick!"

"Aw, that's all right," said Denver after listening critically, "she's just getting ready to sing."

"Getting ready!" sneered the Professor, "don't you fool yourself dere–she'll keep dat going for hours. And in the morning she puts on just one thin white dress and dances barefoot in the garden. I come by dere one time and looked over the vall–and, psst, listen, she don't vare no corsets! She ought to be ashamed."

"Well, what about you, you danged old stiff?" inquired Denver with ill-concealed scorn. "If Old Bunk had seen you he'd have killed you."

"Ah–him?" scoffed the Professor, "no, he von't hurt nobody. Lemme tell you something–now dis is a fact. When he married his vife–and she's an awful fine lady–all she asked vas dat he'd stop his tammed fighting. You see? I know everyt'ing–every little t'ing–I been around dis place too long. She came right out here from the East and offered to marry him, but he had to give up his fighting. He was a bad man–you see? He was quick with a gun, and she was afraid he'd go out and get killed. So I laugh at him now and he goes avay and leaves me–but he von't let me talk with his vife. She's an awful nice woman but–"

“Danged right she is!” put in Denver with sudden warmth and after a rapid questioning glance the Professor closed his mouth.

“Vell, I guess I’ll be going,” he said at last and Denver did not urge him to stay.

CHAPTER VIII
THE SILVER TREASURE

As evening came on and the red eye of the sun winked and closed behind a purple range of mountains Denver Russell came out of his cliff-dwelling cave and looked at the old town below. Mysterious shadows were gathering among the ruins, the white walls stood out ghostly and still, and as a breeze stirred the clacking leaves of the sycamores a voice mounted up like a bird's. It rose slowly and descended, it ran rippling arpeggios and lingered in flute-like trills; but it was colorless, impersonal, void of feeling.

It was more like a flute than like the voice of a bird that pours out its soul for joy; it was perfect, but it was not moving. Only as the spirit of the desolate town–as of some lost soul, pure and passionless–did it find its note of appeal and Denver sighed and sat silent in the darkness. His thoughts strayed far away, to his boyhood in the mountains, to his wanderings from camp to camp; they leapt ahead to the problem that lay before him, the choice between the silver and gold treasures; and then, drowsy and oblivious, he left the voice still singing and groped to his bed in the cave.

All night the prying pack-rats, dispossessed of their dwelling, raced and gnawed and despoiled his provisions; but when the day dawned Denver left them to do their worst, for his mind was on greater things. At another time, when he was not so busy, he would swing some rude cupboards on wires and store his food out of reach; but now he only stopped to make a hasty breakfast and started off up the trail. When the sun rose, over behind Apache Leap, and cast its black shadow among the hills, Denver was up on the rim-rock, looking out on the promised land that should yield him two precious treasures.

The rim where he stood was uptilted and broken, a huge stratified

wall like the edge of a layer cake or the leaves of some mighty book. They lay one upon the other, these ledges of lime and sandstone, some red, some yellow, some white; and, heaped upon the top like a rich coating of chocolate, was the brownish-black cap of the lava. In ages long past each layer had been a mud bank at the bottom of a tropic sea, until the weight of waters had pressed them down and time had changed them to stone. Then Mother Earth had breathed and in a slow, century-long heave, they had emerged from the bottom of the sea, there to be broken and shattered by the pent-up forces of the fire which was raging in her breast.

Great rents had been formed, igneous rocks had boiled up through them; and then in a grand, titanic effort the fire had forced its way up. For centuries this extinct volcano had belched forth its lava, building up the frowning heights of Apache Leap; and then once more the earth had subsided and the waters of the ocean had rushed in. The edge of the rim-rock had been sheered by torrential floods, erosion had fashioned the far heights; until once more, with infinite groanings, the earth had risen from the depths. There it stayed, cracking and trembling, as the inner fires cooled down and the fury of the conflict died away; and boiling waters bearing ores in solution burst like geysers from every crack. And there atom by atom, combined with quartz and acids, the metals of the earth were brought to the surface and deposited on the sides of the cracks. Copper and gold and silver and lead, and many a rarer metal, all spewed up from the molten heart of the world to be sought out and used by man.

All this Denver sensed as he gazed at the high cliff where the volcano had overflowed the earth, and at the layers and layers of sedimentary rock that protruded from beneath its base; but his eyes, though they sensed it, cared nothing for the great Cause–what they looked for was the fruit of all that labor. Where along this shattered rim-rock, twisted and hacked and uptilted, were the hidden cracks, the precious fissure veins, that had brought up the ore from the depths? There at his feet lay one, the gash through the rim where

Queen Creek took its course; and further to the north, where the rim-rock was wrenched to the west, was another likely place. To the south there was another, a deep, sharp canyon that broke through the formation to the heights; and over them all, like a sheltering hand, lay the dark, moving shadow of Apache Leap. He traced out its line as it crept back towards the town and then, big eyed and silent, he started down the trail, still looking for some sign that might guide him.

But other eyes than his had been sweeping the rim and as he came up the trail Bunker Hill appeared and walked along beside him.

"I'll just show you those claims," he said smiling genially, "it'll save you a little time, and maybe a pair of shoes. And just to prove that I'm on the square I'll take you to the best one first."

He led on up the street and as they passed a stone cabin the door was yanked violently open and then as suddenly slammed shut.

"That's the Dutchman," grinned Bunker, "he wakes up grouchy every morning. What did you think of that rock he showed you?"

"Good enough," replied Denver, "it was rotten with gold. But from the looks of the pieces it's only a stringer–I doubt if it shows any walls."

"No, nor anything else much," answered Bunker slightingly, "you can't even call it a stringer. It's a kind of broken seam, going flat into the hill–the Mexicans have been after it for years. Every time there's a rain the Professor will go up there and wash out a little gold in the gulch; but a Chinaman couldn't work it, and make it show a profit, if he had to dig out his ore. Of course it's all right, if you think gold is the ticket, but you wait till I show you this claim of mine–next to the famous Lost Burro Mine.

"You know the Lost Burro–there she lays, right there–and they took out four million dollars in silver before the bonanza pinched out. At first they hauled their ore to the Gulf of California and shipped it to Swansea, Wales, and afterwards they built a kind of furnace and roasted their ore right here. It was refractory ore, mixed up with zinc and antimony; but with everything against them, and all kinds of bum

management, she paid from the very first day. All full of water now, or I'd show you around; but some mine in its time, believe me. I wouldn't sell it for a million dollars."

"Five hundred is my limit," observed Denver with a grin and Bunker slapped his leg.

"Say," he said, "did I tell you that story about the deacon that got stung in a horse-trade? Well, this was back east, where I used to live, before I emigrated for the good of the country, and there was an old Methodist deacon that was as smart as they make 'em when it came to driving a bargain. He and the livery-stable keeper had made a few swaps and one was about as sharp as the other; until finally it got to be a matter of pride between 'em to cut each other's throats in some horse-trade They would talk and haggle, and drive away and come back, and jockey each other for months; but they always paid cash and if one of 'em got stuck he'd trade the horse off to some woman. Well, one day the livery-stable man drove past the deacon's house with a fine, free, high-stepping bay; and every afternoon for about a week he'd go by at a pretty good clip. The deacon he'd rush out and try to flag him, but the livery-stable keeper wouldn't stop; until finally the deacon's curiosity got the best of his judgment and he went out and laid in wait for him.

"'How much do you want for that hoss?' he says when the livery-stable man came to a stop.

"'Two hundred dollars,' says the livery-stable keeper.

"'I'll give you fifty!' barks the deacon coming out to look him over and the livery-stable man tossed him the reins.

"'The hoss is yours,' he says, and the deacon knowed he was stung.

"Quick work," said Denver, "but I'm not like the deacon. I'm going to look around."

"Oh, sure, sure!" protested Bunker, "take all the time you want, but this offer is only good for one week. I've got a special reason for wanting to make a sale or I'd never let you look at this claim. Why, the

Professor himself has told me a thousand times that it's a better proposition than the Burro, so you can see that I am making it attractive. And I ain't pretending that I'm making you the offer for any bull-con reason. I might say that I wanted you to do some work, or to open up the district; but the fact of the matter is I need the five hundred dollars. I've seen times before this war when a hundred thousand cash wouldn't pry me loose from that claim, but now it's yours for five hundred dollars if you honestly think it's worth it. And if you don't, that's all right, there's no hard feeling between us and you can go and buy from the Professor. You wasn't born yesterday and you're a good, hard-rock miner; so enough said, there's the claim, right there."

He waved his hand at the steep shoulder of the hill, where the canyon had cut through the rim-rock; and as Denver looked at the formation of the ground a gleam came into his eyes. The claim took in the silted edge of the rim, where the strata had been laid bare, and along through the middle of the varicolored layers there ran a broad streak of iron-red. Into this a streak of copper-stained green had been pinched by the lateral fault of the canyon and where the two joined–just across the creek–was the discovery hole of the claim.

"Let's go over and look at it," he said and, crossing the creek on the stones, he clambered up to the hole. It was an open cut with a short tunnel at the end and, piled up about the location monument, were some samples of the rock. Denver picked one up and at sight of the ore he glanced suspiciously at Bunker.

"Where did this come from?" he asked holding up a chunk that was heavy with silver and lead, "is this some high-grade from the famous Lost Burro?"

"Nope," returned Bunker, "'bout the same kind of rock, though. That comes from the tunnel in there."

"Like hell!" scoffed Denver with a swift look at the specimen, "and for sale for five hundred dollars? Well, there's something funny here, somewhere."

He stepped into the tunnel and there, across the face, was a four inch vein of the ore. It lay between two walls, as a fissure vein should; but the dip was almost horizontal, following the level of the uptilted strata. Except for that it was as ideal a prospect as a man could ask to see–and for sale for five hundred dollars! A single ton of the ore, if it was as rich as it looked, ought easily to net five hundred dollars.

Denver knocked off some samples with his prospector's pick and carried them out into the sun.

"Why don't you work this?" he asked as he caught the gleam of native silver in the duller gray of the lead and Old Bunk hunched his shoulders.

"Little out of my line," he suggested mildly, "I leave all that to the Swedes. Say, did you ever hear that one about the Swede and the Irishman–you don't happen to be Irish, do you?"

"No," answered Denver and as he waited for the story he remembered what the Professor had told him. This long, gangly Yankee, with his drooping red mustache and his stories for every occasion, was nothing but a store-keeper and a cowman. He knew nothing about mining or the value of mines but like many another old-timer simply held down his claims and waited–and to cover up his ignorance of mining he told stories about Irishmen and Swedes. "No," said Denver, "and you're no Swede, or you'd drift in there and see what you've got."

"A mule can work," observed Bunker oracularly, "but here's one I heard sprung on an Irishman. He was making a big talk about Swedes and Swede luck, and after he'd got through a feller made the statement that the Swedes were the greatest people in the world.

"'In the wur-rold!' yells the Irishman, like he was out of his head, 'well, how do you figure thot out?'

"'Well, I'll tell you,' says the feller, 'the Swedes invented the wheel-barrow–and then they learned you Irish to stand on your hind legs and run it!' Har, har, har; he had him going that time–the Mick couldn't think what else to do so he went to heaving bricks."

"Yes–sure," nodded Denver, "that was one on the Irish. But say, have you got a clean title to this claim? Because if you have—"

"You bet I have!" spoke up Bunker, now suddenly strictly business; but as he waited expectantly there was a shout from the trail and Professor Diffenderfer came rushing up.

"Oh, I heard you!" he cried shaking a trembling fist at Bunker. "I heard vot you said about my claim! Und now, Mister Bunk, I'll have my say–no sir, you haf no goot title. You haf not done your yearly assessment vork on dis or any oder claims!"

"Say, who called you in on this?" inquired Bunker Hill coldly. "You danged, bat-headed Dutchman, you keep butting in on my deals and I'll forget and bust you on the jaw!"

His long, sharp chin was suddenly thrust out, one eye had a dangerous droop; but the Professor returned his gaze with an insolent stare and a triumphant toss of the head.

"Dat's all right!" he said, "you say my golt mine is a stringer–I say your silver mine is nuttings. You haf no title, according to law, but only by the custom of the country."

"Well, you poor, ignorant baboon," burst out Bunker in a fury, "what better title do you want? The claim is mine, everybody knows it and acknowledges it; and I've got your signature, sworn before a notary public, that the annual work was done!"

"Just a form, just a form," returned the Professor with a shrug, "I do like everyone else. But dis claim dat I haf–and my tunnel on the hill–on dem the vork is done. And now, Mr. Russell, if you haf finished looking here, I will take you to see my mine."

"Well, I don't know," began Denver still gazing at the silver ore, "this looks pretty good, right here."

"But the prophecy!" exclaimed the Professor with a knowing smirk, "don't it tell you to choose between the two? And how can you tell if you don't even look–whether the golt or the silver is better?"

"Aw, go down and look at it!" broke in Bunker Hill angrily as Denver scratched his head, "go and see what he calls a mine–and if you don't

come running back and put your money in my hand you ain't the miner I think you are. But by the holy, jumping Judas, I'm going to forget myself some day and knock the soo-preme pip out of this Dutchman!" He turned abruptly away and went striding back towards the town and the Professor leered at Denver.

"Vot I told you?" he boasted, "I ain't scared of dat mens–he promised his vife he von't fight!"

"Good enough," said Denver, "but don't work it too hard. Now come on and let's look at your mine."

CHAPTER IX
BIBLE-BACK MURRAY

As a matter of form Denver went with the Professor and inspected his boasted mine but all the time his mind was far away and his heart was beating fast. The vein of silver that Bunker Hill had shown him was worth a thousand dollars anywhere; but, situated as it was on the next claim to the Lost Burro, it was worth incalculably more. It was too good a claim to let get away and as he listened perfunctorily to the Professor's patter he planned how he would open it up. First he would shoot off the face, to be sure there was no salting, and send off some samples to the assayer; and then he would drive straight in on the vein as long as his money lasted. And if it widened out, if it dipped and went down, he would know for a certainty that it was the silver treasure that good old Mother Trigedgo had prophesied. But to carry out the prophecy, to choose well between the two, he gazed gravely at the Professor's strip of gold-ore.

It was a knife-blade stringer, a mere seam of rotten quartz running along the side of a canyon; and yet not without its elements of promise, for it was located near another big fault. In geological days the rim-rock had been rent here as it had at Queen Creek Canyon and this stringer of quartz might lead to a golden treasure that would far surpass Bunker's silver. But the signs were all against it and as Denver turned back the Professor read the answer in his eyes.

"Vell, vat you t'ink?" he demanded insistently, "vas I right or vas I wrong? Ain't I showed you the golt–and I'll tell you anodder t'ing, dis mine vill pay from the start. You can pick out dat rich quartz and pack it down to the crick and vash out the pure quill golt; but dat ore of Old Bunk's is all mixed oop with lead and zinc, and with antimonia too. You vil haf to buy the sacks, and pay the freight, and the smelter

charges, too; and dese custom smelters they penalize you for everyt'ing, and cheat you out of what's left. Dey're nutting but a bunch of t'ieves and robbers—"

"Aw, that's all right," broke in Denver impatiently, "for cripe's sake, give me a chance. I haven't bought your mine nor Bunk's mine either, and it don't do any good to talk. I'm going to rake this country with a fine-tooth comb for claims that show silver and gold, and when I've seen 'em all I'll buy or I won't, so you might as well let me alone."

"Very vell, sir," began the Professor bristling with offended dignity and, seeing him prepared with a long-winded explanation, Denver turned up the hill and quit him. He clambered up to the rim, dripping with sweat at every step, and all that day, while the heat waves blazed and shimmered, he prospected the face of the rim-rock. The hot stones burned his hands, he fought his way through thorns and catclaws and climbed around yuccas and spiny cactus; but at the end of the long day, when he dragged back to camp, he had found nothing but barren holes. The country was pitted with open cuts and shallow prospect-holes, mostly dug to hold down worthless claims; and the second day and the third only served to raise his opinion of the claim that Bunker had showed him.

On the fourth day he went back to it and prospected it thoroughly and then he kept on around the shoulder of the hill and entered the country to the north. Here the sedimentary rim-rock lay open as a book and as he followed along its face he found hole after hole pecked into one copper-stained stratum. It was the same broad stratum of quartzite which, on coming to the creek, had dipped down into Bunker's claim; and now Denver knew that others beside himself thought well of that mineral-bearing vein. For the country was staked out regularly and in each location monument there was the name Barney B. Murray.

The steady panting of a gas-engine from somewhere in the distance drew Denver on from point to point and at last, in the bottom of a deep-cleft canyon, he discovered the source of the sound. Huge

dumps of white waste were spewed out along the hillside, there were houses, a big tent and criss-crossed trails; but the only sign of life was that *chuh*, *chuh*, of the engine and the explosive *blap*, *blaps* of an air compressor. It was Murray's camp, and the engine and the compressor were driving his diamond drill.

Denver looked about carefully for some sign of the armed guard and then, not too noisily, he went down the trail and followed along up the gulch. The drill, which was concealed beneath the big, conical tent, was set up in the very notch of the canyon, where it cut through the formation of the rim-rock; and Denver was more than pleased to see that it was fairly on top of the green quartzite. He kept on steadily, still looking for the guard, his prospector's pick well in front; and, just down the trail from the tented drill, he stopped and cracked a rock.

"Hey! Get off this ground!" shouted a voice from the tent and as Denver looked up a man stepped out with a rifle in his hand. "What are you doing around here?" he demanded angrily and, as Denver made no answer, another man stepped out from behind. Then with a word to the guard he came down the trail and Denver knew it was Murray himself.

He was a tall, bony man with a flowing black beard and, hunched up above his shoulders, was the rounded hump which had given him the name of "Bible-Back." To counterbalance this curvature his head was craned back, giving him a bristling, aggressive air, and as he strode down towards Denver his long, gorilla arms, extended almost down to his knees.

"What are you doing here, young man?" he challenged harshly, "don't you know that this ground is closed?"

"Why, no," bluffed Denver, "you haven't got any signs out. What's all the excitement about?"

Bible-Back Murray paused and looked him over, and his prospector's pick and ore-sack, and a glint came into one eye. The other eye remained fixed in a cold, rheumy stare, and Denver sensed that it was made of glass.

"Who are you working for?" rasped Murray and as he raised his voice the guard started down the dump.

"I'm not working for anybody," answered Denver boldly, "I'm out prospecting along the edge of the rim."

"Oh–prospecting," said Murray suddenly moderating his voice; and then, as the guard stood watching them narrowly, he gave way to a fatherly smile. "Well, well," he exclaimed, "it's pretty hot for prospecting–you can't see very well in this glare. Whereabouts have you made your camp?"

"Over on the crick," answered Denver. "What have you got here, anyway? Is this that diamond drill?"

"Never mind, now!" put in the guard who, anticipating a call-down for his negligence, was in a distinctly hostile mood, "you know danged well it is!"

"Oh, I do, do I?" retorted Denver, "well, all right pardner, if you say so; but you don't need to call me a liar!"

He returned the guard's glare with an insulting sneer and Murray made haste to intercede.

"Now, now," he said, "let's not have any trouble. But of course you've no business on this ground."

"That's all right," defended Denver, "that don't give him a license to pull any ranicky stuff. I'm as peaceable as anybody, but you can tell your hired man he don't look bad to me."

"That will do, Dave," nodded Murray and after another look at Denver, the guard turned back towards the tent.

"Judas priest," observed Denver thrusting out his lip at the guard, "he's a regular gun-fighting boy. You must have something pretty good hid away here somewhere, to call for a guard like that."

"He's a dangerous man," replied Murray briefly, "I'd advise you not to rouse him. But what do you think of our district, Mister–er–"

"Russell," said Denver promptly, "my name is Denver Russell. I just came over from Globe."

"Glad to meet you," answered Murray extending a hairy hand, "my

name is B. B. Murray. I'm the owner of all this ground."

"'S that so?" murmured Denver, "well don't let me keep you."

And he started off down the trail.

"Hey, wait a minute!" protested Murray, "you don't need to go off mad. Sit down here in the shade–I want to have a talk with you."

He stepped over to the shade of an abandoned cabin and Denver followed reluctantly. From the few leading questions which Mr. Murray had propounded he judged he was a hard man to evade; and, until he had got title to the claim on Queen Creek, it was advisable not to talk too much.

"So you're just over from Globe, eh?" began Murray affably, "well, how are things over in that camp? Yes, I hear they are booming–were you working in the mines? What do you think of this country for copper?"

"It sure looks *good*!" pronounced Denver unctuously, "I never saw a place that looked better. All this gossan and porphyry, and that copper stain up there–and just look at that dacite cap!"

He waved his hand at the high cliff behind and Murray's eye became beady and bright.

"Yes," he said rubbing his horny hands together and gazing at Denver benevolently, "we think the indications are good–were you thinking of locating in these parts?"

"No, just going through," answered Denver slowly. "I was camping by the crick and saw that copper-stain, so I thought I'd follow it up. How far are you down with your drill?"

"Quite a ways, quite a ways," responded Murray evasively. "You don't look like an ordinary prospector–who'd you say it was you were working for?"

Denver turned and looked at him, and grunted contemptuously.

"J. P. Morgan," he said and after a silence Murray answered with a thin-lipped smile.

"That's all right, that's all right," he said with a cackle. "No hard feeling–I just wanted to know. You're an honest young man, but there

are others who are not, and we naturally like to inquire. Are you staying with Mr. Hill?"

"Well, not so you'd notice it," replied Denver brusquely. "I'm camped in that cave across the crick."

"Oh, is that so?" purred Murray driving relentlessly on in his quest for information, "did he show you any of his claims?"

"He showed me one," answered Denver and, try as he would, he could not keep his voice from changing.

"Oh, I see," said Murray suddenly smiling triumphantly, "he showed you that claim by the creek."

"That's the one," admitted Denver, "and it sure looked good. Have you got any interests over there?"

"Not at present," returned Murray with a touch of asperity, "but let me tell you a little about that claim. You're a stranger in these parts and it's only fair to warn you that the assessment work has never been done. He has no title, according to law; so you can govern your actions accordingly."

"You mean," suggested Denver, "that all I have to do is to go in and jump the claim?"

"Hell–no!" exclaimed Bible-Back startled out of his piosity. "I mean that you had better not buy it."

"Well, thanks," drawled Denver, "this is danged considerate of you. Shall I tell him you'll take it yourself?"

"Certainly not!" snapped back Murray, "I've enough claims, already. I'm just warning you for your own good."

"Danged considerate," repeated Denver with a sarcastic smile, "and now let me ask *you* something. Who told you I wanted to buy?"

"Never mind!" returned Murray, "I've warned you, and that is enough."

"Well, all right," agreed Denver, "but if you don't want it yourself–"

"Young man!" exclaimed Murray suddenly rising to his feet and crooking his neck like a crane, "I guess you know who I am. I can make or break any man in this country, and I'm telling you now–don't

you buy!”

“I get you,” answered Denver, and without arguing the point he rose up and went down the trail.

CHAPTER X
SIGNS AND OMENS

When a man like Bible-Back Murray, the biggest man in the country–a sheep-owner, a store-keeper, a political power–goes out of his way to break up a trade there is something significant behind it. Denver had come to Pinal in response to a prophecy, in search of two hidden treasures between which he must make his choice; and now, added to that, was the further question of whether he should venture to oppose Murray. If he did, he could proceed in the spirit of the prophecy and choose between the silver and gold treasures; but if he did not there would be no real choice at all, but simply an elimination. He must turn away from the silver treasure, that precious vein of metal which led so temptingly into the hill, and take the little stringer of quartz which the Professor had offered as a gold mine. Denver thought it all over out in front of his cave that night and at last he came back to the prophecy.

"Courage and constancy," it said, "will attend you through life, but in the end will prove your undoing, for you will meet your death at the hands of your dearest friend."

Denver's heart fell again at the thought of that hard fate but it did not divert him from his purpose. Mother Trigedgo had said that he should be brave, nevertheless–very well then, he would dare oppose Murray. But now to choose between the two, between the Professor's stringer of gold and Bunker's vein of silver–with the ill will of Murray attached. Denver pondered them well and at last he lit a candle and referred it to Napoleon's Oraculum.

In the front of the Book of Fate were thirty-two questions the answers to which, on the succeeding pages, would give counsel on every problem of life. The questions, at first sight, seemed more

adapted to love-sick swains than to the practical problem before Denver, but he came back to number nine.

"Shall I be SUCCESSFUL in my present undertaking?"

All he had to do was to decide to buy the silver claim and then put the matter to the test. He spread a sheet of fair paper on the clear corner of his table and made five rows of short lines across it, each containing more than the requisite twelve marks. Then he counted each row and, opposite every one that came even, he placed two dots; opposite every line that came odd, one dot. This made a series of five dots, one above the other, of which the first two were double and the last three single, and he turned to the fateful Key.

It was spread across two pages, a solid mass of signs and letters, arranged in a curious order; and along the side were the numbers of the questions, across the top the different combinations of dots. Against the thirty-two questions there were thirty-two combinations in which the odd and even dots could be arranged, and Denver's series was the seventh in order. The number of his question was nine. Where the seventh line from the side met the ninth from the top there occurred the letter O. Denver turned to the Oraculum and on the page marked O he found thirty-two answers, each starred with a different combination of dots. The seventh answer from the top was the one he sought–it said:

"Fear not, if thou are prudent."

"Good enough!" exclaimed Denver, shutting the book with a slap; but as he went out into the night a sudden doubt assailed him–what did it mean by: "If thou art prudent?"

"Fear not!" he understood, it was the first and only motto in the bright, brief lexicon of his life; but what was the meaning of "prudent?" Did it mean he was to refrain from opposing Old Bible-Back, or merely that he should oppose him within reason? That was the trouble with all these prophecies–you never could tell what they meant. Take the silver and golden treasures–how would he know them when he saw them? And he had to choose wisely between the two. And now,

when he referred the whole business to the Oraculum it said: “Fear not, if thou art prudent.”

He paced up and down on the smooth ledge of rock that made up the entrance to his home and as he sunk his head in thought a voice came up to him out of the blackness of the town below. It was the girl again, singing, high and clear as a flute, as pure and ethereal as an angel, and now she was singing a song. Denver roused up and listened, then lowered his head and tramped back and forth on the ledge. The voice came again in a song that he knew–it was one that he had on a record–and he paused in his impatient striding. She could sing, this girl of Bunk’s, she knew something besides scales and running up and down. It was a song that he knew well, only he never remembered the names on the records. They were in German and French and strange, foreign languages, while all that he cared for was the music. He listened again, for her singing was different; and then, as she began another operatic selection he started off down the trail. It was a rough one at best and he felt his way carefully, avoiding the cactus and thorns; but as he crossed the creek he suddenly took shame and stopped in the shadow of the sycamore.

