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GLEN OF THE HIGH NORTH

by

H. A. CODY

Author of "The Frontiersman," "The Lost Patrol,"
"The Chief of the Ranges," "The Touch of Abner," etc.

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1920

To

ALL TRUE MEN AND WOMEN

Of the Outer Trails of the Yukon,

Where for Years the Author Lived and Travelled,

This Book is Affectionately Dedicated.

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"Something lost beyond the Ranges,
Lost; and calling to you. Go."

KIPLING

"She had grown, in her unstained seclusion, bright and pure as a first opening lilac, when it spreads its clear leaves to the sweetest dawn of May."

PERCIVAL

GLEN OF THE HIGH NORTH

CHAPTER I

ONE FLEETING VISION

It all happened in less than two minutes, and yet in that brief space of time his entire outlook upon life was changed. He saw her across the street standing upon the edge of the sidewalk facing the throng of teams and motors that were surging by. She had evidently attempted to cross, but had hurriedly retreated owing to the tremendous crush of traffic. The gleam of the large electric light nearby brought into clear relief a face of more than ordinary charm and beauty. But that which appealed so strongly to the young man was the mingled expression of surprise, fear and defiance depicted upon her countenance. It strangely affected him, and he was on the point of springing forward to offer his assistance when she suddenly disappeared, swallowed up in the great tide of humanity.

For a few minutes the young man stood perfectly still, gazing intently upon the spot where the girl had been standing, hoping to see her reappear. He could not account for the feeling that had swept upon him at the sight of that face. It was but one of the thousands he daily beheld, yet it alone stirred him to his inmost depths. A few minutes before he had been walking along the street without any definite aim in life, listless and almost cynical. But now a desire possessed him to be up and doing, to follow after the fair vision which had so unexpectedly appeared. Who could she be, and where was she going? Should he ever see her again, and if he did would he have the slightest chance of meeting and talking with her?

These thoughts occupied his mind as he continued on his way. He walked erect now, with shoulders thrown back, and with a more buoyant step than he had taken in many a day. His blood tingled and his eyes glowed with a new-found light. He felt much of the old thrill that had animated him at the beginning of the Great War, and had sent him overseas to take his part in the titanic struggle. An overmastering urge had then swept upon him, compelling him to abandon all on behalf of the mighty cause. It was his nature, and the leopard could no more change its spots than could Tom Reynolds overcome the influence of a gripping desire. Ever since childhood thought and action had always been welded in the strong clear heat of an overwhelming purpose. It had caused him considerable trouble, but at the same time it had carried him through many a difficult undertaking that had daunted other men. It was only the afterwards that affected him, the depression, when the objective had been attained. So for months after the war ended his life had seemed of no avail, and he found it impossible to settle comfortably back into the grooves of civilian life in a bustling, thriving city. Everything seemed tame and insignificant after what he had experienced overseas. Time instead of lessening had only increased this feeling, until Reynolds believed that he could no longer endure the prosaic life of the city. Such was the state of his mind when he beheld the face across the street, which in some mysterious manner gave him a sudden impulse and a new outlook upon the world. After a short quick

walk, he turned into a side street and stopped at length before a building from which extended a large electric sign, bearing the words *Telegram* and *Evening News*. He entered, and at once made his way through several rooms until he reached the editorial office at the back of the building. The door was open, and seated at the desk was an elderly man, busily writing. He looked up as Reynolds appeared, and a smile illumined his face.

"You are back early, Tom. Found something special?"

"Yes," Reynolds replied as he sat down upon the only vacant chair the office contained. "But nothing for publication."

The editor pushed back his papers, swung himself around in his chair and faced the visitor.

"What is it, Tom?" he asked. "You look more animated than I have seen you for many a day. What has come over you? What is the special something you have found?"

"Myself."

"Yourself!"

"That's just it. I'm through with this job."

The editor eyed the young man curiously yet sympathetically. He was to him as a son, and he had done everything in his power to help him since his return from the war. But he was well aware that Reynolds was not happy, and that newspaper work was proving most uncongenial.

"Where are you going, Tom, and what are you going to do?" he presently asked.

"I have not the slightest idea, sir. But I must get away from this hum-drum existence. It is killing me by inches. I need adventure, life in the open, where a man can breathe freely and do as he likes."

"Haven't you done about as you like, Tom, since you came home? I promised your father on his death-bed that I would look after you, and I have tried to do so in every possible way. I sincerely hoped that your present work would suit you better than in an office. You are free to roam where you will, and whatever adventure has taken place in this city during the past six months you were in the midst of it, and wrote excellent reports, too."

"I know that, sir, and I feel deeply indebted to you for what you have done. But what does it all amount to? What interest do I take in trouble along the docks, a fight between a couple of toughs in some dark alley, or a fashionable wedding in one of the big churches? Bah! I am sick of them all, and the sooner I get away the better."

Reynolds produced a cigarette, lighted it and threw the match upon the floor. From the corner of his eye he watched the editor as he toyed thoughtfully with his pen. This man was nearer to him than anyone else in the world, and he was afraid that he had annoyed him by his plain outspoken words.

"And you say you have nothing in view?" the editor at length enquired.

"Nothing. Can you suggest anything? Something that will tax all my energy of mind and body. That is what I want. I hope you do not misunderstand me, sir. I do not wish to seem ungrateful for what you have done."

"I do understand you, Tom, and were I in your position, and of your age, I might feel the same. But what about your painting? Have you lost all interest in that? When you were in France you often wrote what impressions you were getting, and how much you intended to do when you came home."

"I have done very little at that, and the sketches I made are still uncompleted. Some day I may do something, but not now."

"You certainly have lost all interest, Tom, in the things that once gave you so much pleasure."

"It is only too true, although I have honestly tried to return to the old ways. But I must have a fling at something else to get this restless feeling out of my system. What do you suggest! Perhaps it is only a thrashing I need. That does children good sometimes."

The editor smiled as he pulled out a drawer in his desk, and brought forth a fair-sized scrapbook. He slowly turned the pages and stopped at length where a large newspaper clipping had been carefully pasted.

"I do not think you need a thrashing, Tom," he began. "But I believe I can suggest something better

than that. Here is an entry I made in this book over fifteen years ago, and the story it contains appeals strongly to me now. I read it at least once a year, and it has been the cause of many a day-dream to me, and night-dream as well, for that matter. Did you ever hear of the mysterious disappearance of Henry Redmond, the wealthy merchant of this city? But I suppose not, as you were young at the time."

"No, I never heard of him," Reynolds acknowledged. "Was he killed?"

"Oh, no. He merely disappeared, and left no trace at all. That was, as I have just said, over fifteen years ago, and no word has been received from him since."

"What was the trouble? Financial difficulties?"

"Not at all. He simply disappeared. It was due to his wife's death, so I believe. They were greatly attached to each other, and when she suddenly died Redmond was a broken-hearted man. I knew him well and it was pathetic to watch him. He took no interest in his business, and sold out as soon as possible. Then he vanished, and that was the last we heard of him. He was an odd man in many ways, and although one of the shrewdest men in business I ever knew, he was fond of the simple life. He was a great reader, and at one time possessed a very fine library. This article which I wish you to read tells the story of his life, how he built up his business, and of his sudden disappearance."

"How do you know he wasn't killed?" Reynolds asked.

"Because of this," and the editor laid his forefinger upon a small separate clipping at the bottom of the larger one. A short time after Redmond disappeared, and when the excitement of all was intense, this was received and published. Although it bore no name, yet we well know that it was from Redmond, for it was just like something he would do. This is what he wrote:

"I go from the busy haunts of men, far from the bustle and worry of business life. I may be found, but only he who is worthy will find me, and whoever finds me, will, I trust, not lose his reward. From the loopholes of retreat I shall watch the stress and fever of life, but shall not mingle in the fray."

"Queer words, those," Reynolds remarked, when the editor had finished reading. "What do you make of them?"

"I hardly know, although I have considered them very carefully. I believe they contain a hidden meaning, and that the finding will consist of more than the mere discovery of his person. It must refer to something else, some quality of heart or mind, that is, the real personality behind the mere outward form."

"A double quest, eh, for anyone who undertakes the venture?"

"It seems so, Tom, and that makes it all the more difficult. But what an undertaking! How I wish I were young again, and I should be off to-morrow. I was a fool not to make the try fifteen years ago. I would not now be chained to this desk, I feel certain of that."

"And as you cannot go yourself, you want——?" Reynolds paused and looked quizzically at the editor.

"I want you to go in my stead," was the emphatic reply. "You are young, strong, and anxious for adventure."

"For what purpose, sir? Why do you wish me to undertake this wild-goose chase? For such it seems to me."

"I wish you to go for three reasons. First, for your own good; as an outlet to your abundant energy, and to give you some object in life. Next, to satisfy a curiosity that has been consuming me for years. I am more than anxious to know what has become of Henry Redmond. And finally, for the sake of my paper. If you should prove successful, what a write-up it will make, for you will have a wonderful story to tell. Doesn't the thing appeal to you? Why, it makes my blood tingle at the thought of such an undertaking."

"It does stir me a bit," Reynolds acknowledged. "But where am I to go? Have you any idea where Redmond is? The world is big, remember, and without any clue, the chase would be absolute folly."

"I am well aware of all that. I have no idea where Redmond is, and that makes the venture all the more interesting. If I could tell you where he is, and you merely went and found him, bah! that would not be worth the trouble. But the uncertainty of it all is what appeals to me. The whole world is before you, and somewhere in the world I believe Henry Redmond is living. Your task is to find him. Can you do it?"

For a few minutes Reynolds did not speak. He was interested, but the undertaking seemed so utterly hopeless and ridiculous that he hesitated. If he had the slightest clue as to the man's whereabouts it would be different.

"How old a man was Redmond when he disappeared?" he at length asked.

"About fifty, I understand, although he appeared much older at times. He was a fine looking man, over six feet in height, and a large head, crowned with a wealth of hair streaked with gray, when last I saw him. His commanding appearance attracted attention wherever he went, and that should aid you somewhat in your search."

"Had he any family?" Reynolds questioned.

"One little girl only, for he married late in life. His friends thought that he would remain a permanent bachelor, and they were greatly surprised when he unexpectedly took to himself a wife much younger than himself, and very beautiful. They lived most happily together, and when his wife died Redmond was heartbroken."

"Perhaps her death affected his mind," Reynolds suggested.

"I have thought of that, and his sudden disappearance, as well as the peculiar letter I read to you, lends color to the idea."

"What became of the child?"

"No one knows. He evidently took her with him, and that is another reason why I believe no harm befell him as you suggested. The whole affair is involved in the deepest mystery."

"And did no one attempt to solve it?" Reynolds asked. "Was no effort made to find the missing man?"

"There was at the time, and the newspapers far and near made mention of his disappearance. It was the talk of the city for several weeks, and I understand that several men thought seriously of searching for him. But the interest gradually waned, and he was forgotten except by a few, of whom I am one."

Reynolds rose to his feet and picked up his hat.

"Suppose I think this over for a few days?" he suggested. "If I get the fever I shall let you know. In the meantime I shall plug away at my present job. I can't afford to be idle, for 'idleness is the holiday of fools,' as someone has said."

"That's fine, Tom," and the editor's face brightened with pleasure. "And, remember, you shall be supplied with all the money you need, so do not worry about that."

"Thank you, but I have a little of my own that will last me for a while. When I run through with it I may call upon you."

"Very well, do as you like, Tom. But think it over and let me know of your decision as soon as possible."

CHAPTER II

WHEN THE FOG-BANK LIFTED

The *Northern Light* was lying at her wharf preparing for her long run to the far Northern Pacific, through the numerous islands studding the coastal waters of British Columbia, and the United States Territory of Alaska. All day long she had been taking on board great quantities of freight, and now on the eve of her departure passengers were arriving. The latter were mostly men, for new gold diggings had been discovered back in the hills bordering the Yukon River, and old-timers were flocking northward, anticipating another Klondyke, and all that it might mean.

Tom Reynolds stood on the wharf noting the excitement that was taking place around him. Apart from the article he would prepare for the next day's issue of *The Telegram*; he was more than usually interested in what he beheld. As he watched several bronzed and grizzly veterans of many a long trail

and wild stampede, a desire entered into his heart to join them in their new adventure. He would thus find excitement enough to satisfy his restless nature, and perhaps at the same time share in the golden harvest.

This longing, however, was held in check by the thought of the story he had heard the evening before, and also by the hope of seeing again the face he had beheld for a few fleeting seconds at the street crossing. In fact, he had thought more of it than of the mysterious disappearance of Henry Redmond. For the greater part of the night and all the next day the girl had been in his mind. He tried to recall something more about her, the color of her hair, how she was dressed, and whether she was tall or short. But he could remember nothing except the face which alone stood out clear and distinct. Several times during the day he had been on the point of transferring his impressions to paper, but he always deferred action, preferring to muse upon the beautiful vision he had seen and to dream of meeting her again. She must still be in the city, he reasoned, and should he go away now his chance of finding her would be lost forever. That he would find her he had not the slightest doubt, for among the crowds that passed daily along the streets he would surely see her, and when he did—well, he was not certain what would happen. Anyway, he would know more about her than at present. He was standing watching an old man with a long gray beard and wavy hair falling below a broad-brimmed slouch hat. He was evidently a prospector, for he bore a good-sized pack across his right shoulder, and was dressed as if for the trail, with a pair of coarse boots upon his feet. His figure was commanding, almost patriarchal, and Reynolds watched him with much interest as he walked stately and deliberately up the gangway.

As Reynolds turned from his observation of the old man, he gave a great start, and his heart beat wildly, for there but a few feet from him was the very girl he had seen at the street crossing. She had just alighted from an hotel auto, and was pointing out her baggage to one of the cabin boys when Reynolds noticed her. He leaned eagerly forward to catch the sound of her voice, but the noise around him made this impossible. But he had a chance to feast his eyes upon her face, and to note her neat dark-brown travelling suit which fitted so perfectly her well-built erect figure. She was of medium height, and carried herself with complete assurance as one well accustomed to travel. She was apparently alone, for no one accompanied her as she presently went on board the steamer.

Reynolds was all alert now, and his old-time enthusiasm returned. She was going north, and why should not he go too? Once more thought and action became welded, and finding that it would be three-quarters of an hour before the steamer's departure, he hurried back to his boarding house, gathered together his few belongings, including his artist's outfit, thrust them into a grip, settled his board bill, and almost raced to the *Telegram* and *Evening News* building, where he found the editor who had just arrived for his nightly duties.

"I am off at once," he announced. "How will that suit you?"

"Good for you!" was the pleased reply. "Decided upon the Great Quest, eh?"

"Yes, all settled, and away in twenty minutes."

"Where to?"

"Up north, to the edge of nowhere. How will that do?"

"Found a clue?" The editor was quite excited now.

"All the clue I need," was the evasive reply. "I shall write as soon as possible, telling of my wanderings. So, good-by; I must be away."

"Have you enough money?" The editor was on his feet now, grasping the young man's hand in a firm grip.

"Yes, all that's necessary for the present. If I need more I shall let you know."

An hour later the *Northern Light* was steaming steadily on her way. Reynolds had been fortunate enough to obtain an upper berth, his roommate being a young clerk destined for a branch bank in a northern mining town. Reynolds strolled about the boat hoping to catch a glimpse of her who was much in his mind, but all in vain. It rained hard most of the next day, and the outside decks were uncomfortable. It was toward evening that he saw her, walking slowly up and down the hurricane deck abaft the funnel. She was with the captain, a fine looking, middle-aged man, and they seemed to be on very friendly terms, for the girl was smiling at something her companion was saying.

Reynolds lighted a cigar and began to pace up and down on the opposite side of the deck. Others were doing the same, so no one paid any heed to his presence. A casual observer might have thought

that the silent young man took no interest in anything around him. But Reynolds missed hardly a movement of the girl but a few feet away. He always kept a short distance behind and was thus able to study her closely without attracting attention. She wore a raincoat, of a soft light material, and her head was bare. The wind played with her dark-brown hair, and occasionally she lifted her hand and brushed back a wayward tress that had drifted over her forehead. At times he caught a glimpse of her face as she swung around at the end of the beat, and it was always a happy, animated face he beheld.

For about fifteen minutes this walk was continued, and Reynolds had been unable to distinguish any of the conversation between the two. But as they ended their promenade, and started to go below, they almost brushed him in passing, and he heard the captain say, "Jack will be home soon, and he will——" That was all Reynolds was able to overhear, and yet it was sufficient to cause him to stop so abruptly that he nearly collided with a man a few steps behind. Was all that talk about Jack? he asked himself, and was that why the girl seemed so happy in listening to her companion? Was Jack the captain's son, and did he have the first claim upon the girl? Perhaps he was overseas, and was expected home shortly. No doubt the girl had been visiting his people.

Such an idea had not occurred to Reynolds before, but as he thought it all over that night as he sat silent in the smoking-room, it did indeed seem most reasonable. Why should he think any more about the girl? he mused. He had been a fool for allowing his heart to run away with his head. How could he for one instant imagine that such a girl would be left until now without many admiring suitors, with one successful over all the others? And no doubt that one was Jack, whose name had fallen from the captain's lips.

Although Reynolds felt that the girl was not for him, yet he could not banish her from his mind. She had aroused him from the paralysis of indifference, for which he was most grateful. He would make a desperate effort not to be again enmeshed in such a feeling. He would throw himself ardently into the search for gold, and then turn his attention to Henry Redmond, and strive to solve the mystery surrounding the man.

After breakfast the next morning he went out on deck, and found the girl already there comfortably seated in a large steamer chair. She had evidently been reading, but the book was now lying open upon her lap, and her hands were clasped behind her head. Reynolds caught the gleam of a jewel on one of her fingers, and he wondered if it was an engagement ring she was wearing. Her eyes were looking dreamily out across the water, away to a great fog-bank hanging and drifting over the face of the deep. Reynolds, too, looked, and the sight held him spellbound. The mass of fog slowly rose and rolled across the newly-bathed sun. Then it began to dissolve, and dim forms of trees and islands made their appearance, growing more distinct moment by moment. The scene fascinated him. It was truly a fairy world upon which he was looking.

And as he looked, his eyes rested upon a dark speck just beneath the overhanging fog. For a few minutes it made no impression upon his wandering mind. But slowly he began to realize that the object was in motion, and moving toward the steamer. Then he saw something dark being waved as if to attract attention. He was all alert now, feeling sure that someone was hailing the steamer. In a few minutes she would be past, when it would be too late to be of any assistance.

Turning almost instinctively toward the pilot-house, Reynolds' eyes fell upon the captain, who was again talking to the girl. Only for an instant did he hesitate, and then walking rapidly along the deck, he reached the captain's side and touched him lightly upon the arm.

"Excuse me, sir," he began, as the officer wheeled suddenly around. "Someone seems to be signaling to you over there, just where that fog-bank is lifting," and he pointed with his finger.

The captain and the girl both turned, and their eyes scanned the watery expanse.

"Can you see anything, Glen?" the captain asked. "My eyes must be failing me."

"I do now," was the reply. "Over there to the left," and she motioned with her hand. "I see it quite plainly. It is a boat of some kind with people in it, and they are waving to us."

"So it is!" the captain exclaimed. "Who can it be? However, we shall soon find out."

He hurried away, and soon a long raucous blast ripped the air. Then the steamer swerved to the right and made for the small craft which was now plainly visible. Many of the passengers were already crowding the rail, all greatly interested in this new diversion.

Reynolds stepped back and gave his place to another. He could watch the approaching boat just as well here, and at the same time study to a better advantage the girl who was standing close to the rail. He had accomplished something, anyway, which was worth a great deal to him. He had heard her

speak and learned her name. He liked "Glen," and it seemed to suit her. But Glen what? He longed to know that, too. Her voice was soft and musical. It appealed to him. Yes, everything seemed to be in harmony, he mused. Name, voice, dress, and manner, all suited the girl admirably. It was a happy combination.

From where he was standing he could watch her unobserved. He could see the side of her face nearest to him, and he noted how flushed it was with excitement. She was keenly interested in the approaching boat, and her eyes followed it most intently.

The steamer had already slowed down, and its movement now was scarcely perceptible. Reynolds looked at the small approaching craft, and to his surprise he saw that it was a large canoe, being paddled by four stalwart Indians. There were several white men on board, although he could not distinguish their faces. Who could they be, and where had they come from? he wondered. A man standing nearby asked the same question, though no one seemed to be able to give a satisfactory answer.

By this time the canoe was so near the steamer that from his position Reynolds could see nothing more owing to the men crowding the rail. He glanced toward the girl just as she turned suddenly away from the side of the steamer and walked rapidly across the deck. She seemed much agitated, and the flush had fled her face, leaving it very white. All this Reynolds briefly noted, and when she had disappeared through a door leading into the observation room, he stood wrapped in thought, wondering as to the cause of the remarkable change that had so suddenly taken place. Was there some mystery connected with her life, and had she recognized someone in the canoe she did not wish to meet? He determined to learn what he could about the picked-up men, and to keep his eyes and ears open for further developments.

CHAPTER III

A BIG BLAZIN' LAUGH

"Fine sight that, sir."

Reynolds turned sharply at these words, and saw the old man with the long beard and flowing hair standing at his left. Although he himself was almost six feet in height, he seemed small by the side of this stranger, who was looking calmly out over the water toward the fog-bank, which had now lifted and was slowly dissolving.

"Ye don't see the likes of that often," he continued, "an' it ain't everyone who kin read its meanin', either."

"What do you see there?" Reynolds asked, more interested in hearing the man's deliberate drawl than the meaning of the fog-bank.

"Wall, it seems to me that a fog-bank hasn't a ghost of a chance fer life when the sun hits it good an' hard."

"That one hasn't, anyway," Reynolds replied, as he watched the cloud gradually thinning and drifting away.

"It's the same with all clouds, sir, an' it makes no difference whether they're hangin' over the water or over one's life. They're bound to disappear when the sun gits after 'em."

"Do you think so?"

"I sartinly do. Why, there isn't a cloud but'll gather up its skirts an' run when a good big blazin' laugh gits after it. An' that's what we want in this world to-day; more cheerfulness, more of the joy of life."

"Have you tried it?"

"Y'bet I have, an' it's allus worked like a charm. I could tell ye of many a squabble that's been settled by the means of a smilin' face an' a good hearty laugh. There's nuthin' like it."

"You're an optimist, I see," and Reynolds smiled for the first time in many a day. He could not help it,

for this stranger radiated a stimulating influence of cheerfulness and goodwill.

"I try to be, sir, an' when I see a fog-bank hoverin' over people like that one did out yonder a little while ago, I consider it my duty to act like the sun an' drive it away. Then, there's good feelin' all around, 'specially among the ones who were under the cloud."

"I imagine it is that way with those men who have just been picked up. They must feel happy over the lifting of the fog at the right moment."

"That's jist what I mean. It meant much to them."

"Do you know who they are?"

"Miners, no doubt, who wish to go north. They've been prospecting mebbe, on some of the islands along the coast, an' started out to hail a passin' steamer. They do it at times."

"And the steamers always pick them up?"

"Sure; they wouldn't go by without takin' 'em on board, no matter who they are. It's the great Brotherhood of man, ye see, back of it all, an' ye'll find that spirit stronger the farther north ye go. It's different here from what it is in the big cities, an' the more ye preach of that the better."

"Preach! What do you mean?" Reynolds asked in amazement.

"You be one of them missionary chaps, ain't ye?"

Reynolds laughed. "What makes you think so?"

"Dunno, 'cept yer solemncooly face, an' the way yer dressed. Missionaries ginerally come north lookin' about as you do, to turn the sinner from the error of his way, an' to convert the heathen Injun. They're not overly pop'lar up thar."

"Why not?"

"Oh, they've too high an' mighty notions about the way men should live; that's the trouble."

"And so you think they should make themselves popular with the men, eh? In what way?"

"By bein' one of 'em, an' not bein' too hard on what they do."