What if the Professor, that old prowler, should come along and find him, peeping in through Bunker’s open door? What if the ray of light which struck out through the door-frame should reveal him to the singer within? And yet he was curious to see her. Since his first brusque refusal to go in and meet her, Bunker had not mentioned his daughter again–perhaps he remembered what was said. For Denver had stated that he had plenty of music himself, if he could ever get his phonograph from Globe. Yet he had had the instrument for nearly a week and never unpacked the records. They were all good records, no cheap stuff or rag-time; but somehow, with her singing, it didn’t seem right to start up a machine against her. And especially when he had refused to come down and meet her–a fine lady, practicing for grand opera.

He sat down in the black shadow of the mighty sycamore and

strained his ears to hear; but a chorus of tree-frogs, silenced for the moment by his coming, drowned the music with their eerie refrain. He hurled a rock into the depths of the pool and the frog chorus ceased abruptly, but the music from the house had been clearer from his cave-mouth than it was from the bed of the creek. For half an hour he sat, gazing out into the ghostly moonlight for some sign of the snooping Diffenderfer; and then by degrees he edged up the trail until he stood in the shadow of the store. The music was impressive–it was Marguerite's part, in "Faust," sung consecutively, aria by aria–and as Denver lay listening it suddenly came over him that life was tragic and inexorable. He felt a great longing, a great unrest, a sense of disaster and despair; and then abruptly the singing ceased, and with it passed the mood.

There was a murmur of voices, a strumming on the piano, a passing of shadows to and fro; and then from the doorway there came gay and spritely music–and at last a song that he knew. Denver listened intently, trying to remember the record which had contained this lilting air. He had it–the "Barcarolle," the boat-song from the "Tales of Hoffmann!" And she was singing the words in English. He left the shadow and stepped out into the open, forgetful of everything but the singer, and the words came out to him clearly.

"Night divine, O night of love,
O smile on our enchantment;
Moon and stars keep watch above
This radiant night of love!"

She came to the end, riding up and down in an ecstatic series of "Ahs!" and as the song floated away into piano and pianissimo Denver braved the light to see her.

She was standing by the piano, swaying like a flower to the music; and a lamp behind made her face like a cameo, her hair like a mass of gold. That was all he saw in the swift, stolen moment before he retreated in a panic to his cave. It was she, the beautiful woman that the seeress had predicted, the one he should fall in love with! She had won his heart before he even saw her, but how could he hope to win her? She was a singer, an artist as Mother Trigedgo had said, and he was a hobo miner. He stood by his cavern looking down on the town and up at the moon and stars and the words of her song came back to his ears in a continual, haunting refrain.

"Ah! smile on our enchantment,
Night of Love, O night of love!
Ah, Ah! Ah, Ah! Ah, Ah! Ah, Ah!"

It floated away in a lilting diminuendo, a joyous, mocking refrain; and long after the night was quiet again the music still ran through his head. It possessed him, it broke his sleep, it followed him in dreams; and with it all went the vision of the singer, surrounded like St. Cecilia with a golden halo of light. He woke up at dawn with a fire in his brain, a tumult of unrest in his breast; and like a buck when he feels the first sting of a wound he turned his face towards the heights. The valley seemed to oppress him, to cabin him in; but up on the cliffs where the eagles soared there was space and the breath of free winds. He toiled up tirelessly, a fierce energy in his limbs, a mill-race of thoughts in his mind, and at last on the summit he turned and looked down on the house that sheltered his beloved.

She was the woman, he knew it, for his heart had told him long before he had thought of the prophecy; and now the choice between the gold and silver treasures seemed as nothing compared to winning her. Of all the admonitions which had been laid upon him by the words of the Cornish seeress, none seemed more onerous than this about the woman that he would love.

"You will fall in love with a beautiful woman who is an artist," Mother Trigedgo had written, "but beware how you reveal your affection or she will confer her hand upon another."

On another! This woman, whom he had worshipped from the moment he had seen her, would flaunt him if he revealed his love! That was the thought which had tortured him and driven him to the heights, where he could wrestle with his problem alone. How could he meet her without her reading in his eyes the secret he must not reveal? And yet he was possessed with a mad desire to see her–to see her and hear her sing. All her scales and roulades, her runs and trills, had passed by him like so much smoke; but when the mood had come and she had sung her song-of-songs he had lost his heart to her instantly. But if, in her presence, he revealed this new love she would confer her hand upon another!

He stood on the edge of Apache Leap and gazed down at the valley below, then he looked far away where peak piled on peak and the desert sloped away to the horizon. It was hot, barren land, every ridge spiked with giant cactus, every gulch a bruising tangle of brush and rocks; but Pinal lay sleeping in the cool shadow of the Leap, and Drusilla slept there too. But who would think to look for her in a place like that, or for the treasures of silver and gold? The finger of destiny had pointed him plain, for he stood on the Place of Death. It was lifeless yet, save for the uneasy eagles who watched him from a splintered crag; and the clean, black shadow that lapped out over the plain held the woman and the treasures in its compass.

A sense of awe, of religious exaltation, came over Denver as he considered the prophecy, and from somewhere within him there

came a new strength which stilled the fierce tumult in his breast. Since the stars had willed it that he should have this woman if he veiled his love from her eyes he would be brave then, and constant, and steel his boy's heart to resist her matchless charms. He would watch over her from afar, feeding his love in secret, and when the time came he would reap his reward and the prophecy would be fulfilled. And while he stood aloof, stealing a glimpse of her at night or listening to the magic of her songs; he must win the two treasures, both the silver and the gold, to lay as an offering at her feet.

The shadow of the Leap drew back from the town, leaving the houses sun-struck and bare, and as his mind went back to the choice between the treasures he watched the moving objects below. He saw a steer wandering down the empty street, and Old Bunk going across to the store; and then in the walled garden that lay behind the house he beheld a woman's form. It was draped in white and it moved about rhythmically, bending slowly from side to side; and then with the graceful ethereal lightness it leapt and whirled in a dance. In the profundity of the distance all was lost but the grace of it, the fairy-like flitting to and fro; and, as Denver watched, the tears leapt to his eyes at the thought of her perfect beauty.

She was a woman from another world, which a horny-handed miner could hardly hope to enter; yet if he won the two treasures, which would make them both rich, the doors would swing open before him. All it needed was a wise choice between the silver and the gold, and destiny would attend to the rest. Well–if he chose the gold he would offend her own father, who was urgently in need of funds; and if he chose the silver he would offend Bible-Back Murray, and Diffenderfer as well. He considered the two claims from every standpoint, looking hopefully about for some sign; and as he stepped to the edge and looked down into the depths, the male eagle left his crag.

Riding high on the wind which, striking against the face of the cliff, floated him up into the spaces above; he wheeled in a smooth circle, turning his head from side to side as he watched the invader of his

eyrie. And at each turn of his head Denver caught the flash of gold, though he was loath to accept it as a sign. He waited, fighting against it, marshaling reasons to sustain him; and then, folding his wings, the eagle descended like a plummet, shooting past him with a shrill, defiant scream. Denver flinched and stepped back, then he leaned forward eagerly to watch where the bird's flight would take him. No Roman legionary, going into unequal battle with his war eagle wheeling above its standard, ever watched its swift course with higher hopes or believed more fully in the omen. The eagle spread his wings and glided off to the west, flying low as he approached the plain; and as he passed over Pinal and the claim by Queen Creek, Denver laughed and slapped his leg.

"It's a go!" he exulted, "the silver wins!"

And he bounded off down the trail.

CHAPTER XI
THE LADY OF THE SYCAMORES

A weight like that of Pelion and Ossa seemed lifted from Denver's shoulders as he hurried down from Apache Leap and, with his wallet in his hip pocket, he strode straight to Bunker's house. The eagle had chosen for him, and chosen right, and the last of his troubles was over. There was nothing to do now but buy the claim and make it into a mine–and that was the easiest thing he did. Pulling ground was his specialty–with a good man to help he could break his six feet a day–and now that the choice had been made between the treasures he was tingling to get to work.

"Here's your money," he said as soon as Bunker appeared, "and I'd like to order some powder and steel. Just write me out a quit-claim for that ground."

"Well, well," beamed Bunker pushing up his reading glasses and counting over the roll of bills, "this will make quite a stake for Drusilla. Come in, Mr. Russell, come in!"

He held the door open and Denver entered, blinking his eyes as he came in from the glare. The room was a large one, with a grand piano at one end and music and books strewn about; and as Bunker Hill shouted for his wife and daughter Denver stared about in astonishment. From the outside the house was like any other, except that it was covered with vines; but here within it was startling in its elegance, fitted up with every luxury. There was a fireplace with bronze andirons, massive furniture, expensive rugs; and the walls were lined with stands and book-shelves that overflowed with treasures.

“Oh Drusilla!” thundered Bunker and at last she came running, bounding in through the garden door. She was attired in a filmy robe, caught up for dancing, and her feet were in Grecian sandals; and at sight of Denver she drew back a step, then stood firm and glanced at her father.

“Here’s that five hundred dollars,” said Bunker briefly and put the roll in her hand.

“Oh–did you sell it?” she demanded in dismay “did you sell that Number One claim?”

“You bet I did,” answered her father grimly, “so take your money and beat it.”

“But I told you not to!” she went on reproachfully, ignoring Denver entirely. “I told you not to sell it!”

“That’s all right,” grumbled Bunker, “you’re going to get your chance, if it takes the last cow in the barn. I know you’ve got it in you to be a great singer–and this’ll take you back to New York.”

“Well, all right,” she responded tremulously, “I did want just one more chance. But if I don’t succeed I’m going to teach school and pay every dollar of this back.”

She turned and disappeared out the garden door and Bunker Hill reached for his hat.

“Come on over to the store,” he said and Denver followed in a daze. She was not like any woman he had ever dreamed of, nor was she the woman he had thought. In the night, when she was singing, she had seemed slender and ethereal with her swan’s neck and piled up hair; but now she was different, a glorious human animal, strong and supple yet with the lines of a girl. And her eyes were still the eyes of a child, big and round and innocently blue.

“Here comes the Professor,” muttered Bunker gloomily, as he unlocked the heavy door, “he’s hep, I reckon, the way he walks.”

The Professor was waddling with his queer, duck-like steps down the middle of the deserted street and every movement of his gunboat feet was eloquent of offended dignity.

"Vell," he began as he burst into the store and stopped in front of Denver, "I vant an answer, right avay, on dat property I showed you the udder day. I joost got a letter from a chentleman in Moroni inquiring about an option on dat claim and—"

"You can give it to him," cut in Denver, "I've just closed with Mr. Hill for that Number One claim up the crick."

"So!" exploded the Professor, "vell, I vish you vell of it!" And he flung violently out the door.

"Takes it hard," observed Bunker, "never was a good loser. You want to watch out for him, now–he's going over to report to Murray."

"So that's the combination," nodded Denver. "I was over there yesterday and Murray knew all about me–gave me a tip not to buy this property."

"Danged right he's working for him," returned Old Bunk grimly. "He runs to him with everything he hears. It's a wonder I haven't killed that little tub of wienies–he crabs every trade I start to make. What's the matter with Old Bible-Back now?"

"Oh, nothing," answered Denver, "but if it's all the same to you I'd like to just locate that ground. Then I'll do my discovery work and if there ever comes up a question I'll have your quit-claim to boot."

"Suit yourself," growled Bunker, "but I want to tell you right now I've got a perfect title to that property. I've held it continuously for fifteen years and—"

"Give me a quit-claim then; because Murray questions your title and I don't want to take any chances. He says you haven't kept up your work."

"He does, hey!" challenged Bunker thrusting out his jaw belligerently, "well, I'd like to see somebody jump me. I'm living on my property, and possessory title is the very best title there is. By grab, if I thought that Mormon-faced old devil was thinking of jumping my ground—" He went off into uneasy mutterings and wrote out the quit-claim absently; then they went up together and, after going over the lines, Denver relocated the mine and named it the Silver Treasure.

“Think you guessed right, do you?” inquired Bunker with a grin. “Well, I hope you make a million. And if you do you’ll never hear no kick from me–you’ve bought it and paid my price.”

“Fair enough!” exclaimed Denver and shook hands on the trade, after which he bought some second-hand tools and went to work on a trail. Not a hundred feet down-stream from where the vein cropped out, the main trail crossed to the east side of the creek, leaving the mine on the side of a steep hill. A few days’ work, while he was waiting for his powder, would clear out the worst of the cactus and catclaws and give him free access to his hole. Then he could clean out the open cut, set up a little forge and prepare for the driving of his tunnel. The sun was blazing hot, not a breath of wind was stirring and the sweat splashed the rocks as he toiled; but there was a song in Denver’s heart that made his labors light and he hummed the “Barcarolle” as he worked. She was scornful of him now and thought only of her music; but the time would come when she would know him as her equal, for a miner can be an artist, too. And at swinging a double-jack or driving uppers Denver Russell was as good as any man. He worked for the joy of it and took pride in his craft–and that marks the true artist everywhere.

Yet now that his sale had been consummated and he had the money he needed, Bunker Hill suddenly lost all interest in Denver and retired into his shell. He had invited Denver once to come down to his house and share the hospitality of his home; but, after Denver’s brusque, almost brutal refusal, Old Bunk had never been the same. He had shown Denver his claim and stated the price and told a few stories on the side, but he had shown in many ways that his pride had been hurt and that he did not fully approve. This was made the more evident by the careful way in which he avoided introducing his wife; and it became apparent beyond a doubt in that tense ecstatic minute when Drusilla had come in from the garden.

Then, if ever, was the moment when Denver should have been introduced; but Bunker had pointedly neglected the opportunity and

left him still a stranger. And all as a reward for his foolish words and his refusal of well-meaning hospitality. Denver realized it now, but his pride was touched and he refrained from all further advances. If he was not good enough to know Old Bunker's family he was not good enough to associate with him; and so for three days he lived without society, for the Professor, too, was estranged. He passed Denver now with eyes fixed straight ahead, refusing even to recognize his presence; and, cut off for the time from all human intercourse, Denver turned at last to his phonograph.

The stars had come out in the velvety black sky, the hot stillness of evening had come, and from the valley below no sound came up but the eerie, *eh*, *eh*, *eh*, of tree toads. They were sitting by the stream and in cracks among the rocks, puffing out their pouched throats like toy balloons and raising, a shrill, haunting chorus. Their thin voices intermingled in an insistent, unearthly refrain as if the spirits of the dead had come again to gibber by the pool. Even the scales and trills of Drusilla had ceased, so hot and close was the night.

Denver set up his phonograph with its scrollwork front and patent filing cases and looked over the records which he had bought at great expense while the other boys were buying jazz. He was proud of them all but the one he valued most he reserved for another time. It was the "Barcarolle" from "Les Contes D' Hoffmann," sung by Farrar and Scotti, and he put on instead a tenor solo that had cost him three dollars in Globe. Then a violin solo, "Tambourin Chinois," by some man with a foreign name; and at last the record that he liked the best, the "Cradle Song," by Schumann-Heink. And as he played it again he saw Drusilla come out and stand in the doorway, listening.

It was a beautiful song, very sweet, very tender, and sung with the feeling of an artist; yet something about it seemed to displease Drusilla, for she turned and went into the house. Perhaps, hearing the song, she was reminded of the singers, stepping forward in a blare of trumpets to meet the applause of vast audiences; or perhaps again she felt the difference between her efforts and theirs; but all the next

day, when she should have been practicing, Drusilla was strangely silent. Denver paused in his work from time to time as he listened for the familiar roulades, then he swung his heavy sledge as if it were a feather-weight and beat out the measured song of steel on steel. He picked and shoveled, tearing down from above and building up the trail below; and as he worked he whistled the “Cradle Song,” which was running through his brain. But as he swung the sledge again he was conscious of a presence, of someone watching from the sycamores; and, glancing down quickly he surprised Drusilla, looking up from among the trees. She met his eyes frankly but he turned away, for he remembered what the seeress had told him. So he went about his work and when he looked again his lady of the sycamores had fled.

CHAPTER XII
STEEL ON STEEL

The stifling summer heat fetched up wind from the south and thundercaps crowned the high peaks; then the rain came slashing and struck up the dust before it lifted and went scurrying away. The lizards gasped for breath, Drusilla ceased to sing, all Pinal seemed to palpitate with heat; but through heat and rain one song kept on–Denver's song of steel on steel. In the cool of his tunnel he drove up-holes and down, slugging manfully away until his round of holes was done and then shooting away the face. As the sun sank low he sat on the dump, sorting and sacking the best of his ore; and one evening as he worked Drusilla came by, walking slowly as if in deep thought.

He was down on his knees, a single-jack in his right hand a pile of quartzite at his left, and as she came to the forks he went on cracking rocks without so much as a stare. She glanced at him furtively, looked back towards the town, then turned off and came up his trail.

"Good evening," she began and as he nodded silently she seemed at a loss for words. "–I just wanted to ask you," she burst out hurriedly, "if you'd be willing to sell back the mine? I brought up the money with me."

She drew out the sweaty roll of bills which he had paid to her father and as Denver looked up she held it out to him, then clutched it convulsively back.

"I don't mean," she explained, "that you have to take it. But I thought perhaps–oh, is it very rich? I'm sorry I let him sell it."

"Why, no," answered Denver with his slow, honest smile, while his heart beat like a trip-hammer in his breast, "it isn't so awful rich. But I bought it, you know–well, I was sent here!"

"What, by Murray?" she cried aghast, "did he send you in to buy it?"

"Don't you think it!" returned Denver. "I'm working for myself and–well, I don't want to sell."

"No, but listen," she pleaded, her eyes beginning to fill, "I–I made a great mistake. This was father's best claim, he shouldn't have sold it; and so–won't you sell it back?"

She smiled, and Denver reached out blindly to accept the money, but at a thought he drew back his hand.

"No!" he said, "I was sent, you know–a fortune-teller told me to dig here."

"Oh, did he?" she exclaimed in great disappointment. "Won't some other claim do just as well? No, I don't mean that; but–tell me how it all came about."

"Well," began Denver, avoiding her eyes; and then he rose up abruptly and brushed off the top of a powder-box. "Sit down," he said, "I'd sure like to accommodate you, but here's how I come to buy it. There's a woman over in Globe–Mother Trigedgo is her name–and she saved the lives of a lot of us boys by predicting a cave in a mine. Well, she told my fortune and here's what she said:

"You will soon make a journey to the west and there, within the shadow of a place of death, you will find two treasures, one of silver and the other of gold. Choose well between them and both shall be yours, but–well, I don't need to tell you the rest. But this is my choice, see? And so, of course—"

"Oh, do you believe in those people?" she inquired incredulously, "I thought—"

"But not this one!" spoke up Denver stoutly, "I know that the most of them are fakes. But this Mother Trigedgo, she's a regular seeress–and it's all come true, every word! Apache Leap up there is the place of death. I came west after that fellow that robbed me; and this mine here and that gold prospect of the Professor's are both in the shadow of the peaks!"

"But maybe you guessed wrong," she cried, snatching at a straw. "Maybe this isn't the one, after all. And if it isn't, oh, won't you let me

buy it back for father? Because I'm not going to New York, after all."

"Well, what good would it do *him*?" burst out Denver vehemently. "He's had it for fifteen years! If he thought so much of it why didn't he work it a little and ship out a few sacks of ore?"

"He's not a miner," protested Drusilla weakly and Denver grunted contemptuously.

"No," he said, "you told the truth that time–and that's what the matter with the whole district. The ground is all held by lead-pencil work and nobody's doing any digging. And now, when I come in and begin to find some ore, your old man wants his mining claim back."

"He does not!" retorted Drusilla, "he doesn't know I'm up here. But he hasn't been the same since he sold his claim, and I want to buy it back. He sold it to get the money to send me to New York, and it was all an awful mistake. I can never become a great singer."

"No?" inquired Denver, glad to change the subject, "I thought you were doing fine. That evening when you–"

"Well, so did I!" she broke in, "until you played all those records; and then it came over me I couldn't sing like that if I tried a thousand years. I just haven't got the temperament. Those continental people have something that we lack–they're so Frenchy, so emotional, so full of fire! I've tried and I've tried and I just can't do it–I just can't interpret those parts!"

She stamped her foot and winked very fast and Denver forgot he was a stranger. He had heard her sing so often that he seemed to know her well, to have known her for years and years, and he ventured a comforting word.

"Oh well, you're young yet," he suggested shame-facedly, "perhaps it will come to you later."

"No, it won't!" she flared back, "I've got to give it up and go to teaching school!"

She stomped her foot more impatiently than ever and Denver went to cracking rocks.

"What do you think of that?" he inquired casually, handing over a

chunk of ore; but she gazed at it uncomprehendingly.

"Isn't there anything I can do?" she began at last, "that will make you change your mind? I might give you this much money now and then pay you more later, when I go to teaching school."

"Well, what do you want it back for?" he demanded irritably, "it's been lying here idle for years. I'd think you'd be glad to have somebody get hold of it that would do a little work."

"I just want to give it back–and have it over with!" she exclaimed with an embittered smile. "I've practiced and I've practiced but it doesn't do any good, and now I'm going to quit."

"Oh, if that's all," jeered Denver, "I'll locate another claim, and let you give that back. What good would it do him if you did give it back–he'd just sit in the shade and tell stories."

"Don't you talk that way about my father!" she exclaimed, "he's the nicest, kindest man that ever lived! He's not strong enough to work in this awful hot weather but he intended to open this up in the fall."

"Well, it's opened up already," announced Denver grimly. "You just show him that piece of rock."

"Oh, have you found something?" she cried snatching up the chunk of ore. "Why, this doesn't look like silver!"

"No, it isn't," he said, and at the look in his eyes she leapt up and ran down the trail.

She came back immediately with her father and mother and, after a moment of pop-eyed staring, the Professor came waddling along behind.

"Where'd you get this?" called Bunker as he strode up the trail and Denver jerked his thumb towards the tunnel.

"At the breast," he said. "Looks pretty good, don't it? I *thought* it would run into copper!"

"Vot's dat? Vot's dat?" clamored the Professor from the fork of the trail and Bunker gave Denver the wink.

"Aw, that ain't copper," he declared, "it's just this green hornblende. We have it around here everywhere."

"All right", answered Denver, "you can have it your own way–but I call it copper, myself."

"Vot–*copper*?" demanded the Professor making a clutch at the specimen and examining it with his myopic eyes, and then he broke into a roar. "Vot–dat copper?" he cried, "you think dat is copper? Oh, ho, ho! Oh, vell! Dis is pretty rich. It is nutting but manganese!"

"That's all right," returned Denver, "you can think whatever you please; but I've worked underground in too many copper mines—"

"Where'd you get this?" broke in Bunker, giving Denver a dig, and as they went into the tunnel he whispered in his ear: "Keep it dark, or he'll blab to Murray!"

"Well, let him blab," answered Denver, "it's nothing to me. But all the same, pardner," he added *sotto voce*, "if I was in your place I wouldn't bank too much on holding them claims with a lead-pencil."

"I'm holding 'em with a six-shooter," corrected Bunker, "and Murray or nobody else don't dare to jump a claim. I'm known around these parts."

"Suit yourself," shrugged Denver as they came to the face, "I guess this ore won't start no stampede. That seam in the hanging wall is where it comes in–I'm looking for the veins to come together."

"Judas priest!" exclaimed Bunker jabbing his candlestick into the copper streak, "say, this is showing up good. And your silver vein is widening out, too. Nothing to it, boy; you've got a mine!"

"Not yet," said Denver, "but wait till she dips. This is nothing but a blanket vein, so far; but if she dips and goes down then look out, old-timer, she's liable to turn out a bonanza."

"Well, who'd a thought it," murmured Old Bunk turning somberly away, "and I've been holding her for fifteen years!"

He led the way out, stooping down to avoid the roof; and outside the stoop still remained.

"Where's the Professor?" he asked, suddenly looking about, "has he gone to tell Murray, already? Well, by grab then, he knew it was."

"Oh, *was* it copper?" quavered Drusilla catching hold of his hand

and looking up into his tired eyes, “and you sold it for five hundred dollars! But that’s all right,” she smiled, drawing his head down for a kiss. “I’ll just have to succeed now–and I’m going to!”

CHAPTER XIII
SWEDE LUCK

As the sun set that evening in a trailing blaze of glory Denver Russell came out and sat with bared arms, looking lazily down at the town. The news of his strike had roused them at last, these easy-going, do-nothing old-timers; and now, from an outcast, a crack-brained hobo miner, he was suddenly accepted as an equal. They spoke to him, they recognized him, they rushed up to his mine and stared at the ore he had dug; and even the Professor had purloined a specimen to take over and show to Murray. And all because, while the rest of them loafed, he had drifted in on his vein until he cut the stringer of copper. It was Swede luck again–the luck of that great people who invented the wheel-barrow, and taught the Irish to stand erect and run it.

Denver could smile a little, grimly, as he recalled Old Bunker's stories and his fleering statement that a mule could work; but, now that he had struck copper at the breast of his tunnel, the mule was suddenly a gentleman. He was good enough to speak to, and for Bunker's daughter to speak to, and for his wife to invite to supper; and all on account of a vein of copper that was scarcely two inches thick. It was rich and it widened out, instead of pinching off as a typical gash-vein would; and while it would take a fortune to develop it, it was copper, and copper was king. Silver and gold mines were nothing now, for silver was down and gold was losing its purchasing power; but the mining journals were full of articles about copper, and it had risen to thirty cents a pound.

Thirty cents, when a few years ago it had dropped as low as eleven! And it was still going up, for the munition factories were clamoring for it and the speculators were bidding up futures. Even Bible-Back Murray, who had a reputation as a pincher, had suddenly

become prodigal with his money and was working day and night, trying to tap a hidden copper deposit. He had caught the contagion, the lure of tremendous profits, and he was risking his all on the venture. What would he have to say now if his diamond drill tapped nothing and a hobo struck it rich over at Queen Creek? Well, he could say what he pleased, for Denver was determined not to sell for a million dollars. He had come there with a purpose, in answer to a prophecy, and there yet remained to win the golden treasure and the beautiful woman who was an artist.

Every little thing was coming as the seeress had predicted–good Old Mother Trigedgo with her cards and astrology–and all that was necessary was to follow her advice and the beautiful Drusilla would be his. He must treat her at first like any young country girl, as if she had no beauty or charm; and then in some way, unrevealed as yet, he would win her love in return. He had schooled himself rigidly to resist her fascination, but when she had looked up at him with her beseeching blue eyes and asked him to sell back the mine, only a miracle of intercession had saved him from yielding and accepting back the five hundred dollars. He was like clay in her hands–her voice thrilled him, her eyes dazzled him, her smile made him forget everything else–yet just at the moment when he had reached out for the money the memory of the prophecy had come back to him. And so he had refused, turning a deaf ear to her entreaties, and scoffing at her easy-going father; and she had gone off down the trail without once looking back, promising Bunker she would become a great singer.

Denver smiled again dreamily as he dwelt upon her beauty, her hair like fine-spun gold, her eyes that mirrored every thought; and with it all, a something he could not name that made his heart leap and choke him. He could not speak when she first addressed him, his brain had gone into a whirl; and so he had sat there, like a great oaf of a miner, and refused to give her anything. It was rough, yet the Cornish seeress had required it; and doubtless, being a woman

herself, she understood the feminine heart. At the end of his long reverie Denver sighed again, for the ways of astrologers were beyond him.

In the morning he rose early, to muck out the rock and clear the tunnel for a new round of holes; and each time as he came out with a wheel-barrow full of waste he cocked his eye to the west. Bible-Back Murray would be coming over soon, if he was still at his camp around the hill. Yet the second day passed before he arrived, thundering in from the valley in his big, yellow car; and even then he made some purchases at the store before he came up to the mine.

"Good morning!" he hailed cheerily, "they tell me you've struck ore. Well, well; how does the vein show up?"

"'Bout the same," mumbled Denver and glanced at him curiously. He had expected a little fireworks.

"About the same, eh?" repeated Murray, flicking his rebellious glass eye, which had a tendency to stare off to one side, "is this a sample of your ore? Well, I will say, it looks promising–would you mind if I go into the tunnel?"

"Nope," returned Denver; and then, after a moment's pause: "How's that gun-man of yours getting along?"

"Oh, Dave? He's all right. I'll ask you over sometime and let you get better acquainted."

"Never mind," answered Denver, "I know him all I want to. And if I catch him on my ground I'll sure make him jump–I don't like the way he talked to me."

"Well, he's rough, but he's good hearted," observed Murray pacifically. "I'm sorry he spoke to you that way–shall we go in now and look at the vein?"

Denver grunted non-committally and led Murray into the tunnel, which had turned now to follow the ore. Whatever his game was it was too deep for Denver, so he looked on in watchful silence. Murray seemed well acquainted with mining–he looked at the foot-wall and hanging-wall and traced out the course of both veins; and then,

without offering to take any samples, he turned and went out to the dump.

"Yes, very good," he said, but without any enthusiasm, "it certainly looks very promising. Well, good day, Mr. Russell; much obliged."

He started down the trail, leaving Denver staring, and then he turned hurriedly back.

"Oh, by the way," he said, "I buy and sell ore. When you get enough sacked you might send it down by McGraw and I'll give you a credit at the store."

"Yes, all right," assented Denver and stood looking after him till he cranked up and went roaring away. Not a word about the title, nothing said about his warning; and no mention made of his well-known ability to break any man in the county. The facts, apparently, were all that interested him then–but he might make an offer later. When the vein was opened up and he had made his first shipment, when it began to look like a mine! Denver went back to work and as he drove in day by day he was careful to save all the ore.

He hadn't had it assayed, because assaying is expensive and his supplies had cost more than he expected, but from the size of the button when he made his rough fire-tests, he knew that it ran high in silver. Probably eight hundred ounces, besides the lead; and he had sorted out nearly a ton. About the time he was down to his bottom dollar he would ship and get another grub-stake. Then, when that was gone, if his vein opened up, he would ship to the smelter direct; but the first small shipment could be easier handled by a man who made it a business. Of course Murray would gouge him, and overcharge him on everything, but the main idea was to get Denver to start an account and take that much trade away from Hill. Denver figured it all out and then let it pass, for there were other things on his mind.

On the evening of his strike the house below had been silent; but early the next morning she had begun again, only this time she was not singing scales. It was grand opera now, in French and Italian; with brilliant runs and trills and high, sustained crescendos that seemed

almost to demand applause; and high-pitched, agitato recitatives. She was running through the scores of the standard operas–"La Traviata," "Il Trovatore," "Martha"–but as the week wore along she stopped singing again and Denver saw her down among the sycamores. She paid no attention to him, wandering up and down the creek bed or sitting in gloomy silence by the pools; but at last as he stood at the mouth of his tunnel breaking ore with the great hammer he loved, she came out on the trail and gazed across at him wistfully, though he feigned not to notice her presence. He was young and vigorous, and the sledge hammer was his toy; and as Drusilla, when she was practicing, gloried in the range of her voice and her effortless bravuras and trills, so Denver, swinging his sledge, felt like Thor of old when he broke the rocks with his blows. Drusilla gazed at him and sighed and walked pensively past him, then returned and came back up his trail.

"Good evening," she said and Denver greeted her with a smile for he saw that her mood was friendly. She had resented, at first, his brusque refusal and his rough, straight-out way of speaking; but she was lonely now, and he knew in his heart that all was not well with her singing.

"You like to work, don't you?" she went on at last as he stood sweating and dumb in her presence, "don't you ever get tired, or anything?"

"Not doing this," he said, "I'm a driller, you know, and I like to keep my hand in. I compete in these rock-drilling contests."

"Oh, yes, father was telling me," she answered quickly. "That's where you won all that money–the money to buy the mine."

"Yes, and I've won other money before," he boasted. "I won first place last year in the single-handed contest–but that's too hard on your arm. You change about, you know, in the double-handed work–one strikes while the other turns–but in single jacking it's just hammer, hammer, hammer, until your arm gets dead to the shoulder."

"It must be nice," she suggested with a half-concealed sigh, "to be

able to make money so easily. Have you always been a miner?"

"No, I was raised on a ranch, up in Colorado–but there's lots more money in mining. I don't work by the day, I take contracts by the foot where there's difficult or dangerous work. Sometimes I make forty dollars a day. There's a knack about mining, like everything else–you've got to know just how to drive your holes in order to break the most ground–but give me a jack-hammer and enough men to muck out after me and I can sink from sixteen to twenty feet a day, depending on the rock. But here, of course, I'm working lone-handed and only make about three feet a day."

"Oh," she murmured with a mild show of interest and Denver picked up his hammer. Mother Trigedgo had warned him not to be too friendly, and now he was learning why. He set out a huge fragment that had been blasted from the face and swung his hammer again.

"Did you ever hear the 'Anvil Chorus'?" she asked watching him curiously. "It's in the second act of 'Il Trovatore.'"

"Sure!" exclaimed Denver, "I heard Sousa's band play it! I've got it on a record somewhere."

"No, but in a real opera–you'd be fine for that part. They have a row of anvils around the back of the stage and as the chorus sing the gypsy blacksmiths beat out the time by striking with their hammers. Back in New York last year there was a perfectly huge man and he had a hammer as big as yours that he swung with both hands while he sang. You reminded me of him when I saw you working–don't you get kind of lonely, sometimes?"

"Too busy," replied Denver turning to pick up another rock, "don't have time for anything like that."

"Well, I wish I was that way," she sighed after a silence and Denver smote ponderously at the rock.

"Why don't you work?" he asked at last and Drusilla's eyes flashed fire.

"I do!" she cried, "I work all the time! But that doesn't do me any good. It's all right, perhaps, if you're just breaking rocks, or digging

dirt in some mine; but I'm trying to become a singer and you can't succeed that way–work will get you only so far!"

"'S that so!" murmured Denver, and at the unspoken challenge the brooding resentment of Drusilla burst forth.

"Yes, it is!" she exclaimed, "and, just because you've struck ore, that doesn't prove that you're right in everything. I've worked and I've worked, and that's all the good it's done me–I'm a failure, in spite of everything."

"Oh, I don't know," responded Denver with a superior smile, "you've still got your five hundred dollars. A man is never whipped till he thinks he's whipped–why don't you go back and take a run at it?"

"Oh, what's the use of talking?" she cried jumping up, "when you don't know a thing about it? I've tried and I've tried and the best I could ever do was to get a place in the chorus. And there you simply ruin your voice without even getting a chance of recognition. Oh, I get so exasperated to see those Europeans who are nothing but big, spoiled children go right into a try-out and take a part away from me that I know I can render perfectly. But that's it, you see, they're perfectly undisciplined, but they can throw themselves into the part; and the director just takes my name and address and says he'll call me up if he needs me."

Denver grunted and said nothing and as he swung his hammer again the leash to her passions gave way.

"Yes, and I hate you!" she burst out, "you're so big and self-satisfied. But I guess if you were trying to break into grand opera you wouldn't be quite so intolerant!"

"No?" commented Denver stopping to shift his grip and she stamped her foot in fury.

"No, you wouldn't!" she cried half weeping with rage as she contemplated the wreck of her hopes, "don't you know that Mary Garden and Schumann-Heink and Geraldine Farrar and all of them, that are now our greatest stars, had to starve and skimp and wait on the impresarios before they could get their chance? There's a

difference between digging a hole in the ground and moving a great audience to tears; so just because you happen to be succeeding right now, don't think that you know it all!"

"All right," agreed Denver, "I'll try to remember that. And of course I'm nothing but a miner. But there's one thing, and I know it, about all those great stars–they didn't any of them quit. They might have been hungry and out of a job but they never *quit*, or they wouldn't be where they are."

"Oh, they didn't, eh?" she mocked looking him over with slow scorn. "And I suppose that *you* never quit, either?"

"No, I never did," answered Denver truthfully. "I've never laid down yet."

"Well, you're young yet," she said mimicking his patronizing tones, "perhaps that will come to you later."

She smiled with her teeth and stalked off down the trail, leaving Denver with something to think about.

CHAPTER XIV
THE STRIKE

Denver Russell *was* young, in more ways than one, but that did not prove he was wrong. Perhaps he was presumptuous in trying to tell an artist how to gain a foothold on the stage, but he was still convinced that, in grand opera as in mining, there was no big demand for a quitter. As for that swift, back stab, that veiled intimation that he might live to be a quitter himself, Denver resolved then and there not to quit working his mine until his last dollar was gone. And, while he was doing that, he wondered if Drusilla could boast as much of her music. Would she weaken again, as she had twice already, and declare that she was a miserable failure; or would she toil on, as he did, day by day, refusing to acknowledge she was whipped?

Denver returned to his cave in a defiant mood and put on a record by Schumann-Heink. There was one woman that he knew had fought her way through everything until she had obtained a great success. He had read in a magazine how she had been turned away by a director who had told her her voice was hopeless; and how later, after years of privation and suffering, she had come back to that same director and he had been forced to acknowledge her genius. And it was all there, in her voice, the sure strength that comes from striving, the sweetness that comes from suffering; and as Denver listened to her “Cradle Song” he remembered what he had read about her children. Every night, in those dark times when, deserted and alone, she sang in the chorus for her bread, she had been compelled for lack of a nursemaid to lock her children in her room; and evening after evening her mother’s heart was tormented by fears for their safety. What if the house should burn down and destroy them all? All the fear and love, all the anguished tenderness which had torn her heart

through those years was written on the stippled disc, so deeply had it touched her life.

Denver put them all on, the best records he had by singers of world renown, and then at the end he put on the “Barcarolle,” the duet from the “Love Tales of Hoffmann.” For him, that was Drusilla’s song, the expression of her gayest, happiest self. Its lilt and flow recalled her to his thoughts like the embroidered motifs that Wagner used to anticipate the coming of his characters. It was a light song, in a way, not the greatest of music; but while she was singing it he had seen her for the first time and it had become the motif of her coming. When he heard it he saw a vision of a beautiful young girl, singing and swaying like a slender flower; and all about her was a golden radiance like the halo of St. Cecelia. And to him it was a prophecy of her ultimate success, for when she sung it she had won his heart. So he played it over and over, but when he had finished there was silence from the old town below.

Yet if Drusilla was silent it was not from despair for in the morning as Denver was mucking out his tunnel he heard her clear voice mount up like the light of some bird.

“Ah, *Ah-h-h-h*, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah.”

It was the old familiar exercise, rising an octave at the first bound and then fluttering down like some gorgeous butterfly of sound till it rested on the octave below. And at each renewed flight it began a note higher until it climbed at last to high C. Then it ran up in roulades and galloping bravuras, it trilled and sought out new flights; yet always with the pellucid tones of the flute, the sweet, virginal purity of a child. She was right–there was something missing, a something which she groped for and could not find, a something which the other singers had. Denver sensed the lack dimly but he could not define it, all he knew was that she left out herself. In the brief glimpse he had of her she had seemed torn by dark passions, which caused her at times to brood among the sycamores and again to seek a quarrel with him; yet all this youthful turbulence was left out of her singing–she had not

learned to express her emotions.

Denver listened every morning as he came out of his dark hole, pushing the wheel-barrows of ore and waste before him, and then he bade farewell to sun, air and music and went into the close, dark tunnel. By the light of a single candle, thrust into its dagger-like miner's candlestick and stabbed into some seam in the wall, he smashed and clacked away at his drill until the whole face was honeycombed with holes. At the top they slanted up, at the bottom down, to keep the bore broken clean; but along the sides and in the middle they followed no system, more than to adapt themselves to the formation. When his round of holes was drilled he cut his fuse and loaded each hole with its charge; after which with firm hands he ignited each split end and hurried out of the tunnel. There he sat down on a rock and listened to the shots; first the short holes in the center, to blow out the crown; then the side holes, breaking into the opening; and the top-holes, shooting the rock down from above; and then, last and most powerful, the deep bottom holes that threw the dirt back down the tunnel and left the face clear for more work.

As the poisonous smoke was drifting slowly out of the tunnel mouth Denver fired up his forge and re-sharpened his drills; and then, along towards evening, when the fumes had become diffused, he went in to see what he had uncovered. Sometimes the vein widened or developed rich lenses, and sometimes it pinched down until the walls enclosed nothing but a narrow streak of talc; but always it dipped down, and that was a good sign, a prophecy of the true fissure vein to come. The ore that he mined now was a mere excrescence of the great ore-body he hoped to find, but each day the blanket-vein turned and dipped on itself until at last it folded over and led down. In a huge mass of rocks, stuck together by crystals of silica and stained by the action of acids, the silver and copper came together and intermingled at the fissure vent which had produced them both. Denver stared at it through the powder smoke, then he grabbed up some samples and went to see Bunker Hill.

Not since that great day when Denver had struck the copper had Bunker shown any interest in the mine. He sat around the house listening to Drusilla while she practiced and opening the store for chance customers; but towards Denver he still maintained a grim-mouthed reserve, as if discouraging him from asking any favors. Perhaps the fact that Denver's money was all gone had a more or less direct bearing on the case; but though he was living on the last of his provisions Denver had refrained from asking for credit. His last shipment of powder and blacksmith's coal had cost twenty per cent more than he had figured and he had sent for a few more records; and after paying the two bills there was only some small change left in the wallet which had once bulged with greenbacks. But his pride was involved, for he had read Drusilla a lecture on the evils of being faint-hearted, so he had simply stopped buying at the little store and lived on what he had left. But now–well, with that fissure vein opened up and a solid body of ore in sight, he might reasonably demand the customary accommodations which all merchants accord to good customers.

"Well, I've struck it," he said when he had Bunker in the store, "just take a look at *that*!"

He handed over a specimen that was heavy with copper and Bunker squinted down his eyes.

"Yes, looks good," he observed and handed it somberly back.

"I've got four feet of it," announced Denver gloating over the specimens, "and the vein has turned and gone down. What's the chances for some grub now, on account? I'm going to ship that sacked ore."

"Danged poor–with me," answered Bunker with decision. "You'd better try your luck with Murray."

"Oh, boosting for Murray, eh?" remarked Denver sarcastically. "Well, I may take you up on that, but it's too far to walk now and I've been living on beans for a week. I guess I'm good for a few dollars' worth."

"Sure you're good for it," agreed Bunker, "but that ain't the point. The question is–when will I get my money?"

"You'll get it, by grab, as soon as I do," returned Denver with considerable heat. "What's the matter? Ain't that ore shipment good enough security?"

"Well, maybe it is," conceded Bunker, "but you'll have a long wait for your money. And to tell you the truth, the way I'm fixed now, I can't sell except for cash."

"Oh! Cash, eh?" sneered Denver suddenly bristling with resentment. "It seems like I've heard that before. In fact, every time that I ask you for a favor you turn me down like a bum. I came through here, one time, so danged weak I could hardly crawl and you refused to even give me a meal; and now, when I've got a mine that's worth millions, you've still got your hand out for the money."

"Well, now don't get excited," spoke up Bunker pacifically, "you can have what grub you want. But I'm telling you the truth–those people down below won't give me another dollar's worth on tick. These are hard times, boy, the hardest I've ever seen, and if you'd offer me that mine back for five hundred cents I couldn't raise the money. That shows how broke I am, and I've got a family to support."

"Well, that's different," said Denver. "If you're broke, that settles it. But I'll tell you one thing, old-timer, you won't be broke long. I'm going to open up a mine here that will beat the Lost Burro. I've got copper, and that beats 'em all."

"Sure does," agreed Bunker, "but it's no good for shipping ore. It takes millions to open up a copper property."

"Yes, and it brings back millions!" boasted Denver with a swagger. "I'm made, if I can only hold onto it. But I'll tell you right now, if you want to hold your claims you'd better do a little assessment work. There's going to be a rush, when this strike of mine gets out, that'll make your ground worth millions."

Old Bunk smiled indulgently and took a chew of tobacco and Denver came back to earth.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," proposed Denver after a silence, "I'll take a contract to do your assessment work for ten dollars a claim, in trade. I'll make an open cut that's four by six by ten, and that's held to be legal work anywhere. Come on now, I'm tired of beans."

"Well, come down to supper," replied Bunker at last, "and we'll talk it over there."

"No, I don't want any supper," returned Denver resentfully, "you've got enough hoboes to feed. You can give me an answer, right now."

"All right–I won't do it," replied Bunker promptly and turned to go out the door; but it had opened behind them and Drusilla stood there smiling, a mischievous twinkle in her eyes.

"What are you two men quarreling about?" she demanded reprovingly, "we could hear you clear over to the house."

"Well, I asked him over to supper," began Bunker in a rage, "and—"

"That's got nothing to do with it," broke in Denver hotly, "I'm making him a business proposition. But he's so danged bull-headed he'd rather kill some jumper than comply with the law as it stands. He's been holding down these claims with a lead-pencil and a six-shooter just about as long as he can and—"

"Oh, have you made another strike?" asked Drusilla eagerly and when she heard the news she turned to her father with a sudden note of gladness in her voice. "Then you'll have to do the work," she said, "because I'll never be happy till you do. Ever since you sold your claim I've been sorry for my selfishness but now I'm going to pay you back. I'm going to take my five hundred dollars and hire this assessment work done and then—"

"It won't cost any five hundred," put in Denver hastily. "I'm kinder short, right now, and I offered to do it for ten dollars a claim, in trade."

"Ten dollars? Why, how can you do it for that? I thought the law required a ten foot hole, or the same amount of work in a tunnel."

"Or an open cut," hinted Denver. "Leave it to me–I can do it and make money, to boot."

"Well, you're hired, then!" cried Drusilla with a rush of enthusiasm,

“but you have to go to work to-morrow.”

“Well–ll,” qualified Denver, “I wanted to look over my strike and finish sacking that ore. Wouldn’t the next day do just as well?”

“No, it wouldn’t,” she replied. “You can give me an answer, right now.”

“Well, I’ll go you!” said Denver and Old Bunker grunted and regarded them with a wry, knowing smile.

CHAPTER XV
A NIGHT FOR LOVE

There was music that evening in the Bunker Hill mansion but Denver Russell sat sulking in his cave with no company but an inquisitive pack-rat. He regretted now his curt refusal to join the Hills at supper, for Drusilla was singing gloriously; but a man without pride is a despicable creature and Old Bunk had tried to insult him. So he went to bed and early in the morning, while the shadow of Apache Leap still lay like a blanket across the plain, he set out to fulfill his contract. Across one shoulder he hung a huge canteen of water, on the other a sack of powder and fuse; and, to top off his burden, he carried a long steel churn-drill and a spoon for scooping out the muck.

The discovery hole of Bunker's Number Two claim was just up the creek from his own and, after looking it over, Denver climbed up the bank and measured off six feet from the edge. Then, raising the steel bar, he struck it into the ground, churning it rhythmically up and down; and as the hole rapidly deepened he spooned it out and poured in a little more water. It was the same uninteresting work that he had seen men do when they were digging a railroad cut; and the object was the same, to shoot down the dirt with the minimum of labor and powder. But with Denver it became a work of art, a test of his muscle and skill, and at each downward thrust he bent from the hips and struck with a deep-chested "Huh!"

An hour passed by, and half the length of the drill was buried at the end of the stroke; and then, as he paused to wipe the sweat from his eyes, Denver saw that his activities were being noted. Drusilla was looking on from the trail below, and apparently with the greatest interest. She was dressed in a corduroy suit, with a broad sombrero against the sun; and as she came up the slope she leapt from rock to

rock in a heavy pair of boys' high boots. There was nothing of the singer about her now, nor of the filmy-clad barefooted dancer; the jagged edge of old Pinal would permit of nothing so effeminate. Yet, over the rocks as on the smooth trails, she had a grace that was all her own, for those hillsides had been her home.

"Well, how's the millionaire?" she inquired with a smile that made his fond heart miss a beat. "Is *this* the way you do it? Are you just going to drill one hole?"

"That's the dope," replied Denver, "sink it down ten feet and blow the whole bank off with one shot. It's as easy as shooting fish."

"Why, you're down half-way, already!" she cried in amazement. "How long before you'll be done?"

"Oh, half an hour or so," said Denver. "Want to wait and see the blast? I learned this system on the railroad."

"You'll be through, then, before noon!" she exclaimed. "You're actually making money."

"Well, a little," admitted Denver, "but, of course, if you're not satisfied—"

"Oh, I'm satisfied," she protested, "I was only thinking–but then, it's always that way. There are some people, of course, who can make money anywhere. How does it feel to be a millionaire?"

"Fine!" grinned Denver, chugging away with his drill, "this is the way they all got their start. The Armstrong method–and that's where I shine; I can break more ground than any two men."

"Well, I believe you can," she responded frankly, "and I hope you have a great success. I didn't like it very well when you called me a quitter, but I can see now what you meant. Did you ever study music at all?"

Denver stopped his steady churning to glance at her quickly and then he nodded his head.

"I played the violin, before I went to mining. Had to quit then–it stiffens up your fingers."

"What a pity!" she cried. "But that explains about your records–I

knew you'd heard good music somewhere."

"Yes, and I'm going to hear more," he answered impressively, "I'm not going to blow my money. I'm going back to New York, where all those singers live. The other boys can have the booze."

"Don't you drink at all?" she questioned eagerly. "Don't you even smoke? Well, I'm going right back and tell father. He told me that all miners spent their money in drinking–why wouldn't you come over to supper?"

She shot the question at him in the quick way she had, but Denver did not answer it directly.

"Never mind," he said, "but I will tell you one thing–I'm not a hobo miner."

"No, I knew you weren't," she responded quickly. "Won't you come over to supper to-night? I might sing for you," she suggested demurely; but Denver shook his head.

"Nope," he said, "your old man took me for a hobo and he can't get the idea out of his head. What did he say when you gave me this job?"

"Well, he didn't object; but I guess, if you don't mind, we'll only do three or four claims. He says I'll need the money back East."

"Yes, you will," agreed Denver. "Five hundred isn't much. If I was flush I'd do this for nothing."

"Oh, no," she protested, "I couldn't allow that. But if there *should* be a rush, and father's claims should be jumped—"

"You'd have the best of them, anyway. I wouldn't tempt old Murray too far."

"No," she said, "and that reminds me–I hear that he's made a strike. But say, here's a good joke on the Professor. You know he thinks he's a mining expert, and he's been crazy to look at the diamond drill cores; and the other day the boss driller was over and he told me how he got rid of him. You know, in drilling down they run into cavities where the lime has been leached away, and in order to keep the bore intact they pour them full of cement. Well, when the

Professor insisted upon seeing the core and wouldn't take no for an answer, Mr. Menzger just gave him a section of concrete, where they'd bored through a filled-up hole. And Mr. Diffenderfer just looked so wise and examined it through his microscope, and then he said it was very good rock and an excellent indication of copper. Isn't that just too rich for anything?"

"Yeh," returned Denver with a thin-lipped smile. And then, before he thought how it sounded: "Say, who is this Mr. Menzger, anyway?"

"Oh, he's a friend of ours," she answered drooping her eyelashes coquettishly. "He gets lonely sometimes and comes down to hear me sing–he's been in New York and everywhere."

"Yes, he must be a funny guy," observed Denver mirthlessly. "Any relation to that feller they call Dave?"

"Oh, Mr. Chatwourth? No, he's from Kentucky–they say he's the last of his family. All the others were killed in one of those mountain feuds–Mr. Menzger says he's absolutely fearless."

"Well, what did he leave home for, then?" inquired Denver arrogantly. "He don't look very bad to me, I guess if he was fearless he'd be back in Kentucky, shooting it out with the rest of the bunch."

"No, it seems that his father on his dying bed commanded him to leave the country, because there were too many of the others against him. But Mr. Menzger tells me he's a professional killer, and that's why Old Murray hired him. Do you think they would jump our claims?"

"They would if they struck copper," replied Denver bluntly. "And old Murray warned me not to buy from your father–that shows he's got his eye on your property. It's a good thing we're doing this work."

"Weren't you afraid, then?" she asked, putting the wonder-note into her voice and laying aside her frank manner, "weren't you afraid to buy our claim? Or did you feel that you were guided to it, and all would be for the best?"

"That's it!" exclaimed Denver suddenly putting down his drill to gaze into her innocent young eyes. "I was guided, and so I bought it anyhow."

“Oh, I think it’s so romantic!” she murmured with a sigh, “won’t you tell me how it happened?”

And then Denver Russell, forgetting the seeress’ warning at the very moment he was discussing her, sat down on a rock and gave Drusilla the whole story of his search for the gold and silver treasures. But at the end–when she questioned him about the rest of the prophecy–he suddenly recalled Mother Trigedgo’s admonition: “Beware how you reveal your affection or she will confer her hand upon another.”

A shadow came into his blue eyes and his boyish enthusiasm was stilled; and Drusilla, who had been practicing her stage-learned wiles, suddenly found her technique at fault. She chattered on, trying subtly to ensnare him, but Denver's heart was now of adamant and he failed to respond to her approaches. It was not too late yet to heed the words of the prophecy, and he drilled on in thoughtful silence.

"Don't you get lonely?" she burst out at last, "living all by yourself in that cave? Why, even these old prospectors have to have some pardner–don't you ever feel the need of a friend?"

There it was–he felt it coming–the appeal to be just friends. But another girl had tried it already, and he had learned about women from her.

"No," he said shortly, "I don't need no friends. Say, I'm going to load this hole now."

"Well, go on!" she challenged, "I'm not afraid. I'll stay here as long as you do."

"All right," he said lowering his powder down the hole and tamping it gently with a stick, "I see I can't scare *you*."

"Oh, you thought you could scare me!" she burst out mockingly, "I suppose you're a great success with the girls."

"Well," he mocked back, "a good-looking fellow like me—" And then he paused and grinned slyly.

"Oh, what's the use!" she exclaimed, rising up in disgust, "I might as well quit, right now."

"No, don't go off mad!" he remonstrated gallantly. "Stay and see the big explosion."

"I don't care *that* for your explosion!" she answered pettishly and snapped her fingers in the air.