"Do you think that their great Master ever said that they would be popular, and that they were to please all men?" Reynolds defensively asked.

"I dunno. Guess I can't recall anything He ever said about the matter," and the old man scratched his head in perplexity.

"Didn't He tell His first disciples that they would be hated of all men for His name's sake when He sent them forth to do His work?"

"I believe He did," was the reluctant assent. "But that was a long time ago. Things are different now."

"Only outwardly, remember. The heart is the same in all ages; you can't change that. If it is evil and full of vileness, it is bound to hate the good. Surely you know that."

"Then you really are one of them missionary chaps?" and the old man eyed Reynolds curiously.

"No, I am not," was the emphatic reply.

"But ye quote Scriptor like a parson, though. I thought mebbe ye was."

"Is it necessary to be a parson to know something about the Bible? Isn't this a Christian land? Why shouldn't I know something about the greatest Book in the world? My mother taught it to me when I was a child, and I learned a great deal about it when I went to Sunday school. I did not value it so much then, but when over in France, with death on all sides, much of it came back to me, and I honestly confess it was a great comfort."

"An' so ye was over thar, young man? Wall, that's sartinly interestin'. Fer how long?"

"Nearly four years. I enlisted at the beginning of the war."

"An' come through all right?"

"Look," and Reynolds bared his left arm, showing a great scar. "I have several more on my body, some worse than that."

"Ye don't tell! My, I'm glad I've met ye. Got some medals, I s'pose."

Reynolds made no reply, as he already felt ashamed of himself for having told this much. It was not his nature to speak about himself, especially to a stranger, and he was determined to say nothing about the medals he had received for conspicuous bravery, and which he carried in his breast pocket.

"Do you smoke?" he suddenly asked.

"Yes; an old hand at it. Good fer the nerves."

"Well, suppose we go and have a smoke now. I am just in the mood for one myself."

Together they made their way to the smoking-room, which was situated well aft. It was partly filled with men, smoking, chatting, and playing cards. The air was dense with various brands of tobacco, making it impossible to see clearly across the room. No one paid any heed to the two as they entered, sat down in one corner of the room, filled and lighted their pipes. Reynolds noted that his companion became suddenly silent, and seemed to be deeply interested in four men playing cards at a small table a short distance from where they were sitting.

"Do you play?" Reynolds asked, thinking that the old man might be fond of cards.

"No," was the brief and absent-minded reply.

Reynolds said no more, but watched the four men. His attention was chiefly centered upon one who was facing him, and who was doing most of the talking. He was a young man, with a dark moustache and black curly hair. He played with keen interest and in a lofty dominating manner. Reynolds did not like his appearance, and the more he studied him the stronger became his repugnance. It was not only the low brutal face that compelled this feeling, but the coarse language that reeked from his lips. This so disgusted Reynolds that he was about to leave the room, when in an instant a commotion took place among the players. They sprang to their feet, and a miniature babel ensued.

"You're cheating."

"I'm not."

"You're a liar."

These were some of the terms hurled forth in sharp rasping sentences, and it seemed as if blood must surely be shed ere the confusion ended. As the word "liar" rang out, a sudden silence followed, and at once hands rested upon butts of revolvers concealed in four hip-pockets. But before they were drawn a peculiar noise broke the stillness, which caused Reynolds to start, for the sound came from the old prospector's lips.

"Me-o-o-o-ow. Me-o-o-o-ow. Bow-wow-wow. Bow-wow-wow."

So unexpected was this interruption that all in the room stared in amazement, and even the four angry men turned to see whence the sound came. So perfect was the imitation, and so humorous the expression upon the face of the old man, that the onlookers burst into a hearty laugh, which caused the four inflamed players to shuffle uneasily, and to look sheepishly at one another. Then their mouths expanded into a grin, and the storm was over.

The curly-haired man at once left his place and strode over to where the prospector was sitting.

"Frontier Samson!" he exclaimed, gripping him firmly by the hand. "Is it really you?"

"Sure, it's me, all right, Curly. Who else did ye think it was; me ghost?"

"Not when I heard that cat-call, an' the bow-wow."

"Heard 'em before, eh? Guess this isn't the first scrape I've got ye out of, is it?"

"Should say not. But where in h—— did ye drop from, Sam? I didn't know ye were on board."

"Oh, I'm jist on a visit from the outside. An' it's mighty lucky that I'm here, or else I don't know what 'ud have happened. Better leave cards alone, Curly, if ye can't play without fightin'. They make people act like a bunch of kids."

"It was those d—— fools' fault, though, Sam."

"Thar, now, don't make excuses an' blame others, Curly. That's jist what kids allus do. An' cut out them unholy words. There might be a parson around."

Curly flung himself down upon a seat, and lighted a cigarette. He cast a furtive glance at Reynolds, thinking that perhaps he might be the "parson."

"What have ye been doin', Curly?" the old man asked. "An' why was ye driftin' out under that fog-bank? Ye nearly got left, let me tell ye that."

"I know we did, and I thought that d——, excuse me, Sam," he apologized, as he again glanced toward Reynolds. "I mean, I thought that the fog-bank would never lift. We've been doing some of the islands for several months."

"Strike anything?"

"Nothing, an' nearly starved in the bargain. If it hadn't been fer an Indian mission, we wouldn't be alive now."

"Then missionaries are of some use after all, Curly. You was allus hard on 'em, if I remember right."

"Umph! They're all right when one's starving. If they'd only leave the Gospel dope out, it wouldn't be so bad."

"Got a dose of it, eh?"

"Should say I did. Morning, noon an' night I had to go to church with the Indians. I've had enough to last me the rest of me life. Say, weren't we glad to get away!"

"Goin' north agin? I thought ye was through, up thar?"

"So did I. But we heard of the new strike at Big Draw, an' decided to try our luck once more."

"Think ye'll hit it this time?"

"I hope so. But it isn't altogether the gold that's taking me back. There's something more attractive."

"So I imagined."

"I thought you would understand." Curly's voice was eager now. "She'll not escape me this time. Gad, she's a beaut! But as wild as a hawk."

"An' so ye think ye'll corner her, eh?" There was a peculiar note in Samson's voice which Reynolds was quick to detect, but which Curly missed.

"Just you wait an' see," the latter reminded. "That old cuss thinks he's got a regular Gibraltar behind those hills with his lousy Indians. But I'll show him a thing or two."

"Ye've never been thar, have ye?" Samson queried.

"Never. But the bird comes out of her nest sometimes, ye know, an' then——"

"You'll be the hawk, is that it?" Samson asked as the other paused.

"Oh, I'll be around," Curly laughed. "One doesn't run across the likes of her every day, an' she's the gold I'm really after."

"Wall, all I kin say is this," the prospector replied, as he rose slowly to his feet, "that ye'd better be mighty keerful, young man. That Giberalter, as ye call it, is guarded by a lion that ain't to be fooled with. He's got claws that reach from sun-up to sun-down as several smarter ones than you have found out to their sorrow. Leave him alone, an' he'll bother nobody. But interfere with that lass of his, an' the hull north won't be big enough to hide ye. That's my warnin', an' if yer not a fool ye'll heed it."

Reynolds had a good long sleep that afternoon. He had been much disturbed the night before by several men in the next room, who shouted and sang until early morning. During the evening he went out upon deck, well forward, as he wished to be alone, and away from the men who were drinking and gambling in other parts of the steamer. It was a beautiful evening, with scarcely a ripple disturbing the surface of the water. The air was mild, and when the sun went down, the moon rose big and cheery above the dense dark forest away to the right. Reynolds thought over the conversation he had heard

between Frontier Samson and the man known as "Curly." That the latter was a scoundrel he had not the slightest doubt. His face alone would have betrayed him even if he had not spoken a word. He was curious concerning the reference to "Gibraltar," the "lion," and the "lass."

As he thus sat and mused, listening to the zip-zip of the vessel as it cut through the water, his mind naturally drifted off to her of the street crossing incident. He wondered what had become of her. Why had she left the railing in such a hurry, and what was the cause of the sudden pallor that had come upon her face? Had Curly anything to do with her agitation, and was it possible that she was the girl to whom he referred? As this idea flashed into his mind, he sat bolt upright in his chair. It did seem reasonable when he considered it. In fact, it gave him a certain degree of pleasure as well. If his suspicions were true, then the girl needed protection from that brute, and was it not his duty to keep a sharp lookout, and if necessary to protect her from all harm?

And as he thought of this, the girl herself came upon deck, and walked at once toward the bow close to the tall flag-staff, which pointed upwards like a quivering slender needle. Reynolds could see her plainly as she stood looking straight before her. A cloak was thrown carelessly over her shoulders, and her head was bare. What a perfect picture of gracefulness she presented to the admiring young man as he watched her by the light of the full-orbed moon. How he longed to go forward, speak to her, and listen to her voice. But, no, he did not dare to do that. He must adore her at a distance and wonder what she was thinking about.

Presently an idea leaped into his mind that thrilled his entire being. He was pushing out into the Great Unknown, with all its dangers and uncertainties. But standing there before him was his guiding star, the one girl in all the world who unconsciously had inspired and stirred him to action. Was she really to be his guiding star? Anyway, the sight of her standing before him seemed to be a favorable portent of the future.

For almost half an hour the girl stood silently at the bow, apparently unconscious that anyone was near. Reynolds remained a long time after she had gone. It was good to be there on such a night, with no one to disturb him, alone with a fair vision before him, and a sweet peace in his soul.

CHAPTER IV

BEYOND THE GREAT WHITE PASS

"All aboard!"

The train was on the point of pulling out from the little coast town of Skagway on its run inland of one hundred and ten miles. There had been much bustle and excitement ever since the steamer landed early that morning. But now everything was in readiness, the signal had been given, and the train began to move.

Reynolds was comfortably seated and looking out of the open window, when Frontier Samson came and sat down by his side. The old prospector was much out of breath and panting heavily.

"I nearly missed the train," he explained. "She was movin' when I swung on board."

"Sight-seein', eh?" Reynolds queried.

"That's about it, I guess. Watchin' a mix-up, an' gittin' Curly out of a scrape. That's what delayed me."

"What was the trouble?"

"Oh, the same old story. Curly kin never mind his own bizness. He's allus pokin' his nose into other people's affairs. He's too sassy."

"Where is he now?"

"In the smoker. I had to drag him along with me, an' that's what made me late."

"Why didn't you leave him behind?"

"I should have done that. But it's the Brotherhood, ye see, that made me do it. That feller ain't safe runnin' at large, an' somebody's got to keep an eye on him, 'specially up here."

"It seems to me that you have undertaken a big task," and Reynolds smiled.

"Indeed I have an' no one knows that better'n me. If I had my way, he'd be shipped off to some Penitentiary. That's the right place for the likes of him. An' he'll land thar some day, as sure as guns. But in the meantime somebody's got to watch him."

Reynolds made no reply. In fact, he hardly heard his companion's last words, for his eyes were riveted upon the wonderful sights around him. Above towered the peaks of the White Pass Range, grand and majestic. Away to the left, and far above, could be seen the railway track, twisting along the mountain side like a thin dark thread. It seemed incredible that the train could make such a tremendous climb.

"Do we go up there?" he asked in amazement.

"Sure. We'll be thar in a short time, but it takes four engines, though, to tug us up. Then ye'll see something that'll make ye wonder. Guess thar's nuthin' like it in the hull world. We'll go up three thousand feet, an' it'll be the nearest to heaven that some of the chaps on this train'll ever be. Jist look at that, now!"

Reynolds was indeed looking. Far down below a few cabins appeared like little toy houses, while away beyond could be seen the blue cold waters of the North Pacific. The air was becoming keen. But it was bracing and stimulating.

"Say, I'd like to paint that!" he mused half aloud. "It is grand, stupendous, appalling! And what a work to build this road! How was it ever done!"

"It sartinly was, young man. It cost a mint of money, to say nuthin' of the lives sacrificed. Thar was some mighty bad accidents on this bit of road, though thar was some funny ones, too. I often have a good laugh to meself whenever I think of one of the stories that was told."

"What was it?" Reynolds asked. He was interested in everything now.

"Wall, ye see, the company that built this road was considered mighty mean, an' ground the men down to the last cent. One day a big blast went off before its time, an' a feller was blown high into the air. Everybody thought fer sure that thar wouldn't be a speck of him left. But strange to say, in about fifteen minutes he came down pat on his feet, an' but fer a few bruises an' a bad shakin' up he was as chipper as ye please. He got another shock, though, at the end of the week which nearly put him out of bizness."

The old man paused, and a smile overspread his face as he gazed thoughtfully out of the window.

"Yes," he continued, "it sartinly was some shock, an' no mistake. When he went to the office to be paid fer his week's work, he found that the company had docked him two-bits fer the fifteen minutes he was absent on that air-trip when the blast went off. Now, what d'ye think of that?"

"Close shaving, I should say," was the reply. "It's a good yarn, though, and worth remembering. But, my, isn't that a wonderful sight!" And Reynolds motioned to the great mountains away in the distance. "We seem to be surrounded by them."

"So we are, young man. Ye can't escape 'em in the north any more'n ye kin git clear of the skyscrapers in New York. But them over thar are the work of the Almighty, an' a grand job He made of 'em. This hull land reminds me of a big cathedral; the woods an' valleys are the aisles, an' the mountains are the spires pointin' man to heaven. I tell ye, it's a great place out alone on the hills to worship. Yer not cramped thar, an' it doesn't matter what kind of clothes ye have on. It's wonderful the sights ye see an' the things ye hear. Talk about music! Why, ye have the finest in the world when nature's big organ gits to work, 'specially at night. I've shivered from head to toe when the wind was rippin' an' roarin' through the woods, down the valleys, an' along the mountain passes. That's the music fer me!"

"You seem to love this country," Reynolds remarked, as he noted the intense admiration upon his companion's face.

"I sartinly do, young man. It grips me jist as soon as I cross this range. Thar's nuthin' like it to my way of thinkin', though it takes ye years to find it out. Yet, it doesn't altogether satisfy the soul, although it helps. Thar's something within a man that needs more'n the mountains an' the wonderful things around him. But, thar, I must see what Curly's doin'. He may be up to some more mischief."

Although Reynolds was much interested in the scenery and in listening to the philosophy of the old prospector, yet his mind turned continually to Glen, for it was by that name he now thought of her. He

knew that she was on the train, for he had seen her as she stepped aboard but a few minutes before it left the coast. She had passed close to where he was standing, carrying a grip in her hand. He had caught sight of the leather tag fastened to the handle of the grip, and had strained his eyes in a futile effort to read the name written thereon. He was determined in some manner to find out what that name was, as he feared lest he should lose her altogether when the journey by rail was ended. He must have something more definite than the one word Glen.

This opportunity was afforded him when he entered the principal hotel of the little town of Whitehorse at the terminus of the railway. It was just across the street from the station, and when he arrived at the office she was there before him, and about to enter her name in the hotel register. He stood by her side and watched her write. It was a firm sun-browned hand that held the pen, and she wrote in a rapid business-like way. "Glen Weston" were the only words Reynolds saw there as he wrote his own name a minute later below hers. She had not even mentioned where she was from—that space was left blank. He also noticed that the hotel clerk seemed to know who she was, for he was more affable to her than to anyone else. She asked him if her father had yet arrived, and she appeared disappointed when he answered in the negative.

The name "Glen Weston" kept running through Reynolds' mind all that evening. He liked it, and it suited her admirably, so he thought. But who was she, and where was she going? That was what he wished to know.

The town of Whitehorse was of considerable interest to Reynolds as he strolled that evening through its various streets. It was a surprise to him as well, for he had not expected to find such a settled community. He had imagined that all such towns in the north were wild and almost lawless places, abounding in desperate characters, ready to shoot on the slightest provocation. But here all was order, and it was little different from one of the many small conventional towns in Eastern Canada. There were several up-to-date stores, a large post office, bank, churches, and comfortable dwelling houses, though many of the latter were built of logs. The Royal Northwest Mounted Police had their large barracks at the rear of the town under the brow of a high hill, where all day long the flag of the clustered crosses floated from its tall white staff in the centre of the square.

It was the time of year when the light of day reaches far into the night, and deep darkness is unknown. The sun merely dips for a few hours below the mountain Crests, and skims along the horizon, thus illuminating the western sky, and holding back the heavy draperies of night. The light on the far-off ranges and the glory of the distant heavens fascinated Reynolds. He had beheld many beautiful sunsets, but never such a one as this, and his entire soul was stirred within him.

Leaving the level of the town, he climbed the hill, and there on the edge of the steep bank he feasted his eyes upon the wonderful panorama stretched out before him. Like a silver thread the river wound its sinuous way between its steep banks, and faded from view amidst its setting of dark firs and jack-pines; around rose the mountains, their great sides either bathed in the glow of evening, or lying sombre and grim, telling of crouching valleys and funnel-like draws from which the light of day had retreated. And below lay the little town, silent save for the occasional bark of a dog, or the shrill voices of children away to the right.

For some time Reynolds remained here. He was in no hurry to go elsewhere, for the evening was mild and conducive to thought. There was nothing to take him back to the hotel, and he preferred to be out of doors. Just what he was to do next he had no clear idea. He knew that somewhere out from this town was the new mining camp for which he had started. But where it was and how to reach it he had not the faintest knowledge. In truth, he had never been sufficiently interested to make any inquiries, even from Frontier Samson. What had become of the prospector, he wondered, as he had not seen him since his arrival in town. And where was Glen? He had followed her this far, and was he to lose her after all? She had aroused him to action, and caused him to take this long and apparently foolish journey. But he had not spoken a word to her, and so far as he knew she was totally unaware of his existence. He smiled at the thought, and wondered what his friend, the editor, would say if he knew of it. And what about his search for the missing man, Henry Redmond? Instead of throwing himself earnestly and actively into the quest he was frittering away his time, following the will-o'-the-wisp of a fancy, and going daft over a mere slip of a girl who moved serenely apart from his world of thought and being. He called himself a fool and chided himself over and over again. But for all that, he was unable to tear her out of his heart and mind. She seemed to belong to him, and to no one else.

"I believe that my experiences in France have affected my brain," he muttered, as he at length rose to his feet. "I am sure I was not like this before the war. But here I am now dazzled and mystified by a fair face, a pair of sparkling eyes, and the charm of a name. This will never do. I must shake off this fascination, or I shall be good for nothing."

He walked rapidly down the hill, and then along a trail that wound through a thicket of small fir trees.

This brought him in a few minutes to one of the streets leading straight to the river. He walked slower now, much interested in the quaint log houses, with here and there a miner's or a prospector's tent. Presently he saw before him a large building, with galvanized roof and sides. People were entering the place, and drawing nearer, the sound of music fell upon his ears. A band was playing, he could easily tell, and it was dancing music at that.

Reaching the building, Reynolds paused and listened. The music was good, the best he had heard in a long time. Through an open door he could see men playing billiards and pool. It was a lively and an attractive scene, which caused him to enter and stand for a while near the door watching the games. No one paid any attention to him, and from what he observed there were others like himself, strangers, who found the time hanging heavily on their hands, and had dropped into the place for the sake of companionship. There were several large tables, and these were all occupied by eager players. Nearby was a bar, where drinks of various kinds were being served. The room was brilliantly lighted by electricity, and the whole atmosphere of the place was most congenial.

At one end of the billiard room were two doors, and here a number of people were standing watching the dancing that was going on in the main part of the building. Reynolds presently joined them, and he was greatly surprised at the size of the room, and the number of people upon the floor. There was a gallery immediately overhead, and here the band was placed.

For a few minutes Reynolds stood and watched the dancers in a somewhat indifferent manner. He learned from a man standing by his side that this building belonged to a town club, and that such dances were not uncommon, at which most of the people attended.

At first Reynolds could not recognize anyone he knew, but as he watched, he gave a great start, for there but a short distance away was Glen, and her partner was none other than the rascal, Curly. He could hardly believe his eyes, and he followed them most intently as they moved about the room. He felt certain now that Glen was the girl mentioned by Curly on the steamer in his conversation with Frontier Samson. He had found her, and was it to her liking? he wondered. He recalled her pale face and agitated manner as Curly boarded the vessel along the coast. Was he the cause of her distress, or was it someone else? It seemed then as if she wished to keep clear of the fellow, and her seclusion during the remainder of the voyage lent color to this idea. But here she was dancing with him, and apparently enjoying herself. All this puzzled Reynolds as he stood there, unheeding everything else save those special two.

When the music ceased, Glen and Curly walked across the room and sat down but a short distance from the door. Reynolds could see the girl's face most plainly now, and he could tell at a glance that she was unhappy. Curly, on the other hand, was very animated and did all of the talking. He was speaking in a low voice and seemed very much in earnest. Occasionally the girl shook her head, and looked uneasily around as if fearful lest someone should overhear what was being said. At length, however, as she glanced to her right, her face brightened, and the light of joy leaped into her eyes. Reynolds also turned his head, and he was surprised to see, standing not far away, a tall and powerfully-built Indian. Where he had come from Reynolds had not the least idea, but there he was, clad in a soft buckskin suit, motionless, and heeding no one except the young girl sitting by Curly's side. His placid face relaxed a little, however, as Glen moved swiftly to where he was standing and spoke to him in a low voice. The Indian merely nodded in reply, and without even glancing around upon the curious watchers in the room, he at once followed the girl as she passed out of the building through a side door which opened upon the street.

CHAPTER V

COMRADES OF THE TRAIL

There was no wild stampede to the Big Draw mining camp on Scupper Creek, where gold had been discovered. There had been so many such reports in the past which proved but flurries, that many of the old-timers became sceptical, and waited for further developments. There were some, however, who were always on the lookout for anything new, and the hope of making a strike induced them to hasten away at the least information of any discovery. These drifted forth in little groups by the way of the river and mountain passes. Among such there were always newcomers, men from the outside, as well as miners who had left the country years before.

It was with the latest arrivals that Reynolds made his way into Big Draw. He was accustomed to life in the open, and his recent experience of camp life in France served him in good stead now. He had just himself to look after, and, accordingly, he did not need a large outfit. He also learned that provisions could be procured at the mining camp, where a store had been established. He, therefore, took with him only what was absolutely necessary, such as a small tent, a few cooking utensils, a good rifle, and sufficient food to last him for several days. A steamer would carry him part of the way, while the rest of the journey would be made overland on foot.

After her departure from the dance that night, Reynolds saw nothing more of Glen. He found that she had left the hotel, but where she had gone he did not know. He inquired of the clerk, and was answered with a curt "Don't know." He wondered who the Indian could be. There seemed to be a mutual understanding between him and the girl, at any rate, and they must have departed together. During the remainder of his stay in town he had wandered about the streets, with the faint hope that he might again see the girl, or learn something as to her whereabouts.

Frontier Samson had also disappeared, and no one seemed to know anything about him. Reynolds did not mind asking about the old prospector, as it was different from enquiring about Glen. In fact, the girl had become so real to him and such a vital part of his very existence that should he speak of her to others he might betray his deep concern.

During the voyage down river he thought much about her and tried to imagine who she really was and what had become of her. The idea even suggested itself that she might be that stolid Indian's wife. Strange things often happened in the north, so he had read, and this might be one of them. He banished the thought, however, as too ridiculous, and beyond the bounds of probability.

The voyage was an uneventful one to Reynolds, who kept much to himself and did not join his companions at cards, which were played day and night. At times there was considerable roughness, though no shooting. Curly was there, and enjoying himself to his heart's content. He played most of the time, losing and winning in turn. Reynolds often sat and watched him as he played, wondering where the fellow had first met Glen and what he knew about her. He had never spoken to the rascal, and had no inclination to do so. But several times glancing up from his cards Curly noticed Reynolds' eyes fixed intently upon him. Although he had found out that the quiet, reserved man was not a "parson," yet he knew that he had been with Frontier Samson, and he was curious to know what the old prospector had told him about his career. His record was so black that he naturally became suspicious until he at length imagined that the young man with the steady unswerving eyes was following him north with some special object in view. The idea annoyed him, although he said nothing, but went on with his game.