It was the particular gesture with which the coquettish Carmen was wont to dismiss her lovers; but as she strode down the hill Drusilla herself was heart-broken, for her coquetry had come to naught. This big Western boy, this unsophisticated miner, had sensed her wiles and turned them upon her–how then could she hope to succeed? If

her eyes had no allure for a man like him, how could she hope to fascinate an audience? And Carmen and half the heroines of modern light opera were all of them incorrigible flirts. They flirted with servants, with barbers, with strolling actors, with their own and other women's husbands; until the whole atmosphere fairly reeked of intrigue, of amours and coquettish escapades. To the dark-eyed Europeans these wiles were instinctive but with her they were an art, to be acquired laboriously as she had learned to dance and sing. But flirt she could not, for Denver Russell had flouted her, and now she had lost his respect.

A tear came to her eye, for she was beginning to like him, and he would think that she flirted with everyone; yet how was she to learn to succeed in her art if she had no experience with men? It was that, in fact, which her teacher had hinted at when he had told her to go out and live; but her heart was not in it, she took no pleasure in deceit–and yet she longed for success. She could sing the parts, she had learned her French and Italian and taken instruction in acting; but she lacked the verve, the passionate abandon, without which she could never succeed. Yet succeed she must, or break her father's heart and make his great sacrifice a mockery. She turned and looked back at Denver Russell, and that night she sang–for him.

He was up there in his cave looking down indifferently, thinking himself immune to her charms; yet her pride demanded that she conquer him completely and bring him to her feet, a slave! She sang, attired in filmy garments, by the light of the big, glowing lamp; and as her voice took on a passionate tenderness, her mother looked up from her work. Then Bunker awoke from his gloomy thoughts and glanced across at his wife; and they sat there in silence while she sang on and on, the gayest, sweetest songs that she knew. But Drusilla's eyes were fixed on the open doorway, on the darkness which lay beyond; and at last she saw him, a dim figure in the distance, a presence that moved and was gone. She paused and glided off into her song of songs, the "Barcarolle" from "Love Tales of

Hoffman," and as her voice floated out to him Denver rose up from his hiding and stepped boldly into the moonlight. He stood there like a hero in some Wagnerian opera, where men take the part of gods, and as she gazed the mockery went out of her song and she sang of love alone. Such a love as women know who love one man forever and hold all his love in return, yet the words were the same as those of false Giuletta when she fled with the perfidious Dapertutto.

"Night divine, O night of love,
O smile on our enchantment
Moon and stars keep watch above
This radiant night of love!"

She floated away in the haunting chorus, overcome by the madness of its spell; and when she awoke the song was ended and love had claimed her too.

CHAPTER XVI
A FRIEND

A new spirit, a strange gladness, had come over Drusilla and parts which had been difficult became suddenly easy when she took up her work the next day; but when she walked out in the cool of the evening the sombrero and boy's boots were gone. She wore a trailing robe, such as great ladies wear when they go to keep a tryst with knightly lovers, and she went up the trail to where Denver was working on the last of her father's claims. He was up on the high cliff, busily tamping the powder that was to blast out the side of the hill, and she waited patiently until he had fired it and come down the slope with his tools.

"That makes four," he said, "and I'm all out of powder." But she only answered with a smile.

"I'll have to wait, now," he went on bluffly, "until McGraw comes up again, before I can do any more work."

"Yes," she answered and smiled again; a slow, expectant smile.

"What's the matter?" he demanded and then his face changed and he fumbled with the strap of his canteen. And when he looked up his eyes met hers and there was no longer any secret between them.

"You can rest a few days, then," she suggested softly, "I'd like to hear some of your records."

"Yes–sure, sure," he burst out hastily and they walked down the trail together. She went on ahead with the quick step of a dancer and Denver looked up at an eagle in the sky, as if in some way it could understand. But the eagle soared on, without effort and without ceasing, and Denver could only be glad. In some way, far beyond him, she had divined his love; but it was not to be spoken of–now. That would spoil it all, the days of sweet communion, the pretence that nothing had changed; yet they knew it had changed and in the sharing

of that great secret lay the tie that should bind them together. Denver looked from the eagle to the glorious woman and remembered the prophecy again. Even yet he must beware, he must veil every glance, treat her still like a simple country child; for the seeress had warned him that his fate hung in the balance and she might still confer her hand upon another.

In the happy days that followed he did no more work, further than to sack his ore and ship it; but all his thoughts were centered upon Drusilla who was friendly and elusive by turns. On that first precious evening she came up with her father and inspected his smoke-blackened cave, and over his new records there sprang up a conversation that held him entranced for hours. She had been to the Metropolitan and the Boston Opera Houses and heard the great singers at their best; she understood their language, whether it was French or Italian or the now proscribed German of Wagner, and she listened to the records again and again, trying to steal the secret of their success. But through it all she was gentle and friendly, and all her old quarrelsomeness was gone.

A week passed like a day, full of dreams and half-uttered confidences and long, contented silences; and then, as they sat in the shade of the giant sycamore Denver let his eyes that had been fixed upon Drusilla, stray and sweep the lower road.

“What are you looking for now?” she demanded impatiently and he turned back with a guilty grin.

“McGraw,” he said and she frowned to herself for at last the world had come between them. For a week he had been idle, a heaven-sent companion in the barren loneliness of life; but now, when his powder and mining supplies arrived, he would become the old hard-working miner. He would go into his dark tunnel before the sun was up and not come out till it was low in the west, and instead of being clean and handsome as a young god he would come forth like a groveling gnome. His face would be grimy, his hands gnarled with striking, his digging-clothes covered with candle-grease: and his body would reek

with salty sweat and the rank, muggy odor of powder fumes. And he would crawl back to his cave like an outworn beast of burden, to sleep while she sang to him from below.

"Will you go back to work?" she asked at last and he nodded and stretched his great arms.

"Back to work!" he repeated, "and I guess it's about time. I wonder how much credit Murray gave me?"

Drusilla said nothing. She was looking far away and wondering at the thing we call life.

"Why do you work so hard?" she inquired, half complainingly. "Is that all there is in the world?"

"No, lots of other things," he answered carelessly, "but work is the only way to get them. I'm on my way, see? I've just begun. You wait till I open up that mine!"

"Then what will you do?" she murmured pensively, "go ahead and open up another mine?"

"Well, I might," he admitted. "Don't you remember that other treasure? There's a gold-mine around here, somewhere."

"Oh, is that all you think about?" she protested with a smile. "There are lots of other treasures, you know."

"Yes, but this one was prophesied," returned Denver doggedly. "I'm bound to find it, now."

"But Denver," she insisted, "don't you see what I mean? These fortune-tellers never tell you, straight out. Yours said, 'a golden treasure,' but that doesn't mean a gold mine. There are other treasures, besides."

"For instance?" he suggested and she looked far away as if thinking of some she might name.

"Well," she said at length, "there are opals, for one. They are beautiful, and look like golden fire. Or it might be a rare old violin that would bring back your music again. I saw one once that was golden yellow–wouldn't you like to play while I sing? But if you spend all your life trying to grub out more riches you will lose your appreciation of

art."

"Yes, but wait," persisted Denver, "I'm just getting started. I haven't got a dollar to my name. If Murray don't send me the supplies that I ordered I'll have to go to work for my grub. The jewels can wait, and the yellow violins, but I know that she meant a mine. It would have to be a mine or I couldn't choose between them–and when I make my stake I'm going to buy out the Professor and see what he's got underground. Of course, it's only a stringer now but—"

"Oh dear," sighed Drusilla and then she rose up, but she did not go away. "Aren't you glad," she asked, "that we've had this week together? I suppose I'm going to miss you, now. That's the trouble with being a woman–we get to be so dependent. Can I play over your records, sometimes?"

"Sure," said Denver, "say, I'm going up there now to see if McGraw isn't in sight. Would you like to come along too? We can sit outside in the shade and watch for his dust, down the road."

"Well, I ought to be studying," she assented reluctantly, "but I guess I can go up–for a while."

They clambered up together over the ancient, cliff-dwellers' trail, where each foothold was worn deep in the rock; but as they sat within the shadow of the beetling cliff Drusilla sighed again.

"Do you think?" she asked, "that there will be a great rush when they hear about your strike down in Moroni? Because then I'll have to go–I can't practice the way I have been with the whole town filled up with miners. And everything will be changed–I'd almost rather it wouldn't happen, and have things the way they are now. Of course I'll be glad for father's sake, because he's awfully worried about money; but sometimes I think we're happier the way we are than we will be when we're all of us rich. What will be the first thing you'll do?"

"Well," began Denver, his eyes still on the road, "the first thing is to open her up. There's no use trying to interest outside capital until you've got some ore in sight. Then I'll go over to Globe to a man that I know and come back with a hundred thousand dollars. That's right–I

know him well, and he knows me–and he's told me repeatedly if I find anything big enough he's willing to put that much into it. He came up from nothing, just an ordinary miner, but now he's got money in ten different banks, and a hundred thousand dollars is nothing to him. But his time is valuable, can't stop to look at prospects; so the first thing I do is to open up that mine until I can show a big deposit of copper. The silver and lead will pay all the expenses–and you wait, when that ore gets down to the smelter I'll bet there'll be somebody coming up here. It runs a thousand ounces to the ton or I'm a liar, the way I've sorted it out; but of course old Murray and the rest of 'em will rob me. I don't expect more than three hundred dollars."

"Isn't it wonderful," murmured Drusilla, "and to think it all happened just from having your fortune told! I'm going over to Globe before I start back East and get her to tell my fortune, too; but of course it can't be as wonderful as yours–you must have been just born lucky."

"Well, maybe I was," said Denver with a shrug, "but it isn't all over yet–I still stand a chance to lose. And she told me some other things that are not so pleasant–sometimes I wish I'd never gone near her."

"Oh, what are they?" she asked in a hushed eager voice; but Denver ignored the question. Never, not even to his dearest friend, would he tell the forecasting of his death; and as for dearest friends, if he ever had another pardner he could never trust him a minute. The chance slipping of a pick, a missed stroke with a hammer, any one of a thousand trivial accidents, and the words of the prophecy would come to pass–he would be killed before his time. But if he favored one man no more than another, if he avoided his former pardners and friends, then he might live to be one of the biggest mining men in the country and to win Drusilla for his wife.

"I'll tell you," he said meditatively, "you'd better keep away from her. A man does better without it. Suppose she'd tell you, for instance, that you'd get killed in a cave like she did Jack Chambers over in Globe; you'd be scared then, all the time you were under ground–it ruins a man for a miner. No, it's better not to know it at all. Just go ahead, the

best you know how, and play your cards to win, and I'll bet it won't be but a year or two until you're a regular operatic star. They'll be selling your records for three dollars apiece, and all those managers will be bidding for you; but if Mother Trigedgo should tell you some bad news it might hurt you–it might spoil your nerve."

"Oh, did she tell you something?" cried Drusilla apprehensively. "Do tell me what it was! I won't breathe it to a soul; and if you could share it with some friend, don't you think it would ease your mind?"

Denver looked at her slowly, then he turned away and shook his head in refusal.

"Oh, Denver!" she exclaimed as she sensed the significance of it, and before he knew it she was patting his work-hardened hand. "I'm sorry," she said, "but if ever I can help you I want you to let me know. Would it help to have me for a friend?"

"A friend!" he repeated, and then he drew back and the horror came into his eyes. She was his friend already, the dearest friend he had–was she destined then to kill him?

"No!" he said, "I don't want any friends. Come on, I believe that's McGraw."

He rose up hastily and held out his hand to help her but she refused to accept his aid. Her lips were trembling, there were tears in her eyes and her breast was beginning to heave; but there was no explanation he could give. He wanted her, yes, but not as a friend–as his beloved, his betrothed, his wife! By any name, but not by the name of friend. He drew away slowly as her head bowed to her knees; and at last he left her, weeping. It was best, after all, for how could he comfort her? And he could see McGraw's dust down the road.

"I'm going to meet McGraw!" he called back from the steps and went bounding off down the trail.

CHAPTER XVII
BROKE

McGraw, the freighter, was a huge, silent man from whom long years on the desert had almost taken the desire for speech. He came jangling up the road, his wagons grinding and banging, his horses straining wearily in their collars; and as Denver ran to meet him he threw on the brakes and sat blinking solemnly at his inquisitor.

"Where's my powder?" demanded Denver looking over the load, "and say, didn't you bring that coal? I don't see that steel I ordered, either!"

"No," said McGraw and then, after a silence: "Murray wouldn't receive your ore."

"Wouldn't receive it!" yelled Denver, "why, what was the matter with it–did the sacks get broke going down?"

"No," answered McGraw, "the sacks were all right. He said the ore was no good."

"Like hell!" scoffed Denver, "that ore that I sent him? It would run a thousand ounces to the ton!"

McGraw wrinkled his brows and looked up at the sun.

"Well," he said, "I guess I'll be going."

"But–hey, wait!" commanded Denver, scarcely believing his ears, "didn't he send me any grub, or anything?"

"Nope," answered McGraw, "he wouldn't give me nawthin'. He said the ore was no good. Come, boys!" And he threw off the brakes with a bang.

The chains tightened with a jerk, the wheelers set their feet; then the lead wagon heaved forward, the trail-wagon followed and Denver was alone on the road. His brain was in a whirl, he had lost all volition, even the will to control his wild thoughts; until suddenly he burst out in

a fit of cursing–of Murray, of McGraw, of everything. McGraw had been a fool, he should have demanded the supplies anyway; and Murray was just trying to job him. He knew he was broke and had not had the ore assayed, and he was taking advantage of the fact. He had refused the ore in order to leave him flat and compel him to abandon his mine; and then he, Murray, would slip over with his gunman and take possession himself. Denver struck his leg and looked up and down the road, and then he started off for Moroni.

It was sixty miles, across a scorching desert with only two wells on the road; but Denver arrived at Whitlow's an hour after sunset, and he was at Desert Wells before dawn. A great fire seemed to consume him, to drive him on, to fill his body with inexhaustible strength; and, against the advice of the station man, he started on in the heat for Moroni. All he wanted was a show-down with Bible-Back Murray, to meet him face to face; and no matter if he had the whole county in his pocket he would tell him what he thought of him. And he would make him take that ore, according to his agreement, or answer to him personally; and then he would return to Pinal, where he had left Drusilla crying. But he could not face her now, after all his boasting and his tales of fabulous wealth. He could never face her again.

The sun rose up higher, the heat waves began to shimmer and the landscape to blur before his eyes; and then an automobile came thundering up behind him and halted on the flat.

"Get in!" called the driver throwing the door open hospitably; and in an hour's time Denver was set down in Moroni, but with the fever still hot in his brain. His first frenzy had left him, and the heat madness of the desert with its insidious promptings to violence; but the sense of injustice still rankled deep and he headed for Murray's store. It was a huge, brick building crowded from basement to roof with groceries and general merchandise. Busy clerks hustled about, waiting on Mexicans and Indians and slow-moving, valley ranchers; and as Denver walked in there was a man there to meet him and direct him to any department. It showed that Bible-Back was efficient, at least.

"I'd like to see Mr. Murray," announced Denver shortly and the floor-walker glanced at him again before he answered that Mr. Murray was out. It was the same at the bank, and out at his house; and at last in disgust Denver went down to the station, where he had been told his ore was lying. The stifling heat of the valley oppressed him like a blanket, the sweat poured down his face in tiny streams; and at each evasion his anger mounted higher until now he was talking to himself. It was evident that Murray was trying to avoid him–he might even have started back to the mine–but his ore was there, on a heavily timbered platform, where it could be transferred from wagon to car without lifting it up and down. There was other ore there too, each consignment by itself, taken in by the store-keeper in exchange for supplies and held to make up a carload. The same perfect system, efficiency in all things–efficiency and a hundred per cent profit.

Denver leapt up on the platform and cut open a sack, but as he was pouring a generous sample of the ore into his handkerchief a man stepped out of the next warehouse.

"Hey!" he called, "what are you doing, over there? You get down and leave that ore alone!"

"Go to hell!" returned Denver, tying a knot in his handkerchief, and the man came over on the run.

"Say!" he threatened, "you put that ore back or you'll find yourself in serious trouble."

"Oh, I will, hey?" replied Denver with his most tantalizing smile. "Whose ore do you think this is, anyway?"

"It belongs to Mr. Murray, and you'd better put it back or I'll report the matter at once."

"Well, report it," answered Denver. "My name is Denver Russell and I'm taking this up to the assayer."

"There's Mr. Murray, now," exclaimed the man and as Denver looked up he saw a yellow automobile churning rapidly along through the dust. Murray himself was at the wheel and, sitting beside him, was another man equally familiar–it was Dave, his hired gun-man.

"What are you doing here, Mr. Russell?" demanded Murray with asperity and Denver became suddenly calm. Old Murray had been hiding from him, but they had summoned him by telephone, and he had brought along Dave for protection. But that should not keep him from having his way and forcing Murray to a show-down.

"I just came down for a sample of that ore I sent you," answered Denver with a sarcastic grin. "McGraw said you claimed it was no good, so I thought I'd have it assayed."

"Oh," observed Murray and for a minute he sat silent while Dave and Denver exchanged glances. The gun-man was slight and insignificant looking, with small features and high, boney cheeks; but there was a smouldering hate in his deep-set eyes which argued him in no mood for a jest, so Denver looked him over and said nothing.

"Very well," said Murray at last, "the ore is yours. Go ahead and have it assayed. But with the price of silver down to forty-five cents I doubt if that stuff will pay smelter charges. I'll ship it, if you say so, along with this other, if only to make up a carload; but it will be at your own risk and if the returns show a deficit, your mine will be liable for the balance."

"Oh, that's the racket, eh?" suggested Denver. "You've got your good eye on my mine. Well, I'd just like to tell you—"

"No, I haven't," snapped back Murray, his voice harsh and strident, "I wouldn't accept your mine as a gift. Your silver is practically worthless and there's no copper in the district; as I know all too well, to my sorrow. I've lost twenty thousand dollars on better ground than yours and ordered the whole camp closed down–that shows how much I want *your* mine."

He started his engine and glided on to the warehouse and Denver stood staring down the road. Then he raised his sample, tied up in his handkerchief, and slammed it into the dirt. His mine was valueless unless he had money, and Murray had abandoned the district. More than ever Denver realized how much it had meant to him, merely to have that diamond drilling running and a big man like Murray behind

it. It was indicative of big values and great expectations; but now, with Murray out of the running, the district was absolutely dead. There was no longer the chance of a big copper strike, such as had been rumored repeatedly for weeks, to bring on a stampede and make every claim in the district worth thousands of dollars as a gamble.

No, Pinal was dead; the Silver Treasure was worthless; and he, Denver Russell, was broke. He had barely the price of a square meal. He started up-town, and turned back towards the warehouse where Murray was wrangling with his hireling; then, cursing with helpless rage, he swung off down the railroad track and left his broken dreams behind him.

CHAPTER XVIII
THE HAND OF FATE

The swift hand of fate, which had hurled Denver from the heights into the depths of dark despair, suddenly snatched him up out of the abyss again and whisked him back to Globe. When he walked out of Moroni his mind was a blank, so overcome was his body with heat and toil and the astounding turns of his fortune; but at the next station below, as he was trying to steal a ride, a man had dropped off the train and dragged him, willy nilly, into his Pullman. It was a mining superintendent who had seen him in action when he was timbering the Last Chance stope, and in spite of his protests he paid his fare to Globe and put him to work down a shaft.

At the bottom of this shaft was millions of dollars worth of copper and level after level of expensive workings; and some great stirring of the earth was cutting it off, crushing the bottle off at the neck. Every night, every shift, the swelling ground moved in, breaking stulls and square-sets like tooth-picks; and now with solid steel and quick-setting concrete they were fighting for the life of the mine. It was a dangerous job, such as few men cared to tackle; but to Denver it was a relief, a return to his old life after the delirium of an ugly dream. Even yet he could not trace the flaw in his reasoning which had brought him to earth with such a thump; but he knew, in general, that his error was the common one of trying to run a mine on a shoestring. He had set up in business as a mining magnate on eight hundred dollars and his nerve, and Bible-Back Murray had busted him.

Upon that point, at least, Denver suffered no delusion; he knew that his downfall had been planned from the first and that he had bit like a sucker at the bait. Murray had dropped a few words and spit on the hook and Denver had shipped him his ore. The rest, of course, was

like shooting fish in the Pan-handle–he had refused to buy the ore, leaving Denver belly-up, to float away with other human débris. But there was one thing yet that he could not understand–why had Murray closed down his own mine? That was pulling it pretty strong, just to freeze out a little prospector and rob him of a ton or two of ore; and yet Denver had proof that it was true. He had staked a hobo who had come over the trail and the hobo had told him what he knew. The diamond drill camp was closed down and all the men had left, but the guard was still herding the property. And the hobo had seen a girl at Pinal. She was easy to look at but hard to talk to, so he had passed and hit the trail for Globe.

Denver worked like a demon with a gang of Cousin Jacks, opposing the swelling ground with lengths of railroad steel and pouring in the concrete behind them; but all the time, by fits and snatches, the old memories would press in upon him. He would think of Mother Trigedgo and her glowing prophecies, which had turned out so wonderfully up to a certain point and then had as suddenly gone wrong; and then he would think of the beautiful artist with whom he was fated to fall in love, and how, even there, his destiny had worked against him and led him to sacrifice her love. For how could one hope to win the love of a woman if he denied her his friendship first? And yet, if he accepted her as his dearest friend, he would simply be inviting disaster.

It was all wrong, all foolish–he dismissed it from his mind as unworthy of a thinking man–yet the words of the prophecy popped up in his head like the memories of some evil dream. His hopes of sudden riches were blasted forever, he had given up the thought of Drusilla; but the one sinister line recurred to him constantly–"at the hands of your dearest friend." Never before in his life had he been without a pardner, to share his ramblings and adventures, but now in that black hole with the steel rails coming down and death on every hand, superstition overmastered him and he rebuffed the hardy Cornishmen, refusing to take any man for his friend. Nor would he

return to Mother Trigedgo's boarding house, for her prophecies had ruined his life.

He worked on for a week, trying to set his mind at rest, and then a prompting came over him suddenly to go back and see Drusilla. If death must come, if some friend must kill him, in whose hands would he rather entrust his life than in those of the woman he loved? Perhaps it was all false, like the rest of the prophecy, the gold and silver treasures and the rest; and if he was brave he might win her at last and have her for more than a friend. But how could he face her, after all he had said, after boasting as he had of his fortune? And he had refused her friendship, when she had endeavored to comfort him and to exorcise this fear-devil that pursued him. He went back to work, determined to forget it all, but that evening he drew his time. It came to ninety dollars, for seven shifts and over-time, and they offered him double to stay; but the desire to see Drusilla had taken possession of him and he turned his face towards Pinal.

It was early in the morning when he rode out of Globe and took the trail over the divide; and as he spurred up a hill he overtook another horseman who looked back and grinned at him wisely.

"Going to the strike?" he asked and Denver's heart leapt, though he kept his quirt and spurs working.

"What strike?" he said and the man burst into a laugh as if sensing a hidden jest.

"That's all right," he answered, "I guess you're hep–they say it runs forty per cent copper."

"How'd *you* hear about it?" inquired Denver, fishing cautiously for information. "Where you going–over to Pinal?"

"You're whistling," returned the man, quite off his guard. "Say, stake me a claim when you get there, if old Bible-Back hasn't jumped them all."

"Say, what are you talking about?" demanded Denver, suddenly reining in his horse. "Is Murray jumping claims?"

"Never mind!" replied the man, shutting up like a clam, and Denver

spurred on and left him.

There was a strike then in Pinal, Old Murray had tapped the vein and it ran up to forty per cent copper! That would make the claim that Denver had abandoned the week before worth thousands and thousands of dollars. It would make him rich and Bunker Hill rich and–yes, it would prove the prophecy! He had chosen the silver treasure and the gold treasure had been added to it–for the copper ore which had come in later was almost the color of gold. As old Bunk had said, all these prophecies were symbolical, and he had done Mother Trigedgo an injustice. And there was one claim that he knew of–yes, and four others, too–that Murray would never jump. That was his own Silver Treasure and the four claims of Bunker's that he had done the annual work on himself.

Denver's heart leapt again as he raced his horse across the flats and led him scrambling with haste up the steep hills, and before the sun was three hours high he had plunged into the box canyon of Queen Creek. Here the trail wound in and out, crossing and recrossing the shrunken stream and mounting with painful zigzags over the points; but he rioted through it all, splashing the water out of the crossings as he hurried to claim his own. The box canyon grew deeper, the walls more precipitous, the creek bottom more dark and cavernous; until at last it opened out into broad flats and boulder patches, thickly covered with alders and ash trees. And then as he swung around the final, rocky point he saw his own claim in the distance. It was nothing but a hole in the side of the rocky hillside, a slide of gray waste down the slope; but to him it was a beacon to light his home-coming, a proof that some dreams do come true. He galloped down the trail where Drusilla and he had loitered and let out an exultant whoop.

But as Denver came opposite his mine a sinister thing happened–a head rose up against the black darkness of the tunnel and a man looked stealthily out. Then he drew back his head like some snake in a hole and Denver stopped and stared. A low wall of rocks had been

built across the cut and the man was crouching behind it–Denver jogged down and turned up the trail. A glimpse at Pinal showed the streets full of automobiles and a huddle of men by the store door, and as he rode up towards his mine Bunker Hill came running out and beckoned him frantically back.

"Come back here!" he hollered and Denver turned and looked at him but kept on up the narrow trail. The mine was his, without a doubt, both by purchase and by assessment work done; and he had no fear of dispossession by a jumper who was so obviously in the wrong.

"Hello, there!" he hailed, reining in before the tunnel; and after a minute the man rose up with his pistol poised over his shoulder. It was Dave, Murray's gun-man, and at sight of his enemy Denver was swept with a gust of passion. From the moment he had first met him, this narrow-eyed, sneering bad-man had roused all the hate that was in him; but now it had gone beyond instinct. He found him in adverse possession of his property and with a gun raised ready to shoot.

"What are *you* doing here?" demanded Denver insolently but Chatwourth did not move. He stood like a statue, his gun balanced in the air, a thin, evil smile on his lips, and Denver gave way to his fury. "You get out of there!" he ordered. "Get off my property! Get off or I'll put you off!"

Chatwourth twirled his gun in a contemptuous gesture; and then, like a flash, he was shooting. He threw his shots low, between the legs of the horse, which reared and whirled in a panic; and with the bang of the heavy gun in his ears, Denver found himself headed down the trail. A high derisive yell, a whoop of hectoring laughter, followed after him as he galloped into the open; and he was fighting his horse in a cloud of dust when Bunker Hill and the crowd came up.

CHAPTER XIX
THE MAN-KILLER

"Did he hit ye?" yelled Bunker when Denver had conquered his pitching horse and set him back on his haunches. "Hell's bells, boy, I told you to stay out of there!"

"Well, you lend me a gun!" shouted Denver in a fury, "and I'll go back and shoot it out with that dastard! It's him or me–that's all!"