It took the little steamer some time to reach her destination, as she had to buck a heavy current part of the way. When she at length tied up at the landing where the trail over the mountain began, the passengers scrambled quickly ashore, and started at once upon their hard journey, carrying heavy loads upon their backs. With their long trip of several thousand miles almost at an end, the excitement of the quest increased, and eagerly and feverishly they pressed forward, each anxious to be the first of the party to reach the mining camp.

But Reynolds was in no hurry. He had not the same incentive as the others, and so long as his supply of food lasted he was as contented on the trail as anywhere else. His pack was heavy and the day promised to be very warm. He preferred to be alone, away from the insipid chatter and profanity of his companions. It would give him an opportunity to think and to study the beauty of the landscape.

Leaving the landing, he walked along the trail, which in a short time began to ascend around the right side of the mountain. Here he stopped and looked back. The river wound below, and the little steamer was lying at the bank discharging her cargo. It was the last link between him and the great outside world of civilization. In a few hours it would be gone, and for an instant there came to him the longing to go back and give up his foolish quest. He banished the temptation, however, and plodded steadily on his way. He had never turned back yet, and he was determined that this should not be the first time. He had the unaccountable conviction that the lap of the future held something in store for him, and that he would come into his own in due time.

The higher he climbed the more wonderful became the view. The trail twisted around the mountain side, and from this vantage ground the solitary traveller could look forth upon vast reaches of forest and great wild meadows far below, with here and there placid lakes, mirroring trees, mountain peaks, and billowy clouds. The voices of his companions had long since died away, and he was alone with the brooding silence all around, and his own thoughts for company.

At noon he rested under the shade of an old storm-beaten tree, and ate his meagre lunch. This finished, he lighted his pipe and stretched himself full length upon the mossy ground. He was feeling

more contented than he had been in many a day. The air was invigorating, and a desire came over him to be up and doing. His old indifference to life seemed to slip away like a useless and impeding garment, leaving him free for action. He even thought with pleasure of mingling again in the activities of civilization, and winning for himself a worthy reputation. He would make good in the north, and then go back and surprise his friend, the editor, and all who knew him.

So strong was this feeling that he sat suddenly up, wondering what had come over him to cause the subtle change. "It must be the wild mystery of this region," he mused. "It is stimulating and impelling. It may be the spirit of the mountains, and the other grand things of nature. They are carrying out the designs for which they were intended, and perhaps they have silently rebuked me for being a traitor to the highest that is in me. But I shall show them a thing or two, if I am not much mistaken."

Springing lightly to his feet, he continued his journey. His step was more buoyant, his heart lighter, and the pack seemed less heavy than when he left the river.

He travelled all that afternoon, crossed the summit, and moved swiftly down the opposite slope. It was easy walking now, and he hoped to reach the valley and there spend the night. He believed that he should find water among that heavy timber ahead of him, and thither he made his way. Neither was he mistaken, for when his steps at length began to lag he heard the ripple of water drifting up the trail. As he drew nearer he smelled the smoke of a camp-fire, and the appetizing odor of roasting meat. "Somebody must be camping there," he mused, "and I may have company. I am sorry, but then it can't be helped."

The brook was a small one, shallow, and Reynolds easily sprang across. Gaining the opposite bank, he peered among the trees, and to his surprise he saw Frontier Samson squatting upon the ground, roasting a grouse over a fire he had previously lighted. The old prospector's face brightened as the young man approached.

"My, y've been a long time comin'," he accosted. "I thought mebbe ye'd played out, tumbled down the side of the mountain, or a grizzly had gobbled ye up. What in time kept ye so long?"

"And where in the world did you come from?" Reynolds asked in reply, as he unslung his pack and tossed it aside. "I never expected to meet you here."

"Ye didn't, eh? Wall, ye never want to be surprised at anything I do. I'm here to-day an' somewhere else to-morrow. I'm allus on the move, rovin' from place to place. It's me nature, I guess."

"A rolling stone gathers no moss, so I've heard. Is that the way with you?" Reynolds asked, with a twinkle to his eyes.

"I may git no moss, young man, an' not become a fossil like some of the fellers in big cities, but I git a heap of rubbin' with me rollin', an' that keeps me brightened up."

"But how did you get here ahead of me?" Reynolds questioned. "You were not on the steamer, and I am certain you didn't walk."

Samson drew the grouse from the fire, and examined it critically. Finding it not done to his satisfaction, he thrust it back again.

"Jist hand me that fryin'-pan, will ye?" and he motioned to his left. "I want it handy when the bird's cooked. Ye didn't expect to find a supper here to-night, young man, did ye?" and he looked quizzically at Reynolds.

"Indeed I didn't," was the emphatic reply.

"Neither did ye imagine that it 'ud be a grouse's bones ye'd be pickin'. Why, it's no tellin' where that bird was three days ago. It may have been fifty miles or more away, fer all we know. But it's here now, isn't it?"

"It looks very much like it," and Reynolds laughed.

"Wall, that's jist the way with many other things. It's allus the unexpected that happens, an' thar are surprises on every trail, as ye'll larn if ye haven't done so already. Meetin' me here is one of 'em, an' my movements are jist as unsartin an' mysterious as were them of that bird which is now sizzlin' over this fire."

"But with not such an unhappy ending, I hope," and again Reynolds smiled.

The prospector's eyes twinkled as he drew the bird from the fire, and laid it carefully in the frying-pan.

"Guess it's done all right this time," he remarked. "Now fer supper. I'm most starved."

Reynolds was hungry, and he did full justice to the meal. Samson had some excellent sour-dough bread of which he was very proud.

"Made it last night," he explained, "an' it turned out better'n usual. Thought mebbe I'd have company before long."

"Did you meet the others?" Reynolds asked.

"Oh, yes, I met 'em," Samson chuckled.

"Were they far ahead?"

"Y' bet, an' chatterin' like a bunch of monkeys. Guess they're thar by now."

"Were they surprised to see you?"

"H'm, they didn't see me. I was settin' under a tree well out of sight. I didn't want to meet that crowd; they're not to my likin'. I jist wished to see if Curly was along."

"You seem to be keepin' a sharp eye on that fellow still," Reynolds remarked. He was anxious to draw the prospector out. Perhaps he might learn something about Curly's acquaintance with Glen.

"Yes, I do keep me eyes peeled fer Curly," Samson drawled, as he finished his supper and pulled out his pipe. "It's necessary, let me tell ye that. He ain't safe nohow."

"You have known him for some time, then?"

"Long enough to be suspicious of the skunk."

"He seems to be very friendly with you, though."

"Oh, he's got sense enough not to buck up against me. An' besides, I've yanked him out of many a nasty fix. Most likely he'd been planted long before this if I hadn't been around at the right moment."

"He's up here for more than gold, so I understand."

"How did ye larn that, young man?" There was a sharp note in Samson's voice.

"Oh, I merely overheard your conversation with him in the smoking-room of the *Northern Light*. That was all, but I drew my own conclusion."

"An' what was that?"

"Nothing very definite. I simply inferred that he is after a girl somewhere here in the north, and that she is so guarded by a lion of a father that Curly hasn't much of a chance."

"An' so that's what ye surmised, is it?" the prospector queried.

"Am I right?"

"Guess yer not fer astray."

"Have you seen the girl? Do you know her father?"

"Have I seen the girl? Do I know her father?" the old man slowly repeated. "Yes, I believe I've seen her, all right. But as fer knowin' her father, wall, that's a different thing. Frontier Samson doesn't pretend to know Jim Weston; he never did."

"Weston, did you say?" Reynolds eagerly asked.

"That's what I said, young man. The name seems to interest ye."

"It does. When I registered at the hotel in Whitehorse, the name just before mine was 'Glen Weston,' and the girl who wrote it came north on the *Northern Light*. Do you suppose she is Jim Weston's daughter?"

"She might be," was the somewhat slow reply. "As I told ye before, it's ginerally the unexpected that happens. Anyway, ye can't tell much by names these days."

"But Curly knows her, for I saw them together at a dance the night I arrived in town."

"Ye did!" The prospector took his pipe from his mouth and stared hard at Reynolds. "Are ye sure?"

"Positive. Why, I was standing at the door watching the dance, when I saw the two together upon the floor. Later they came over and sat down quite close to me. Curly did most of the talking, and the girl seemed quite uneasy. She left shortly after with a fine-looking Indian, who had evidently come for her. I have not seen her since."

"So Curly was dancin' with her," Samson mused. "Then she must be Jim Weston's gal. I wonder what the old man'll say when he hears about it?"

"How will he know?"

"Oh, he'll find out, all right. There's nuthin' that misses him here in the north."

"What will he do to Curly?"

"I wouldn't like to say at present. That remains to be seen."

"Is this Jim Weston a desperate character?"

"The ones who have tried to fool with him say he is, an' I guess they ought to know. He's a holy terror when he gits goin', 'specially when anyone's after that lass of his."

"The men up here all know about her, I suppose?"

"Should say so. They're about crazy over her. She's been the cause of many a row, an' several shootin' rackets."

"Does she favor anyone?"

"Not as fer as I know. She's in a class all by her lonesome, an' well able to take care of herself. She's not anxious fer lovers, so I understand, at least, not the brand ye find up here. She's some lass, all right, an' whoever succeeds in winnin' her'll be a mighty lucky chap."

"What does her father do? Is he a miner?"

"It's jist hard to tell what Jim Weston does an' what he doesn't do. No one seems to know fer sartin. He lives like a lord on Big Lake, way over yonder," and Samson motioned to the east. "All the folks know that he lives thar with his lass, guarded by a hull pack of Injuns. But what he does an' what he doesn't do is a mighty problem."

"His daughter travels, though, and alone at that, doesn't she?"
Reynolds queried.

"Occasionally. Jim's givin' her an eddication, so I hear. She must be comin' back now, as this is vacation time."

"But what happened to her, do you suppose, after the dance that night?"
Reynolds asked. "She disappeared as if by magic, and I believe the big Indian had something to do with it."

"How d'ye know she disappeared?" was the sudden and somewhat embarrassing question.

Reynolds laughed, and his face flushed. He knew that he had betrayed himself, and that the prospector noted his confusion.

"Oh, I didn't notice her in town," he explained, "and I saw by the register that she had left the hotel."

"So you're interested in her, too, are ye, young man?"

"I certainly am," was the candid confession. "From the moment that I first saw her at a street crossing in Vancouver she has been hardly out of my mind. I never saw any girl who affected me so much, and she is the reason why I am here now."

"Ye don't tell!" Samson tapped the ashes out of his pipe, and then stretched himself full length upon the ground. "Make a clean breast of it, young man," he encouraged. "I'm an old hardened chap meself,

but I do like to hear a real interestin' heart-story once in a while. I git sick an' disgusted listenin' to brutes on two legs, callin' themselves men when they talk about women. But when it comes to a clean young feller, sich as I take you to be, tellin' of his heart-stroke, then it's different, an' I'm allus pleased to listen."

And make a clean breast of it Reynolds did. He was surprised at himself for talking so freely as he told about his indifference to life until he first saw Glen Weston. It was easy to talk there in the silence of the great forest, with the shadows of evening closing around and such a sympathetic listener nearby. He felt better when his story was ended, for he had shared his heart feeling with one worthy of his confidence, so he believed.

Frontier Samson remained silent for a few minutes after the confession had been concluded.. He looked straight before him off among the trees as if he saw something there. Reynolds wondered what he was thinking about, and whether he considered him a fool for becoming so infatuated over a mere girl.

"I must seem ridiculous to you," he at length remarked. "Would any man in his senses act as I have?"

"Ye might do worse," was the quiet reply. "I am sartinly interested in what ye've jist told me, an' I thank ye fer yer confidence. Me own heart was stirred once, an' the feelin' ain't altogether left me yit. But ye've got a difficult problem ahead of ye, young man. Ye want that lass, so I believe, but between you an' her stands Jim Weston."

"And the girl, why don't you say?"

"Sure, sure; she's to be considered. But a gal kin be won when she takes a fancy to a man of your make-up. The trouble'll be with her dad, an' don't fergit that. But thar, I guess we've talked enough about this fer the present. I'm dead beat an' want some sleep. We must be away early in the mornin', remember."

"What! are you going my way?" Reynolds eagerly asked.

"Sure; if ye'd like to have me along. I'm bound fer Big Draw meself."

It was just what Reynolds desired. He liked the old prospector, and now that he had confided to him his tale of love, he was drawn closer than ever to this wandering veteran of the trails.

CHAPTER VI

A SHOT THAT TOLD

The life at Big Draw mining camp on Scupper Creek did not appeal to Reynolds. He watched the men at work upon their various claims, and noted how meagre was their success. They toiled like slaves, lured on by the hope of a rich strike that never came. The principal place of meeting was the roadhouse, where "Shorty" Bill held sway. He lodged men, served meals, and conducted a bar. He was a good-hearted fellow, rough and uncouth, but well liked by all, and a genial companion. It was, therefore, but natural that at this place many of the men should congregate at night, and at times during the day, for a brief respite from their labors. It was here, too, that news would occasionally drift in from the outside world, which would be discussed by the men as they played cards, the only amusement for which they seemed to care. When the mail arrived, as it did at irregular intervals, all work on the creek was suspended, and the men flocked to the roadhouse to receive their scanty dole of letters and papers. Shorty was the custodian of the mail after its arrival, and he magnified his office. With a quid of tobacco tucked away in his cheek, he would study each address most carefully before calling forth the owner's name in a stentorian voice.

Although mining was not in his line, Reynolds realised that he must do something. As he studied the life of the camp, and watched the men at their work, he thought of his friend, the editor. What an article he might write for *The Telegram* that would make the editor's eyes dance with joy. And he could do it, too, he felt certain, if he could only get up sufficient energy. He could add a number of sketches drawn from life, which would be of much value. He thought of all this as he wandered aimlessly around, and as he lay at night in his little tent.

Several days thus passed without anything being done. Frontier Samson had again disappeared, and

no one had any idea where he had gone. Reynolds soon grew tired with having nothing to do, so he accordingly turned his attention to the hills. Fresh meat was urgently needed for the camp, as the miners would not spare the time to go after it themselves. Wild sheep roamed the mountains, and Reynolds decided that he could make more money by supplying the camp with meat than digging for the uncertain gold. It would also satisfy his desire to get away into the wilds, where he could explore to his heart's content the mysteries of the foothills, the great valleys, and the vast expanses of wild meadows.

Reynolds at once put this plan into execution, and each morning he left camp for a day in the hills. At night he returned, loaded down with a mountain sheep he had bagged, and which he readily sold for several ounces of gold. When not hunting, he would spend his time either exploring some creek or lying on the hillside studying the scenery around him, and imbibing impressions for the masterpieces he planned to produce.

But it was not always the beauties of nature which occupied his mind. No matter where he went Glen was ever with him. In some mysterious manner she seemed to be near, and he wondered if he should ever see her again. He often looked away to the east, for there Frontier Samson had told him she lived. How far off was the place? he asked himself, and if he did find her what would her lion of a father do? He was tempted to make the try, anyway, and find out for himself if Jim Weston was as desperate a character as he had been painted. He could do no more than kill him, and he did not fear death. Had he not often faced it on the field of battle, and why should he shrink now?

The more Reynolds thought about this, the more inclined he became to make the effort. It would be another grand adventure to once again go over the top. He might fail, but he would have the satisfaction of making the attempt and showing Glen that he was not a coward. He had been longing for some wild undertaking, and here was the opportunity right at hand. It would be far more preferable than spending his time around camp, or even hunting mountain sheep.

He was thinking seriously of this one beautiful afternoon as he lay on the side of a deep ravine beneath a big weather-beaten fir tree. Below, a brook gurgled, now very small owing to the dryness of the season, but at times swollen by floods into a raging torrent. Across this ravine the mountain rose steep and rugged. Along its side a narrow trail wound, worn smooth by the feet of Indians, mountain sheep, and other denizens of the wild. Reynolds idly wondered whither the trail led, and he was half tempted to start forth on an exploration journey. But it was so comfortable there on the hillside that he gave up the idea, so, lying full upon his back with his hands under his head, he watched the tops of the far-off mountains, and the clouds drifting across the great savannas of the blue.

For some time he remained thus, thinking of Glen and recalling the last time he had seen her. He was trying once more to solve the mystery of her disappearance from Whitehorse, when a sudden noise across the ravine arrested his attention. Casting his eyes in that direction, great was his surprise to see a woman mounted on a magnificent horse riding slowly down that crooked and dangerous trail. Then his heart leaped within him as he recognized Glen. What was he to do? he intuitively asked himself. Should he remain where he was, or hurry down to the brook to meet her? But what right had he to go near her? He had never spoken a word to her, and as she did not even know who he was, she might resent his appearance. Would it not be better for him to remain where he was, and worship at a distance? But was it gentlemanly that he should stay there and watch her when she was unaware of his presence?

And all this time Glen was coming slowly down that winding trail. Reynolds watched her almost spell-bound. She was a superb horsewoman, and rode as one born to the saddle. How graceful was her figure, and how perfectly the noble animal she was riding responded to the lightest touch of the rein as he cautiously advanced. Reynolds could see the girl most plainly now. She sat astride the saddle, with the reins in her right hand, and a small riding-whip in the other. She wore buckskin riding-breeches, a khaki-colored blouse, open at the throat, and a soft felt hat of the same color. The sleeves of her blouse were rolled up to her elbows, thus exposing her strong, supple arms. All this Reynolds quickly noticed, and he believed that he had never before beheld a more beautiful picture of true virile womanhood.

The horse was jet-black, and although walking on such a perilous and difficult trail, it was easy to tell at the first glance that it was a splendid thoroughbred. The animal's carriage showed not only pride in bearing such a beautiful rider, but a full sense of its responsibility as well. Fine were its proportions, reminding Reynolds more of some victor of the race-track than the rough and hardy cayuses of the north.

And even as he looked and wondered from whence such a pair of creatures had so unexpectedly come, the horse gave a terrified snort, threw up its head, and recoiled back upon its haunches. The cause of this fright was at once apparent, for around a huge boulder a large bear had suddenly made its appearance. Reynolds saw at a glance that it was a grizzly, the most formidable animal of the north,

and the terror of the trails. Although greatly startled at meeting the horse and its rider, the bear had no idea of retreating. They were blocking his lordly advance and it made him angry. Its coarse savage growl sawed the air as it moved menacingly forward.

All this Reynolds noted as he kneeled upon the ground, firmly clutching his rifle with both hands. Beads of perspiration stood out upon his forehead as he watched the scene across the deep gulch. The horse was rearing wildly, and backing slowly up the trail. There was no room to turn around, so with remarkable coolness and self-control the fair rider was keeping him pressed close to the bank and face to face with the on-coming grizzly. At any instant the horse might disregard the guiding hand as well as the friendly words of encouragement, and in mad terror attempt to swerve suddenly around, and thus hurl itself and rider into the yawning abyss below.

All this passed through Reynolds' mind with lightning rapidity, and he realised that there was not a moment to lose. The bear was advancing more rapidly now, and in a twinkling he might hurl his full weight of eight hundred pounds of compact flesh, bone and muscle upon horse and rider. But ere it could do this, Reynolds brought the rifle to his shoulder, took a quick, steady aim, and fired. The bullet sped true and pierced the bear's body just back of its powerful right shoulder. The great brute stopped dead in its tracks. It swayed for an instant, and then with a roar that drove the recoiling horse almost frantic with terror, it leaped sideways and plunged down the precipice, carrying with it a small avalanche of rocks, earth, and rattling stones.

Reynolds watched the bear until it had plowed its way to the ravine below, where it remained a confused and motionless heap. Then a smile of satisfaction over-spread his face as he lowered his rifle and lifted his eyes to the trail above. The girl had the horse under control now, and was urging him slowly down the narrow way. But the animal's fear was most apparent, for he was advancing very timidly, his whole body quivering with excitement. The fair rider, however, seemed perfectly at ease, and not the least disturbed at what had just happened.

After she had passed the spot where the bear had first appeared, she reined up the horse and looked across to where Reynolds was standing watching her most intently. Waving her hand in friendly salutation, she called aloud:

"Come on over."

The young man obeyed with alacrity. He sped down the hill, leaped across the narrow stream, and hurried up the trail. He was panting heavily when he reached the girl's side, and the perspiration was streaming down his face. She looked at him curiously, and her eyes danced with merriment.

"Do you always do that?" she questioned.

"Do what?" Reynolds asked in reply.

"Hustle like that at a woman's call?"

"I never did so before, simply because I never had the chance. This is a new experience to me."

The girl looked at him steadily for a few seconds. Then she smiled and held out her hand.

"I wish to thank you for what you have done for me to-day," she naïvely told him. "I am certain you saved my life. My, that was a great shot you made!"

Reynolds took her hand in his, and a thrill of joy swept through his body. It was not a soft hand, but brown and firm as if accustomed to toil. Her eyes met his and there was something in her look which aroused the noblest within him. It was an expression of admiration, almost hero-worship, and confidence. It said to him, "I know I can trust you, for you are worthy. You are different from most men in this region. Why are you up here?"

"I am glad that I happened to be near," Reynolds replied. "I was merely resting and enjoying the scenery when you and the bear appeared. You must be more careful in the future, as I might not be around."

The girl gave a merry laugh, and brushed back a wayward tress of hair that had drifted temptingly over her right cheek.

"I forgot to bring my gun," she explained, "and so the bear had me at its mercy. It is always the way, isn't it? Something is sure to happen when you are not prepared."

"And do you always ride alone in such dangerous places?" Reynolds asked.

"Oh, yes," and again the girl smiled. "Midnight and I know the trails well, don't we, old boy?" and she affectionately patted the horse's sleek neck. "But we came farther to-day than usual. But it was worth it, though, just to see that shot you made. Won't daddy be interested when I tell him about it."

"It was nothing much," Reynolds replied, although the sudden flush which mantled his face told Glen that he was pleased at her words of praise. "I am used to shooting brutes. In fact, it was my special work for several years."

"Grizzlies?" the girl queried.

"Worse than grizzlies, and far more ugly, crafty, and brutal."

"My, I never heard of such creatures," and the girl's eyes grew big with astonishment.

"Oh, I guess you have," and Reynolds smiled. "They raise and train them in Germany. I met them in France."

"What! were you over there?" Glen's interest and admiration were intense now.

"Yes, almost from the beginning of the war. I was a sharpshooter, you see, and so had excellent practice."

"Oh!" It was all the girl said, but it thrilled the young man's very soul, and when his eyes again met hers a sudden embarrassment came upon him.

"Do you live here?" he unexpectedly asked.

This question aroused Glen, and she at once assumed the defensive. The expression in her eyes changed, and she looked apprehensively around.

"A long way from here," she replied. "I must be off at once."

"Let me go with you, Miss Weston," Reynolds suggested. "You are unarmed, and may meet another grizzly before you reach home."

"How do you know who I am?" the girl asked. "You never saw me before, did you?"

"We travelled up the coast together on the *Northern Light*," Reynolds explained. "I was the one who drew the captain's attention to that canoe when the fog-bank lifted. You remember that, I suppose."

"Indeed I do, and too well at that. I wish that the fog had not lifted just then. Your eyes were too sharp that morning."

"But the men in the canoe were not sorry, though. They seemed to be mighty glad to be picked up."

"It is too bad that the fog lifted when it did," and the girl gave a deep sigh.

"You know the men, then?"

"Only one, but he is enough."

"I saw you with him at the dance. I suppose he is the one you mean."

"Where is he now?" There was a note of sternness in the girl's voice.

"At Big Draw. Any message I can take to him?"

The girl's face underwent a marvellous change. It was like the sweep of a cloud over a sunny landscape. She touched Midnight with her whip, and he sprang forward. Down the trail he clattered at a reckless gait, and when he had reached the level below his rider swung him sharply around. Then he bounded upward, and when near to where Reynolds was standing, Glen pulled him up with a sudden jerk.