"Here's a gun, pardner," volunteered a long-bearded prospector handing up a six-shooter with tremulous eagerness; but Bunker Hill struck the long pistol away and took Denver's horse by the bit.

"Not by a jugful, old-timer," he said to the prospector. "Do you want to get the kid killed? Come on back to the meeting and we'll frame up something on these jumpers that'll make 'em hunt their holes. But this boy here is my friend, understand?"

He held the prancing horse, which had been spattered with glancing lead, until Denver swung down out of the saddle; and then, while the crowd followed along at their heels, he led the way back to the store.

"What's going on here?" demanded Denver, looking about at the automobile and the men who had popped up like magic, "has Murray made a strike?"

"Danged right," answered Bunker, "he made a strike last month–and now he has jumped all our claims. Or at least, it's his men, because Dave there's the leader; but Murray claims they're working for themselves. He's over at his camp with a big gang of miners, driving a tunnel in to tap the deposit–it run forty per cent pure copper."

"Well, we're made then," exulted Denver, "if we can get back our claims. Come on, let's run these jumpers off!"

"Yes, that's what *I* said, a few hours ago," grumbled Bunker biting

savagely at his mustache, “and I never was so hacked in my life. We went up to this Dave and all pulled our guns and ordered him out of the district, and I’m a dadburned Mexican if he didn’t pull *his* gun and run the whole bunch of us away. He’s nervy, there’s no use talking; and I promised Mrs. Hill that I’d keep out of these shooting affrays. By grab, it was downright disgraceful!”

“That’s all right,” returned Denver, “he don’t look bad to me. You just lend me a gun and—”

“He’ll kill ye!” warned Bunker, “I know by his eye. He’s a killer if ever there was one. So don’t go up against him unless you mean business, because you can’t run no blazer on *him*!”

“Well–oh hell, then,” burst out Denver, “what’s the use of getting killed! Isn’t there anything else we can do? I don’t need to eject him because he’s got no title, anyway. How about these lead-pencil fellows that haven’t done their work for years?”

“That’s it,” explained Bunker, “we were having a meeting when we seen you horn in on Dave. These gentlemen are all men that have held their ground for years and it don’t seem right they should lose it. At the same time it’ll take something more than a slap on the wrist to make these blasted jumpers let go. They’ve staked all the good claims and are up doing the work on them and the question is–what can we do?”

“I’ll tell you what I’ll do,” spoke up the old prospector vindictively as the crowd surged into the store, “I’ll get up on the Leap and shoot down on them jumpers until I chase the last one of ’em off. They can’t run no rannikaboo on me!”

He wagged his long beard and spat impressively but nobody paid any attention to him. They realized at last that they were up against gun-fighters–men picked for quick shooting and iron nerves and working under the orders of one man. That man was Dave Chatwourth, nominally dismissed by Murray but undoubtedly still in his pay, and until they could devise some plan to eliminate him it was useless to talk of violence. So they resumed their meeting and, as

Denver owned a claim, he found himself included in the membership. It was a belated revival of the old-time Miners' Meeting, at one time the supreme law in Western mining camps; and Bunker Hill, as Recorder of the district, presided from his perch on the counter.

From his seat in the corner Denver listened apathetically as the miners argued and wrangled, and the longer they talked the more it became apparent that nothing was going to be done. The encounter with Dave had cooled their courage, and more and more the sentiment began to lean towards an appeal to the power of the law. But then it came out that the law was an instrument which might operate as a two-edged sword; for possession, and diligence in working the claim, are the two big points in mining law and just at that moment a legal decision would be all in favor of the jumpers. And if Murray was behind them, as all the circumstances seemed to indicate, he would hire the most expensive lawyers in the country and fight the case to a finish. No, if anything was to be done they must find out some other way, or they would be playing right into his hands.

"I'll tell you," proposed Bunker as the talk swung back to action, "let's go back unarmed and talk to Dave again and find out what he thinks he's doing. He can't hold Denver's claim, and those claims of mine, because the work has just been done; and then, if we can talk him into vacating our ground, maybe these other jaspers will quit."

"I'll go you!" said Denver rising up impatiently, "and if he won't vacate my claim I'll try some other means and see if we can't persuade him."

"That's the talk!" quavered the old prospector, slapping him heartily on the back. "Lord love you, boy, if I was your age I'd be right up in front there, shooting. Why, up in the Bradshaws in Seventy-three—"

"Never mind what you'd do if you had the nerve," broke in Bunker Hill sarcastically. "Just because you've got a claim that you'd like to get back is no reason for stirring up trouble. No, I'm willing to go ahead and do all the talking; but I want you to understand–this is *peaceable*."

"Well, all right," agreed the miners and, laying aside their pistols, they started up the street for Denver's mine; but as Bunker led off a voice called from the porch and his wife came hurrying after him. Behind her followed Drusilla, reluctantly at first; but as her father kept on, despite the entreaties of her mother, she ran up and caught him by the sleeve.

"No, don't go, father!" she cried appealingly and as Bunker replied with an evasive laugh she turned her anger upon Denver.

"Why don't you get back your own mine?" she demanded, "instead of dragging my father into it?"

"Never mind, now," protested Bunker, "we ain't going to have no trouble–we just want to have a friendly talk. This has nothing to do with Denver or his mine–all we want is a few words with Dave."

"He'll shoot you!" she insisted. "Oh, I just know something will happen. Well, all right, then; I'm going along too!"

"Why, sure," smiled Bunker, "always glad to have company–but you'd better stay back with your mother."

"No, I'm going to stay right here," she answered stubbornly, giving Denver a hateful glance, "because I don't believe a word you say."

"Ve-ry well, my dear," responded Bunker indulgently and took her under his arm.

"I'm going ahead!" she burst out quickly as they came to the turn in the trail; and before he could stop her she slipped out of his embrace and went running to the entrance of the cut. But there she halted suddenly and when they came up they found her pale and trembling. "Oh, go back!" she gasped. "He's in there–he'll shoot you. I know something awful will happen!"

"You'd better go back, now," suggested her father quietly, and then he turned to the barrier. "Don't start anything, Dave–we've come peaceable, this time; so come out and let's have a talk."

There was a long, tense silence and then the muzzle of a gun stirred uneasily and revealed the hiding place of Dave. He was crouched behind the rocks which he had piled up across the cut

where it entered the slope of the hill, and his long barrelled six-shooter was thrust out through a crack just wide enough to serve for a loop-hole.

"Don't want to talk," he answered at last. "So go on, now; get off of my property."

"Well, now listen," began Bunker shaking off Drusilla's grasp, "we acknowledge we made a slight mistake. We tried to run a whizzer and you called us good and plenty–all right then, now let's have a talk. If you can show title to this ground you're holding, we'll leave you in peaceful possession; and if you can't, you're just wasting your time and talents, because there's plenty more claims that ain't took. It's a cinch you can't hide in that hole forever, so you might as well have it out now."

"Well what d'ye want?" snarled Chatwourth irritably. "By cripes, I'll kill the first man that comes a step nearer. I won't stand no monkey-business from nobody."

"Oh, sure, sure," soothed Bunker, "we know you're the goods–nerviest gun-man, I believe, I ever saw. But here's the proposition, you ain't here for your health, you must figure on making a winning somehow. Well, if your title's good you've got a good mine, but if it ain't you're out of luck. Now I sold this claim for five hundred dollars to Mr. Russell, that you met a while ago; and we think it belongs to him yet. I gave him a clear title and he's done his work, so—"

"Your title was no good!" contradicted Chatwourth from his rock pile, "you hadn't done your work for years. I've located this claim and the man don't live—"

"That's all right!" spoke up Denver, "but I located it before you did. I didn't *buy* this claim. I paid for a quit-claim and then relocated it myself–and my papers are on record in Moroni."

"Who called you in on this?" burst out Chatwourth abusively, rising up with his gun poised to shoot. "Now you git, dam' your heart, and if you say another word—"

"You don't dare to shoot me!" answered Denver in a passion,

standing firm as the crowd surged back. “I’m unarmed, and you don’t dare to shoot me!”

“Here, here!” exclaimed Bunker grabbing hastily at Denver’s arm but Denver struck him roughly aside.

“Never mind, now,” he said, “just get those folks away–I don’t want any of my friends to get hurt. But I’ll tell you right now, either I throw that man out or he’ll have to shoot me down in cold blood.”

He backed away panting and the miners ran for cover, but Bunker Hill held his ground.

“No, now listen, Denver,” he admonished gently, “you don’t know what you’re doing. This man will kill you, as sure as hell.”

“He will not!” cried Denver grabbing up a heavy stone and advancing on the barricade, “I’m destined to be killed by my dearest friend–that’s what old Mother Trigedgo told me! But this bastard ain’t my friend and never was—”

He paused, for Chatwourth’s gun came down and pointed straight at his heart.

“Stand back!” he shrilled and Denver leapt forward, hurling the rock with all his strength. Then he plunged through the smoke, swinging his arms out to clutch, and as he crashed through the barrier he stumbled over something that he turned back and pounced on like a cat. It was Chatwourth, but his body was limp and senseless–the stone had struck him in the head.

CHAPTER XX
JUMPERS AND TENORS

They led Denver away as if he were a child, for the revulsion from his anger had left him weak; but Chatwourth, the killer, was carried back to town with his head lolling forward like a dead man's. The smash of the stone had caught him full on the forehead, which sloped back like the skull of a panther; and the blood, oozing down from his lacerated scalp, made him look more murderous than ever. But his hard, fighting jaw was hanging slack now and his dangerous eyes were closed; and the miners, while they carried him with a proper show of solicitude, chuckled and muttered among themselves. In a way which was nothing short of miraculous Denver Russell had walked in on Murray's boss jumper and knocked him on the head with a rock–and the shot which Chatwourth had fired in return had never so much as touched him.

They put Chatwourth in an automobile and sent him over to Murray's camp; and then with broad smiles they gathered about Denver and took turns in slapping him on the back. He was a wonder, a terror, a proper fighting fool, the kind that would charge into hell itself with nothing but a bucket of water; and would he mind, when he felt a little stronger, just walking with them to their claims? Just a little, friendly jaunt, as one friend with another; but if Murray's hired junipers saw him coming up the trail that was all that would be required. They would go, and be quick about it, for they had been watching from afar and had seen what happened to Dave–but Denver brushed them aside and went up to his cave where he could be by himself and think.

If he had ever doubted the virtue of Mother Trigedgo's prophecy he put the unworthy thought behind him. He knew it now, knew it absolutely–every word of the prophecy was true. He had staked his

life to prove the blackest line of it, and Chatwourth's bullet had been turned aside. No, the silver treasure was his, and the golden treasure also, and no man but his best friend could kill him; but the beautiful artist with whom he had fallen in love–would she now confer her hand upon another? He had come back to Pinal to set the prophecy at defiance and ask her to be his dearest friend; but now, well, perhaps it would be just as well to stick to the letter of his horoscope. "Beware how you reveal your affections," it said–and he had been rushing back to tell her! And besides, she had met his advances despitefully, and practically called him a coward. Denver brushed off the dust from his shiny phonograph and put on the "Anvil Chorus."

The next morning, early, he was up at his mine, with Chatwourth's gun slung low on his leg; and while he remained there, to defend it against all comers, he held an impromptu reception. There was a rush of miners, to look at the mine and inspect the specimens of copper; and then shoestring promoters began to arrive, with proposals to stock the property. The Professor came up, his eyes staring and resentful; and old Bunker, overflowing with good humor; and at last, when nobody else was there, Drusilla walked by on the trail. She glanced up at him hopefully; then, finding no response, she heaved a great sigh and turned up his path to have it over and done with.

"Well," she said, "I suppose you despise me, but I'm sorry–that's all I can say. And now that I know all about your horoscope I don't blame you for treating me so rudely. That is, I don't blame you so much. But don't you think, Denver, when you went away and left me, you might have written back? We'd always been such friends."

She checked herself at the word, then smiled a sad smile and waited to hear what he would say. And Denver, in turn, checked what was on his lips and responded with a solemn nod. It had come to him suddenly to rise up and clasp her hands and whisper that he'd take a chance on it, yet–that is, if they could still be friends–but the significance of the prophecy had been proved only yesterday, and miracles can happen both ways. The same fate, the same destiny,

which had fended off the bullet when Chatwourth had aimed at his heart, might turn the merest accident to the opposite purpose and make Drusilla his unwilling slayer.

"Yes," he said, apropos of nothing, "you see now how I'm fixed. Don't dare to have any friends."

"No, but Denver," she pouted, "you might say you were sorry–that's different from being friends. But after we'd been so–oh, do you believe all that? Do you believe you'll be killed by your dearest friend, and that nobody else can harm you? Because that, you know, is just superstition; it's just like the ancient Greeks when they consulted the oracle, and the Indians, and Italians and such people. But educated people—"

"What's the matter with the Greeks?" spoke up Denver contentiously. "Do you mean to say they were ignorant? Well, I talked with an old-timer–he was a Professor in some university–and he said it would take us a thousand years before we even caught up with them. Do you think that I'm superstitious? Well, listen to this, now; here's one that he told me, and it comes from a famous Greek play. There was a woman back in Greece that was like Mother Trigedgo, and she prophesied, before a man was born, that he'd kill his own father and marry his own mother. What do you think of that, now? His father was a king and didn't want to kill him, so when he was born he pierced his feet and put him out on a cliff to die. But a shepherd came along and found this baby and named him Edipus, which means swelled feet; and when the kid grew up he was walking along a narrow pass when he met his father in disguise. They got into a quarrel over who should turn out and Epidus killed his father. Then he went on to the city where his mother was queen and there was a big bird, the Sphinx, that used to come there regular and ask those folks a riddle: What is it that is four-footed, three-footed and two-footed? And every time when they failed to give the answer the Sphinx would take one of them to eat. Well, the queen had said that whoever guessed that riddle could be king and have her for his wife, and

Epidus guessed the answer. It's a *man*, you see, that crawls when he is a baby, stands on two legs when he's grown and walks with a cane when he is old. Epidus married the queen, but when he found out what he'd done he went mad and put his own eyes out. But don't you see he couldn't escape it."

"No, but listen," she smiled, "that was just a legend, and the Greeks made it into a play. It was just like the German stories of Thor and the Norse gods that Wagner used in his operas. They're wonderful, and all that, but folks don't take them seriously. They're just–why, they're fairy tales."

"Well, all right," grumbled Denver, "I expect you think I am crazy, but what about Mother Trigedgo? Didn't she send me over here to find this mine? And wasn't it right where she told me? Doesn't it lie within the shadow of a place of death, and wasn't the gold added to it?"

"Why, no!" exclaimed Drusilla, "did you find the gold, too? I thought—"

"That referred to the copper," answered Denver soberly. "It was your father that gave me the tip. When I first came over here I was inquiring for gold, because I knew I had to make a choice; but he pointed out to me that these horoscopes are symbolical and that the golden treasure might be copper. It looks a whole lot like gold, you know; and now just look what happened! I chose the silver, see–I chose the right treasure–and when I drifted in, this vein of chalcopyrites appeared and was added to the silver. It followed along in the hanging wall until the whole formation dipped and then—"

"Oh, I don't care about that!" burst out Drusilla fretfully, "it's easy to explain anything, afterwards! But of course if you think more of gold and silver than you do of having me for a friend—"

"But I don't," interposed Denver, gently taking her hand. "Sit down here and let's talk this over."

"Well," sighed Drusilla and then, winking back the tears, she sank down in the shade beside him.

"I don't want you to think," went on Denver tenderly, without

weighing very carefully what he said, “I don’t want you to think I don’t like you, because–say, if you’ll kiss me, I’ll take a chance.”

“Oh–would you?” she beamed her eyes big with wonder, “would you take a chance on my killing you?”

“If it struck me dead!” declared Denver gallantly, but she did not yield the kiss.

“No,” she said, “I don’t believe in kisses–have you kissed other girls before? And besides, I just wanted to be friends again, the way we were before.”

“Well, I guess you don’t want to be friends very bad,” observed Denver with a disgruntled smile. “When do you expect to start for the East?”

“Pretty soon,” she answered. “Will you be sorry?”

Denver shrugged his shoulders and began snapping pebbles at an ant.

“Sure,” he said and she drew away from him.

“You won’t!” she burst out resentfully.

“Yes, I’ll be sorry,” he repeated, “but it won’t make much difference–I don’t expect to last very long. I’ve always had a pardner, some feller to ramble around with and borrow all my money when he was broke, and I’m getting awful lonesome without one. Sooner or later, I reckon, I’ll pick up another one and the crazy danged fool will kill me. Drop a timber hook on my head or some stunt like that–I wish I’d never seen old Mother Trigedgo! What you don’t know never hurt anyone; but now, by grab, I’m afraid of every man I throw in with. For the time being, at least, he’s the best friend I’ve got; and–oh, what’s the use, anyway, it’ll get you, sooner or later–I might as well go out like a sport.”

“You were awful brave,” she murmured admiringly, “when you fought with Mr. Chatwourth yesterday. Weren’t you honestly afraid he would kill you?”

“No, I wasn’t!” declared Denver. “He didn’t look bad to me–don’t now and never did–and as long as the cards are coming my way I

don't let no alleged bad-man run it over me. Here's the gun that I took away from him."

"Yes, I noticed it," she said. "But when he comes back for it are you going to give it up?"

"Sure," answered Denver, "just show me a rock-pile and I'll run him out of town like a rabbit."

"And you fought him with *rocks*!" she said half to herself, "I wish I were as brave as that."

"Well, it's all in your mind," expounded Denver. "Some people are afraid to crack an egg but I'm game to try anything once."

"So am I!" she defended looking him boldly in the eye but he shook his head and smiled.

"Nope," he said, "you don't believe in kisses. But I was willing to take a chance on getting killed."

"No," she said, "a kiss means more than that. It means–well, it means that you love someone."

"It means what you want it to mean," he corrected. "Don't you have to kiss the tenor in these operas?"

"Well that's different," she responded blushing. "That's why I'm afraid I'll never succeed! Of course we're taught to do stage kisses, but somehow I can't bring myself to it. But oh, I do so love to sing! I like it all, except just that part of it–and the singers are not all nice men. Some of them just make a business of flattering pretty girls and offering to get them a hearing. That's why some girls succeed and get such big parts–they have an understanding with someone that can use his influence with the directors. They don't take the best singers and actors at all, it's all done by intrigue and money. Oh, I wish some real *nice* man would start a new company and invite me to take a part. I've heard one was being organized–a traveling company that will sing in all the big cities–and I've written to my music teacher about it. But if I don't get some position my money will all be gone in no time and then–well, what will I do?"

She looked at him bravely and he saw in her eyes the calmness

that goes with desperation.

"You write to me," he said, "and I'll send you the last dollar I've got."

"No, I didn't mean that," she replied, "I can earn my living at something. But father and mother have spent all their money in training me to be a great singer and I just can't bear to disappoint them. It's cost ten thousand dollars to bring me where I am, and this five hundred dollars is nothing. Why the great vocal teachers, who can use their influence to get their pupils a hearing, charge ten dollars for a half-hour lesson; and if I don't go to them then every door is closed–unless I'm willing to pay the price."

"Well, I take it all back then," spoke up Denver at last, "there are different kinds of bravery. But you go on back there and do your best and maybe we can make a raise. I'll just take my gun and go up to your father's claims and jump out that bunch of bad-men—"

"No! No, Denver!" she broke in very earnestly, "I don't want you to do that again. I heard last night that Dave said he would get you–and if he did, why then I'd be to blame. You'd be doing it for me, and if one of those men killed you–well, it would be just the same as me."

"Nope!" denied Denver, "there was no figure of speech about that. It said: 'at the *hands* of your dearest friend.' These jumpers ain't my friends and never was–come on, let's take a chance. I'll run 'em off the claims if your father will give you half of 'em, and then you can turn around and sell out for cash and go back to New York like a queen. You stand off the tenors and I'll stand off the jumpers; and then, perhaps–but we won't talk about that now. Come on, will you shake hands on the deal?"

She looked at him questioningly, his powerful hand reached out to help her, the old, boyish laughter in his eyes, and then she smiled back as bravely.

"All right," she said, "but you'll have to be careful–because now I'm your dearest friend."

"I'm game," he cried, "and you don't have to kiss me either. But if some Dago tenor—"

“No,” she promised looking up at him wistfully. “I’ll–I’ll save the kiss for you.”

CHAPTER XXI
BROKE AGAIN

The industry of four jumpers, digging in like gophers on the best of Bunker Hill's claims, was brought to an abrupt termination by the appearance of one man with a gun. He came on unconcernedly, Dave's six-shooter at his hip and the strength of a lion in his stride; and the first of the gun-men, after looking him over, jumped out of his hole and made off. Denver tore down his notice and posted the old one, with a copy of his original affidavit that the annual work had been done; and when he toiled up to the remaining three claims the jumpers had fled before him. They knew him all too well, and the gun at his hip; and they counted it no disgrace to give way before the man who had conquered Dave Chatwourth with rocks. So Denver changed the notices and came back laughing and Bunker Hill made over the claims.

"Denver," he said clasping him warmly by the hand, "I swow, you're the best danged friend I've got. For the last time, now, will you come to dinner?"

"Sure," grinned Denver, "but cut out that 'friend' talk. It makes me kind of nervous."

"I'll do it!" promised Bunker, "I'll do anything you ask me. You saved my bacon on them claims. That snooping Dutch Professor tipped them jumpers off that I'd promised my wife not to shoot, but I guess when they see you come rambling up the gulch they begin to feel like Davey Crockett's coon.

"'Don't shoot, Davey,' he says, 'I know you'll get me.' And he came right down off the limb." Old Bunker laughed uproariously and slapped Denver on the back, after which he took him over to the house and announced a guest for dinner.

"Sit down, boy, sit down," he insisted hospitably as Denver spoke of going home to dress, "you're company just the way you are. As Lord Chesterfield says: 'A clean shirt is half of full dress.' And a pair of overalls, I reckon, is the rest of it. Say, did you hear what Murray said when we took Dave over there, looking like something that the cat had brought in?

"'My Gawd,' he says, 'what has happened to the *mine*?'

"That was something like a deacon that I worked for one time when he was fixing to paint his barn. He slung a ladder on an old, rotten rope and sent me up on it to work and about half an hour afterwards the rope gave way and dropped me, ladder and all, to the ground. The deacon was at the house when he heard the crash and he came running with his coat-tails straight out.

"'Goodness gracious!' he hollered, 'did you spill the paint?'

"'No,' I says, 'but I will!' And I kicked all his paint-cans over.

"Well, old Murray is like that deacon; you touch his pocket and you touch his heart–he's always thinking about money. He'd been planning for months to slip in and jump these claims and here you come along and do the assessment work and knock him out of five of 'em. The boys say he's sure got blood in his eye and is cussing you out a blue streak. That's a nice gun you got off of Dave–how many notches has it got on the butt? Only three, eh? Well, say, if he ever sends over to ask for it I've got another one that I'll loan you. You want to go heeled, understand? Murray's busy right now bossing those three shifts of miners that are driving that adit tunnel, but when he gets the time he'll leave his glass eye on a fence post and come over to see what we're doing. Didn't you ever hear about Murray's glass eye?

"Well, they say he lost his good one looking for a dollar that he dropped; but here's the big joke about the fence-post. He got his start down in the valley, raising alfalfa and feeding stock, and he always hired Indians whenever he could because they spent all their time-checks at the store. A Mexican or a white man might hold out a few dollars, or spend the whole wad for booze; but Indians are barred

from getting drunk and they've only got one use for money. Yes, they believe it was made to spend, not to bury alongside of some fence-post. And speaking of fence-posts brings me back to the point–Old Murray had a bunch of big, lazy Apaches working by the day cleaning out a ditch. He was down there at daylight and watched 'em like a hawk, but every time he'd go into town the whole bunch would sit down for a talk. Well, he *had* to go to town so one day he called 'em up and made 'em a little talk.

"'Boys,' he says, 'I've got to go to town but I'm going to watch you, all the same. Sure thing, now,' he says, 'you can laugh all you want to, but I'll see everything that you do.' Then he took out his glass eye and set it on a fence-post where it looked right down the ditch, and started off for town. You know these Apaches–superstitious as hell–they got in and worked like niggers. Kinder scared 'em, you see, ain't used to glass eyes; but there was one old boy that was foxy. He dropped down in the ditch where the eye wouldn't see him and crept up behind that fence-post like a snake, and then he picked up an empty tin can and slapped it down over the eye. There was a boy over at the ranch that saw the whole business and he says them Indians never did a lick of work till they saw Bible-Back's dust down the road. Pretty slick, eh, for an Indian? And some people will try to tell you that the untutored savage can't think.

"Well, that's the kind of an hombre that we're up against–he'd skin a flea for his hide and taller. As old Spud Murphy used to say, he'd rob a poor tumble-bug of his ball of manure and put him on the wrong road home. He's mean, and it sure hurt his feelings to have you hop in and win back your mine. And knocking Dave on the head took the pip out of these other jumpers–I'm looking for the whole bunch to fade."

"Well, they might as well," said Denver, "because their claims are not worth fighting for and there's a Miners' Committee going to call on 'em. I'm going along myself in an advisory capacity, and my advice will be to beat it. And if you'll take a tip from me you'll hire a couple of miners and put them to work on your claims."

"I'll do it to-morrow," agreed Bunker enthusiastically. "I've got a couple of nibbles from some real mining men–not some of these little, one-candle power promoters but the kind that pay with certified checks–and if I can open up those claims and just get a color of copper I'm fixed, boy, that's all there is to it. Come on now, let's go in to dinner."

The memory of that dinner, and of the music that followed it, remained long in Denver's mind; and later in the evening, when the lights were low and her parents had gone to their rest, Drusilla sang the "Barcarolle" from Hoffmann. She sang it very softly, so as not to disturb them, but the look in her eyes recalled something to Denver and as he was leaving he asked her a question. It was not if she loved him, for that would be unfair and might spoil an otherwise perfect evening; but he had been wondering as he listened whether she had not seen him that first time–when he had slipped down and listened from the shadows.

And when he asked her she smiled up at him tremulously and nodded her head very slowly; and then she whispered that she had always loved him for it, just for listening and going away. She had been downcast that night but his presence had been a comfort–it had persuaded her at last that she could sing. She had sung the "Barcarolle" again, on that other night, when he had stepped out so boldly from the shadows; but it was the first time that she loved him for it, when he was still a total stranger and had come just to hear her sing. There was more that she said to him and when he had to go she smiled again and gave him her hand, but he did not suggest a kiss. She was keeping that for him, until she had been to New York and run the gauntlet of the tenors.