"There is no message," she announced. "Why have you misjudged me? Are all men alike? Thank you for what you did for me to-day. Good-by."

She again lifted her whip and it was about to fall upon Midnight's flank when Reynolds stepped forward and laid his right hand upon the horse's bridle.

"Forgive me," he pleaded. "I meant nothing. I was merely joking. Perhaps I understand more than you realise. May I accompany you home?"

It is not safe for you to travel alone, unarmed as you are, in a place like this."

"No, no, you must not come," the girl protested. "It is much safer for me than it would be for you. Never cross the Golden Crest. I have warned you, so remember."

Again she touched her whip to Midnight, who leaped forward up the steep trail, pleased to be away from the place where he had received such a fright. Only once did the girl look back to wave a friendly hand to Reynolds ere a sharp turn in the trail hid her from view.

CHAPTER VII

BOTTLES WILL DO

For a few minutes Reynolds stood and looked up the trail after the girl and horse had disappeared from view. He was strongly tempted to follow to the heights above to see what lay beyond. He refrained, however, as the afternoon was fast wearing away, and he had a heavy load to carry back to camp. Retracing his steps to the brook, he walked up the ravine until he came to the spot where the grizzly was lying, half buried beneath the rocks and earth.

"Too bad, old chap," he remarked, as he looked down upon the brute. "But, then, it served you right. You attacked the innocent and defenseless, little thinking that such swift vengeance was so near. You were little different, however, from certain two-legged brutes who tried the same game to their own sorrow. You did me a great favor to-day, though, and it's too bad I had to shoot you. I would like to take your skin and keep it as a souvenir of this day. Guess I'll have to come back for it as I cannot carry it now. And, besides, I shall need a shovel to dig you out of that heap."

It was later than usual when Reynolds reached camp. The way was long and the sheep he carried was heavy. But his step was light and his heart happy. He had met Glen, had talked with her, looked into her eyes, and felt the firm pressure of her hand. Fate was kind to him, he reasoned, and it augured well for the future.

He was tired and hungry when he reached his little tent on the bank of the creek. A supper of broiled lamb, sour-dough bread, stewed dried fruit, and tea greatly refreshed him. He then lighted his pipe, and stretching himself out upon his blankets, meditated upon all that had taken place during the afternoon. It was good to lie there and rest with deep silence all around, the vision of Glen before him, and the remembrance of her voice and the touch of her hand. He wondered how and when he should see her again. He was determined that it must be soon, and he smiled at the idea of a terrible father keeping him away from her. What did he care for desperate men? Had he not faced them over and over again as they lay entrenched behind blazing rifles and deadly machine-guns? He had carried his life in his hand on numerous occasions on behalf of King and country, and he was not afraid to do it again for his own personal satisfaction. Just how he was to accomplish his object he had no definite idea. It was enough for him as he lay there to think of Glen's voice, the charm of her face, and the glory of her kindling eyes.

When he had finished his smoke he arose, and hoisting the sheep once again upon his back he carried it down to the roadhouse, where he sold it to Shorty, who had bargained with him the evening before for his game of the day. It was much easier than toting it around to the various tents and shacks, and selling it by the piece to the miners. He made less, to be sure, but he was satisfied. In fact, he was becoming tired of this business, and longed for something else, especially since he had met Glen in the hills.

Several men had arrived at Big Draw that day, and had brought a number of letters. One was for Reynolds, from his old friend, the editor. It was a fatherly letter, full of interest for his welfare, and the hope that he would soon return and enter upon the quest to find the missing Henry Redmond.

"I cannot get this notion out of my mind," he wrote in conclusion. "It is with me night and day since I talked it over with you. I believe you are the person best fitted for the undertaking. Give up your present wild-goose chase, and come home."

Reynolds smiled as he thrust the letter into his pocket, The editor called his trip north a "wild-goose

chase." He little knew that it was a chase of a different kind, and the bird was a fascinating girl. "I guess I shall have to tell Harmon that the bird I'm after is not a wild goose, but a new species, found solely up here, and with only one known specimen in existence. But I must write to him, anyway, and tell him something about my doings and the life at Big Draw."

In an adjoining room men were playing cards. Reynolds entered and stood watching them, especially Curly, who was deep in a game. He was evidently losing heavily, and he was in a bad frame of mind. As Reynolds stood and watched him, he began to wonder when the fellow had first met Glen. Was it on the trail, or had Curly ventured beyond the Golden Crest? It pleased him to know that the girl disliked the man, and how she wished that the fog-bank had not lifted just when it did. He longed to know what was in Curly's mind. Would he attempt to meet the girl again? That he was capable of the basest villainy, he had not the shadow of a doubt. Frontier Samson had told him as much, and the old prospector apparently knew whereof he spoke. It was not safe for Glen to travel alone among the hills, he mused. She was in danger of meeting a worse brute than the raging grizzly she had encountered that afternoon.

As Reynolds thought of these things he kept his eyes fixed intently upon Curly's face, not realising that he was staring so hard. But Curly did, and glancing up several times from his cards, he met those steady, inscrutable eyes. At first it annoyed him, making him nervous and impatient. He wondered what the quiet, reserved fellow meant by looking at him in such a manner. At length he became angry, and noticing that the eyes never left his face, he leaped to his feet with a savage oath, and moving over to where Reynolds was standing, demanded of him an explanation.

Brought suddenly to earth, Reynolds started, and asked what was the trouble.

"Trouble!" Curly roared. "You'll d— soon find out if you don't mind your own business."

"Why, I have been doing nothing," and Reynolds looked his surprise. "I was merely watching the game."

"No, you weren't. You were watching me like a cat watches a mouse, and I want to know what you mean."

Reynolds laughed.

"I didn't realise I was watching you," he explained. "My mind was elsewhere. I was thinking of more important things. You seem to be looking for trouble."

"I am, and you're the trouble, d— you. You've made me lose my game."

"H'm, you needn't accuse me. It must be your own conscience. I am not looking for a quarrel, even if you are. I shall leave at once if my presence is so objectionable to you. I'm rather fond of my own company."

"Coward!"

Reynolds had partly turned as this word smote him like a knife. He wheeled in an instant and faced Curly.

"Did you refer to me?" he asked. His eyes spoke danger, and the muscles of his body were tense. But Curly did not heed the signs; he had thrown caution to the winds.

"I did," he replied. "And I repeat it, 'Coward!' for that is what—"

Curly never finished the sentence, for a rigid fist caught him suddenly under the right jaw, and sent him reeling backward upon a small table. Recovering himself as speedily as possible, and wild with pain and rage, he ripped forth a revolver from a hip-pocket. A dead silence pervaded the room, like a calm before a storm. And during that silence something unexpected happened. It was not the report of the revolver, but the angry growl of a dog, the spitting of a cat, the bleat of a sheep, and the crow of a cock.

"Gr-r-r-r, ps-s-s-s, ba-a-a-a, cock-a-doodle-do-o-o."

So incongruous did the peculiar sounds appear, that all stared in amazement. Then when they beheld Frontier Samson standing near the door, their faces broadened into knowing grins, followed by hearty outbursts of laughter.

The prospector walked at once over to where Curly was standing, and laid his big right hand upon his shoulder.

"What's all this about?" he asked. "In trouble agin, eh?"

"I've been insulted by *that?*" and Curly motioned to Reynolds.

"An' so yer goin' to shoot?"

"I certainly am, so leave me alone."

"An unarmed man?"

"What in h— do I care whether he's armed or unarmed?"

"H'm, I guess ye'd care if he had a gun in his hands."

"Let him do it, Samson." It was Reynolds speaking. "An unarmed man is the only one he would try to shoot. He took mighty good care to keep out of range of the German guns during the war."

"You're a liar," Curly yelled, for the taunt stung him to the quick.

"Then the lie is on your own bead," was the quiet reply. "You and others have made the boast that you hid in the mountains and could not be caught when men were so sorely needed at the Front. If it's a lie, then you lied first, so don't blame me."

Curly's only response was to raise his revolver and fire. But Samson's hand struck the weapon in time to divert the aim, and no harm was done.

"Thar, that's enough of sich nonsense." The old prospector's voice was more than usually stern. "I'm not goin' to stand here an' see a man shot down in cold blood by the likes of you, Curly. The chap ye want to kill is worth ten of you any day. An' as fer shootin', why, ye wouldn't have a peek in with him if he had a gun."

"Give him one, then, and see how he can shoot," was the surly reply.

"But give me that first," and Samson laid his hand upon Curly's revolver.

"What for?"

"Never mind; I'll explain later, so jist let go. Thar, that's better," he commented when Curly had reluctantly obeyed. "Now, look here, I've got a suggestion to make. Let's settle this racket outside. It's no use practisin' on human bodies which the Lord made fer something more important. Whiskey bottles will do as well, an' the more ye smash of them the better, to my way of thinkin'. So s'pose we stick several of 'em up an' let you two crack away at 'em. That's the best way to find out who's the real marksman. Anyone got a rifle handy?"

This suggestion was not at all to Curly's liking. He preferred to have matters all his own way, and his opponent completely at his mercy. But Frontier Samson, as well as all the miners present, decided otherwise, and so Curly was forced to bow to the inevitable.

The men entered enthusiastically into this shooting-test, and in a few minutes three bottles were stuck upon a stump about fifty yards off. A rifle was procured, which Samson at once handed to Curly.

"Now, shoot, ye beggar," he ordered. "Here's the chance to show what ye kin do."

Curly's hand trembled as he took the weapon. The miners crowded around and assailed him with various remarks.

"Go to it, Curly," one encouraged. "Ye were always good at hitting the bottle."

"But not so far away," another bantered. "Curly likes it near, and full, at that."

Curly looked as if he would have liked to turn the rifle upon the men instead of the bottles. He was angry, and an angry man is always at a great disadvantage, especially where a steady nerve is needed. He accordingly fired wild, and when, the third shot had been made, the bottles remained untouched.

During this performance Reynolds had been standing silently by, apparently the least concerned of all. He felt annoyed at the trouble which had occurred, and he was anxious that Curly should be taught a salutary lesson. He picked up the rifle from the ground where his opponent had flung it in his rage, and brought it to his shoulder. He never felt calmer in his life as he took a quick and steady aim. Thrice he pulled the trigger, and each time a bottle crashed to the ground, while the excited miners cheered and shouted themselves hoarse.

When he was through, Reynolds quietly handed the rifle to Frontier

Samson. Then he turned to Curly.

"Are you satisfied now?" he asked, "or do you want some more shooting? If so, I am ready."

With an oath, Curly turned upon his heel, and was about to walk away, when the old prospector laid a firm hand upon his shoulder.

"Jist a minute, young man," he ordered. "I want to give ye a word of advice, which ye kin take or leave as ye see fit. Ye've made a miserable fool of yerself today, though it isn't the first time ye've done it, not by a long chalk. If ye want to git along in this camp, stow that nasty temper of yours, an' mind yer own bizness. This young feller wasn't interferin' with you one bit. The devil was in ye, an' ye had to spit it out on somebody. Ye better be more keerful in the future, as I mightn't allus be around to check ye on yer rampage."

"But he hit me," Curly growled.

"Sure he did, an' wouldn't anyone with the least grain of spunk in him do the same if he'd been called a coward fer nuthin'? This young chap is no coward, let me tell ye that. He did more'n his bit over in France when you was hidin' away in the hills. Oh, I know all about it, an' whar ye was an' what ye was doin'. Why, this chap ye wanted to shoot has more scars on his body an' more medals to his credit than you have toes an' fingers. An' yit ye called him a coward! I guess the men here know purty well by this time who is the coward an' who isn't. Thar, that's all I have to say, so ye may go. I'm sick of the sight of ye."

Curly was angry, but so fierce and powerful did the old prospector look that he did not dare to reply. He slunk away, leaving the miners greatly amused at his defeat. But Frontier Samson was not amused, for he knew Curly better than any of the men gathered there.

CHAPTER VIII

LOVE VERSUS GOLD

The next day Reynolds spent as usual out in the hills, though he did no hunting. When not stretched out upon the ground, he was wandering aimlessly around wherever his spirit listed. He had no more interest in the mountain sheep, and he passed several fine flocks without firing a shot. His thoughts were elsewhere, upon game of far greater importance. He had spent a sleepless night, for Curly's action not only annoyed but disgusted him. He did not wish to remain near such a cur, and the sooner he left, the better it would be for both of them. His only desire was to be left alone, and that seemed impossible so long as he stayed at Big Draw. But where could he go, and what should he do? Had he not met Glen Weston it would be an easy task to leave the north at once. But since she was here, and just beyond the hills, he could not bear the thought of going away without seeing her again.

As he lay under a big tree, there suddenly came into his mind the old fairy tale of "The Sleeping Beauty and the Enchanted Palace." He smiled as he recalled it now, for was not he himself something like the young knight who faced all manner of difficulties and won the prize? But the knight of the fairy tale did not have to contend with a desperate father and a tribe of Indians, as all the people connected with the ancient story were asleep. This was a much more difficult undertaking, and a greater adventure by far. It stirred his blood as he thought of it, making him anxious to be away upon the quest.

It was about the middle of the afternoon when he at length made his way to the ravine where he had met Glen the previous day. There was just the slightest chance that he might see her again, for something he had detected in her eyes encouraged him in the belief that she looked upon him with favor. But when he reached the place no sign of life could he behold. He went to the spot where he had left the grizzly half buried beneath the rocks and earth. To his surprise no sign of the bear was to be seen. No doubt the Indians had been sent to recover the animal for its skin and meat. Had Glen come with them? he wondered, to show where the animal had fallen? Such an idea was feasible, and he chided himself for not being there early in the day when he might have again met her.

Going to the tree on the bank where he had first beheld the girl on horseback, he threw himself down upon the ground and kept his eyes fixed upon the trail across the ravine. He still cherished the hope that she might reappear, and this would be the best place to see her. His earnest longings, however,

were of no avail, for no sign of the girl could he behold. Birds flitted here and there, while a great eagle alighted upon a rocky pinnacle and eyed him curiously and somewhat suspiciously.

"If I only had your power of flight, my fine fellow," Reynolds mused, "it would not take me long to go beyond the Golden Crest. I wonder why human beings were made the most helpless of all creatures? We are endowed with aspirations, yet how often they come to naught for lack of power to achieve them. But I shall achieve mine. If I have not the wings of an eagle, I have the mind of a man, as well as strength of body. I shall go to her, no matter what obstacles intervene." He rose from his reclining position and began to descend the bank. He had gone but half way, when, happening to glance once more across the ravine, he was surprised to see an Indian mounted upon a horse far up the trail. Both horse and rider were motionless until Reynolds' eyes rested upon them, when they vanished as if by magic. He gazed in amazement, thinking that perhaps he had seen a vision. But look as he might, nothing more could he see, and, much mystified, he continued on his way back to Big Draw.

Reynolds' mind was now fully made up. The day of meditation spent in the hills had proven beneficial. He would at once undertake the venture, and find out what lay beyond the Golden Crest. He would be the knight of the fairy tale, and either win or die in the attempt to win the Princess of his heart and mind.

So much was Glen in Reynolds' thoughts that he could think of little else. He visioned her mounted upon her horse, facing the grizzly. What a picture she would make! Never before had he beheld such a scene, and his fingers burned to sketch her as she now stood out clear and distinct in his mind.

Producing a pencil and a sheet of his scanty supply of paper, he was soon at work before the door of his tent. The bottom of a biscuit box, placed at the proper angle on the stump of a jack-pine, formed his easel. Perched upon another box, he was soon busily engaged upon the outline of what was to be his masterpiece. Forgotten was everything else as he sat there, devoting all the energy of heart, mind, and hand to the work before him. The miners might delve for gold; Curly and his companions might gamble to their hearts' content; such things were nothing to him. He had struck a vein of wealth, the true gold of love, by the side of which all the treasures of earth were as dross.

And as he worked, a shadow suddenly fell across the picture. Looking quickly up, he was surprised to see Frontier Samson standing quietly by his side, looking intently upon the sketch.

"You startled me," and Reynolds gave a slight laugh, feeling for the instant a sense of embarrassment.

"Caught in the act, eh?" the prospector queried.

"It seems so, doesn't it? I wasn't expecting company."

"Oh, I don't mean you, young man. I was thinkin' of her," and Samson pointed to the picture. "Where did ye ketch her?"

"Out on the hills. Isn't she wonderful?"

"Mebbe she is an' mebbe she isn't," was the cautious reply.

"Have you any doubt about it?" Reynolds somewhat impatiently asked.

"Wall, no, I s'pose not. I'll take yer word fer it."

"But can't you see for yourself, man, what she is?"

"H'm, d'ye expect me to see what you do in that picter?"

"And why not?"

"Simply 'cause I'm not as young as you are. Now that," and he pointed to the sketch, "doesn't tell me much. I see some drawin's thar of a gal on horseback, but they don't show me the gal herself. They don't tell me anything about the sound of her voice, the look in her eyes, nor the heavin' of her buzom. I can't see what her mind's like, nor her heart, fer that matter. Them's the things ye can't draw, an' them's the things by which I judge a gal."

"But good gracious! if you saw her only once you would know what she's like; the most wonderful creature in the whole world. Heaven and earth must have combined in bestowing upon her their choicest graces."

"When did ye see her like that?" and Samson again motioned to the sketch.

"Yesterday; out in the hills."

"On horseback?"

"Yes, and face to face with a grizzly."

"A grizzly!"

"It certainly was, and a monster, too. My! you should have seen the way she handled her horse when the brute was coming toward her. Some day I am going to sketch her as she looked when the horse was rearing backward. This drawing merely shows her in repose when last I saw her."

"An' what happened to the grizzly?" the old man queried.

"Oh, a bullet hit him, that was all, and he took a header into the ravine below."

"It did! An' whar did the bullet come from? Jist dropped down by accident at the right moment, I s'pose."

Reynolds merely smiled at the prospector's words, and offered no explanation.

"Modest, eh?" and Samson chuckled. "No more trouble to knock over a grizzly than it was to smash three whiskey bottles without winkin'. I like yer coolness, young man. Now, some fellers 'ud have blatted it all over camp in no time. An' that happened yesterday, so ye say?"

"Yes; toward evening."

"An' the gal was thar all alone?"

"It seems so. I wanted to go home with her, but she would not let me."

"She wouldn't! An' why not?"

"She said it wasn't safe for me to go beyond the Golden Crest."

"Did she give any reason?"

"None at all, and that's what makes me curious."

"About what?"

"What lies beyond the Golden Crest. The spirit of adventure is on me, and I intend to make the attempt to find out for myself about the mystery surrounding that place."

"Ye do! Didn't the gal say it wasn't safe?"

"All the greater reason, then, why I should go. If that girl will not come to me, I am going to her. Death is the worst that can happen to me, and I would rather die than live without Glen Weston."

"Ye've got it bad, haven't ye?" and Samson smiled. "But mebbe she's got the fever, too, since yesterday, an' has been back to the ravine to see if you was thar."

"Perhaps she did, but I was too late. I was there this afternoon, and saw no one except an Indian on horseback. The bear, too, was gone."

"Ye saw an Injun, ye say? What was he doin'?"

"Merely sitting upon his horse at the top of the trail. But he vanished just as soon as I glimpsed him."

"An' the bear was gone, too, did ye say?"

"Yes; nothing left of it. I suppose the Indians came for it. Perhaps Glen was with them, and so I missed another chance of seeing her."

During this conversation Frontier Samson had been standing. But now he sat down upon the ground, and remained for some time in deep thought. He filled and lighted his pipe, and smoked in silence, while Reynolds continued his work upon the sketch.

"When d'ye expect to leave camp?" Samson at length asked.

But Reynolds made no reply. He went on steadily with his work, while the old man watched him with twinkling eyes.

"Completely gone," he mused. "Deaf to the world. Can't hear nuthin'."

It's a sure sign."

"What's that? Were you speaking?" Reynolds suddenly asked.

"Speakin'! Sure. Why, me tongue's been goin' like a mill-clapper, though ye never heard a word I said."

"I was lost, I guess," and Reynolds smiled as he turned toward the sketch.

"So I imagined. But, then, I fergive ye, fer I was young once meself, an' in love, too, so I know all the signs. I only wanted to know when ye expect to hit the trail on yer great adventure?"

"To-morrow," was the emphatic reply. "This place won't keep me an hour longer than I can help. I am sick of it."

"How d'ye expect to travel?"

"On foot, of course; straight over the mountains."

"D'ye realise the dangers?"

"Dangers are nothing to me; I am used to them."

"But s'pose I should tell ye it's impossible to git behind the Golden Crest?"

"Then, I like to do the impossible. There are plenty to do the ordinary things. I want to do the extraordinary, the so-called impossible. Did you ever hear the song that the Panama Canal diggers used to sing to cheer them up?"

"No; what is it?"

"I only know four lines; they go this way:

"Got any rivers they say are uncrossable?
Got any mountains you can't tunnel through?
We specialize on the wholly impossible,
Doing the things that no man can do.'

"I like those words, and they have heartened me more than once."

"They're sartinly stirrin', an' I like the spirit of 'em," the prospector replied. "But it seems to me that ye've got to use common sense as well as spirit. Now reason tells me that ye need someone to help ye in this undertakin' of yours, an' why shouldn't that someone be me?"

"You! Could you help me?" Reynolds eagerly asked. "Will you go with me?"

"I might on a sartin condition."

"And what is that?"

"Nuthin' much, 'cept you'll go with me."

"And why shouldn't I?"

"That's jist the pint about which I ain't sure. Though you've got the feet of a man, yit from what I gather yer heart an' yer head have eagle's wings, which'll make ye impatient to foller an old feller like me, who ain't as spry as he once was, an' whose jint's are somewhat stiff."

"Oh, you needn't worry about that," Reynolds laughingly told him. "I hope I have a little sense left yet, although it's quite true what you say about my heart and my head having eagle's wings. You lead on and I'll follow like a dog."

"Now, look here, young man, thar's something else I want to put to ye. 'Twixt two things, one sartin an' t'other unsartin, which will ye choose?"

"I do not understand. Explain what you mean."

"Wall, ye see, it's this way: The findin' that gal on which ye've set yer heart is a mighty unsartin proposition. But thar's another which is as sure as the sun, an' about which all the men here in camp, an' the hull world fer that matter, would go crazy over if they knew about it."

"What is it?"

"It's gold; that's what it is, an' plenty of it, too."

"Where?" Reynolds' eyes were big with excitement.

"Oh, back in the hills. I discovered it over a year ago, an' nobody knows of it but me."

"Why didn't you report it?"

"H'm, what would be the good of doin' that? Haven't I seen too many gold strikes already, an' what have they amounted to? Look at this camp, fer instance. The men have come here an' ruined this place. They may git some gold, but what good will it do 'em? They'll gamble it, or waste it in other ways. Oh, I know, fer I've seen it lots of times."

"Why, then, are you willing to reveal the secret of your mine to me?" Reynolds asked.

"Did I say I was willin'?"

"That is what I inferred from your words."

"I merely asked ye 'twixt which would ye choose: the findin' that gal, which is an unsartin proposition, or gittin' the gold, which is as sure as the sun. That's all I asked."

"But if I choose the gold, then your secret will be known, and there will be a wild stampede into the place. You don't want that to happen, do you? It would be the same story of other camps, and perhaps worse."

"No, I don't want it to happen, that's a fact. But, ye see, it's bound to come sooner or later. Thar are so many men pokin' thar noses into every hole an' corner, that they are sure to find my mine before long. Now, I want someone to my likin' to be first on the ground, an' that someone is you. Ye kin then make yer choice an' stake two claims as discoverer. Tharfore, which will ye choose, that gal proposition or the gold? It's up to you. Is it hard to decide?"

"Not at all," was the reply. "I shall take the girl. One might run across gold any time, but a girl like that one won't find again. And, besides, what good would the gold be to me without her? I, therefore, take the girl proposition."

Samson looked at his companion in surprise, as if he had not heard aright. Here was a phase of character beyond the bounds of his experience.

"An' ye don't want the gold?" he asked.

"Certainly I want the gold, who wouldn't? But you told me I had to choose it or the girl, didn't you?"

"I surely did, though I never imagined ye'd throw down the gold. Now, all the fellers I ever met up here would have taken the gold first."

"Feeling sure of getting the girl later; is that it?"

"That's about the gist of it. They'd tackle what's sartin first, but you're willin' to try the unsartin."

"I am, and when can we start?"

"In the morning if it's all the same to you. We'll need some extry grub, which we kin git from Shorty. We won't want much, as we'll find plenty of meat along the way. We'll hit out before the camp's astir, so nobody'll know what's become of us."

"How long will it take us to cross the Golden Crest?" Reynolds asked.

"That depends upon many things. We might do it in three or four days by the way we're goin', or, again, it might take six months, an' mebbe longer. In fact, we might never git thar at all."

"I planned to do it in a couple of days," Reynolds declared.

"I s'pose ye did. But things don't allus turn out as ye plan, 'specially if ye undertake to cross the Golden Crest. Ye see, things happen thar quick as lightnin' sometimes, an' if yer lucky enough to git off alive, the patchin'-up process might take a long time. See?"

"I see," Reynolds replied, as he took the sketch from the improvised easel, "I have a number of

patches on my body already, so a few more won't make much difference."

CHAPTER IX

THE OUTER TRAIL

A profound silence lay over Big Draw mining camp as Frontier Samson and Tom Reynolds slipped quietly away among the hills. The sun had not yet lifted itself above the horizon, but the speediness of its coming was heralded in the eastern sky, and the tallest mountain peaks had already caught the first shafts of its virgin glory. The valleys were still robed in semi-darkness, and the two wayfarers seemed like mere spectres as they sped forward.

"My, this is great!" Reynolds exclaimed as he at length stopped to readjust his pack. "I believe I should live to be a hundred or over if I could breathe air like this all the time. It's a fine tonic."

"It sure is," Samson agreed, as he laid aside his rifle and pulled out his pipe. "Not much like the smell of yer city streets, whar ye swaller hundreds of disease germs every second."

"Have you ever lived there?" Reynolds asked, curious to learn something of the old man's history.

"Long enough to know what they're like. I've poked me nose into a good many cities, an' they're all the same, to my way of thinkin'. It's a wonder to me why so many people live in sich places, crowded, together like sheep, when thar's all this, an' millions of places like it, whar ye kin breathe the air as the Lord made it, an' not fouled by the work of human bein's."

"You are very fond of this wild life, I see," Reynolds replied. "Have you lived here many years?"

The prospector threw aside his burnt match, gave his pack an extra hitch, picked up his rifle and moved forward.

"Guess we'd better git on," he said. "Thar's a little brook we want to reach in time fer dinner. Ye don't find much water in these valleys."

Reynolds moved along by his companion's side, wondering why he did not answer his question. It was not until they were eating their dinner by the side of the brook did Samson vouchsafe any information.

"Ye asked me if I've been long in this country," he began. "My reply may seem strange to you, but it's true. Judgin' by years, I've been here a long time, but, accordin' to life, only a little while. I uster reckon things by years, but I don't do that any longer."

"No?" Reynolds looked quizzically at his companion.

"I don't count time by years, young man, an' the sooner ye larn to do the same the better it'll be fer ye. In the cities ye find clocks an' watches everywhere, an' they all remind people that time is passin'. Ye kin hardly walk along a street hut ye'll see funeral processions, an' the doctors are busy with the sick. Big hospitals are crowded with patients, an' accidents happen every minute of the day. These all tell that life is brief an' unsartin. The feelin' gits in the blood an' on the nerves that death is right near, an' as people think, so they are. Age an' health are accordin' to the mind, an' don't ye ever fergit that."

Samson paused and looked around.

"See them big mountains," and he pointed away to the left. "A man kin never feel old with them on every side. They don't remind ye of the passin' of time an' of dyin'. They're jist the same as they were thousands of years ago. An' so it's purty much like that with other things up here. I never feel old when I look around me on the wonderful sights; I feel young. An' why shouldn't I? Thar's so much to do, an' so many things to see an' larn that I haven't time to think of dyin'. Life after all, as I said, ain't to be judged by years, but by love of livin'."

Samson seemed to be on his pet theme, and he continued his talk as he and Reynolds again resumed their journey. Several times the latter endeavored to find out something about the old man's past history, but all in vain. The prospector gave him not the slightest information concerning himself, but discoursed volubly about the difference between the ways of the city and the wilderness.

"Money ain't everything," he declared, "even though some seem to think it is. It has its uses, I

acknowledge, but it was never meant to starve the soul, though that is jist what it too often does. I know of men who sacrificed everything to the pilin' up of money, even love, without which life ain't worth a straw."

"Have you been able to find love here in the north?" Reynolds asked.

"Thar are different kinds of love, young man," was the somewhat slow and thoughtful reply. "The brand you mean, if I understand ye aright, I've never experienced in this country, an' in fact, I never expect to find it agin on this side of the grave. It's the pure love of a true man fer a good woman, I mean. I believe you have it, an' yer to be congratulated. It's the most wonderful thing in life. Even the love of children, though it is great, kin never equal it. It's in a class all by itself."

"But suppose the love isn't mutual, what then?" Reynolds asked.

"That'd be a pity, an' no mistake. Are ye referrin' to yer own case?"

"I certainly am. I am positive that the only woman in the world I want cares nothing for me. She does not even know my name, while I—oh, well, you know how I feel toward her."

"Jist keep up courage an' plod along, that's my advice. If she's meant fer you, ye'll win her all right. I'm a great believer in the idea that our own'll come to us some day, an' often in ways we least expect. But, hello! what's that?"

The trail on which they were now walking wound along the side of a deep valley, through which flowed a small stream. Samson was looking across toward the opposite bank, and as Reynolds turned his eyes in that direction he saw an Indian on horseback as motionless as the trees around him. He was facing the two travellers, and apparently he had been watching them for some time.

"Where do you suppose he has come from, and what does he want?" Reynolds asked.

His companion's only reply was to bring his rifle to his shoulder and fire two shots in rapid succession across the valley toward the horseman, neither of which took effect. The Indian quickly unslung his rifle, fired one shot in return, and immediately vanished into the forest.

"Is that the best you can do?" Reynolds asked. "You should have let me have a crack at him."

"Me aim's unsartin to-day," was the reply. "I don't allus miss like that."

"But why did you shoot, anyway? The Indian was doing us no harm."

"He was skulkin' around, though, an' I jist gave him a hint to move along."

"So you didn't intend to shoot him?"

"Oh, no. It was merely a hint, as I told ye."

"A queer hint, I should say," and Reynolds laughed. "Manners of the wilderness, I suppose?"

"Sure. We don't stand on ceremony up here. We're a bluff bunch, an' if we don't like a feller's company we tell him so without beatin' around the bush."

"And did the Indian understand your meaning?"

"Y'bet he did. He took my shots as sayin', 'Good day. How are the missus an' the kids? Mebbe they need ye.' His shot in reply jist said, 'Thank ye; mebbe they do.' That was all."

Reynolds laughed at this quaint explanation, although he felt certain that Samson was not telling him the truth. He said nothing about it, however, and the prospector did not refer to it again. But Reynolds had the feeling that his companion and the Indian understood each other, and that the shots they had fired were signals, the meaning of which was known only to themselves. Who was this Frontier Samson? he mused. Was he in some manner in league with the Indians? Why had he taken such an interest in him, a complete stranger, and a chechahco at that? Why should he wish to reveal to him the secret of his gold discovery? He could not for a moment think that Samson had any evil purpose in mind, but as he thought it all over during the remainder of the afternoon, he felt that there was something very peculiar and mysterious about it all.

This feeling was intensified that first night on the trail. They camped by a little stream, where the trees stood thick, and larger than on the uplands. They had shot a couple of grouse on their way, and these Samson prepared for supper.

"I'll jist cook both of 'em," he remarked, "an' what we don't eat to-night will be fine warmed up to-morrow."

"I should like to get a moose," Reynolds declared. "I haven't shot one since I came north."

"Don't do it, young man, unless ye kin git nuthin' else," Samson advised. "A moose is a purty big animal, an' we could tote only a little piece of its carcass. The rest we'd have to leave to spile. I've allus made a practice of shootin' something that I kin clean up in a few meals. Some critters, who call 'emselves men, shoot everything in sight, an' leave it to spile. That is wasteful slaughter, an' not true sport."

Reynolds was glad to roll himself up in his blanket that night, for he was tired after his day's tramp, with a heavy pack on his back. Samson did likewise, and soon silence reigned in the deep forest, broken only by the ripple of the brook a short distance away. It was a calm night, mild, and with not a breath of wind astir.

Some time during the night Reynolds awoke with a start. He sat up and looked around. It was light enough for him to see that his companion was gone, and he believed that it was his footsteps that had aroused him. After waiting for some time and nothing happened, he once again stretched himself out upon the ground. But he could not sleep. What was the meaning of Samson's departure? he wondered. Had it anything to do with the Indian they had seen that day across the ravine? The more he thought of it, the more mystified he became. How long he thus lay there with every sense alert, he did not know, though it seemed a long time before the prospector at last returned. Reynolds pretended that he was asleep, but his suspicions were now firmly confirmed when the old man bent over him for a few seconds as if to make sure that he was not awake.

Reynolds did not refer to the incident the next day, and Samson made no mention of it. The latter was in excellent spirits, and talked freely as they moved on their way. That night they halted, and made ready their camp by the side of a small lake. It was a peaceful and beautiful spot. Not a ripple ruffled the surface of the water, and the trees along the shore were mirrored in the clear depths. Reynolds was delighted, and he expressed his admiration to his companion.

"Isn't this great!" he exclaimed. "I have never seen anything to equal it! It is a matchless gem, with a perfect setting."

"Yes, it sartinly is wonderful," the prospector drawled. "An' I'm glad ye like it. Guess thar should be ducks over yonder," and he motioned to the upper end of the lake. "A good fat feller'd be nice fer dinner to-morrow."

Picking up his rifle, he disappeared among the trees, and in another minute his light tread was unheard. Reynolds stood for some time viewing the scene before him. He longed for his paints and brushes that he might catch the impressions ere they faded. Unfortunately he had left them behind, so he had to satisfy himself with feasting his soul instead.

At length he turned and walked back to their camping ground. He had just reached the place when a magnificent moose trotted majestically by but a short distance away. Forgotten was Samson's admonition about the shooting of big game, so seizing his rifle, he slipped quickly and quietly after the big animal. The latter had already passed out of sight, but expecting to catch a glimpse of it at any instant, Reynolds hastened forward. This led him down into a valley, and there he saw the moose in a small open clearing to the left. Before he was near enough to shoot, the animal once more vanished among the trees. The fever of the chase was now upon him, and unheeding his bearings, he pressed rapidly on, expecting every minute to come in sight of the lordly creature. But he was doomed to disappointment, and most reluctantly he was compelled to relinquish the pursuit.

Reynolds had no definite idea how far he had travelled, nor the direction he had taken. So intent had he been upon following the moose, that he had lost all trace of his bearings, and he knew not the way back to the camp. This was a most disquieting situation, and he chided himself for his stupidity. Night was also upon him, and this added to his perplexity.

"What a mess I have made of it!" he growled. "In this labyrinth of valleys, hills, trees, and wild meadows, how in the name of common sense am I to find that speck of camping ground? It must lie over there," and he looked away to his right. "The sun was before me when I started, and by keeping due east I should come somewhere near the place."

For over an hour he plowed his way through the forest, up hill and down, each moment expecting to see the lake for which he was searching. His efforts, however, were all in vain, so wearied almost to the point of exhaustion, and with clothes torn, hands and face bleeding, he was forced to give up for the night.

Sinking upon the ground, he tried to calm the agitated state of his mind. From the first he had realised his serious predicament, and how difficult it would be to extricate himself from that vast wilderness.

"I can't go any farther to-night," he declared, "so I might as well make the best of a bad affair. I have my rifle, and that's some comfort. I needn't starve, anyway, even though I am lost."

He felt for his cartridge belt, and immediately he gave a great start of dismay. It was not there! Then he remembered that he had taken it off when pitching camp that night by the shore of the lake. With trembling hands he next examined the magazine of his rifle, and found that but three cartridges were left, as he had fired two shots in the hope of attracting Frontier Samson's attention. This was a serious situation, and he realised that upon those three remaining cartridges his life depended.

CHAPTER X

ADrift IN THE WILDERNESS

Nowhere, perhaps, except adrift in mid-ocean, is the sense of loneliness more appalling than to be lost in a labyrinthine forest of the mighty north. Even upon the ocean there is always the chance of being picked up by a passing vessel. But lost in the wilderness! hidden from view, what hope can the stoutest heart entertain of rescue? Here a man is but a thing of naught, an insect creeping upon the ground, a mere speck, the veritable plaything of chance.

Reynolds, however, was well hardened to desperate situations. Often in France he had been alone in "No Man's Land," with death close at hand. He had never flinched then, and he was determined that he would not do so now.

"I told Harmon that I like adventure and desperate undertakings," he mused. "I have certainly enough here to satisfy me for a while. But it can't be helped, and so I must make the best of it. Rest is what I need at present, and I am not going to worry about to-morrow. 'One thing at a time' has been my motto, and I guess it's a good one."

He awoke early the next morning, though the sun was up ahead of him. He sprang to his feet and peered around. But nothing could he see, except trees on every side.

"I must get out of this," he muttered, "and strike for the high hills. Perhaps there I may be able to get my proper bearings. I must find a breakfast somewhere, but with my scanty supply of ammunition, it is necessary to be careful."

Picking up his rifle, he started forth, and for several hours moved steadily onward. Through a break in the forest he had caught sight of a high hill, and toward this he laboriously made his way. He had to descend first into a deep valley, where a large wild meadow offered an inviting feeding-ground for moose. But not a sign of life could he see, and greatly disappointed he was forced to begin the hard climb up the opposite side of the hill.

About the middle of the afternoon he succeeded in shooting a rabbit, which he at once skinned and broiled over a small fire. He was weak from hunger and hard, anxious travelling, so this food gave him much refreshment. He ate sparingly, nevertheless, knowing that he might not be able to procure anything more for supper. With only two cartridges left, his outlook was far from encouraging.

When the summit of the hill was at length reached, he climbed a large fir tree from which he was enabled to obtain an excellent view of the surrounding country. Far off rose great snow-capped mountain peaks, over which fleecy clouds were lazily drifting. A vast sea of forest stretched on every side, broken here and there by placid, shimmering lakes. But which was the one near the camp where Frontier Samson was no doubt anxiously awaiting the wanderer's return? That was the question which agitated Reynolds' mind. No sign of human life could he behold, and he wondered in which direction Big Draw mining camp lay. So completely had he lost his bearings that he had no idea which was the right course to pursue. Anyway, it was necessary to keep on the move, for to remain where he was meant certain death. If he must die, he would die fighting, game to the very last. Surely beyond some of those outstanding hills he could find a river, which would bear him out of that wilderness maze. A high crest to the left looked promising, and toward this he at once started.

He slept that night in a valley by a little brook which gurgled down to a lake beyond. The remains of the rabbit served him for supper, and where was he to obtain his next meal? He had startled several grouse during the day, and once he detected the plunging of a moose. But nothing came within the range of his rifle except a few noisy squirrels, but upon these he did not dare to waste his two remaining cartridges. In his extremity he would have welcomed the sight of a bear, and even a grizzly at that. He could then afford to exhaust his ammunition, as the flesh of a bear would last him for many days. But no bear had he met, although signs of them were at times abundant, especially in the valleys.

The next morning in a mood of desperation, he took a long shot at a flying grouse and missed it. One cartridge now remained, and it was absolutely necessary to reserve that for something large. Down the valley lay a big wide meadow, and here he believed he might find a moose feeding. It was worth trying, at any rate. Walking warily along the edge of the forest, he was at length rewarded by seeing a fine animal some distance off on the opposite side of the meadow. Reynolds instantly stopped, and his hands trembled through the excitement of his discovery. If he could get a little closer he felt sure that the moose would be his. But just as he took a few steps forward, the animal lifted its great head and sniffed the air. There was not a second to lose, so bringing the rifle to his shoulder, he took a quick aim and fired. With a startled snort, the moose reared, staggered, and then with tremendous leaps bounded across the twenty or thirty yards of intervening meadow and vanished in the forest. Reynolds could hear it crashing its way among the trees as he hurried out into the open. The sounds grew fainter and fainter, and finally ceased. The animal had made good its escape, although evidently wounded.

Reynolds' previous discouragement was nothing to what he experienced now. He moved mechanically toward the spot where the moose had been grazing. Why he did so he could not tell. He reached the border of the forest, and flung himself down upon the grass. With his last cartridge gone, what chance had he of life? He had been in many a dire strait in the past, but nothing to equal this. He was face to face with death, more surely and in a far more terrible form than he had ever encountered in far off France.

"This is certainly 'No Man's Land,'" he muttered. "I do not believe a human being ever trod this region before and it is not likely that anyone will come here during the next one hundred years. And to think that I missed that shot when my life depended upon it! It must be my nerves."

A feeling of annoyance swept upon him, and picking up his rifle, he hurled it among the trees.

"Lie there," he ordered. "You are of no use to me now, and I have no strength to tote you along."

Then he laughed, and the hollow sound of his voice startled him. He sprang to his feet and looked around. Why had he laughed? he asked himself. Was he going out of his mind? He glanced at his hands and shuddered, so bruised and bleeding were they. His clothes, too, were in tatters, while his boots were so worn that portions of his feet were visible.

For a few minutes he stood rigidly still, as if in a dream. The intense loneliness of the place was appalling. It was unnerving him, and he was losing control of himself. Suddenly he started and ran as if for life, back over the track he had recently traversed. He was no longer the Tom Reynolds who had started forth from Big Draw, but a denizen of the wilds. The desire for food possessed him. It made him mad, a demon, ready to fall upon any creature that crossed his path. He was crafty as well, and reaching the shelter of the forest, he glided cautiously along the edge of the meadow, up toward the little brook where he had slept the night before. No tiger creeping through the jungle moved more stealthily than did he. Nothing escaped his notice, and he eagerly watched for rabbit or squirrel that he might pounce upon it.

For some time he thus advanced, but nothing could he see. At length he came to an opening in the trees, which exposed the brook plainly to view. His eyes swept the stream, and as they did so they presently rested upon a black object crouched upon a fallen tree projecting out over the brook. He recognized it at once as a black bear, watching for fish. It was lying flat on the log, with one big paw close to the water waiting for its breakfast.

Reynolds' first impulse was to rush forward and engage the brute in a deadly conflict. But a natural caution restrained him, and he accordingly waited to see what would happen. Neither did he have to wait long, for in a twinkling the big paw struck, the water splashed, and a shiny form hurtled through the air, and fell several yards away. And after it sprang the bear, but his body had scarcely left the log ere Reynolds was bounding toward him with such yells and whoops that the forest resounded on all sides. Startled and surprised beyond measure, the bear paused and looked back. Seeing, but not understanding the strange creature rushing toward him with wildly waving arms, and emitting such blood-curdling yells, it uttered a hoarse growl of fear and rage and lumbered off for the shelter of the forest as fast as its legs would carry it.

Reynolds paid no more attention to the bear than if it had been a gnat, but sprang greedily upon the fish, which was wriggling and beating itself around upon the ground. It was a young king-salmon, and although not large, Reynolds thought it the finest fish he had ever beheld. It did not take him long to despatch his prize, and in a few minutes a portion of it was sizzling over a small fire he had lighted. Never had any food tasted so good, he imagined, and the strength thus gained brought back his normal state of mind. He felt more like himself, and ready for another effort to free himself from his wilderness prison. He even smiled as he thought of the bear's fright and its ignominious retreat.

"Lost your breakfast, old boy, didn't you?" he called out. "You weren't expecting company, were you? But I am grateful to you, and wish you better luck next time."

Taking with him the remainder of the fish, Reynolds once more continued his journey. The high ridge was a long way off, and before it could be reached it would be necessary to cross several smaller hills and a number of valleys. But with strength renewed, he sped onward.

All through the day the heat had been almost over-powering. It poured its hot rays full upon him, and not a breath of wind stirred the trees. He was about half way up the high hill when the weather suddenly changed. The sky darkened, and the wind began to howl through the forest. Great black clouds massed in vast battalions overhead, and in less than half an hour the storm burst.

Reynolds had paused on a rocky ledge as the tempest swept upon him. Never before had he experienced such a storm. It seemed as if the very windows of heaven had suddenly opened to deluge the earth. He looked hurriedly around for shelter, and seeing an overhanging portion of rock, he at once made his way thither, and crouched low for protection. The rain, however, swirled in after him, forcing him to move farther back. That he was able to do this surprised him, and feeling with his hands, he discovered that there was a big open space to the rear, and that he was at the entrance of a cave, how large he did not know. Fortunately he was provided with a good supply of matches, so striking one, he examined his new abode. The brief feeble light showed that the cave was about a foot higher than his head, and much larger than he had supposed. He had no inclination to explore it just then, for some dry sticks lying at his feet arrested his attention. He was hungry after his hard tramp, so a piece of salmon would be most acceptable.

It did not take him long to light a small fire as near the mouth of the cave as the rain would permit, and, prepare his meal. The fire felt good, too, for the air was damp and chilly.

"I might as well spend the night here," he mused, "for even if the storm does let up, I would only get soaked from the drenched trees. And, besides, I cannot see anything from the top of the hill until the clouds roll away and the air clears."

He ate the nicely browned piece of fish, and when he had finished he leaned comfortably back, filled and lighted his pipe. This was the first time he had thought of smoking since leaving Frontier Samson. He wondered where the old prospector was, and whether he was hunting frantically for his lost companion. His mind turned naturally to Glen. He was farther from her now than ever, and should he see her again? The thought of her had stimulated him during his recent terrible experiences. Over and over again she seemed to be standing by his side, urging him to go on, and renewing his fainting spirits. He pictured her now as he had last seen her at the top of that steep trail, mounted upon her horse. He recalled for the thousandth time her clear musical voice, the bright flash of her eyes, and the deep flush which had mantled her cheeks at the mention of Curly's name.

"I must find her," he emphatically declared, as he stirred up the dwindling fire, and added a couple of sticks. "I expected to be with her before this, but here I am, lodged like a bear in this dismal hole."

He glanced around the cave, and as he did so, he gave a sudden start. Something in one side of the wall where the fire-light fell attracted his attention. It made his heart beat fast, and brought him to his feet in an instant. His hand reached up and touched it. Then he quickly struck a match, and examined it more carefully. Yes, he was right, and he had made no mistake. It was gold!

CHAPTER XI

INTO THE GREAT UNKNOWN

For a few seconds Reynolds stared upon his new discovery. Then he examined the walls elsewhere,

and no matter where he looked, he found nuggets of gold protruding from the earth. His excitement now became intense, and seizing a burning stick he began to explore the cave. Everywhere it was the same. The earth beneath his feet was even filled with nuggets, and, they gleamed upon him from overhead. He felt that he must be dreaming, or else his terrible experiences of late had turned his brain. Could it be possible that he had accidentally stumbled upon a vein of the precious metal, rich beyond the wildest bounds of imagination! He put his hand to his face, and even pinched himself to make sure that he was awake.

When the brand had flickered out, he walked back to the fire and sat down. He tried to calm himself that he might think over his wonderful discovery. The rain still pelted down outside, and the wind roared among the trees. But Reynolds paid no attention to them now. He saw nothing but gold, heaps of it, piled high before him, and himself the richest man in the whole world. What would not the miners of Big Draw give to know of this discovery! How they would flock to the place, followed by thousands of others. What a change would ensue in a short time. No longer would it be the desolate wilderness, but alive with frantic human beings.