This was the high spot in Denver's life, when he had stood upon Parnassus and beheld everything that was good and beautiful; but in the morning he put on his old digging clothes again and went to work in the mine. He had seen her and it was enough; now to break out the ore and win her for his own. For he was poor, and she was poor, and

how could she succeed without money? But if he could open up his mine and block out a great ore body then her claims and Bunker's, that touched it on both sides, would take on a speculative value. They could be sold for cash and she could go East in style, to take lessons from the ten-dollar teacher who had influence with directors and impresarios. Denver put in a round of holes and blasted his way into the mountain; but as he came out in the evening, dirty and grimed and pale from powder sickness, Drusilla paled too and almost shrank away. She had strolled up before, only to hear the clank of his steel and the muffled thud of his blows; and now as she stood waiting, attired as daintily as a bride, the dream-hero of her memories was banished. He was a miner again, a sweaty, toiling animal, dead to all the finer things of life; but if Denver read her thoughts he did not notice, for he remembered what Mother Trigedgo had told him.

Two weeks passed by and Labor Day came near, when all the hardy miners foregathered in Globe and Miami and engaged in the sports of their kind. A circular came to Denver, announcing the drilling contests and giving his name as one of the contestants; then a personal letter from the Committee on Arrangements, requesting him to send in his entry; and at last there came a messenger, a good hard-rock man named Owen, to suggest that they go in together. But Denver was driving himself to the limit, blasting out ore that grew richer each day; and at thought of Bible-Back Murray, waiting to pounce upon his mine, he sent back a reluctant refusal. Yet they published his name, with the partner's place left vacant, and advertised that he would participate; for on the Fourth of July, with Slogger Meacham for a partner, he had won the title of champion.

The decision to go was forced upon him suddenly on the day before the event, though he had almost lost track of time. Every morning at day-break he had been up and cooking, after breakfast he had gone to the mine; and, between mucking out the tunnel and putting in new shots, the weeks had passed like days. But when he went to Bunker on the eighth of September and asked for a little more

powder Bunker took him to the powder-house and showed him a space where the boxes of dynamite had been. Then he took him behind the counter and showed him the money-till and Denver awoke from his dream.

In spite of the stampede and the activity all about them the whole Pinal district was not producing a cent, and would not for months to come. Every dollar that was spent there had to come in from the outside, and the men who held the claims were all poor. Even after driving off the jumpers and regaining their lost claims the majority had gone home after merely scratching up their old dumps in a vain pretense at doing the assessment work.

The promoters were not buying, they were simply taking options and waiting on Murray's tunnel; and until he drove in and actually tapped the copper ore there would be no steady boom. He had organized a company and was selling a world of stock, even using it to pay off his men: and it was whispered about that his strike was a fake, for he still refused to exhibit the drill cores. But whether his strike was a bona fide discovery or merely a ruse to sell stock, the fact could not be blinked that Denver and Bunker Hill had reached the end of their rope. They were broke again and Denver set out for Globe, leaving Bunker to hold down his claim.

CHAPTER XXII
THE ROCK-DRILLING CONTEST

The main street of Globe was swarming with men, from the court-house square down past the viaduct to where the Bohunks dwelt. And the men were all miners, deep-chested and square-shouldered, but white from working underground. They were gathered in knots before the soft-drink emporiums that before had all been saloons and as Denver rode in they shouted a hoarse welcome and followed on to Miners' Hall. There the Committee of Arrangements was sitting in state but when Denver strode in a huge form bulked up before him and Slogger Meacham grinned at him evilly. Two months before, on the Fourth of July, they had been partners in the winning team; but now Meacham had taken on with a Cornishman from Miami and they counted the money as good as won.

"What are you doing here?" demanded the Slogger insolently, "do you think you're going to compete?"

"Danged right I am, if the judges will let me," answered Denver shoving resolutely past; and at sight of their lost champion the committee brightened up, though they glanced at each other anxiously. But what they wanted was a contest, something that would bring out the crowd and make the great day a success, and they waited upon Denver expectantly.

"Well, here's where you get left then," spoke up Meacham with a sneer, "the entries were closed at noon."

"Oh, hell!" cursed Denver and was turning to go when the chairman called him back.

"Just a minute," he said, "didn't you send in your entry? I believe

we've got it here, somewhere." He began to fumble industriously through a pile of papers and Denver caught his breath. For a moment he had seen his dreams brought to nothing, his last chance at the prize-money gone; but at this tentative suggestion on the part of the chairman he suddenly took heart of grace. They wanted him to compete, it had been advertised in all the papers, and they were willing to meet him half-way. But Denver was no liar, he shook his head and sighed, then turned back at a sudden thought.

"Maybe Tom Owen made the entry?" he burst out eagerly, "he was over to see me, you know."

"That was it!" exclaimed the chairman as if clutching at a straw, "say, where is that blank of theirs, Joe?"

"Search me," answered Joe, "it's around here, somewhere. Oh, I know!" And he went out into the back room. "Ain't this it?" he inquired returning with a paper and the chairman snatched it away from him.

"Yes," he said, "how'd it get out there? Well, no matter–that's all right, Mr. Russell!"

"No it ain't!" blurted out Meacham making a grab for the paper; but the chairman struck away his hand.

"You keep out of this!" he said. "What d'ye think you're trying to do? You keep out or I'll put you out!"

"It's a flim-flam!" raged Meacham, "you're trying to job me. He never made no entry."

"I never claimed to," retorted Denver boldly and Meacham turned on him, his pig eyes blazing with fury.

"I'll fix you, for this!" he burst out hoarsely, "I'll get you if I have to kill you. You robbed me once, but you won't do it again; so I give you fair warning–pull out!"

"You robbed *me*!" came back Denver, "and these boys all know it. But I fought you fair for the whole danged roll—"

"You did naht!" howled Meacham, "you had a feller with ye—"

"Well, I'll fight you right now, then," volunteered Denver accommodatingly but the Slogger did not put up his hands.

"That's all right," he said backing sullenly away, "but remember what I told you–I'll git ye!"

"You'll git nothing!" returned Denver and laughed him out the door, though there were others who muttered warnings in his ears. Slogger Meacham was a fighter as well as a driller and his flight with the prize-money was not the first time that he had lapsed from the ways of strict rectitude. He had killed a man during the riots at Goldfield and had been involved in several ugly brawls; but his record as a bad man did not deter Denver from opposing him and he went out to hunt up Owen.

Tom Owen was a good man, and he was also a good driller, but there was one thing that Denver held against him–he had been a drinking man when Arizona was wet. And a man who has drunk, no matter when, is never quite the same in a contest. He has lost that narrow margin of vital force, those last few ounces of strength and stamina which win or lose at the finish. Yet even at that he was a better man than Meacham, who had laid down like a yellow dog. Denver remembered that too and when he found his man he told him they were due to win. Then he borrowed some drills and a pair of eight-pound hammers and they went through a try-out together. Owen was quick and strong, he made the changes like lightning and struck a heavy blow; but when it was over and he was rolling a cigarette Denver noticed that his hand was trembling. The strain of smashing blows had over-taxed his nerves, though they had worked but three or four minutes.

"Well, do the best you can," said Denver at last, "and for cripes sake, keep away from this boot-leg."

There was plenty of it in town on this festive occasion, a nerve-shattering mixture that came in from New Mexico and had a kick like a mule. It was circulating about in hip pockets and suit-cases and in automobiles with false-bottomed seats, and Denver knew too well from past experience what the temptation was likely to be; yet for all his admonitions when he met Owen in the morning he caught the bouquet of whisky. It was disguised with sen-sen and he pretended

not to notice it but his hopes of first money began to wane. They went out again to the backyard of an old saloon where a great block of granite was embedded and while their admirers looked on they practiced their turn, for they had never worked together. A Cornish miner, a champion in his day, volunteered to be their coach and at each call of: “Change!” they shifted from drill to hammer without breaking the rhythm of their stroke.

“You’ll win, lads,” said the Cornishman, patting them affectionately on the back and Denver led them off for their rub-down.

The band began to play in the street below and the Miners’ Union marched past, after which they banked in about a huge block of granite and the drilling contests began. The drilling rock was placed on a platform of heavy timbers at the lower side of the court-house square, and the slope above it and the windows of all the buildings were crowded with shouting miners. First the men who were to compete in the single-jack contests mounted the platform one by one; and the sharp, *peck*, *peck*, of their hammers made music that the miners knew well. Then, as their holes were cleaned out and the depth of each measured, the first team of double-jackers climbed up to the platform amid the frantic plaudits of the crowd. The announcer introduced them, they laid out their drills and the hammer-man poised his double-jack; then at the word from the umpire they leapt into action, striking and turning like men gone mad.

There were five teams entered, of which Denver’s was the last, but when Meacham and his partner were announced as the next contestants his impatience would not brook further delay. With his own precious drills tied securely in a bundle and Owen and the coach behind him he fought his way to the base of the platform and sat down where he could watch every blow. They came on together, a team hard to match; Meacham stripped to the waist, his ponderous head thrust forward, the muscles swelling to great knots in his arms. His partner wore the heavy, yellow undershirt of a miner, his trousers draped low on his hips; and to hold them up he had a strand of black

fuse twisted loosely in place of a belt. He was a hard, hairy man, with grim, deep-set eyes and a jaw that jutted out like a crag and as he raised his hammer to strike Denver saw that he was out to win.

"Go!" called the umpire and the hammer smote the drill-head till it made the blue granite smoke; and then for thirty seconds he flailed away while Slogger Meacham turned the short starter-drill.

"Change!" called their coach and with a single swoop Meacham flung his drill back into the crowd and caught up his hammer to strike. His partner dropped his hammer and chucked in a fresh drill–*smash*, the hammer struck it into the rock–and so they turned and struck while the ramping miners below them looked on in envious amazement. As each drill was thrown out it was brought back from where it fell and examined by the quick-eyed coach, and as he called off the half minutes he announced their probable depth as indicated by the mud marks on the drills. Across the block from the two drillers knelt a man with a rubber tube who poured water into the churning hole; and at each blow of the hammer the gray mud leapt up, splashing turner and hammer-man alike.

At the end of five minutes they were down fifteen inches, at ten they still held their pace; but as Denver glanced doubtfully at his coach and Owen the sound of the drilling changed. There was a grating noise, a curse from the turner, and as he flung out the drill and thrust in another a murmur went up from the crowd. They had broken the bit from the brittle edge of their drill and the new drill was grinding away on the fragment, which dulled the keen edge of the steel. The quick ears of the miners could sense the different sound as the drill champed the fragment to pieces, and when the next change was made the mud-marks on the drill showed that over an inch had been lost. A team working at top speed averaged three inches to the minute, driving down through hard Gunnison granite; but Meacham and his partner had lost their fast start and they had yet four minutes to go. The tall Cornishman's eyes gleamed–he struck harder than ever–but Meacham had begun to lose heart. The accident upset him, and the

grate of the broken steel as the drill bit down on chance fragments; and as his coach urged him on he glanced up from his turning with a look that Denver knew well. It was the old pig-eyed glare, the look of unreasoning resentment, that he had seen on the Fourth of July.

"He's quitting," chuckled Owen when Meacham rose to strike; but when the hole was measured it came to forty-three and fifteen-sixteenths of an inch. The big Cornishman had done it in spite of his partner, he had refused to accept defeat; and now, with only two more teams to compete, they led by nearly an inch.

"You can beat it!" cried Denver's coach, "I've done better than that myself! Forty-four! You can make forty-six!"

"I'm game," answered Denver, "but it takes two to win. Do you think you can stick it out, Tom?"

"I'll be up there, trying," returned Owen grimly and Denver nodded to the coach.

The next team did no better, for it is a heart-breaking test and the sun was getting hot, and when Denver and Owen mounted up on the platform a hush fell upon the crowd. Denver Russell they knew, but Owen was a new man; and a drilling contest is won on pure nerve. Would he crack, like Meacham, as the end approached, or would he stand up to the punishment? They looked on in silence as Denver spread out his drills–a full twenty, oil-tempered, of the best Norway steel, each narrower by a hair than its predecessor. The starter was short and heavy, with an inch-and-a-quarter bit; and the last long drill had a seven-eighths bit, which would just cut a one-inch hole. They were the best that money could buy and a famous tool-sharpener in Miami had tempered their edges to perfection. Denver picked up his starter, all the officials left the platform, and Owen raised his hammer.

"Are the drillers ready?" challenged the umpire. "Then *go*!" he shouted, and the double-jack descended with a smash. For thirty seconds while the drill leapt and bounded, Denver held it firmly in its place, and at the call of "Change!" he chucked it over his shoulder and swung his own hammer in the air. Owen popped in a new drill, the

hammer struck it squarely and the crowd set up a cheer. Denver was working hard, striking faster than his partner; and in every stroke there was a smashing enthusiasm, a romping joy in the work, that won the hearts of the miners. He was what they had been before drink and bad air had sapped the first freshness of their strength, or dust and hot stopes had broken their wind, or accidents had crippled them up–he was a miner, young and hardy, putting his body behind each blow yet striking like a tireless automaton.

"Change!" cried the coach, his voice ringing with pride; and as the drill came flying back he shouted out the depth which was better than three inches for the minute. At five minutes it was sixteen, at ten, thirty-three; but at eleven the pace slackened off and at twelve they had lost an inch. Tom Owen was weakening, in spite of his nerve, in spite of his dogged persistence; he struck the same, but his blows had lost their drive, the drill did not bite so deep. At every stroke, as Denver twisted the long drill loose and turned it by so much in the hole, he raised it up and struck it against the bottom, to add to the weight of the blows. The mud and muck from the hole splashed up into his face and painted his body a dull gray, but at thirteen minutes they had lost their lead and Tom Owen was striking wild. Then he missed the steel and a great voice rose up in mocking, stentorian laughter.

"Ho! Ho!" it roared, and Denver knew it well–it was Slogger Meacham, exulting.

"Here–you turn!" he said flinging out his drill, and as Owen sank down on his knees by the hole Denver caught up his double-jack and struck. For a half minute, a minute, he flailed away at the steel; while Owen, his shoulders heaving, turned the drill like clock-work and gasped to win back his strength.

"Thirteen and a half!" announced the coach at last and then he shouted: "Change!"

"No–*turn*!" panted Denver, never missing a stroke; and Owen sank back to his place by the hole while the battery of blows kept on.

"Fourteen!" proclaimed the coach, "you're about an inch behind.

How about it–do you want to change?"

"No–turn!" choked Denver. "I'll finish it–*turn*!" And as Owen straightened his back Denver struck like a mad-man while the sweat poured down in a shower. The official umpire leapt up on the platform to toll off the last sixty seconds, but the rise and fall of Denver's body was faster by far than his count. A frenzy seemed to seize him as the half minute was called and Owen slipped in their last drill; and with hoarse, coughing grunts he smashed it deeper and deeper while the miners surged forward with a cheer.

"Fifty-eight–fifty-nine–*sixty*!" cried the umpire, slapping him sharply on the back to stop, and Denver fell like dead across the stone. His great strength had left him, completely, on the instant; and when he raised his head there was a grinning crowd around him as his coach was measuring the last drill.

"The poor, dom fool!" he exclaimed commiseratingly, "and to think of him wurruking like thot. He's ahead by two inches and more."

CHAPTER XXIII
THE HEART OF HIS BELOVED

There was a celebration that day which warmed Denver's heart and sent Slogger Meacham cursing out of the camp, but as soon as it was over and he had his prize money in his hand Denver remembered his unguarded claim. Bunker Hill was there, of course, but the spiteful Professor had heralded his pledge afar; and a man who has promised his wife not to fight is ill-fitted to herd a mine. No, the Silver Treasure lay open for Dave or Murray to jump, if they felt like contesting his claim; and, weak as he was, Denver took no rest until he was back where he could fight for his own. He rode in late and slept like the dead, but in the morning he was up and down at the store as soon as Old Bunk came out.

"I win!" he announced holding up the roll of bills, "first money–can you get me some powder?"

"W'y, you lucky fool!" exclaimed Bunker admiringly, "seems like *nothing* can keep you down. Sure I'll get your powder, and just to show you what *I* can do–how's that for a healthy little roll?" He drew out a roll of bills twice the size of Denver's and fingered them over lovingly. "A thousand dollars," he murmured, "for an option on half the Lost Burro. A party came up yesterday and took one look at it and grabbed it right off the bat, and as soon as old Murray gets in to his ore they're going to capitalize the Burro for a million. Fine name that, for stock-selling–known all over the world, in England, Paris and everywhere–but I made 'em come through with a thousand dollars cash, so Drusilla could have a good stake. She's thinking of going East, soon."

"'S that so?" said Denver, trying to take it all in, "are these parties going to do any work?"

“Well, that’s an unfair question, as Pecos Edwards used to say when they asked him if all Texans was cow-thieves; but you know how these promoters work. There’ll be lots of work done; but mostly by lawyers, and publicity men and such. There’s a whole lot of water in the workings of the Lost Burro that’ll have to be pumped out first, and then there’s a little job of timbering that’ll cost a world of money. No, I sold them that mine on the ore in your tunnel–I will say, it shows up splendid. If you’d’ve been here yesterday you might have made a deal that would—”

“Not on your life!” broke in Denver, “I don’t sell to anybody. But say, but what did they think of my mine?”

“Think!” exclaimed Bunker, “they stopped thinking right here, when I showed ’em that big vein of copper! They went crazy, just like lunatics; because it ain’t often, I’m telling you, that you find sixty-per-cent copper on the surface.”

“Not in a fissure vein–no,” agreed Denver emphatically, “I wouldn’t sell out for a million. Did those promoters take away any samples?”

“Well, yes; a few,” responded Bunker apologetically, “I didn’t think you’d object.”

“Why, of course not,” answered Denver, “it’ll advertise the district and bring in some outside people. And now that I’ve got another stake I’m going to sack my ore and make a trial shipment to the smelter. But you bet your boots, after what Murray put over on me, I’m going to have some assaying done first.”

“Yes, and keep some samples,” advised Bunker wisely. “Keep a sample out of every bag.”

“I’ll just mix that ore up,” said Denver cautiously, “and cut it down, the way they do at the mill. Throw out every tenth shovel and mix ’em up again and then cut the pile down smaller until you’ve got a control, like the ore brokers take at the smelter. And then I’ll send a sample to the assayer–say, there’s Drusilla over there, trying to call you.”

“She’s trying to call you,” answered Bunker Hill shortly and went on into the store.

"Well, be sure and order that powder," shouted Denver after him. "And say, I'll want the rest of those ore-sacks."

"All right," replied Bunker and Denver turned to the house where Drusilla was waiting on the porch.

"Did you hear the news?" she asked dancing ecstatically to and fro; as if she were a Delilah, leading the Philistine maidens in the "Spring Song," and he were another Samson. "I'm expecting to go East now, soon."

"Good!" exclaimed Denver. "Well, I won't see you much then–I'm going to work in the mine."

"Yes, isn't it grand?" she cried. "Everything is coming out fine–but you must come down to dinner to-night. I'm going to sing, just for you."

"I'll be there," smiled Denver, and then he stopped. "But let's not make it to-night," he said, "I'm dead on my feet for sleep."

"Well, sleep then," she laughed, "and get rested from your contest–I'm awfully glad you won. And then—"

"Nope, can't come to-night," he answered soberly, "I want to get that ore sacked to-day. And I'm stiff as a strip of burnt raw-hide."

"Well, to-morrow night," she said, "unless you don't want to come. But you'll have to come soon or—"

"Oh, I want to come, all right," interposed Denver hastily, "you know that, without telling. But my partner played out on me before the end of the contest and I had to finish the striking myself. And then I rode hard to get back here, before Dave or some gun-man jumped my claim."

"Then to-morrow night," she smiled, "but don't you forget, because if you do I'll never forgive you."

She danced away into the house and Denver turned in his tracks and went to look over his ore-sacks. They were old and torn, what was left of a big lot that Bunker had got in a trade; but Denver picked out the best and wheeled them up to his dump, where his picked ore lay waiting for shipment. He had a big lot, much larger than he had thought, and it was just as it had been shot down from the breast. Some was silver-lead; and there was copper to boot, though that

would hardly do to ship. Yet at thirty cents a pound copper was almost a precious metal, and a report from the smelter would be a check. He would know from that how the ore really ran and how much he would be penalized for the zinc. So he picked out the best of it and broke it up fine, for the rough chunks would not do to sack; and before he had more than got started with his sampling the sun had gone down behind the ridge. And he was tired–too tired to eat.

There was music that night at the big house below but Denver could not hold up his head. Nature had drugged him with sleep, like a romping child that takes no thought of its strength, and in the morning he woke up in a sort of stupor that could not be worked off. Yet he worked, worked hard, for McGraw had arrived and the ore must be loaded that day; so they threw in together, Denver sacking the heavy ore and McGraw wheeling it out to the wagon. They toiled on till dark, for McGraw started early and the work could not be put off till to-morrow; and when it was over Denver staggered up to his cave like an old and outworn man. He was reeking with sweat, his hands were like talons, the ore-dust had left his face gray; and all he thought of was sleep. For a moment he roused up, as if he remembered some new duty–something pleasant, yet involving further effort–and then his candle went out. He fell asleep in his chair and when he awoke it was only to stumble to his bed.

The sun was over the Leap when he opened his heavy eyes and gazed at the rude squalor of his cave. The dishes were unwashed, the floor was dirty, a long-tailed rat hung balanced on the table-edge–and he was tired, tired, tired. He heaved himself up and reached for the water-bucket but he had forgotten to fill it at the creek. Now he grabbed it up impatiently and started down the trail, every joint of his body protesting, and when he had climbed back he was weak from the effort–his bank account with Mother Nature was overdrawn. He was worn out, at last; and his poor, tired brain took no thought how to make up the deficit. All he wanted was rest, something to eat, a drink of water. A drink of water anyway, and sleep. He drank deep and

bathed his face, then sank back on the bed and let the world whirl on.

It was late in the day when he awoke again and hunger was gnawing his vitals; but the slow stupor was gone, he was himself again and the cramps had gone out of his limbs. He rose up luxuriously and cut a can of tomatoes, drinking the juice and eating the fruit, and then he lit a fire and boiled some strong coffee and cooked up a great mess of food. There was two cans of corn and a can of corned beef, heated together in a swimming sea of bacon grease and eaten direct from the frying-pan. It went to the spot and his drooping shoulders straightened, the spring came back into his step; yet as he cleaned up the dishes and changed to decent clothes the weight of some duty seemed to haunt him. Was it McGraw? No, he had loaded the last sack and sent him on his way. It was Drusilla–she had been going to sing for him.

Denver stepped to the door and looked down at the house and his heart sank low at the thought. They had invited him to dinner and he had forgotten to come, he had gone home and fallen asleep. And no one had come to call him–or to inquire what had kept him away. A heavy guilt came over him as he gazed down at the house with its broad porch and trailing Virginia creepers, the Hills would take it very ill to have their invitation ignored. Old Bunk had told him the time before, when he had invited him in to dinner: “Now, for the last time, Denver—” and it would take more than mere words to ever mend that breach. Denver paced back and forth, undecided what to do, and at last he decided to do nothing. As the sun went down he ate another supper and drugged his sorrows with sleep.

The next morning he rose early and shaved and bathed and put on his last clean shirt, and then he walked down to the town; but the store was locked, there was no voices from the house, only a smoke from the kitchen stove. He went on to his mine and looked it over, and as he passed the Professor leered out at him; there was something that he knew, some bad news or spiteful gossip, for he found pleasure only in evil. Denver came back down the street, that was now as

deserted as it had been before the stampede, and once more the Professor looked out.

"Vell," he said, "so you haf lost your sveetheart!" And he chuckled and shut the door softly.

Denver stopped and stood staring, hardly crediting the news, yet conscious of the sinister exulting. The Professor was glad, therefore the news was bad; but what did he mean by those words? Had Drusilla gone away or had she thrown him over for neglecting to keep his engagement? She had probably spoken her mind as she watched for him at the doorway and the Professor had been out there, eavesdropping.

"What are you talking about?" he demanded at last but the Professor only tittered. Then he dropped the heavy bar across his door and Denver took the hint to move on. He went down past the house and looked it over hopefully, but as no one came out he pocketed his pride and knocked, like a hobo battering the door for a meal, Mrs. Hill came out slowly as if preoccupied with other things, but when he saw her eyes he knew she had been crying and that Drusilla had really gone.

"I'm sorry," he began and then he stopped; there was nothing that he could say. "Has Drusilla gone?" he asked at length and Mrs. Hill answered him, almost kindly.

"Yes," she said, "she was summoned by a telegram. Her father took her down this morning."

He stood thinking a minute, then he shook his head regretfully and started off down the steps.

"She was sorry not to have seen you," she added gently but Denver made no reply. He was weak again now and inadequate to life; he could only crawl back like some dumb, wounded animal, to the sheltering gloom of his cave. But as he sat there stolidly, now trying to make some plan, now endeavoring to become reconciled to his fate, a rage swept over him like a storm-wind that shakes a tree and he burst into gusty oaths. The fates had turned against him, his

horoscope had come to nothing; he had followed the admonitions of Mother Trigedgo and this was the result of her advice. She had told him to beware how he revealed his affection, but nothing about what to do when he had fallen asleep while his beloved sang only for him.

He drew out the Oraculum, by which the Man of Destiny had ordered the least affairs of his life, and read down through the thirty-two questions. Only once on each day could he consult the mystic oracle, and once only in each month on the same subject, lest the fates be outworn by his insistence. At first it was Number Thirteen that appealed to his fancy:

"Will the FRIEND I most reckon upon prove faithful or TREACHEROUS?" But he knew without asking that, whatever her failings, Drusilla would never prove treacherous. No, since he had taken her for his friend he would never question her faithfulness; Number Twenty-six was more to his liking:

"Does the person whom I love, LOVE and regard me?"

He spread out a sheet of paper on his littered table and dashed off the five series of lines, and then he counted each carefully and made the dots at the end–two dots for the two lines that came even and one for those that came odd. The first two came odd, the next two even, the last one odd again; and under that symbol the Oraculum Key referred him to section B for his answer. He turned to the double pages with its answers, good and bad, and his brain whirled while he read these words:

"Thy heart of thy beloved yearneth toward thee."

He closed the book religiously and put it away, and his heart for the moment was comforted.

CHAPTER XXIV
COLONEL DODGE

Denver doubted it, himself, for human nature is much the same in man and woman and Drusilla had been sorely slighted; but the Oraculum had said that her heart was yearning towards him and the Book of Fate had always spoken true. Perhaps women *were* different, but if it had been done to him, he would have called down black curses instead. Yet women were different, one could never guess their moods, and perhaps Drusilla would forgive him. Not right away, of course, but after her blood had cooled and he had written a proper letter. He would let it go awhile, until he had framed up some excuse or decided to tell her the truth, and in the meantime there was plenty of work to do that would help him forget his sorrow. There was his mine, and McGraw had brought up some powder.