But suppose he should never live to tell the tale? He was lost, far from any habitation, and with only enough food for a most meagre breakfast. No, he must not die. It was necessary for him to live, to make his great discovery known; and to reap the rich harvest himself. And Glen! Again he thought of her. He would be able to go to her a rich man instead of almost a beggar. He smiled as he recalled what he had said to Frontier Samson. The prospector had given him his choice between gold and the girl, and he had chosen the latter. His love had not changed in the least degree, but why should he not have the gold as well as the girl?

Reynolds sat for a long time that night absorbed in deep thought. He slept upon the ground, and his dreams were a jumble of wild animals, gold, and a beautiful girl. He awoke early and noted with satisfaction that the storm had ceased, and the sky was clear. Having eaten the last of the salmon, he left the cave and viewed his surroundings in order to locate his bearings should he ever return to the place. He believed that he was about half way up the highest hill in the immediate vicinity, and that he could not fail to miss seeing it from a distance. He noticed that the hill formed the apex of a triangular formation, while two hills, one to the right and the other to left, served as base corners. He was sure that he could remember such guiding marks, and would be able to return to the cave without any difficulty.

It was with a feeling of reluctance that he at length left the cave and again assayed the climb up the side of the hill, which became steeper and more precipitous the farther he advanced. At times he was forced to pull himself up by means of roots and small trees, so his progress was accordingly slow. The sun was hot, and often he grew faint from heat and fatigue. He watched for any sign of life, of rabbit, bird, or squirrel. But the place seemed deserted, and even the plant life was scant and scrubby. A fierce thirst came upon him, for no water had passed his lips since the previous day.

Thus hour after hour he toiled upward. He did not dare to return to the brook below, for that would mean certain death. It had to be ever on until the summit was reached, and what then? His courage almost failed as he thought of what that barren peak might have in store for him. He had been disappointed so often, surely Fate would not abandon him now after he had made such a fierce fight for life.

When but a hundred yards from his goal, he paused for a minute's respite. He turned his bloodshot eyes to the sky. A great eagle was soaring majestically athwart the blue. It seemed to mock him by its easy flight. It angered him as he followed its every movement. Why should a mere bird have such freedom of motion, while man was so helpless? To the eagle, distance was nothing; it laughed the highest mountain peak to scorn, and its food was wherever its fancy led. He suddenly thought of the gold he had discovered. In the world of civilization what a power it would mean. What could it not do toward providing ease and reputation? And of what use was that treasure to him now? It was of no more value than the stones beneath his feet, and he would gladly have given it all for one good meal and a draught of refreshing water.

The eagle was still soaring overhead, free and buoyant. It was nearer now, wheeling closer and closer to Reynolds as he clung like a snail to the side of the hill. And he was made in the image of God! The thought stung him. Why should such things be? Instantly there flashed into his mind a picture he had often seen. It was the side of a steep cliff, and there a shepherd was rescuing a sheep from its perilous position. The man was clinging with His left hand to a crevice in the rock, while with His right He was reaching far over to lift up the poor animal, which was looking up pathetically into the shepherd's loving face. He knew the meaning of that picture, and it came to him now with a startling intensity. Why did he think of it? he asked himself. Although his life was clean, yet Reynolds was not what might be called a religious man. He was not in the habit of praying, and he seldom went to church. But

something about that picture appealed to him as he crouched on that burning hillside. Was there One who would help him out of his present difficulty? He believed there was, for he had been so taught as a little child. He remembered the Master's words, "Ask, and ye shall have." "Here, then, is a chance to test the truthfulness of that saying," a voice whispered.

"I shall not do it," Reynolds emphatically declared. "I have not prayed for so long, that I'm not going to act the hypocrite now, and cry for help when I'm in a tight corner. I daresay He would assist me, but I am ashamed to ask Him. If I should only think of a friend when I am in trouble I should consider myself a mean cur, and unfit to have the friendship of anyone. And that's about how I stand with Him, so I do not consider myself worthy of His help."

Although Reynolds reasoned in this manner, yet that picture of The Good Shepherd inspired him. He could not get it out of his mind as he lay there watching the eagle soaring nearer and nearer.

"I wonder what that bird is after?" he mused. "It is coming this way, and it seems to be getting ready to alight. Perhaps it has a nest somewhere on this hill."

This thought aroused him. An eagle's nest! It was generally built on some high rocky place, and why should there not be one here? And if so, there might be eggs, and eggs would mean food for a starving man.

Eagerly and anxiously he watched the bird now, hoping and longing that it would alight close to where he was crouching. Neither was he disappointed, for in a few minutes the eagle drove straight for the hill, about fifty yards above, and landed upon a rocky ledge. Seizing a stick lying near, with cat-like agility, Reynolds sprang forward, and hurried to the spot where the bird had alighted. From what he had heard and read about eagles he surmised that a struggle lay ahead of him, so he clutched the stick firmly as he advanced.

It took him but a few minutes to reach the place, and as he paused and looked keenly around for the nest, an infuriated mass of great wings and feathers hurled itself upon him. Taken by surprise, Reynolds staggered back, and lifted his stick to ward off the attack. How he saved himself from being torn to pieces by the talons and beak of that angry bird he never could tell. It was a mystery to him that he was able to defend himself at all. But do it he did, and used his stick in such a skilful manner that he kept the creature from tearing at his face. Fortunately he had a good footing, which enabled him to retreat at each desperate onslaught, and to meet the bird with a furious blow as it wheeled and circled close above his head. But he realised that he could not endure the strain much longer, for he was weak through lack of food and hard climbing. The energy of the eagle, on the other hand, seemed just as keen as ever, and it might continue the fight for hours. Reynolds grew desperate as he thought of this, and he was determined that he should not leave his body there as food for his opponent.

He watched as the bird again circled and once more swept to the attack. But he was ready, and as it swooped close enough he threw his entire remaining strength into one great swinging blow. The stick struck the eagle fair on the head with a resounding crash, and so great was the force of the impact that the cudgel snapped like a pipestem, and the broken end hurtled over the ledge. The eagle's fight was done. It swerved from its course, and frantically tried to recover itself. But all in vain. Far out over the hillside it swung, and then a helpless and inert mass, it dropped down, and crashed into the tops of the firs and jack-pines, which lifted their heads like pointed spears to receive the victim.

Reynolds watched until the bird had disappeared. Then he breathed a deep sigh of relief, and examined his wounds. His hands were bleeding, and such clothes as he had were literally torn into shreds. He was so weak that he could hardly stand, and he sank down upon the ground.

"How long will this keep up?" he panted. "What else lies before me? I am a poor specimen of a human being now, and unfitted for another encounter of any kind. This was my own fault, though. That poor devil I just sent to its doom was merely acting in self-defence. But the survival of the fittest is the law of the wilderness just as in the ways of so-called civilization. That bird had what I needed; and that settles it."

This turned his mind upon the nest, which he suspected was somewhere near. In another minute he had found it, a mass of sticks, in the midst of which was a hollow lined with wild grass, and lying there were three white eggs. Eagerly he seized one, and held it in his hand. Was it fresh? he wondered, or was it ready to be hatched?

Drawing forth his pocket-knife, he perforated each end of the egg, and smelled the contents. It was fresh, having been recently laid. In another instant it was at his parched lips, and never did he remember having tasted anything half as refreshing. Then he looked longingly at the other two.

"No, I must not eat them now," he told himself. "I shall need them for supper and breakfast. The Lord

only knows when I shall get anything more."

The mention of the Lord brought back to him the picture of The Good Shepherd rescuing the lost sheep. "Strange, very strange," he mused, as he picked up the eggs and continued his climb. "Can it be possible that the Lord had anything to do with that eagle coming here just when I was about all in, and ready to drop from hunger and thirst? I am not ashamed, anyway, to confess my gratitude, even though I disliked the idea of praying."

A few minutes later he stood on the top of the hill, a bleak, desolate spot, rocky, and devoid of the least sign of vegetation. But this mattered nothing to him now, for his eyes rested almost immediately upon a silver gleam away to the left. It was water, and a river at that! An exclamation of joy leaped from his lips, as from that lonely peak he viewed the river of his salvation. Where it led, he did not know, but surely along that stream he would find human beings, able and willing to succor him.

Forgotten now was his weariness, and a new hope possessed his soul. He could not expect to reach the river that afternoon, for several valleys and small hills intervened. But he could go part of the way and on the morrow complete the journey. Carefully guarding his two precious eggs, he hurried down the opposite side of the hill as fast as it was possible, and night found him by the side of a small wood-enshrouded lake. Here he stopped, drank of the cool refreshing water, and built a small fire. Finding a smooth stone, he washed it clean, and heating it thoroughly, he was enabled to fry one of the eggs upon the surface. In the morning the other was treated in a similar manner, and thus strengthened, but his hunger not appeased, he sped onward.

This last lap of his journey to the river was a trying one. Reynolds made it more difficult by his feverish impatience, and when about the middle of the afternoon he heard the ripple of water, and caught the first gleam through the trees of its sparkling surface, he was completely exhausted, and had only sufficient strength to drag his weary form to the river's bank. A refreshing drink of the ice-cold water and a rest of a few minutes revived him. The stream was swift, far swifter than he had anticipated. But this encouraged him, for if once launched upon its surface it would bear him speedily out of that desolate wilderness.

A craft of some kind was necessary, so searching around, he found several good-sized trees, stripped and bare, which had been brought down stream by the spring floods, and left stranded upon the bank. With considerable difficulty he managed to fashion these into a rude raft, binding all together with strong, pliable willow withes. As a boy he had often made rafts, and the knowledge acquired then served him in good stead now.

Finding a stout pole, he stepped upon the raft, and to his delight found that it would easily bear his weight. Pushing it from the shore, it was soon caught by the strong current and borne rapidly down stream. The steering was an easy matter, so, sitting upon the raft, he gave himself up to the luxury of this new mode of travel. It was such a great relief from his fearful wandering through the woods and climbing the hills, that but for his pangs of hunger he would have been quite happy.

All through, the night the raft swung on its way, the plaything of the current which kept it clear of bars and rocks. Reynolds did not dare to sleep, for he could not tell what lay ahead. It might be a dangerous rapid, or at any minute he might come to some camp along the shore, and it would be necessary to be wide awake and alert.

But nothing happened, and morning found him still floating onward into the great unknown. He was ravenously hungry, and once he ran the raft ashore and gathered a number of willow twigs. These he gnawed as he once more continued his voyage. This, however, was poor food for a starving man, and he was well aware that unless he could obtain something more substantial he must miserably perish. Game was plentiful along the river, and several times he saw moose and bears, while early that morning he ran close to a flock of wild ducks. But their presence only mocked him now, weaponless as he was.

This day was a most trying one, for about the middle of the forenoon it began to rain, and Reynolds was wet to the skin as he sat huddled upon the raft. Anxiously he peered forward, hoping that around every bend something more cheering than the monotonous trees would meet his eyes. But hour after hour it was just the same, and the rain continued without any cessation. Would the river never end? he asked himself over and over again. Whither was it bearing him, anyway? At times the sinuous water appeared like a demon, carrying him on to destruction. Its gurgle and ripple sounded in his ears like mocking laughter, and the great brooding forest in its intense silence seemed in league with the stream. Of what avail were all his mighty efforts? He had escaped from the tangle of the forest, only to be lured to ruin by the river.

The afternoon waned, and night drew near, and still the raft swept onward. Reynolds felt that he

could endure the strain but little longer. He was chilled to the bone, and cramped from his huddled position. He must land, and get some circulation in his body, providing he had any strength left.

He was about to run the raft ashore, when to his great delight it suddenly shot forth from its forest prison into the open expanse of a broad and silent lake. Reynolds staggered painfully to his feet and looked around. He could only see a short distance, as a heavy mist lay over the water. His eyes scanned the shore, but no sign of human habitation could he behold. There was nothing except the same scene of desolation which had been his companion for weary days.

The raft was motionless now, some distance out upon the lake. Slowly Reynolds forced it to the shore, and secured it in a little cove.

"I might as well stay here for the night," he muttered. "It may be clear to-morrow which will enable me to see farther. Oh, for something to eat!"

With much difficulty he started a fire, for the wood was wet, and then warmed himself before the cheerful blaze. It was not raining so hard now, for which he was thankful. He tried to dry his rags of clothes by hanging them on sticks near the fire. His boots were off his feet, with the uppers alone clinging to his ankles. Removing these, he examined them. Then an idea flashed into his mind. He had heard of men eating their boots in their extremity, and why should not he! It was worth the try, at any rate.

It took him but a second to whip out his knife and cut a piece from the top of one of the boots. This he washed clean in the lake, and tasted it. Only one on the extreme verge of starvation can in any manner comprehend what even a portion of a boot means. There is some nourishment there, as Reynolds soon found. Almost ravenously he chewed that piece of leather, extracting from it whatever life-giving substance it contained. When it had been converted to mere pulp, he helped himself to another piece. He was in a most desperate situation, but if he could sustain his strength for another night and day he believed that his life would be spared. Surely along that lake he would find human beings, whether Indians or whites he did not care, who would give him food.

He awoke early the next morning, and having partaken his breakfast of another piece of boot, he pushed off his raft. There was only one way for him to go, and that was with the breeze which was drawing down the lake. The mist was now lifting, and although he strained his eyes, he could see no sign of life. He had to pole the raft now, and in order to do so he was forced to keep close to the shore where the water was shallow.

Thus all through the morning and far on into the afternoon he urged the raft forward with all the strength at his command. There were so many curves to the shore that following these lengthened the voyage. From point to point he moved, each time to be disappointed as he looked ahead and saw nothing but trees and water.

The sun was hot, and the perspiration poured down his face. But with the energy of despair he drove his pole again and again into the water. As the afternoon waned, and night drew near, the limit of his endurance was reached, and he knew that he could do no more. He had struggled for life, but to no purpose. Rest was all that he cared for now. His head began to swim, and he sank exhausted upon the raft. And there he lay, face downward, while the raft drifted at its own sweet will. Presently a breeze sprang up and cooled the air. But it did not affect Reynolds in the least. He had fought to the last grain of strength, and when that left him he was beyond all sense of time, place, and feeling.

CHAPTER XII

THE GIRL OF GLEN WEST

When Glen Weston reached the top of the hill that afternoon of her encounter with the grizzly, she reined in Midnight and swung him sharply around. She was confident that she could not be seen from the valley below, as a large projecting rock hid her from view. She was in no hurry to leave the place, and several times she was tempted to dismount, peer around the rock to see if her rescuer were still at the bottom of the trail. She refrained from doing so, however, lest he might see her, and thus be induced to follow her.

Glen was not a girl to be easily affected, but she had to acknowledge to herself that the gallant

stranger interested her in an unusual manner. He was not like the men she was in the habit of meeting. He was different and so courteous. And he was good looking, too, she mused. He had also been at the Front! That appealed to her, and aroused her curiosity. What had he done over there? she wondered. Had he performed special deeds of daring, and carried off any medals?

For some time she remained there facing the west. The sun was riding over the distant mountain peaks, and the whole landscape was bathed in resplendent glory. Midnight was standing close to the rocky ledge, with ears pointed forward and his large eyes turned to the left. His body was still quivering, and every nerve was keenly alert. Occasionally his right fore-hoof struck the rock, indicating his impatience to be away. The slightest sound startled him, for he could not easily forget his encounter with the bear.

"Steady, laddie," Glen soothed, when he became more restless than usual. "I know you are anxious to be off, but I like this place. I wonder where we would be now but for that wonderful shot. Most likely we would be lying down there in the ravine instead of the grizzly."

For about fifteen minutes longer she remained in this position, silently looking out toward the great mountains beyond. Had Reynolds but seen her then, how the artist soul within him would have rejoiced. With a remarkable grace and ease she sat there, as one well accustomed to the saddle. Her left hand held the reins, and her right the riding-whip. Her soft felt hat, caught up at one side, partly shaded her face. A deep flush mantled her cheeks, due not to the reflection of the sun alone, but to buoyant health, and the excitement through which she had just passed.

Almost wistfully she at length wheeled her horse and headed him away from the summit. Midnight needed no urging, and the light of satisfaction gleamed in his eyes as he sped swiftly and nimbly along the narrow trail. No guiding hand directed him, and the reins lay loose upon his glossy neck, for his mistress' mind was elsewhere. At times he was compelled to slow down to a walk where the rocks were thick, or the trail steep and dangerous. But whenever possible, such as on the wild meadows, he laid back his ears and sped like the wind. This always aroused Glen and brought her back to earth. She enjoyed such races, and when they were over, she would pat Midnight on the neck and utter affectionate words of praise. Horse and rider understood each other, which feeling had been developed through years of companionship on many a hard trail.

For over an hour they thus moved steadily onward, and at length there loomed before them the high frowning ridge of the Golden Crest. At first it seemed to form an impassable barrier to their advance. But as they continued, an opening suddenly appeared, flanked on either side by huge projecting rocks. It was Nature's great doorway in one of the mighty partitions of the house not made with hands. Through this Midnight speedily loped and ere long swept out upon a wild meadow which extended to the left farther than the eye could see, and over a mile in width. Horses were feeding here, and at once Midnight lifted up his voice in a friendly neigh of salutation, which was immediately answered by several horses in the distance. In fact, he was on the point of slowing down and swerving from the trail, but a light flick of the whip reminded him that his mistress had other business on hand which had to be attended to first, so again throwing back his ears, he dashed onward.

The wild meadow crossed, they reached a wooded region where the trail ascended and wound up a steep hill. Midnight took this with a bound, and in a few minutes he was at the top, panting heavily from his vigorous exercise. Here Glen reined him in, and sat silently looking straight before her. And truly it was a magnificent scene which was thus so suddenly presented to her view. Below stretched a dense forest, lying sombre beneath the shades of evening. Away in the distance rose the mighty mountains, sentinel-like and austere, while between, flashing like a jewel in its dark stern setting, was a large body of water. Not a ripple ruffled its surface, and nothing could Glen discern there, although her eyes scanned it most intently.

A word to Midnight, and down the incline they moved, and in a short time emerged from the forest, when a large open clearing burst into view. To a stranger the sight would have been startling, for a short distance away was a neat village, close to the water's edge. But to Glen it was not at all out of the ordinary. She had been accustomed to it from childhood, and to her it was home.

The village consisted of well built log houses, at the doors of which children were playing, and dogs lying around. The former smiled as the girl rode by. She did not stop as was her wont, to talk to them, but at once made her way to a building larger than the others. This was a store, in front of which a number of Indians were gathered.

As Glen rode up and stopped, a tall, powerfully built native came forth and laid his hand upon the horse's bridle. It was the same Indian Reynolds had seen that night at the dance in Whitehorse. He was evidently accustomed to waiting upon Glen, and needed no instructions. But on this occasion the girl did not dismount. She merely leaned over and whispered a few words to her attendant, who simply

nodded, and let his hand drop from the bridle. Then as Glen continued on her way, he walked by her side through the street, up along the water-front.

In a few minutes they passed from the village and entered a grove of trees which extended down to the shore of the lake. In the midst of this was a clearing, and situated here was a log building of generous proportions, well made, and altogether different from the rest in the settlement. It was a two-story building, facing the water, with large windows, and a spacious verandah sweeping around the front and both sides. Wherever it was possible, paint had been liberally applied, and the white on the sashes, the green on the corner-boards, and the red on the roof gave it a striking appearance. It might well have been the home of some millionaire, who had thus sought seclusion in the wilderness, adding to his domicile a few touches of the world of civilization.

The grounds were well kept, showing that much attention had been bestowed upon them. Flowers bloomed in profusion, and off to the left a vegetable garden showed what the north could produce. A gravelly walk led to the water, and here at a small wharf floated a motor-boat, graceful in appearance, and capable of carrying passengers and freight. Several Indian men were standing on the wharf, while others, including women and children, were paddling in canoes but a short distance away. It was a scene of peace and seclusion, a regular fairy-land nestling there in the wilds. Even the storms of winter could not affect the place, for besides the sheltering trees which surrounded it on all sides, the frowning ridge of the Golden Crest formed a mighty barrier to the rear.

But Glen noticed none of these things, for something else occupied her mind this evening. She had remained silent since leaving the store, but now that the house was in sight, she halted Midnight at the edge of the woods and looked at her Indian companion.

"Is daddy home yet?" she asked, speaking in the rhythmical native language with which she was so familiar.

"Not home," was the brief reply.

"He said that he might come to-day, didn't he?"

The Indian, merely nodded.

"He has been gone for nearly a week now," Glen continued, "and I wonder what can be keeping him. Do you think he will come to-night?"

"Sconda doesn't know. Big white chief alone knows."

Glen laughed and stroked Midnight's neck with an impatient hand.

"I guess you are right, Sconda. Daddy alone knows what he is going to do, for he never tells me, at any rate. But as he is not here I must take matters into my own hands. You know Deep Gulch beyond the Golden Crest?" and she motioned to the left.

Again the Indian nodded.

"Well, then, there is a dead bear in the Gulch, Sconda, and I want you to take men and bring it in, see?"

A new light now shone in the native's eyes, and he looked enquiringly into the girl's face.

"Bear?" he asked. "In Deep Gulch?"

"Yes, and a grizzly at that; a monster. Oh, it was terrible!" and Glen shivered as the recollection of the brute's fierce charge swept upon her.

"Bear dead, eh?" Sconda queried.

"Yes, dead, and lying in the ravine, half covered with earth and rocks. Go down Crooked Trail to the bottom, then up the gulch, and you will find it."

"Who shoot grizzly?" the Indian asked.

"A white man. And, oh, Sconda, you should have seen what a shot he made! It was wonderful! I am sure you never did anything like it."

"Greater than Sconda made at Saku, when he shot grizzly, and saved Injun, eh?"

"Greater? Listen, Sconda. That white man shot the grizzly from the other side of Deep Gulch. He was way up on the hill, and he hit the bear in the heart."

The Indian's eyes showed his astonishment as he studied the girl's face as if to make sure that she was telling the truth.

"It is true, Sconda. I was there and saw him do it."

"What was bear doing?"

"Coming at me for all it was worth, and Midnight was almost frantic with fright. If it hadn't been for that white man we would be down there now where that grizzly is lying."

"And you want Sconda to fetch bear to camp, eh?"

"I do. Take as many men as you need and go in the morning. Tell the women to be ready to prepare the meat. And, Sconda, I want you to look after the dressing of the skin. Get Klota to do it. Tell her it is for me, and she will understand. That is all, I guess."

Glen dismounted, and handed the reins to the Indian.

"Midnight is hungry, Sconda. Look after him yourself, and see that he gets a good bite of grass. And, Sconda," she added, as if an afterthought, "you will be sure to go with the men in the morning?"

"Ah, ah, Sconda will go."

"That's good. And I want you to do something for me. Keep a sharp watch to see if that white man comes again to Deep Gulch. You will, won't you?"

"Sconda will watch."

"But don't let him think you are watching, remember. You stay behind when the others have brought the bear home. But don't let the white man see you."

Into Sconda's eyes flashed an expression of understanding. He knew now what the girl meant. What would he not do for her? the white girl he had known since she was but a child, and whose word to him was law, not of force but of affection.

"Now, don't forget, Sconda," Glen warned. "Stay there, if necessary, until night, and watch him carefully from the top of Crooked Trail. And don't tell anybody, not even Klota. Her eyes and ears are sharp, and she might suspect something. This is the greatest secret I have ever had. You have never failed me yet, Sconda, and I know that I can trust you now."

CHAPTER XIII

WHEN THE STORM BURST

Glen West Lodge, the name of this fine building on the shore of that inland lake, was a comfortable and cozy abode. The rooms were not large, but their furnishings and decorations showed the artistic taste of the owner. The pictures adorning the walls had evidently been chosen with careful discrimination, most of them representing nature scenes, with a few well known paintings of the world of civilization. Each room contained a fire-place, and over the mantel of the livingroom, which opened off the hallway, was Watt's symbolical figure of "Hope." Glen had often seen her father standing before this, studying it most intently. Once he had told her its meaning. "You see that woman sitting on the top of the world," he had said. "The strings of her harp are all broken but one, and upon that she is making the best music she can. It teaches us, Glen, never to despair, but with the one string of limited power to do our best."