There was something in the air which seemed to whisper to Denver of portentous happenings to come, and as he was sharpening up his steel for a fresh assault upon the ore-body a big automobile came into town. It stopped and a big man wearing a California sombrero and a pair of six-buckle boots leapt out and led the way to the Lost Burro. Behind him followed three men attired as gentlemen miners and as Denver listened he could hear the big man as he recited the history of the mine. Undoubtedly it was the buyer of the Lost Burro Mine, with a party of "experts" and potential backers who had come up to look over the ground; yet something told Denver that there was more behind it all. He felt their eyes upon him. They spent a few minutes looking over the old workings, and then they came stringing up his trail.

"Good afternoon, sir," hailed the promoter, "are you the owner of this property? Well, I'd like with your permission to show my friends

some of your ore–why, what's this, have you hauled it away?"

"Yes, I shipped it out yesterday," answered Denver briefly and the big man glanced swiftly at his friends.

"Well, I'm Colonel Dodge–H. Parkinson Dodge–you may have heard the name. I'm your neighbor here on the south–we've taken over the Lost Burro property. Yes, glad to know you, Mr. Russell." He shook hands and introduced his friends all around, after which he came to the point. "We've been looking at the Lost Burro and one of the gentlemen suggested that it might be well to enlarge our property. That would make it more attractive to worth-while buyers and at the same time prevent any future litigation in case our ore-bodies should join. You understand what I mean–there's such a thing as apex decision and of course you hold the higher ground. Well, before we do any work or tie up our money we would like to know just exactly where we stand in relation to surrounding properties. What price do you put on your claim?"

"No price," answered Denver. "I don't want to sell. Are you thinking of opening up the Lost Burro?"

"That will all depend," hinted the Colonel darkly, "upon the attitude of the people in the district. If we meet with encouragement we intend to form a company and spend hundreds of thousands of dollars; but if not, why we will charge up our option money to profit and loss and seek out a less backward community. What is your lowest price on your claim?"

"A million dollars–cash," responded Denver cheerfully. "Now you come through and make me an offer."

"Well," began the Colonel, and then he stopped and glanced suggestively at the tunnel. "We'd like to look it over first."

"Fair enough," replied Denver and, giving each a candle, he led them into the tunnel. They looked the ore over, making indifferent comments and asking permission to take samples, and then Colonel Dodge took one of his experts aside and they conferred in muffled tones.

"Er–we'd rather not make an offer just now," said the Colonel at last; and in a silent procession they returned to the daylight, leaving Denver to follow behind. The atmosphere of the group was now reeking with gloom but after a long conference the Colonel came back, summoning up the ghost of a smile. "Well, I'll tell you, Mr. Russell," he began apologetically, "we saw some of your ore before we came up and we were all of us most enthusiastic. The copper in particular was very promising but the gentleman I was talking with is our consulting engineer and he advises me not to buy the property."

"All right," answered Denver, "you don't have to buy it. I never saw one of these six-buckle men yet that wouldn't knock a good claim." He turned back angrily to his job of tool-sharpening and the Colonel followed after him solicitously.

"Don't misunderstand me," he said, "there's nothing I'd like better than to buy in this neighboring property–if I could get it at a reasonable figure; but Mr. Shadd advises me that your ore lies in a gash-vein, which will undoubtedly pinch out at depth."

"A gash-vein!" echoed Denver, "why the poor, ignorant fool–can't you see that the vein is getting bigger? Well, how can it be a gash-vein when it's between two good walls and increasing in width all the time? Your friend must think I'm a prospector."

"Oh, no," protested the Colonel smiling feebly at the joke, "but–well, he advises me not to buy. The fact that the ore is so rich on the surface is against its continuance at depth. All gash-veins, as you know, are very rich at the surface; so in this case the fact is against you. But I tell you what I will do–just to protect my other property and avoid any future complications–I'll give you a thousand dollars for your claim."

"Whooo!" jeered Denver, "I'll get more than that for the ore I just sent to the smelter. No, I'm no thousand-dollar man, Mr. Dodge. I've got a fissure vein and it's increasing at depth, so I guess I'll just hold on a while. You wait till old Murray begins to ship!"

"Ah–er–well, I'll give you fifteen hundred," conceded the Colonel

drawing out his check-book and pen. “That’s the best I can possibly do.”

“Well save your check then, because I’m a long ways from broke. What d’ye think of that for a roll?” Denver drew out his roll of prize money, with a hundred dollar bill on top, and flickered the edges of the twenties. “I guess I can wait a while,” he grinned. “Come around again, when I’m broke.”

“I’ll give you a thousand dollars down and nine thousand in six months,” burst out the Colonel with sudden vehemence. “Now it’s that or absolutely nothing. If you try to hold me up I’ll abandon my option and withdraw entirely from the district.”

“Sorry to lose you, old-timer,” returned Denver genially, “but I guess we can’t do business. Come around in about a month.”

A sudden flash came into the Colonel’s bold eyes and he opened his mouth to speak–then he paused and shut his mouth tight.

“Not on your life, Mr. Russell,” he said with finality, “if I go I will not come back. Now give me your lowest cash price for the property. Will you accept ten thousand dollars?”

“No, I won’t,” answered Denver, “nor a hundred thousand, either. I’m a miner–I know what I’ve got.”

“Very well, Mr. Russell,” replied Colonel Dodge crisply and, bowing haughtily, he withdrew.

Denver looked after him laughing, but something about his stride suddenly wiped away the grin from Denver’s face–the Colonel was going somewhere. He was going with a purpose, and he walked like a man who was perfectly sure of his next move–like a man who has seen a snake in the road and turns back to cut a club. It was distinctly threatening and a light dawned on Denver when the automobile turned off towards Murray’s camp. That was it, he was an agent of Murray.

Denver sharpened up his steel and put in a round of holes but all that day and the next his uneasiness grew until he jumped at every sound. He felt the hostility of Colonel Dodge’s silence more than any

that words could express; and when, on the second day, he saw Professor Diffenderfer approaching he stopped his work to watch him.

"Vell, how are you?" began the Professor, trying to warm up their ancient friendship; and then, seeing that Denver merely bristled the more, he cast off his cloak of well-wishing. "I vas yoost over to Murray's camp," he burst out vindictively, "and Dave said he vanted his gun."

"Tell 'im to come over and get it," suggested Denver and then he unbuckled his belt. "All right," he said handing over the gun and cartridges, "here it is; I don't need it, anyhow." The Professor blinked and looked again, then reached out and took the belt doubtfully.

"Vot you mean?" he asked at last as his curiosity got the better of him, "have you got anudder gun somevhere? Dot Dave, he svears he vill kill you."

"That's all right," replied Denver, "just give him his gun–I'll take him on any day, with rocks."

"How you mean 'take him on?'" inquired the Professor all excitement but Denver waved him away.

"Go on now," he said, "and give him his gun. I guess he'll know what I mean."

But if Chatwourth understood the hidden taunt he did not respond to the challenge and Denver's mind reverted to H. Parkinson Dodge and his flattering offers for the mine. Ten thousand dollars cash, from a mining promoter, was indeed a princely sum; better by far than the offer of half a million shares that went with Bunker's option. For stock is the sop that is thrown to poor miners in lieu of the good hard cash, but ten thousand dollars was a lot of money for a promoter to pay for a claim. It showed that there were others beside himself who believed in the value of his property, yet who this Colonel Dodge was or who were his backers was a question that only Bunker could answer. Denver waited in a sweat, now wondering if Bunker would speak to him, nor exulting in the offer for his mine; and when at last he saw

Bunker Hill drive in he threw down his tools and hurried towards him.

But Bunker Hill was surly, he barely glanced at Denver and went on caring for his horses; and Denver did not crowd him. He waited, and at last Old Bunk looked up with jaw thrust grimly out.

"Well?" he said, and Denver forgot everything but the question that was on his tongue.

"Say," he burst out, "who is this Colonel Dodge that came up and bought your mine? Is he working for Murray, or what?"

"Search me," grumbled Bunker, "I got his thousand dollars, and that's about all I know."

"He was up here to see me the same day you left, with a whole load of six-buckle experts; and say, he offered me a check for ten thousand dollars if I'd sell him the Silver Treasure claim. And when I refused it he got into his machine and went right over to Murray's. I'll bet you you're sold out to Bible-Back."

"Well, he's stuck then," said Bunker. "I guess you haven't heard the news–Murray's closed down his camp for good."

"He has!" exclaimed Denver, and then he laughed heartily. "He's a foxy old dastard, isn't he?"

"You said it," returned Bunker. "Never did have any ore. Just pretended he had in order to sell stock and recoup what he'd lost on the drilling. They're offering the stock for nothing."

"Who's offering it?" demanded Denver suddenly taking the matter seriously. "I'll bet you it's nothing but a fake!"

"All right," shrugged Bunker, "but I met a bunch of miners and they were swapping stock for matches. Old Tom Buchanan down at Desert Wells won't accept it at any price–that shows how much it's a fake."

"Aw, he pulled that once before," answered Denver contemptuously, "but he don't fool me again. Like as not he's made a strike and is just shutting down so he can buy back the stock he sold."

Bunker looked up and grunted, then gathered together his purchases and ambled off towards the house.

“That’s all you think about, ain’t it?” he said at parting. “I’ll mention it when I write to Drusilla.”

“Oh–oh, yes,” stammered Denver suddenly reminded of his dereliction, “say, how did she happen to go? And I want to get her address so I can explain how it happened–I wouldn’t have missed seeing her for anything!”

“No, of course not,” growled Bunker, “not for anything but your own interests. You can go to hell for your address.”

“Why, what do you mean?” demanded Denver; but as Bunker did not answer he fell back and let him go on.

CHAPTER XXV
THE ANSWER

There are some kinds of questions which require no answers and others which answer themselves. Denver had asked Bunker what he meant when he refused Drusilla's address and intimated that he was unworthy of her friendship, but after a gloomy hour in the deepening twilight the question answered itself. Bunker had taken his daughter across the desert, on her way to the train and New York, and his curt remarks were but the reflex of her's as she discussed Denver's many transgressions. He thought more of mines and of his own selfish interests than he did of her and her art, and so she desired to hear no more of him or his protestations of innocence. That was what the words meant and as Denver thought them over he wondered if it was not true.

Drusilla had greeted him cordially when he had returned from Globe and had invited him to dinner that same night, but he had refused because he needed the sleep and begrudged the daylight to take it. And the next day he had worked even harder than before and had forgotten her invitation entirely. She was to sing just for him and, after the singing, she would have told him all her plans; and then perhaps they might have spoken of other things and parted as lovers should. But no, he had spoiled it by his senseless hurry in getting his ore off with McGraw; and now, with all the time in the world on his hands, the valley below was silent. Not a scale, not a trill, not a run or roulade; only silence and the frogs with their devilish insistence, their ceaseless *eh*, *eh*, *eh*. He rose up and heaved a stone into the creek-bed below, then went in and turned on his phonograph.

They were real people to him now, these great artists of the discs; Drusilla had described them as she listened to the records and even

the places where they sang. She had pictured the mighty sweep of the Metropolitan with its horse-shoe of glittering boxes; the balconies above and the standing-room below where the poor art-students gathered to applaud; and he had said that when he was rich he would subscribe for a box and come there just to hear her sing. And now he was broke, and Drusilla was going East to run the perilous gauntlet of the tenors. He jerked up the stylus in the middle of a record and cursed his besotted industry. If he had let his ore go, and gone to see her like a gentleman, Drusilla might even now be his. She might have relented and given him a kiss–he cursed and stumbled blindly to bed.

In the morning he went to work in the close air of the tunnel, which sadly needed a fan, and then he hurled his hammer to the ground and felt his way out to daylight. What was the use of it all; where did it get him to, anyway; this ceaseless, grinding toil? Murray's camp had shut down, the promoters had vanished, Pinal was deader than ever; he gathered up his tools and stored them in his cave, then sat down to write her a letter. Nothing less than the truth would win her back now and he confessed his shortcomings humbly; after which he told her that the town was too lonely and he was leaving, too. He sealed it in an envelope and addressed it with her name and when he was sure that Old Bunk was not looking he slipped in and gave it to her mother.

"I'm going away," he said, "and I may not be back. Will you send that on to Drusilla?"

"Yes," she smiled and hid it in her dress; but as he started for the door she stopped him.

"You might like to know," she said, "that Drusilla has received an engagement. She is substitute soprano in a new Opera Company that is being organized to tour the big cities. I'm sorry you didn't see her."

"Yes," answered Denver, "I'm sorry myself–but that never bought a man anything. Just send her the letter and–well, goodby."

He blundered out the door and down the steps, and there stretched the road before him. In the evening he was as far as Whitlow's Well

and a great weight seemed lifted from his breast. He was free again, free to wander where he pleased, free to make friends with any that he met–for if the prophecy was not true in regard to his mine it was not true regarding his friends. And how could any woman, by cutting a pack of cards and consulting the signs of the zodiac, predict how a man would die? Denver made himself at home with a party of hobo miners who had come in from the railroad below, and that night they sat up late, cracking jokes and telling stories of every big camp in the West. It was the old life again, the life that he knew and loved, drifting on from camp to camp with every man his friend. Yet as he stretched out that night by the flickering fire he almost regretted the change. He was free from the great fear, free to make friends with whom he would; but, to win back the love of the beautiful young artist, he would have given up his freedom without a sigh.

His sleep that night was broken by strange dreams and by an automobile that went thundering by, and in the morning as they cooked a mulligan together he saw two great motor trucks go past. They were loaded with men and headed up the canyon and Denver began to look wild. A third machine appeared and he went out to flag it but the driver went by without stopping; and so did another, and another. He rushed after the next one and caught it on the hill but the men pushed him roughly from the running board. They were armed and he knew by their hard-bitten faces that it was another party of jumpers.

“Where are you going?” he yelled but they left him by the road without even a curse for an answer. Well, he knew then; they were going to Final, and Murray had fooled him again. Denver had suspected from the first that Murray’s shutdown was a ruse, to shake down the public for their stock; and now he knew it, and that if his mine was jumped again it would be held against all comers. Another automobile whirled by; and then came men that he knew, the miners who owned claims in the district.

“What’s the matter?” he called but they would not stop to talk,

simply shouted and beckoned him on. Denver started, right then, without stopping for breakfast or to pick up his hobo's pack; and soon he caught a ride with a party of prospectors whose claims he had once freed from jumpers.

"It's a big strike!" they clamored, hauling him in and rushing on. "Old Murray struck copper in his tunnel! *Rich?* Hell, yes!" And they gave him all the details as the machine lurched along up the road.

Murray had struck another ore-body, entirely different from the first one–the copper had come out the drill-holes like pure metal–and then he had shut down and rushed the machine-men away before they could tell of the strike. But they had got loose down in Moroni and showed the drill-dust and every man that saw it had piled into his machine and joined the rush for Murray's.

"Jumped again!" muttered Denver and when he arrived in Pinal he found his mine swarming with men. They had built a barricade and run a pipe line down the hill to pump up water from the creek, and when he appeared they ordered him off without showing so much as a head. And he went, for the swiftness of the change had confused him; he was whipped before he began. There was no use to fight or to put up a bluff, the men behind the wall were determined; and while, according to law, they held no title the law was far away. It was a weapon for rich men who could afford to pay the price; but how could he, a poor man, hope to win back his claim when it was held by Bible-Back Murray? He went down to the store, where the Miners' Meeting was assembled, and beckoned Bunker aside.

"Mr. Hill," he said, "you promised me one time to give me the loan of a gun. Well, now is the time I need it."

"Nope," warned Bunker, "you ain't got a chance. Them fellers are just up here to get you."

"Well, for self-defense!" protested Denver, "Dave sent word he'd kill me."

"Keep away, then," advised Bunker, "don't give him no chance. But if them fellers should jump on you, just run to my house and I'll slip you

the old Injun-tamer."

Denver went out on the street, now swarming with traffic, and looked up toward his mine; and as he gazed he walked up closer until he stopped at the fork of the trails. The men behind the wall were watching him grimly, without letting their faces be seen; but as he stood there looking they began to bandy jests and presently to taunt him openly. But Denver did not answer, for he divined their evil purpose, and at last he turned quietly away.

"Hey! Come back here!" roared a voice and Denver whirled in his tracks for he knew it was Slogger Meacham's. He was standing there now, looking across the barricade, and as Denver met his gaze he laughed.

"Ho! Ho!" he rumbled folding his arms across his breast and thrusting out his huge black mustache. "Well, how do you feel about it now?"

"Never mind," returned Denver and, leaving him gloating, he hurried away down the trail. Old Bunk was right, they had come there to get him, and there was no use playing into their hands; yet at thought of Slogger Meacham his hair began to bristle and he muttered half-formed threats. The Slogger had come to get him–and Dave Chatwourth was behind there, too–the whole district was dominated by their gang; but the times would change and with inrush of other men the jumpers would soon be out-numbered. It was better then to wait, to let the excitement die down and law and order return; and then, with a deputy sheriff at his back, he could eject them by due process of law. The claim was his, his papers were recorded and no lawyer could question their validity–no, the best thing was to let the jumpers rage, to say nothing and keep out of sight. That was all that he had to do.

But to avoid them was not so easy, for as the day wore on and no attempt was made to oust them, the jumpers walked boldly into town. At first it was Chatwourth, to buy some tobacco and break in on the Miners' Meeting; and then Slogger Meacham, a huge mountain of a

man, came ambling down the street. He slouched down on the store platform and leered about him evilly, but Denver had retreated to his cave under the cliff and the Slogger returned to the mine. Then they came down in a body, Chatwourth and Meacham and all the jumpers; but though his mine was left open Denver refrained from going near it, for their purpose was becoming very plain. They were trying to inveigle him into openly opposing them, after which they would have a pretext for resorting to actual violence. But their plans went no further for he remained in retirement and the Miners' Meeting adjourned. Soon the street was deserted, except for their own numbers, and they returned to the mine with shrill whoops.

From his lookout above Denver watched them with a smile, for his nerve had come back to him now. Now that Murray had made his strike, and increased the value of the Silver Treasure by a thousand per cent over night, Denver's mind had swung back like a needle to the pole to his former belief in the prophecy. He had doubted it twice and renounced it twice, but each time as if by an act of Providence he was rebuked for his lack of faith. Now he *knew* it was so–that the mine would be restored and that only his dearest friend could kill him. So he smiled almost pityingly at the loud-mouthed jumpers and went boldly down the trail.

The hush of evening was in the air when he knocked at Bunker Hill's door and after a look about Old Bunk went back into the house and brought out a heavy pistol. It was an old-fashioned six-shooter of the Indian-tamer type–a single action, wooden-handled forty-five–and Bunker fingered it lovingly as he handed it over to Denver.

"For self-defense, understand," he said beneath his breath, "and look out, that bunch is sure ranicky."

"Much obliged," responded Denver and tested the action before he slipped the gun in its belt. He was starting for his cave, when from his cabin up the street the Professor came out and beckoned him.

"What do you want?" called Denver; then, receiving no answer, he strode impatiently up the street.

“Come in,” urged the Professor touching his nose for secrecy, “come in, I vant to show you some-t’ing.”

“Well, show it to me here,” answered Denver but the Professor drew him inside the house.

“You look oudt vat you do,” he warned mysteriously, “dem joompers are liable to see you.”

“I should worry,” said Denver and, whipping out the gun, he made the motions of fanning the hammer.

“Now, now,” reproved Diffenderfer drawing back in a panic; and then he laughed, but nervously.

“Well, what do you want to show me?” demanded Denver bluntly. “Hurry up now–I hear somebody coming.”

“Oh, nutting–come again!” exclaimed the Professor apprehensively. “Come to-morrow–I show you everyt’ing!”

“You’ll show me now,” returned Denver imperturbably, “I’m not afraid of the whole danged bunch. Come on, what have you got–a bottle?”

“Yoost a piece of copper from Murray’s tunnel–Mein Gott, I hear dem boys coming!”

He sprang to the door and dropped the heavy bar but Denver struck it up and stepped out.

“What the hell are you trying to do?” he demanded suspiciously and the door slammed to behind him.

“Run! Run!” implored the Professor staring out through his peep-hole but Denver lolled negligently against the house. A crowd of men, headed by Slogger Meacham, were coming down the street; but it was not for him to fly. He had a gun now, as well as they, and his back was against the wall. They could pass by or stop, according to their liking; but the show-down had come, there and now.

They came on in a bunch down the middle of the street, ignoring his watchful glances; but as the rest trampled past Slogger Meacham turned his head and came to a bristling halt.

“Well,” he said, “out for a little airing?” And the jumpers swung in behind him.

“Yes,” answered Denver regarding him incuriously and the Slogger moved a step or two closer.

“You start anything around here,” he went on significantly, “and you’ll be airing the smoke out of your clothes. We got your number, see, and we’re here to put your light out if you start to make a peep.”

“Is that so?” observed Denver still standing at a crouch and one or two of the men walked off.

“Come on, boys,” they said but Meacham stood glowering and Chatwourth stepped out in front of him. “I hear,” he said to Denver, “that you’ve been making your brag that you kin whip me with a handful of stones.”

“Never mind, now,” replied Denver, “I’m not looking for trouble. You go on and leave me alone.”

“I’ll go when I damned please!” cried Chatwourth in a passion and as he advanced on Denver the crowd behind him suddenly gave a concerted shove. Denver saw the surge coming and stepped aside to avoid it, undetermined whether to strike out or shoot; but as he was slipping away Slogger Meacham made a rush and struck him a quick blow in the neck. He whirled and struck back at him, the air was full of fists and guns, swung like clubs to rap him on the head; and then he went down with Meacham on top of him and a crashing blow ringing in his ears. When he came to his senses he was stripped and mauled and battered, and a stranger stood over him with a gun.

“You’re my prisoner,” he said and Denver sat up startled.

“Why–what’s the matter?” he asked looking about at the crowd that had gathered on the scene of the fight, “what’s the matter with that jasper over there?”

“He’s dead–that’s all,” answered the officer laughing shortly, “you hit him over the head with this gun.”

“I did not!” burst out Denver, “I never even drew it. Say, who is that fellow, anyway?”

“Name was Meacham,” returned the officer, “come on.”

CHAPTER XXVI
THE COURSE OF THE LAW

As he lay in his cell in the county jail at Moroni it was borne in upon Denver that he was caught in some great machine that ground out men as a mill grinds grain. It had laid a cold hand on him in the person of an officer of the law, it had inched him on further when a magistrate had examined him and Chatwourth and his jumpers had testified; and now, as he awaited his day in court, he wondered whither it was taking him. The magistrate had held him, the grand jury had indicted him–would the judge and jury find him guilty? And if so, would they send him to the Pen? His heart sank at that, for the name of "ex-convict" is something that cannot be laid. No matter what the crime or the circumstances of the trial, once a man is convicted and sent to prison that name can always be hurled at him–and Denver knew that he was not guilty.

He had no recollection of even drawing his gun, to say nothing of striking at Meacham; and yet Chatwourth and his gang would swear him into prison if something was not done to stop them. They had come before the magistrate all agreeing to the same story–that Denver had picked a fight with his old enemy, Meacham, and struck him over the head with his six-shooter. And then they showed Denver's pistol; the one he had borrowed from Bunker, all gory with hair and blood. It was a frame-up and he knew it, for they had all been striking at him and one of them had probably hit Meacham; but how was he to prove to the satisfaction of the court that Murray's hired gun-men were trying to hang him? His only possible witness was Professor Diffenderfer, and he would not testify to anything.

In his examination before the magistrate Denver had called upon the Professor to explain the cause of his being there; but Diffenderfer

had protested that he had been hiding in his cabin and knew nothing whatever about the fight. Yet if the facts could be proved, Denver had not gone up the street to shoot it out with the jumpers; he had gone at the invitation of this same Professor Diffenderfer who now so carefully avoided his eye. He had been called to the Professor's cabin to look at a specimen of the copper from Murray's tunnel; but as Denver thought it over a shrewd suspicion came over him that he had been lured into a well-planned trap. They had never been over-friendly so why should this Dutchman, after opposing him at every turn, suddenly beckon him up the street and into his cabin just as Chatwourth and his gang came down? And why, if he was innocent of any share in the plot, did Diffenderfer refuse to testify to the facts? Denver ground his teeth at the thought of his own impotence, shut up there like a dog in the pound. He was helpless, and his lawyer would do nothing.

The first thing he had done when he was brought to Moroni was to hire a second-rate lawyer but, after getting his money, the gentleman had spent his time in preparing some windy brief. What Denver needed was some witnesses, to swear to his good character, and Diffenderfer to swear to the facts; and no points of law were going to make a difference as long as the truth was suppressed. Old Bunk alone stood by him, though he could do little besides testifying to his previous good character. Day after day Denver lay in jail and sweated, trying to find some possible way out; but not until the morning before his trial did he sense the real meaning of it all. Then a visitor was announced and when he came to the bars he found Bible-Back Murray awaiting him.

"Good morning, young man," began Murray smiling grimly, "I was just passing by and I thought I'd drop in and talk over your case for a moment."

"Yes?" said Denver looking out at him dubiously, and the great man smiled again. He *was* a great man, as Denver had discovered to his sorrow, for no one in the country dared oppose him.

"I regret very much," went on Murray pompously, "to find you in this

position, and if there's anything I can do that is just and right I shall be glad to use my influence. We have, as you know, here in the State of Arizona one of the most enlightened governments in the country; and a word from me, if spoken in time, might possibly save you from conviction. Or, in case of conviction, our prison law is such that you might immediately be released under parole. But before I take any action—" he lowered his voice–"you might give me a quit-claim for that mine."

"Oh" said Denver, and then it was that the great ray of light came over him. He could see it all now, from Murray's first warning to this last bold demand for his mine; but two months in jail had broken his spirit and he hesitated to defy the county boss. His might be the hand that held Diffenderfer back, and it certainly was the one that paid Chatwourth; he controlled the county and, if what he said was true, had no small influence in the affairs of the state. And now he gave him the choice between going to prison or giving up the Silver Treasure.

"What is this?" inquired Denver, "a hold-up or a frame-up?"

"I don't know what you're talking about," answered Murray curtly, "but if you're still in a mood for levity—" He turned away but as Denver did not stop him he returned of his own will to the bars.

"Now see here," he said, "this has gone far enough, if you expect to keep out of prison. I came down here to befriend you and all I ask in return is a clear title to what is already mine. Perhaps you don't realize the seriousness of your position, but I tell you right now that no power on earth can save you from certain conviction. The District Attorney has informed me that he has an airtight case against you but, rather than see your whole life ruined, I am giving you this one, last chance. You are young and headstrong, and hardly realized what you were doing; and so I say, why not acknowledge your mistake and begin life over again? I have nothing but the kindest feelings towards you, but I can't allow my interests to be jeopardized. Think it over–can't you see it's for the best?"

"No, I can't," answered Denver, "because I never killed Meacham

and I don t believe any jury will convict me. If they do, I'll know who was behind it all and govern myself accordingly."

"Just a slight correction," put in Murray sarcastically, "you will not govern yourself at all. You will become a ward of the State of Arizona for the rest of your natural life."

"Well, that's all right then," burst out Denver, wrathfully, "but I can tell you one thing–you won't get no quit-claim for your mine. I'll lay in jail and rot before I'll come through with it, so you can go as far as you like. But if I ever get out–"

"That will do, young man," said Murray stepping back, "I see you're becoming abusive. Very well, let the law take its course."

He straightened up his wry neck, put his glass eye into place and stalked angrily out of the jail; and in the hard week that followed Denver learned what he meant, for the wheels of the law began to grind. First the District Attorney, in making his charge, denounced him like a mad-man; then he brought on his witnesses, a solid phalanx, and put them through their parts; and every point of law that Denver's attorney brought up he tore it to pieces in an instant. He knew more law in a minute than the lawyer would learn in a life-time, he could think circles around him and not try; and when Denver's witnesses were placed on the stand he cross-examined them until he nullified their testimony. Even grim-eyed Bunker Hill, after testifying to Denver's character, was compelled to admit that the first time he saw him he was engaged in a fight with Meacham. And so it went on until the jury filed back with a verdict of "Guilty of manslaughter."

Thus the law took its course over the body and soul of what had once been a man; and when it was over Denver Russell was a Number with eighteen years before him. Eighteen years more or less, according to his conduct, for the laws of the State of Arizona imposed an indeterminate sentence which might be varied to fit any case. As Murray had intimated, under the new prison law a man could be paroled the day after he was sentenced, though he were in for ninety-nine years. That was the law, and it was just, for no court is infallible

and injustice must be rectified somewhere. After the poor man and his poor lawyer had matched their puny wits against those of a fighting District Attorney then mercy must intervene in the name of society and equalize the sentence. For the District Attorney is hired by the county to send every man to prison, but no one is hired to defend the innocent or to balance the scales of justice.

Denver went to prison like any other prisoner, a rebel against society; but after a lonely day in his cell he rose up and looked about him. Here were men like himself–nay, old, hardened criminals–walking about in civilian clothes, and the gates opened up before them. They passed out of the walled yard and into the prison fields where there were cattle and growing crops; and they came back fresh and earthy, after hours of honest toil with no one to watch or guard them. It was the honor system which he had read about for years, but now he saw it working; and after a week he sent word to the Warden that he would give his word not to escape. That was all they asked of him, his word as a man; and a great hope came over him and soothed the deep wound that the merciless law had torn. He raised his head, that had been bowed on his breast, and the strength came back into his limbs; and when the Warden saw him with a sledge-hammer in his hands he smiled and sent him up to the road-camp.

CHAPTER XXVII
LIKE A HOG ON ICE

A month had wrought great changes in the life of Denver Russell, raising him up from a prisoner, locked up like a mad dog, to the boss of a gang of road-makers. He was free again, as far as bolts and bars were concerned; all that kept him to his place was the word he had given and his pride as an honest man. And now he was out, doing an honest man's work and building a highway for the state; and by the irony of fate the road he was improving was the one that led to Pinal. For time had wrought other changes while he lay in prison and the rough road up the canyon was swarming with traffic going and coming from Murray's camp. It was called "Murray" now, and a narrow-gauge railroad was being rushed to haul out the ore. Teams and motor trucks swung by, hauling in timbers and machinery, auto stages came and went like the wind; and old Mike McGraw, who had hauled all the freight for years, looked on in wonder and awe.

Yes, Murray was a live camp, a copper camp with millions of dollars behind it; and Bible-Back himself was a king indeed, for he had tapped the rich body of ore. It was his courage and aggressiveness that had made the camp, and the papers all sounded his praise; but still he was not satisfied and as he passed by Denver Russell he glanced at him almost appealingly. Here was a man he had broken in order to get his way, and his efforts had come to nothing; for the Silver Treasure lay idle, waiting the clearing of its title before the work could go on. And Denver Russell, swinging his double-jack on a drill, never once returned the glance. He was stiff-necked and stubborn, though Murray had sent intermediaries and practically promised to get him a parole.

A legal point had come up, after Denver had been imprisoned,

which Murray had failed to foresee; the fact that a convict is legally dead until he has served his term. He cannot transfer property or enter into a contract or transact any business whatever–nor, on the other hand, can his mining claims be jumped. As a ward of the State his property is held in trust until his term has expired. Then he gains back his identity, if not his citizenship; and with the passing of his number and the resumption of his name he can enter into contracts once more. Murray's lawyer had known all this, but Murray had not; and when he suggested a suit to quiet title to the Silver Treasure old Bible-Back received a great blow. After all his efforts he found himself balked–his work must even be undone. Denver Russell must be pardoned, or at least paroled, and as the price of his freedom he must give his word not to contest the title to his mine. No papers would be necessary, in fact they would not be legal; but if his word would prevent him from escaping from the road-camp it would keep him from claiming his mine.

Murray attended to the matter himself, for he was in a fever to begin work; and then Denver Russell struck back–he refused to apply for parole. Though he was pleasant and amenable, never breaking the prison rules and holding his gang to their duty, when the kindly parole clerk offered to present his case to the Board he had flatly and unconditionally refused. The smouldering fire of his resentment had blazed up and overmastered him as he sensed the hidden hand of his enemy, and he had cursed the black name of Murray. That was the beginning, and now when Murray passed, his glance was almost beseeching. The price of silver was going up, there were consolidation plans in sight, and Denver's claim apexed all the rest–Murray pocketed his pride and, after a word with the guard, drew Denver out of hearing of the gang.

"Mr. Russell," he said trying to appear magnanimous, "that offer of mine holds good. I'll get you a parole to-morrow if you'll give me a quit-claim to your claim."

"How can I give you a quit-claim?" inquired Denver defiantly, "a

convict can't give title to anything!"

"Just give me your word then," suggested Murray suavely and Denver laughed in his face.

"You glass-eyed old dastard," he burst out contemptuously, "I know what you're up to, too well. You're trying to get me paroled so you can take my mine away from me and I won't dare to raise a hand. But I'll fool you, old-timer; I'll just serve my term out and then–well, I'll get back my mine."

"Is that a threat?" demanded Murray but Denver only smiled and toyed with his heavy hammer. "Because if it is," went on Murray, "just for self-protection, I'll see that you don't get out."

"No, it isn't a threat," answered Denver quietly. "If I wanted to kill you I'd swing this sledge and knock you on the head, right now. No, I don't intend to kill you; but a man would be a sucker to play right into your hands."

"What do you mean?" asked Murray trying to argue the matter, but Denver refused to indulge him.

"Never mind," he said, "you railroaded me to the Pen', but by grab you can't get me out. I'll just show you I'm as independent as a hog on ice–if I can't stand up I'll lay down."

"Then you intend, just to spite me, to remain on in prison when you might be a free man to-morrow? I can't believe that–it doesn't seem reasonable."

"Well, I can't stand here talking," answered Denver impatiently and went off and left him staring.

It certainly was unbelievable that any reasoning creature should prefer confinement and disgrace to freedom, but the iron had burned deep into Denver's soul and his one desire now was revenge. He had been deprived of his property and branded a convict by this man who boasted of his powers; but, like a thrown mule, if he could not have his way he could at least refuse to get up. He was down and out; but by a miracle of Providence, a hitch in the wording of the law, the slave-driver Murray could not proceed with his chariot until this balky mule

got up. Denver knew his rights as a prisoner of the state and his status before the law; and bowed his head and took the beating stubbornly, punishing himself a hundred times over to thwart his enemy's plans. As he worked on the road old friends came by and tried to argue him out of his mood, even Bunker Hill suggested a compromise; but he only listened sulkily, a slow smile on his lips, a gleam of smouldering hatred in his eyes.

So the winter passed by and as spring came on the road-gang drew near to Murray. From the hills above their camp Denver could see the dumps and hoists, and the mill that was going up below, and as the ore-trains glided by on the newly finished narrow-gauge he picked up samples of the copper. It was the same as his vein, a brassy yellow chalcopyrites with chunks of red native copper, and he forgot the daily heart-ache and the ignominy of his task as he contemplated the wealth that awaited him. Yes, the mine was still his, though he was herded with common felons and compelled to build a road for Murray; it was his and the law would protect him, the same law that had sent him to prison. And he was a prisoner by choice now for both the warden and the parole clerk had recommended him heartily for parole.

They treated him like a friend, like a big, wrong-headed boy who was still sound and good at heart; and he knew that when he went to them and applied for a parole they would recommend it at once to the Board. But he was playing a deep game, one that had come to him suddenly when Murray had suggested a parole, for by refusing to accept his freedom he made the state his guardian and the receiver of his coveted property. It was safe, and he could wait; and when the time was ripe he could apply to the Governor for a pardon. A pardon would remove the taint of dishonor and restore him to honest citizenship; but a paroled man was known for an ex-con everywhere—he might as well be back in the road-gang. Yet it was hard on his pride when the automobiles rushed past and the passengers looked back and stared, it was hard to have the guard always watching the

gang for fear that some crook might decamp; and only the thought that he was working out his destiny gave him courage to play out his hand.

But how wonderfully had the prophecy of Mother Trigedgo been justified by the course of events! Not a year before he had come over the Globe trail in pursuit of Slogger Meacham, and had discovered the Place of Death. It rose before him now, a solid black wall, and within its shadow lay the mine of the prophecy, the precious Silver Treasure. He had chosen the silver treasure, and the yellow chalcopyrites had added its wealth of copper. And now he but awaited the end of his long ordeal and the reward of his courage and constancy. Both the silver and gold treasures were destined to be his; and Drusilla–but there he paused. Old Bunk had avoided him, Drusilla had not written; yet he had been careful not to reveal his affection. Not once had he asked for her, only once had he written; yet perhaps that one letter had defeated him. He had acknowledged his love, humbly admitted his faults, and begged her to try to forgive him. Even that might have cost him her love.

The spring came on warmer, all the palo verde trees burst out in masses of brilliant yellow, the mezquites hung out tassels of golden fuzz and the giant cactus donned its crown of orange blossoms. Even the iron-woods flaunted bloom and the barren, sandy washes turned green with six-weeks grass. It was a time when rabbits gamboled, when mockingbirds sang by moonlight and all the world turned young. Denver chafed at his confinement, one of his Mexicans broke his parole, the hobo miners went swinging past; and just as the last of his courage was waning Bunker Hill came riding down the road. He was on his big bay, yet not out after cattle–he was coming straight towards him. Denver caught his breath, and waited.

CHAPTER XXVIII
PAROLE

"Mornin', Denver," said Bunker Hill, "here's a letter that come for you–I forgot to send it down."

He fumbled in his pocket and Denver's heart stood still, but it was only his check from the smelter. He slipped it into his shirt without even glancing at the big total and looked up at Bunker expectantly.

"Well?" he prompted and Old Bunk twisted in the saddle before he began to talk.

"How much did you get for your shipment?" he inquired but Denver shrugged impatiently.

"What do I give a damn?" he demanded. "What's up? What you got on your mind?"

"Big stuff," replied Bunker, "but I want you to listen to me–they's no use running off at the head."

"Who's running off at the head? Go on and shoot your wad. Is it something about my mine?"

"Yes–and mine," answered Bunker. "I don't know whether you know it, but your property apexes the Lost Burro. And another thing, silver has gone up. But Pinal is just as dead as it was a year ago. The whole camp is waiting on you."

"Well, what do you want me to do? Get a parole and give Murray my mine?"

"No, just get a parole–and then we'll get you a pardon. I'll tell you, Denver, the Dutchman has begun to talk and it seems he saw your fight. He's told several people that you never pulled your gun, just struck out at the crowd with your fists. And if hints and winks count for anything with him he knows who it was that killed Meacham. He says he was hit from behind. I've tried everything, Denver, to make that

Dutchman talk or put something down on paper; but he's scared so bad of Murray, and mebbe of his gun-men, that he won't say a word, unless he's drunk. Now here's the proposition–old Murray has had you railroaded, and he's sure going to squeeze you until you let go of that claim. Why not sell out for a good price, if he'll make the Professor talk and help get you a pardon from the Governor? You know the Governor, he'll pardon most anybody, but you've got to give him some excuse. Well, the Professor has got the evidence to get you out to-morrow–if Murray will just tell him to talk."

"What d'ye call a good price?" inquired Denver suspiciously. "Did Murray put you up to this?"

"No!" snapped Bunker, "but he named ten thousand dollars as the most he could possibly give. He owns the Colonel Dodge's interest in the Lost Burro Mining Company now."

"Your pardner, eh?" sneered Denver. "Well, where would I get off if I took this friendly tip? I'd lose my mine, that's worth a million, at least; and get ten thousand dollars and a parole. A paroled man can't locate a claim–nor an ex-convict, neither. The Silver Treasure is the last claim that I'll ever get; and I'm going to hold onto it, by grab!"

"You're crazy," declared Bunker, "didn't I say we'd get you a pardon? Well, a pardon restores you to citizenship–you can locate all the claims you want."

"Yes, sure; *if* I'm pardoned! But I know that danged Dutchman–he wouldn't turn a hand to get me out of the Pen' if you'd give him a hundred thousand dollars. He's got it in for me, for not buying his claim when I took the Silver Treasure from you; and more'n that, he's afraid of me, because if I ever get out–"

"Oh, don't be a dammed fool all the rest of your life," burst out Bunker Hill impatiently. "If you'd quiet down a little and quit fighting your head, maybe your friends would be able to help you. I might as well tell you that I've been to the Governor and told him the facts of the case; and he's practically promised, if the Professor will come through, to give you a full pardon with citizenship. Now be reasonable,

Denver, and quit trying to whip the world, and we'll get you out of this jack-pot. Give old Murray your mine–you can never law it away from him–and take your ten thousand dollars; then move to another camp and make a fresh start where there's nobody working against you. Of course I'm Murray's pardner–he put one over on me–but at the same time I reckon I'm your friend. Now there's the proposition and you can take it or leave it–I ain't going to bother you again."

"Nope, it don't look good to me," answered Denver promptly, "there's too many ifs and ands. And I'll stay here till I rot before Bible-Back Murray will ever get that mine from *me*. He hired that bunch of gun-men to jump my claim twice when he had no title to the mine, and then he hired Chatwourth and Slogger Meacham to get me in the door and kill me. They made a slight mistake and got the wrong man, then sent me to the Pen' for murder. That's the kind of a dastard you've got for a pardner but you can tell him I'll never give up. I'll fight till I die, and if I ever get out—"

"Yes, there you go again," burst out Bunker Hill bitterly, "you ain't got the brain of a mule. If I wasn't to blame for loaning you that gun and leaving you out of my sight, I'd pass up your case for good. But I didn't have no better sense than to slip you my old six-shooter, and now Mrs. Hill can't hardly git over it so I'll give you another try. My daughter, Drusilla, is coming home next week and she hasn't even heard about this trouble. Now–are you going to stay here and meet her as a convict, or will you come and meet her like a gentleman. This ain't my doin's–I'd see you in hell, first–but Mrs. Hill says when you get out on parole we'll be glad to receive you as our guest."

Denver stopped and considered, smiling and frowning by turns, but at last he shook his head mournfully.

"No," he muttered, "what will she care for a poor ex-con? No, I'm down and out," he went on to Bunker, "and she'll hear about it, anyhow. It's too late now to pretend I'm a gentleman–my number has burned in like a brand. All these other prisoners know me and they'll turn me up anywhere; if I go to the China Coast one of 'em would

show up, sooner or later, and bawl me out for a convict. No, I'm ruined as a gentleman, and old Murray did it; but by God, if I live, I'll teach him to regret it–and he won't make a dollar out of me. That claim is tied up till John D. Rockefeller himself couldn't get it away from me now; and it'll lay right there until I serve out my sentence or get a free pardon from the Governor. I won't agree to anything and—"

He stopped abruptly and looked away, after which he reached out his hand.

"Well, much obliged, Bunk," he said, trying to smile, "I'm sorry I can't accommodate you. Just thank Mrs. Hill for what she has done and–and tell her I'll never forget it."

He went back to his work and old Bunk watched him wonderingly, after which he rode solemnly away. Then the road-making dragged on–clearing away brush, blasting out rock, filling in, grading up, making the crown–but now the road-boss was absent minded and oblivious and his pride in the job was gone. He let the men lag and leave rough ends, and every few moments his eyes would stray away and look down the canyon for the stage. And as the automobiles came up he scanned the passengers hungrily–until at last he saw Drusilla. There was the fluttering of a veil, the flash of startled eyes, a quick belated wave, and she was gone. Denver stood in the road, staring after her blankly, and then he threw down his pick.

"Send me back to the Pen'" he said to the guard, "I'm going to apply for parole."

CHAPTER XXIX
THE INTERPRETATION THEREOF

After all his suffering, his oaths, his refusals, his rejection of each friendly offer, Denver had changed his mind in the fraction of a second when he saw Drusilla whirl past. He forgot his mine, the fierce battles, the prophecy–all he wanted was to see her again. Placed on his honor for the trip he started down the road, walking fast when he failed to catch a ride, and early the next morning he reported at the prison to apply for an immediate parole. But luck was against him and his heart died in his breast, for the Board of Prison Directors had met the week before and would not meet again for three weeks. Three weeks of idle waiting, of pacing up and down and cursing the slow passage of time; and then, perhaps, delays and disappointments and obstructions from Bible-Back Murray. He sat with bowed head, then rose up suddenly and wrote a brief letter to Murray.

"Get me a pardon," he scrawled, "and I'll give you a quit-claim. This goes, if you do it quick."

He put it in the mail, with a special delivery stamp, and watched the endless hours creep by. She was there in Pinal, running her scales, practicing her exercises, singing arias from the operas at night; and he was shut in by the gray concrete walls where the guards looked down from the towers. He could not trust himself now outside of the yard, his nerve was gone and he would head for Pinal like a homing bird to its mate. And then it came, quicker than he had ever thought or hoped for, though he had offered the Silver Treasure in return for it–a full pardon from the Governor, with his citizenship restored and a letter expressing confidence in his innocence. Denver clutched it to his

breast and started out across the desert with his eyes on distant Pinal.

It lay in the shadow of Apache Leap, that blue wall that loomed to the east, and he hardly stopped to shake hands with the Warden in his haste to get out on the road. There he stopped the first automobile that was going up the canyon and demanded a ride as his right, and so earnest was his manner that the driver took him in and even speeded up his machine. But at the fork of the ways, where the new road turned off to Murray, Denver thanked him and got off to walk. The sun was low but he did not hurry–he had begun to doubt his welcome. A hot shame swept over him at his convict's shirt, his worn shoes and battered hat; and he wondered suddenly if it was not all a mistake, if he had not thrown his mine away. She was an opera singer now, returning from a season which must have given her a taste of success–what use would she have for him?

Up the wash to the west, where the automobile road went, a big camp had sprung up in his absence; but when he topped the hill and gazed down on Pinal nothing had changed, it was just the same. The street was broad and empty, the houses still in ruins, his cave still there across the creek; and from the chimney of Bunker's house a column of smoke mounted up to show that supper was being cooked. Yes, it was the same old town that he had entered the year before when Old Bunk had taken him for a hobo; but now he was hobo and ex-convict both, though the pardon had restored him to citizenship. His broad shoulders drooped, he turned back and crossed the creek and slunk like a thief to his cave.

The door was chained but he wrenched it open and slipped in out of sight. Bunker Hill had closed up the cave and covered all his things, and his bed was spread with clean, white sheets; the floor was swept and the dishes washed, and he knew whose hands had done it. It was Mrs. Hill's, that kindest of all women; who had even invited him to their home. Denver started a fire and cooked a hasty supper from the canned goods that were left in his boxes and then he looked down on

the town. The sun had set now and a single bright star glowed solemnly in the west, but the valley was silent except for the frogs that made the air palpitate with their chorus. Old Bunk came out and went over to the store; someone struck a chord in the house, and as Denver listened hungrily a voice rose up, clear and flute-like, yet somehow changed.

It was her's, it was Drusilla's, and yet it was not; the year had made a change. There was a difference in her singing; a new note of tenderness, of yearning, of sadness, of love. Yes, he recognized it now, it had the quality of the Cradle Song that she had listened to so enviously on his phonograph. She had caught it, at last, that secret, subtle something which gives Schumann-Heink her power; and which comes only from love–and suffering. Denver rose up, startled; he had not thought of it before, but Drusilla must have suffered, too. Not as tragically as he but in other ways, fighting her way against the whole world. He went in hastily and lit his lamp but even when he was dressed his courage failed him and he bowed his head on the table. He dared not face her–now.

The singing had ceased, the frog chorus seemed to mock him, to din his convict's shame into his ears; but as he yielded to despair a hand fell on his shoulders and he looked up to see Drusilla. She was more beautiful than ever, dressed in the soft yellow gown that she had worn when first he saw her, but her eyes were reproachful and near to tears and she drew her hand away.

"What is it?" she asked. "Can't you ever care for me? Must I make every single advance? Oh, Denver, after I'd come clear home to see you–why wouldn't you come down to the house?"

He roused up startled, unable to comprehend her, his mind in a whirl of emotions.

"I was afraid you didn't want me," he said at last and she sank down on the bench beside him.

"Not want you?" she repeated. "Why, haven't I done everything to get you out of prison? Didn't I go to the Professor and beg and plead

with him and sing all my German songs; didn't I go to the Governor and take him with me, and go through everything to have you pardoned?"

"Pardoned!" burst out Denver and then he stopped and shook his head regretfully. "No," he said, "I wish you had, though. I traded my mine for it–to Murray!"

"Why, Denver!" she cried, "you did nothing of the kind. I got you that pardon myself! And then, after all that–and after I'd played, and sung, and waited for you–you wouldn't even come down to see me!"

"Why, sure I would!" he protested brokenly, "I'd do anything for you, Drusilla! But I was afraid you wouldn't want me. I've been in prison, you know, and it makes a difference. They call me an ex-con now."

"No, but Denver," she entreated, "surely you didn't think–why, we *asked* you to come and stay with us."

"Yes, I know," he said but the sullen look had come back; he could not forget so soon. "I know," he went on, "but it wouldn't be right–I guess we've made a mistake. I wanted to see you, Drusilla; I gave everything I had, just to get here before you went–"

"Did you really?" she asked taking him gently by the hand and looking deep into his eyes, "did you give up your mine–for me?"

"Just to see you," answered Denver, "but after I got here–"

"Oh, I'm so glad!" she sighed, "and you haven't lost your mine. I got to the Governor first."

"You did?" he cried and then he sat up and the old fire came back into his eyes. "That's right," he laughed, "you must have beat him to it–I thought that pardon came quick! This'll cost old Murray a million."

"No, you haven't lost your mine," she went on, smiling curiously. "You think a lot of it, don't you?"

"Well, I don't know," grumbled Denver, "whether I do or not now. I believe that mine was a Jonah. I believe I made a mistake and chose the wrong treasure–I should have taken the gold."

"Oh, Denver!" she beamed, "do you really think so? I've always just hated that mine. I've always had the feeling that you thought more of it

than you did of me–or anybody."

"Well, I did," confessed Denver, "it seemed to kind of draw me–to make me forget everything else. And Drusilla, I'm sorry I didn't come down–that night when you went away."

"It was the mine," she frowned, "I believe it was accursed. It always came between us. But you must sell it now, and not work for a while–I want you to entertain me."

"I'll do it!" exclaimed Denver, "I'll sell out for what I can get and then we can be together. How did you get along on your trip?"

"Oh, fine!" she burst out radiantly, "Oh, I had such *luck*. I was only the understudy, and doing minor parts, when the soprano was taken ill in the second act and I went in and scored a triumph. It was 'Love Tales of Hoffmann' and when I sang the 'Barcarolle' they recalled me seven times! That is they recalled us both–it's sung as a duet, you know."

"Um," nodded Denver and listened in glum silence as she related the details of her premier. "And how about those tenors?" he asked at last, "did any of 'em steal my kiss?"

"No–or that is–well, we won't talk about that now. But of course I have to act my parts."

"Oh, sure, sure!" he answered rebelliously and a triumphant twinkle came into her eyes.

"Do you still believe in the prophecy?" she asked, "and in all that Mother Trigedgo told you? Because if you do, I've got some news–you won't die until you're past eighty."

"I won't?" challenged Denver and then he stopped and waited as she smiled back at him mischievously.

"She's a nice old woman," went on Drusilla demurely, "but I wouldn't take her too seriously. She told me, for instance, that I'd give up a great career in order to marry for love. Yes, I went over to see her, myself."

"But what about me?" demanded Denver eagerly, "did she say I'd live till I was eighty?"

"Yes, she did; and she told me some other things, including the color of your eyes. But don't you see, Denver, that you made a mistake when you took what she said so seriously? Why, you wouldn't even speak to me or let us be friends for fear that I'd rise up and kill you; and now it appears that it was all a mistake and you're going to live till you're eighty."

"Well, all the same," responded Denver sighing and stretching his great arms, "I'm awful glad she said it. And a man could live to be eighty and still be killed by his friend. No, I believe that prophecy was true!"

"Very well," she assented, "but you don't need to worry about our friendship, and that's the principal thing. I just did it to set your mind at rest."

"Yes, it *was* true," he went on rousing up from a reverie, "but I was wrong–I should have taken the gold."

"Is that all you think of?" she asked impatiently, "is there nothing but silver and gold?"

"Yes, there is," he acknowledged, "but–say, Drusilla I'm going to buy out the Dutchman. I believe that stringer of his is rich."

"What stringer?" she demanded looking up from her own musings and then she nodded and sighed. "Yes, I know," she said, "you're back at your mining–but you promised you'd think only of me. I may not be here long and you want to be nice to me; because I almost hated you, once. Now listen, Denver, and let *me* interpret–don't you know you've got everything wrong?"

"No!" declared Denver, "it has all come out perfectly. I've lived clear through it, already. Only I chose the wrong treasure and so I lost them both and suffered a great disgrace. I should have taken the gold."

"No; listen Denver," she went on patiently, "and don't always be thinking of *things*. A golden treasure isn't necessarily of gold, it might be even–me."

"You?" echoed Denver and then he clutched his hands and stared about him wildly.

“Why, yes,” she answered evenly, “haven’t you noticed my hair? Other men are not so blind–and one of them said it reminded him of fine-spun gold. Yes, I was the golden treasure in the shadow of Apache Leap, but all you could think of was mines. The mine was your silver treasure, and you had to choose between us–and you always chose the mine. No matter how I sang, or did up my hair or came around where you were at work; you always went into that black, hateful hole, and I used to go home and cry. But–no, listen, Denver–when you saw me come back, and you wanted to see me, and there was no other way to do it; then you threw away your mine and told Murray to take it–and I knew that you really loved me. You loved me even more than your mine, and so you won us both. Do you like your golden treasure?”

“I was a fool!” moaned Denver but she stroked his rumpled hair and raised his face from his hands.

“We’ve both of us been foolish,” she whispered, “I nearly hated you once, and nearly gave your kiss to a tenor. But–oh Denver, I’ll never sing with those men again! I know you wouldn’t like it.”

“No, I wouldn’t,” he admitted, “and if you’ll only—”

“There it is,” she interrupted, giving him the long-treasured kiss. “I saved it just for you.”

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