In one corner of this room was a piano, and the piece of modern music above the key-board showed that someone had been recently playing. A lamp of neat design hung from the wainscoted ceiling, while another with a soft shade stood upon a centre-table. The chairs in the room were comfortable, the largest being placed near the big southern window, close to which was a case well filled with books. The floor was covered with a rich carpet, of a quiet pattern, while before the fire-place was stretched a great bearskin rug. It was a room to delight the heart, especially on a night when a storm was raging

over the land.

It was through this that Glen passed after entering the house. She went at once into the dining-room, adjoining, where she found the table all set for supper, and a white-haired woman standing before the side-board, arranging knives and forks in a drawer. She turned as Glen entered, and a bright smile of welcome illumined her face.

"You are late, dear," she reminded. "Supper has been ready for some time."

"I am sorry, Nannie," the girl apologized. "But I went farther to-day than I intended. There is no word from daddy, I suppose?"

"None at all, dearie. But, hurry and change your clothes, as your father may arrive at any minute. He will be angry if he knows that you have been far beyond the Golden Crest, for he has warned you to be careful. It is not safe for a girl to be riding alone since the miners have come into this region."

Glen smiled gaily at the woman's fears, and hastened away to her own room. In about a quarter of an hour she returned, but in that brief space of time a marvellous transformation had taken place. In a soft white dress, open at the throat, her beauty was enhanced ten-fold. Her luxuriant wavy hair had been hurriedly brushed back, and her cheeks bore the deep flush of health and youth. The woman at the head of the table looked at her with undisguised admiration as she passed her a piece of nicely browned fried salmon which an Indian servant girl had brought in from the kitchen.

"It is too bad that your father isn't here to see you, Glen," she remarked. "I never saw you look prettier. If we were outside, I might suspect that the color in your cheeks is not due to health and exercise alone."

"I am afraid you are flattering me, Nannie," Glen laughingly replied. "You will make me vain, if you are not careful."

"I am not in the habit of flattering without good reason, as you well know, dear. But I have been thinking lately what a great pity it is that you should be wasting your young life in a place like this."

"Losing my sweetness on the desert air; is that it, Nannie? But what about you?"

"Oh, I do not signify," and again the sad expression came into the woman's eyes. "I might as well be here as anywhere else. But with you it is different. You need companions of your own age, and a more agreeable life than this place can provide."

"I certainly do," was the emphatic assent. "I never realised it until my return from the Seminary. What is the use of all my education if I am to spend the rest of my days here, with not a girl friend, and not a——"

Glen floundered and paused, while her cheeks flushed a deep crimson.

"I understand, dear, so do not try to explain. It is only natural that you should wish to be admired. I was the same when I was your age. But you cannot expect to find admirers up here, that is, the right kind, and especially the one above all others."

Glen looked keenly into her companion's eyes, as if to divine her meaning. But she saw nothing there which might lead her to suspect that the secret of her heart was known.

"Do you think that daddy will ever consent to leave this place?" she asked. "I have not spoken to him about it, for I was quite satisfied with this life until recently."

"I have mentioned it to him," was the reply. "Ever since you were a child I have been urging him to leave the north, for your sake, if for nothing else. He always said that he expected to do so some day, but here we are the same as ever, and I see no signs of his going."

"I wonder what in the world daddy ever came here for, anyway?"

"Why, for trading purposes, of course. He has done wonderfully well, and understands the Indians better than any white man in this country. You know they will do anything for him, because he is so fair and just in all his dealings."

"Yes, I know that, Nannie. But daddy never goes outside, and he will not allow white men to come here. You know as well as I do that he turns the Indians upon every white stranger who comes across the Golden Crest or by water. Daddy never mentioned it to me, but both Sconda and Klota have told me how the miners fear this place, and think that daddy is a terrible monster. When I asked them what became of the white men who ventured here, they wouldn't tell me, but looked at each other in a queer

way. There is something mysterious about it all, and it has puzzled me ever since I was able to understand anything."

"There, dearie, never mind worrying your brain about it now," her companion soothed. "You are too young to have wrinkles in your smooth skin. Play that nice piece you were singing before you left today. I never heard it before, and it did me so much good. The piano has been idle all winter, so it must make up for lost time now."

Glen told Nannie nothing about her experiences that afternoon. She was afraid that this woman, gifted with more than ordinary insight, might read her heart. It made her feel somewhat guilty, nevertheless, for Nannie was the only mother she had ever known, and she lay awake a long time that night thinking it all over, and wondering whether she should tell her secret to the one woman in the world in whom she should confide. She had studied herself more carefully than usual in her large mirror before retiring, and what she beheld there was far from displeasing. She knew that she was beautiful, and her heart told her that her brave rescuer had looked upon her with admiration. Should she ever see him again? she asked herself, or had he already forgotten her?

Glen awoke early the next morning, and after breakfast she went down to the store. Here she learned that Sconda and a dozen men had gone to Deep Gulch after the grizzly. Formerly, women would have done most of the heavy work, but the ruler of Glen West had changed all that. The men did not take kindly to this at first, but Jim Weston had been firm.

"If you do not like this order of things, you can go elsewhere," he told them. "Women are not going to do men's work here. You bring the game into camp, and then let your wives attend to it."

Thus the custom of the men bringing in the bear or moose became established, and no one left, for the objectors knew that they were far better off at Glen West than they had ever been in their lives, and that it was to their advantage to obey their Big White Chief, as they called Weston.

Glen waited impatiently for the men's return, and the hours dragged slowly by until their arrival about the middle of the afternoon. They had skinned the bear, and cutting up the carcass, they had strapped the pieces upon their horses. They rode gaily into camp, and most of the inhabitants of the place were gathered around the store to acclaim their arrival. All had heard of the wonderful shot across Deep Gulch, and they were naturally curious to see the monster which had dared to face the Big Chief's daughter. There was the certainty, too, of fresh meat, which added much to the interest.

Sconda, however, was not with the returned men, and Glen was greatly disappointed. Her rescuer, then, had not come back to the gulch, so he evidently had no more thought for her. She had imagined that he would be anxious to obtain the grizzly's fine skin as a souvenir of his meeting with her. At first she was tempted to ride forth toward Crooked Trail and await Sconda's return, but changing her mind, she launched her light canoe, and was soon skimming out over the water of the big lake. She generally took an Indian girl, or Sconda with her. But now she wished to be alone, that she might think as she drifted or paddled.

For over an hour she remained on the water, and when she returned, Sconda was waiting for her on the shore. Her face brightened as she saw him, and she at once questioned him about her rescuer.

"Did you see him?" she asked.

"Ah, ah. Sconda see white man."

"And did he see you?"

"Ah, ah."

"Oh! Did he stay long at Deep Gulch?"

A shake of the head was the native's only response.

"Did he seem surprised when he found that the grizzly was gone?" Glen asked. "Did he look up Crooked Trail as if expecting to see someone there?"

"White man act queer," the Indian explained. "He stay on big hill watching trail. He saw Sconda once."

"What did he do?"

"Nothing," and the Indian's eyes twinkled. "Sconda leave quick."

"And you didn't see him again?"

"Sconda come to Glen West. White man go to Big Draw, maybe."

Although Glen was not altogether satisfied at what Sconda told her, yet it was some comfort to know that her rescuer had returned to Deep Gulch, and stayed there for a while watching the trail as if expecting to see someone. And was that someone herself? she wondered. She had the feeling that it was, and the thought pleased her.

Glen now found the life at Glen West more irksome than ever. She missed her companions of the Seminary and the excitement of the city. She did not even have her father, for several days had now passed since his expected return. She had no idea what was keeping him, and she naturally became very anxious. Several times she discussed his delay with Nannie.

"Did you ever know daddy to stay away as long as this?" she asked one evening as they sat at supper.

"I have known him to be away much longer," was the reply. "Once he was gone for a whole month. He is prospecting for gold, you know, and goes far off at times."

"But he has never discovered anything, has he?"

"Nothing of great value as yet, although he is always expecting to do so some day. You need not worry about him, dearie, for he is well able to take care of himself, and I understand that an Indian always keeps in touch with him. He has a comfortable cabin out in the hills where he sleeps at night."

"Well, I wish to goodness he would come home," and Glen gave a deep sigh. "He might think of me, and how much I need him. If he doesn't come soon, I shall pack up and go outside again. I believe a trip to Whitehorse would do me good, for I am tired of staying here with nothing to do."

"Your father would not like it," her companion reminded. "He would be very angry if he came home and found that you had left Glen West. Why not take a spin on the lake this evening? You once were very fond of the boat."

"I suppose I might as well go," and again Glen sighed as she rose from the table and looked out of the window. "Sconda is on the wharf now, and that will save my going after him. Won't you come, too, Nannie? A spin will do you good."

"Not this evening," was the reply. "Your father may come at any minute, and it would not do for both of us to be away from the house."

Sconda's eyes brightened as Glen came down to the wharf and asked him to take her out upon the water. *The Frontiersman*, the name of the motor-boat, was the pride of Sconda's heart. When he had been appointed captain of the craft, his highest ambition was reached. This, together with the fact that he was the special guardian of the Big Chief's daughter, gave him a high standing in the camp. No one knew the waters of the north better than did he, and Jim Weston's mind was always easy when Glen was with him.

In a few minutes *The Frontiersman* was cutting through the water out into the open. Sconda was at the wheel, with Glen by his side, while Taku, an Indian with special mechanical gifts, looked after the engine.

"Which way?" Sconda at length asked, after they had run out of the sheltered creek into the main body of water.

"Up-stream," Glen replied. "Daddy came down the Tasan once on a raft, and he had a hard time getting home. He may be coming that way now, so we may be able to pick him up."

Sconda at once gave the wheel a sharp turn to the left, and the boat swinging obediently to its master's will, rushed rapidly forward. A stiff breeze was now blowing dead ahead, and this Glen thoroughly enjoyed. It suited her nature, especially this evening, and she longed for a tempest to sweep upon them. Adventure and excitement she dearly enjoyed, and she had often bewailed the fact that she was a woman and not a man.

"Women are supposed to be demure quiet creatures," she had more than once declared. "They are not supposed to run any risks, but must stay safely in the house. That may satisfy some, but it does not suit me."

Her father and Nannie had always smiled at these outbursts of impatience, thinking that as she grew older her mind would change, and she would see things in a different light. But Glen did not change, and the longing for adventure was as strong in her heart now as ever. The sweep of the wind this

evening not only tossed her hair but thrilled her very being, and for the first time since her return home she felt how good it was to live in such a place.

For about half an hour they sped onward, with the wind steadily increasing.

"Big blow soon," Sconda casually remarked, as he glanced at the heavy clouds massing over the mountains. Then he gave a start, and peered keenly forward. His eyes had caught sight of something unusual.

"What's that?" he asked, pointing to the left.

Glen's eyes followed his outstretched arm, and presently she was enabled to detect a dark object upon the water.

"It's only a stick, isn't it, Sconda?"

"No; it's a raft," was the reply. "There's something on it."

"Oh; maybe it's daddy!" Glen exclaimed, now thoroughly aroused. "Make the boat go faster. He will be swamped by these waves!"

The boat, however, was running at full speed, and in short time they were able to view the object more clearly. It was certainly a raft, and the form upon it looked like a human being. Glen almost stopped breathing as they drew nearer. Could it be her father? she asked herself. Who else would be out there on the lake?

As the boat slowed down and ran close to the raft, Sconda called aloud to the figure huddled upon the logs. But there was no reply. The wind was tossing the rags which once were clothes, and the waves were speedily breaking the rude craft asunder. There was no time to lose, so in another minute Sconda had the boat close alongside, and with the aid of Taku the helpless man was lifted from his perilous position.

When Glen saw that the rescued man was not her father, she breathed more freely. But the first glimpse of his face, bearded though it was, reminded her of someone she had seen before. Then the light of recognition leaped into her eyes, and with a cry of surprise she dropped upon her knees by the side of the prostrate man as he lay upon the deck.

Almost instantly the impending storm burst with terrible fury over that inland body of water. The raft went to pieces like matchwood, and Sconda had all that he could do to manage the boat. With the assistance of Taku, the unconscious man was carried inside, and as Glen watched by his side, unable to do anything for his relief, the tempest raged without. It was one of those terrific storms which at times sweep down so suddenly from deep mountain draws, and lash the lake in wildest fury. *The Frontiersman* reeled and plunged as she struggled through the hurricane, and the waves dashed continuously over the deck, threatening to smash the glass in the cabin where Glen was keeping watch. That large lake, so peaceful at morn, was now a raging monster. Many an unwary voyager had been caught in such a storm, and in bygone days the natives always used their stoutest charms in their efforts to propitiate the demon of the mountains.

Sconda's hands firmly grasped the wheel, and his alert eyes studied every wave as he guided the boat on her plunging course. He realised how much was at stake, for was not his master's daughter on board, and he responsible for her safety? Could he have run straight before the gale, it would not have been so difficult. But the creek was over there to the right, hence it was necessary to run in a diagonal manner which caused the boat to ship a great deal of water. But keep this steadfast course he did, and after a desperate struggle, *The Frontiersman* poked her nose into the opening of the creek, and was soon gliding calmly over the smooth water within.

CHAPTER XIV

ANOTHER PRISONER

It was morning when Reynolds opened his eyes and looked around. He believed that he had been dreaming, and a horrible dream it was. In a few minutes his senses returned, and he vividly recalled the terrible experiences through which he had recently passed. But where was he? What had happened to

him? Why was he not yet upon the raft, drifting with the wind and tide? He glanced about the room and saw that it was a cozy place, with the sunlight streaming in through an open window on the right. He attempted to rise, but fell back wearily upon the bed. Then he called, and the sound of his own voice startled him, so strangely hollow and unreal did it seem.

A light footstep near the door caused him to look in that direction. An Indian woman was coming toward him, a big motherly-looking person, with a smile upon her face.

"Where am I?" Reynolds asked. "And how did I get here?"

The woman made no reply, but still smiling with apparent satisfaction, she turned and left the room. She was back again in a few minutes, this time carrying in her hand a bowl of steaming broth.

"Eat," she ordered, offering him a spoon. "No talk."

But Reynolds did not take the spoon. He was too famished for that. Seizing the bowl with hands that trembled from weakness and excitement, he drained it to the last drop.

"More, more," he cried. "I'm starving."

Again the woman smiled as she took the bowl.

"No more now," she told him. "Sleep."

"But where am I?" Reynolds demanded. "I must know."

"Bimeby. Sleep now," was all the satisfaction he obtained, as the woman left the room and closed the door.

For several minutes Reynolds lay there uncertain, what to do. But the bed was comfortable, and he was so tired. It was good to rest, and not worry about anything. He was in friendly hands, and that was sufficient for the present.

When he again awoke, he felt much refreshed, and longed to get up. He attempted to do so, but in an instant the same Indian woman was by his side.

"No get up," she ordered, handing him another bowl of broth she had brought with her.

Reynolds drank this more leisurely, the woman watching him closely all the time.

"Thank you," he said, when he had finished. "I feel better now. But please tell me where I am, and how I came——"

The words died upon his lips, for in the doorway Glen had suddenly appeared. She looked at him, and with a bright smile upon her face, came to his side. So surprised was Reynolds that he was unable to utter a word. He merely stared, so great was his astonishment.

"I hope I have not startled you," the girl began. "You look frightened."

"But where have you come from?" Reynolds asked, not yet sure that he was in his right mind.

"From the other room, of course," and again Glen smiled. "You need not look at me that way for I am no ghost. I do not feel like one, anyway."

Reynolds gave a sigh of relief, and a thrill of joy swept over him. It was almost too good to be true. He had found the girl at last!

"Are you feeling better now?" Glen asked.

Reynolds put his hand to his face, and glanced at the rags upon his body.

"I am not sure," he doubtfully replied. "But perhaps I shall when this beard is removed and I get some decent clothes. I must be a fearful looking object."

"I have seen you look better. But, then, you need not worry, Klota will attend to you presently."

"And you know who I am?" Reynolds eagerly asked.

"Certainly. You are my brave rescuer. You saved me from the grizzly on Crooked Trail, didn't you?"

"I know I did, but I am surprised that you recognize me in my present condition."

"Oh, I knew you as soon as you were taken off the raft."

"You did! And so it was you who saved me?"

"I had something to do with it, though not all. But won't you tell me what happened to you? Why were you adrift on the lake?"

"I can not tell you now," Reynolds replied. "I want to forget the terrible experiences through which I have just passed. I hope you do not mind."

"No, certainly not. I am only curious, that's all. When you get well you can tell me everything. I shall leave you now, for you must be tired."

"Don't go yet," Reynolds pleaded. "It is so nice to have you here, and talking does not tire me. Do you mind telling me where I am?"

"Why, at Glen West, of course. Where did you think you are?"

"Glen West," Reynolds repeated. "I cannot recall that name. Is it far from Big Draw?"

"Too far for anyone but you," and the girl smiled. "You are beyond the Golden Crest, remember, and you have heard what that means."

"I am! Why, I thought one could only get here by crossing the range."

"But you came by water; that is the only other way. And it is lucky for you that you did," she added after a slight pause.

"You mean that my life would be in danger had I come over Golden Crest?"

"Most likely."

"And am I safe now?"

The sunny expression vanished from Glen's eyes, and her face became serious. She gazed out of the window, as if watching several Indian children at play. To Reynolds she had never seemed more beautiful, and he could hardly believe it possible that she was standing there but a few feet away. She turned her face suddenly to his, and the look of admiration in his eyes brought a deep flush to her cheeks.

"Pardon me for not answering your question at once," she began. "I am afraid you are not safe, as you are on forbidden ground, though the fact that you were brought here in a helpless condition may make a difference. But, then, one can never tell what daddy will think about it."

"Does your father know I am here?"

"Not yet. He has been away in the hills for some time, and we are expecting him home at any minute."

"What do you suppose he will do with me? I fear he will find my bones poor picking after what I have gone through."

"Oh, daddy is not such a cannibal as all that," Glen laughingly replied. "But he is very jealous of this place, as others have found out to their sorrow. I cannot understand him at times, although he is very good to me."

"Have you lived here long?"

"Ever since I was a child. But I am tired of it now, and want to live outside. I was satisfied until I attended the Seminary and saw something of the world beyond the Golden Crest. What is the use of having an education if one must always live in a place like this?"

"I agree with you," Reynolds emphatically declared. "You should induce your father to go outside."

"You do not know daddy, or you would not speak about inducing him. But, there, I must go. I have been talking too much, and you are tired."

Reynolds lay there thinking about Glen long after she had gone. He had found her at last, and she was just as sweet and beautiful as the day he had rescued her on Crooked Trail. Yes, he had found her, but was he not as far from gaining her as ever? he asked himself. He thought about her father, and wondered what he would do when he returned home. Perhaps he would pack him at once across the

Golden Crest, if he did no worse. But what could be worse than to be driven from her who had become so dear to him, and for whose sake he had ventured and suffered so much?

The next morning he felt almost like his former self, and when Klota brought him his breakfast, he informed her that he was going to get up. The woman smiled, left the room, and returned when Reynolds had finished the meal, and viewed with satisfaction the empty dishes.

"Did you cook my breakfast?" Reynolds asked.

"Ah, ah," was the reply. "Good, eh?"

"Good! It's the best I've had in a long time. I feel like a new man this morning, and must get up. I wish I had a shave, a bath, and some decent clothes. Look at these," and he pointed to his rags.

"Come," the woman simply ordered. "Me fix you, all right."

Reynolds at once got up, and followed her into the kitchen. He was greatly surprised at the neatness of the place, as he had no idea that an Indian woman could be such a good housekeeper. Klota noted his look of wonder, and smiled.

"Injun all sam' white woman, eh?" she queried.

"Why, yes. You do all this?"

"Ah, ah. All sam' beeg house."

She then opened a door to the left, and pointed within.

"See. All sam' white woman. All sam' Missie Glen. Savvey?"

Reynolds certainly did understand, and with an exclamation of surprise and delight, he entered the little room, where he found a bath-tub partly filled with water, clean towels, a suit of clothes, and a shaving-outfit.

"Where did all these things come from?" he asked.

"Sconda fix 'em all sam' beeg house. Savvey?"

"And are these clothes for me?"

"Ah, ah. Missie Glen send 'em."

Reynolds asked no more questions just then. He was more than satisfied at the kindness he was receiving. He believed it was due to Glen, and that she had instructed the Indians to do all in their power for his comfort. This filled his heart with gladness, for it told him that the girl was interested in his welfare, and that she looked upon him with kindly eyes. He was beginning to understand, too, something of Jim Weston's influence among the Indians. He had taught them the value of cleanliness, at any rate, and if all the natives in the place were like Klota and her husband, it must be an ideal settlement.

An hour later Reynolds came forth looking like a new man, and greatly refreshed after his bath. Klota's eyes beamed their approval as he stood before her.

"Do I look better now?" he asked.

"Good," was the reply. "All sam' white man. No Injun now."

Reynolds laughed as he went out of the house. The woman amused him, although he was most grateful for her kindness. It was a beautiful morning, and not a ripple ruffled the surface of the lake. The village was astir with life, the voices of children and the barking of dogs resounding on every side. No one interfered with him as he walked slowly along the street, but he could easily tell that he was being watched by many curious eyes. He had the feeling, too, that he was a prisoner, and while he could roam about at will, to escape would be impossible. The strong burly Indians he saw seemed to have nothing to do, but he knew that this was their idle season, and that during the winter they would be off to their hunting-grounds.

Reynolds was much interested in the store which he presently reached. A couple of Indians were in charge, who nodded to him as he entered, but apparently paid no further attention to him after their formal salutation. The building was well filled with all kinds of goods, and resembled a large up-to-date store in some large country town such as he had often seen. The sight of pipes and tobacco made him

realise that he had not smoked for days, and having his money with him, he soon made his purchase. He stayed for a while at the store, smoking, and watching the customers as they came and went. It was all of considerable interest to him, and he beheld in this trading-place another tangible evidence of Jim Weston's influence.

He spent the rest of the morning wandering about the village, and it was noon by the time he returned to the house, which for the present he called home. Here he found Sconda near the back door carefully examining a large bearskin. He turned as the young man approached, and without the least sign of surprise, motioned to the skin.

"See um?" he asked. "Beeg skin, eh?"

"It certainly is," was the reply. "A grizzly?"

"Ah, ha. You shoot um, eh?"

"Why, that's not the one I shot on Crooked Trail, is it?" Reynolds asked in astonishment.

"Ah, ah. All sam' bear. Skin dry bimeby."

"What are you going to do with it? Will you let me have it?"

Sconda shook his head as he again felt the skin.

"Missie Glen get skin bimeby."

"Is it for her?"

"Ah, ah. She want skin. She send Injuns to Deep Gulch. She tell Sconda make good skin. Bimeby Missie Glen put skin in room, all sam' dis," and Sconda stooped and spread his hands over the ground.

Reynolds understood, and his heart bounded with joy. So Glen was going to keep the skin as a souvenir of her rescue on Crooked Trail. Then she must care something for him after all, more than he had expected. The thought made him happier than he had been for days, and he was grateful to Sconda for what he had told him.

That afternoon Glen came again to see him. She was greatly pleased at the change in his appearance, and suggested that they should go for a spin upon the creek.

"I want to show you what a beautiful place Glen West really is," she told him. "We can take Sconda's canoe, which is at the shore."

Reynolds was delighted, and eagerly he agreed to the proposition. Glen seated herself in the middle of the canoe, and the deft manner in which she handled the paddle showed that she was well accustomed to the water. Reynolds paddled aft, and headed the light craft up the creek.

"I am anxious for you to see what a wonderful piece of water this arm of the lake is," Glen remarked. "I have never seen anything like it in the north, and we are all very proud of it. Oh, if more people could only see it!"

She sighed as she drove the paddle into the water. Reynolds was more intent upon watching the graceful poise of her body as it swayed to the rhythmic stroke of the paddle than he was in viewing the scenery. He could hardly believe it true that she was seated there before him, and that he was privileged to watch her to his heart's content. He was very happy, and to him Glen West was the most delightful place in the world.

At length they came in front of the big house, and when Reynolds saw it, and also *The Frontiersman* lying at her wharf, his interest was intense. He ceased paddling, and stared in amazement.

"Am I dreaming, or have I taken leave of my senses?" he asked.

Glen laughed, as she rested on her paddle, and turned partly around.

"That is where I live," she explained. "And that is our boat. You were brought in on it the day we picked you up on the lake."

Reynolds made no immediate reply, but drove his paddle suddenly into the water. He knew that this girl had been largely instrumental in saving his life, and he was learning more and more what an important part she was playing in his life, and how one by one the links were being formed to bind them closer together.

Reynolds believed that he had seen the most wonderful sights in the north, but he had to confess that the grandest of all had been reserved for him that afternoon. As they moved on their way, the creek narrowed, and passing through an opening with high frowning rocks on both sides, they ran into a body of water of unruffled calmness, with steep banks, wooded to the shores. On the left rose the high ridge of the Golden Crest, as it shouldered in close to the stream, while on the right towered another crest, grand and austere. Their pinnacles were reflected in the lake, which was one of nature's jewels of surpassing brilliance, set by unseen hands on the fair bosom of the virgin north.

Many were the things the happy young couple talked about that afternoon. They did not paddle all the time, but often were content to let the canoe drift or lie still along the shore. Glen described the life at the Seminary and at Glen West, while Reynolds told of his terrible experiences in the hills and his voyage on the raft down the river.

"I am afraid that Frontier Samson is still hunting for me," he said.
"He is a fine old man, so kind and humorous. Have you ever met him, Miss Weston?"

"Not to my knowledge," was the reply, "although I have heard a great deal about him."

"He has never been here, I suppose?"

"Oh, no. Daddy never permits any white man to come, not even that old prospector."

"But I am here," Reynolds reminded.

"I know you are. But you came in a different way, you see. I believe you are the first white man who ever stayed this length of time here."

"I would like to stay here forever," Reynolds fervently declared. "I have never been so happy in my life as I have been since I came to this place. I wonder what your father will do when he comes home."

"I wish I knew," and Glen sighed. "Anyway, it's no use to worry about that now. Let us enjoy ourselves while we can."

It was supper time when they at length reached Sconda's shore, where they pulled the canoe out of the water. They then walked up to the house, talking and laughing like two children. They had just reached the street, when a strange noise to their left arrested their attention. Looking in that direction, they saw a number of Indian men and children surrounding a man, who was evidently a prisoner. As they drew nearer, Reynolds saw that it was a white man, and that his hands were tied behind his back.

"Another prisoner, I believe," he remarked. "I shall have company."

Then he gave a sudden start, and took a quick step forward as if to obtain a better view.

"Why, it's Curly!" he exclaimed. "What in the world is he doing here!"

But Glen made no reply. Her eyes were fixed upon the prisoner, and her face was very white, as she turned slightly, as if about to flee into the house. In another minute Curly was near, and a most wretched figure he presented. His clothes were torn and his face dirty and bleeding. He had apparently received severe treatment at the hands of his captors. He walked with a shambling and unsteady gait, with his eyes fixed upon the ground. But as he came to where Glen and Reynolds were standing, he suddenly lifted his head, and seeing the two, he stopped dead in his tracks. For an instant he stared as if he had not seen aright. Then his face became contorted with a mingled expression of surprise and hatred. He strained at his bonds in a desperate effort to free himself, but he was immediately checked by his Indian guardians, who caught him by the arms, and hustled him along. He struggled violently for a few seconds, pouring forth at the same time a stream of blood-curdling oaths, abuse and vile words, which caused Glen to put her hands to her ears, and flee hurriedly into the house, while Reynolds slowly followed.

CHAPTER XV

Glen's mind was greatly agitated as she made her way slowly homeward. Curly's presence was the cause of this, as she feared that her father would be so angry with the villain that it would make it hard for Reynolds. He might imagine that the two were in league with each other, as they were both from Big Draw. She despised Curly, knowing what a vile loathsome creature he was, and she had a very fair idea why he had ventured across the Golden Crest. Had he not avowed his affection for her at the dance, and had told her that he would run any risk to meet her again? How glad she had been that night when Sconda came for her, and she could free herself from her unwelcome and insistent suitor. And Curly was now a prisoner at Glen West! She shuddered as she recalled the look on his face when he saw her and Reynolds together. And his language! She could not get the terrible words out of her mind. The meaning of some she did not know, never having heard them before, but she fully realised that they must be very bad, or else Curly would not have used them in his rage. And should he now escape, there was no telling what his revengeful spirit might lead him to do, either to herself, or to him who was now beginning to mean so much to her.

Thinking thus, she reached the house, and as soon as she entered she knew that her father was at home, for the door of his private room was open. He was seated at his desk when he turned and saw her. Springing to his feet, he caught her in his arms, kissed her on both cheeks, and then holding her at the full length of his powerful arms, he looked eagerly and lovingly upon her now flushed and excited face.

"Why, you are getting better looking every day," he declared. "Just like your dear mother at her age. My, my, how the time has gone! and it seems but yesterday that I first met her. But, there, there, I must not give way to such feelings on this my first night home. Come, sit by my side and tell me all about yourself, and how things are going at Glen West."

For the first time in her young life Glen was sorry that her father had come home. She was really more than sorry, for a nameless fear possessed her heart, which restrained her usual free and happy manner. Her father's keen intuition noted this, and that her words seemed forced. Her enthusiasm over his arrival was not so hearty and natural as formerly, and he wondered why.

"What is the matter, dear?" he asked after Glen had somewhat haltingly told him about her music and certain household affairs. "You do not seem like yourself. Has anything out of the ordinary happened at Glen West since I have been away?"

"Yes, lots of things, daddy," was the reply. "One of the most important is your absence from home for such a length of time. You should be ashamed of yourself."

Weston laughed, although he felt quite sure that she was evading the real issue.

"I am sorry, dear, and I make my humble confession now. But what else of importance has been taking place?"

"I was nearly eaten up by a bear on Crooked Trail, and it was a grizzly at that."

Glen was surprised that her father did not seem more concerned, and she told him so.

"You take it very coolly, daddy. Just think, you might have come home and not found me here."

"I am very thankful that you escaped, dear, but did I not forbid your going so far alone beyond the Golden Crest? I hope your experience has taught you a lesson. How were you saved from the grizzly?"

"Oh, a hunter shot it just in the nick of time," Glen explained as indifferently as possible, although she knew that her cheeks were aflame. "And, oh, daddy, you should have seen the shot he made; it was wonderful!"

"Where was the hunter from, Glen?"

"From Big Draw mining camp, so I understand."

"Were you talking to him?"

"Yes, just for a few minutes."

"And have you seen him since?"

Glen's eyes dropped and the flush left her cheeks. Her father noted this, and he laid his right hand suddenly upon her arm.

"Speak, Glen, and tell me at once whether you have seen him since."

Something in her father's voice startled the girl, and she looked up quickly into his face.

"Tell me," he again demanded. "What is the matter? Have you seen that man lately?"

"Yes, I have."

"Where?"

"Here."

"At Glen West? He has been here, and you have seen him? Are you sure?"

"I am certain. I was with him this afternoon in the canoe. But, daddy, what is the matter? Oh, don't get angry. I didn't do anything wrong."

Jim Weston had risen to his feet, and was looking down upon his daughter. He was a powerfully-built man, of more than ordinary height. The northern winter was in his thick hair and heavy moustache, while his steady light-blue eyes and firm, well-built chin betokened a strong will power of unyielding determination. Glen had often expressed her unbounded admiration for her father, and believed him to be the most handsome man in the world. But now he seemed like an avenging god, about to visit upon her the force of his wrath. For the first time in her life she cowered before him, and hid her face in her hands.

"And you say that your rescuer is here?" Weston at length asked. "When did he come, and where is he staying?"

"We saved him from a raft out on the lake just before that fearful storm," Glen faintly replied. "He was almost dead, and in a minute more he would have been drowned. Oh, it was terrible! He is now at Sconda's."

"Another miner's trick, I suppose, to get here," Weston growled. "It has been tried before, but with scanty success. This must be one more fool who was trying the same game."

"He is not a fool," Glen stoutly protested, lifting her eyes defiantly to her father's face. "Mr. Reynolds is a gentleman. He is different from the rest of the miners."

"What was he doing out on the lake?" her father asked.

"He got lost in the hills, and nearly died. He drifted down the Tasan River on a raft which he built. He was almost starved to death."

"And what was he doing in the hills?"

"Prospecting, so he told me. He was with Frontier Samson, and, going after a moose, lost his way."

"H'm," Weston grunted. "A trumped-up yarn, no doubt. Don't you think it looks rather suspicious?"

"It might if it were someone else. But he is different, and I believe he told me the truth."

"Well, we shall soon find out, Glen. If he begins any of his lies or fancy tales to me, he will learn his mistake. I am not going to have any young man wandering about this region, let me tell you that. It has been tried too often already, so we might as well make a special example of him in order to warn others. It's the 'Ordeal' for him, all right."

At these words Glen sprang to her feet and confronted her father. Her eyes were blazing with intense emotion, and Jim Weston stared at her in amazement. A feeling of pride welled up within him at her appearance and courage.

"You shall not lay hands on him," Glen passionately declared. "He is an innocent man, and it would be unjust to hurt him."

"Glen, Glen, what is the meaning of this?" her father demanded. "You seem to be greatly interested in this fellow. I am surprised at you."

"I am interested, daddy. Nay, I am more than interested, for I love him with my whole heart, so there. Don't you dare to touch him."

The strain of this interview was telling upon Glen. As soon as this confession had left her lips, she was wild with regret. Why had she done this? she asked herself, as she stood with big staring eyes watching her father. What would he say? What would he not do to her? Her body trembled, a weakness swept upon her, and sinking down into her chair, she buried her face in her hands and sobbed as if her heart

would break.

If Jim Weston was astonished before, he was dumbfounded now at what his daughter had told him. His heart went out in a great rush of pity to his only child and he longed to take her in his arms and comfort her. But he felt that he must be firm and not give way to any feeling of emotion at a time like this. Instead, he laid his hand somewhat heavily upon her shoulder.

"Does this fellow, Reynolds, know of your love?" he asked.

"No, no; he has not the least idea of it," was the low reply.

"And he has not avowed his love to you? Are you sure?"

"I am certain. He has never given the least sign that he cares for me more than if I were an ordinary acquaintance. But he is a gentleman both in word and action."

For a few minutes Jim Weston stood lost in thought. It seemed to Glen as if he would never speak. The silence of the room was so intense that she was sure her fast-beating heart could be distinctly heard.

"I must have time to think this over, Glen," her father at length informed her. "You may go now and get ready for supper. Nannie has been kept waiting too long already."

Never before had Glen heard her father speak to her in such a cold, peremptory manner. Slowly she rose to her feet and walked across the room. Her head was aching, and she was glad to get away, anywhere in order that she might be alone, and from her father's stern, accusing eyes.

She had almost reached the door, when Sconda stood suddenly before her. She paused, while the Indian entered and walked at once toward his master.

"Well, Sconda, what is it?" the latter demanded, annoyed at the native's intrusion at this critical moment. "Anything wrong?"

Weston spoke in the Indian language, with which he was most familiar.

"Big White Chief," Sconda began, "the Golden Crest has been crossed. Another white man is here."

"I know it," was the curt reply. "He came by water this time, so I understand."

"Not by water, Big White Chief, but through the pass, over Crooked Trail."

"He did! Why, Glen, you told me he came by way of the lake. Have you been deceiving me, girl?"

"Indeed I have not," was the emphatic and somewhat angry denial. "I am surprised that you think I would deceive you, daddy. Sconda refers to someone else. It is Curly who came by the pass, and not Mr. Reynolds."

"Curly! Curly here, did you say?" Weston almost shouted the words, and so fierce did he look that the Indian retreated a step.

"Ah, ah, Curly here," Sconda replied.

"When did he come?"

"To-day. He was caught as he came through the pass. He shot, but missed."

"Where is he now?"

"At Taku's."

Weston placed his hand to his forehead in perplexity.

"This is certainly a great home-coming," he muttered. "Trouble everywhere, with white men entering the place by lake and pass. Look, Sconda, bring Curly here in one hour. See?"

The Indian merely nodded.

"And get ready for the Ordeal at once. Savvey?"

"Ah, ah, Sconda savvey," was the reply, and with that he left the house.

Glen went, too, without another word to her father, and hurried to her own room. It was a cozy place, fitted up with every comfort, and she loved it dearly. But now it seemed to her like a prison. She longed to throw herself upon the bed and give vent to her feelings in a flood of tears. But she knew that her father would be expecting her downstairs, so it was necessary to make haste.

When at last she entered the dining-room, Weston was already there, talking with Nannie. The latter noticed Glen's pale face, but made no comment. With her naturally keen intuition, she divined the cause of the trouble and discreetly said nothing.

During the meal Weston seemed like an altogether different man, and talked and laughed in the most animated manner. He told a number of his experiences in the hills, several of which were of a humorous nature. Glen tried to be interested, although she found it difficult to follow what her father was saying. He puzzled her more than ever. Why was he so stern and cruel at times, and again so bright and merry? He did not seem the least angry now at her, neither was he apparently concerned about the two prisoners at Glen West.

When supper was ended, Weston pushed back his chair and lighted a cigar.

"My, that tastes good," he commented. "It's the first I've had in a long time. Now for some music, Glen."

Music! Glen started and looked at her father, as if she had not heard aright. What did he mean? Was he going to add further torture to her racked brain by asking her to play and sing? She had hardly spoken a word during the meal, and had barely tasted her food. This Weston noted, and he well understood the reason. How much will she safely stand? he asked himself. He was about to repeat his suggestion, when Sconda arrived, and with him came Curly, guarded by two stalwart Indians. Glen breathed a sigh of relief at this timely interruption, and leaving the table, she fled at once to the seclusion of her own room.

CHAPTER XVI

THE ORDEAL

"What are you doing here?"

Curly was a sorry looking specimen of humanity as he stood before his stern questioner, the ruler of Glen West. His clothes were torn, and his face dirty and unshaven. His eyes glowed with a sullen light of hatred, mingled with a nameless fear as he glanced furtively around the room.

"What are you doing here?" Weston repeated. "Why don't you answer? Are you deaf?"

"I was prospectin'," was the surly reply.

"Where?"

"In the hills, north of Crooked Trail."

"And why did you come through the pass?"

"Me pardner an' I got lost; that's why."

"Who was your partner?"

"Slim Fales, from Big Draw."

"Where is he now?"

"Search me. He escaped, while I got pinched."

"Did you expect to find gold near the Golden Crest?"

"We thought it worth the try."

"You know better now, don't you?"

Curly made no reply, but kept his eyes fixed upon the floor.

"It seems to me that you were prospecting for something more valuable than gold, weren't you?" Weston queried.

"What do you mean?" and Curly lifted his head.

"You were prospecting for a woman, and that woman happens to be my daughter. Deny it, if you dare."

"I do deny it," Curly stoutly protested. "Your daughter is nothing to me."

Jim Weston's right hand toyed with a paper-weight on his desk, and his eyes gleamed with anger.

"You lie, Curly, and you know it," he charged. "You have had your foul eyes upon my daughter ever since you first saw her. You have declared over and over again that one day she would be yours."

Curly's face grew livid, and he tried to speak. But Weston lifted his hand.

"Wait until I am through," he thundered. "Have you not used my daughter's name very often while gambling? And did you not bet a short time ago at Big Draw that you would cross the Golden Crest and lure my daughter to a fate worse than death? You know it is true, and yet you have the impudence to stand here and deny it."

Curly's eyes were again fixed upon the floor, and he made no reply to this accusation. His terror of this man was becoming great. How did he know so much? he asked himself.

"Now, what should be done to a thing like you?" Weston continued. "Your record is well known, not only here but all along the coast. No innocent woman or girl is safe when you are around, and you are a menace to any community. You leave the marks of your filthy trail wherever you go. And you are not alone in your villainous deeds, for there are others just like you, who defy the laws of God and man. So far you have escaped, but now you shall pay for your vile and cowardly acts. It would be a sin to allow a creature like you to remain at large. It is far better to settle with you immediately and thus make you incapable of doing more harm in the future. You took it upon yourself to enter Glen West to ruin my daughter, and you must abide by the result."

Curly fully understood the meaning of these words, and his face blanched with terror. He lifted his eyes and tried to speak. But intelligible words failed to come, for he was almost paralyzed with fear.

"Death is too good a punishment for you," Weston resumed. "But as that is about the only thing which will strike terror into the hearts of human devils, of which you are the chief, it must be done. It may teach others to keep clear of Glen West after this."

With a howl Curly dropped upon his knees. His teeth chattered, and his body trembled violently. He stretched out his hands in a beseeching manner.

"For God's sake, don't kill me!" he yelled. "Let me go, an' I swear I'll never come near this place again."

"H'm, you are too late with your prayers, Curly. It's nothing less than the Ordeal for you now, so stop your yelps. If you don't of your own accord, we shall be forced to do something to make you."

He then turned to Sconda and gave a brief order in the Indian tongue. The next instant Curly was hurried out of the house, and down the trail leading to the village.

Weston sat for a while in his room after the others had gone. The grim expression had now left his face, and his eyes twinkled, while a smile lurked about the corners of his mouth. Anyone watching would have pronounced him the most hardened villain in existence. How could a man smile who had just sentenced a fellow creature to death? This man's heart must be hard and cold as an iceberg. But Weston's thoughts were evidently not unpleasant, and when he at length picked up his hat and left the house he was in an excellent frame of mind. Could Glen have seen him then she would have wondered more than ever.

The light of day had not yet faded from the land, although the high ridge of the Golden Crest placed the village in deep shadows. The sky was heavy with big clouds, presaging a storm. The wind was steadily increasing, and Weston knew that the rain would shortly be upon them.

He continued on his way down through the village, past the store and the last house in the place until he came to the edge of a thicket of firs and jack-pines. Here he paused and listened intently, but no sound could he hear. Advancing fifty yards more, he left the main thoroughfare and entered upon a

narrow trail leading down toward the lake. The trees were thicker here, and the ground suddenly sloped to a valley a short distance ahead. Weston needed no light to guide him, and he walked with the assurance of one well acquainted with his surroundings.

In a few minutes a light gleamed through the trees, and a smile of satisfaction overspread Weston's face. He knew that the natives were obeying orders and doing their part. Beyond was a small clearing, and coming to the edge of this, he again paused and watched unseen all that was taking place.

It was a most gruesome spot, this Valley of the Ordeal, and Curly was by no means the first who had been conducted hither. But no one had ever come in a more cringing manner than did this latest victim. Some had shown the craven spirit, and had begged for mercy, while others had fought and cursed their captors. But Curly was different. Whatever spark of manhood he possessed deserted him the moment he left the big house on the hill. He sank upon the ground, and his guards had to drag him along by main force.

He wept and moaned all the way through the village until the valley was reached. Then what he beheld struck him dumb with terror, and for a while he sat crouched upon the ground, staring wild-eyed upon the Indians as they began their preparations for the Ordeal.

There were about two dozen natives present, and they knew their work thoroughly, due, no doubt, to considerable experience in the past. Near the edge of the thicket, on the opposite side of the clearing from where Weston was standing, was the blackened stump of a big fir tree. To this Curly was dragged, and several of the men were forced to hold him up while he was being securely bound with his back to the trunk. About his feet dry wood was then placed, and half way up his body. When this had been accomplished, the Indians formed themselves in a circle about the unhappy man, and began to chant a slow weird dirge in the native tongue.

Between them and the tree of punishment a small fire was burning, and the light from this clearly exposed the face of the bound man. His eyes were dilated with terror, his weak lower jaw had dropped, and his mouth was wide open. So overcome was he, that he had no strength left to stand, so his entire weight rested upon his bonds. Never was there a more pitiable object of abject terror and cowardice. But the Indians did not seem in the least affected by their captive's misery. With stern, impassive faces they went on with their chanting, which steadily increased in weirdness as they continued.

At length they ceased, and at once Sconda seized a burning brand from the fire and approached the prisoner. Then wild shrieks rent the air as Curly frantically struggled to free himself. He might as well have addressed his words to the trees which surrounded him, as to those grim natives of the north.

Sconda had already stooped, as if to touch the brand to the inflammable material about the victim's feet, when Weston stepped within the ring, and ordered him to wait. Sconda immediately straightened himself up and stepped back.

"Save me! Save me!" Curly yelled. "Don't let these devils burn me!
For God's sake, save me! Oh, oh!"

For a few seconds Weston stood with folded arms looking upon the helpless man. Then his lips curled in a sarcastic smile.

"You've got only yourself to blame for this," he began. "Did you not bet that you would defy all the power of Glen West, and lure my daughter to her ruin? You can't deny it."

"No, no, I don't deny it. I was a fool, a madman. But save me, oh, save me! Don't let them burn me!"

"Do you think you are worth saving, Curly Inkles? You are a plague-spot in any community. You have brought untold misery upon many innocent ones, and why should you be allowed to do so to others?"

"I will never do any harm again," Curly whined. "I swear by all that is holy that I will change my life."

"Bah, I wouldn't give the snap of a finger for all the oaths you make, Curly. You don't know the meaning of an oath. Your soul is so seared and blackened that one might as well try to change that stump to which you are bound into a living one as to transform you into a good citizen. No, it is better for you to be off the earth than on it."

"But it's murder!" Curly yelled. "Would you murder a helpless man?
You will hang for it, and all these devils here."

"How do you dare to speak about murdering a helpless man?" Weston asked. "What happened to Bill Ducett, at Black Ravine?"

At these words Curly's eyes fairly started from their sockets, and the perspiration poured down his face in great beads.

"W-what d'ye know about that?" he gasped. "W-who are you, anyway?"

"Oh, never mind who I am, or how much I know. It is sufficient for the present to say that I have all the knowledge necessary to stretch your neck. You have now run the length of your wild career, and it shows you that it is impossible to escape justice here or anywhere else. But, there, I've wasted too much time talking to you, so get ready."

"Oh, oh, don't burn me!" Curly shrieked, as Weston turned and spoke to Sconda.

"Burn you? No!" was the contemptuous reply. "I wouldn't foul this place by burning a thing like you; it wouldn't be fair to others who have been brought here. They all were men with some sparks of manliness and spirit left in their bodies. But you, bah!"

He motioned to Sconda, who at once cut the bonds, and Curly fell forward at Weston's feet.

"Get up," the latter ordered, "and never let me catch you again on this side of the Golden Crest. The Indians will deal with you now. After that, they will dump you beyond the pass, and the sooner you hit the trail for Big Draw the better it will be for you. Thank your stars, Curly Inkles, that you have escaped this time."

There was much suppressed excitement in Glen West that night, for many had heard the shrieks of terror from the Valley of the Ordeal. But no one dared to question the four and twenty men who later that evening crowded into the store where they received a liberal supply of tobacco ordered by their Big White Chief. They were men who could be trusted, and they well knew how to keep a secret.

CHAPTER XVII

MAN TO MAN

Reynolds learned from Klota of Weston's return home, and he was anxious to meet the man who ruled Glen West, and was so greatly feared by the miners throughout the country. He could not believe that the father of such a girl as Glen could be the monster he had been depicted. He wished to see and learn for himself what the man was really like, and he hoped that he would be sent for at once to give an account of himself. Nothing, however, happened that evening, and he saw no more of Glen.

He was seated near the house when Curly was dragged by on his way to the Valley of the Ordeal. Although the shadows of evening were heavy, Reynolds realised who the victim was, and that he was being taken away for punishment, of what nature he could not tell. Going into the house, he questioned Klota, but received no satisfaction. The woman merely shook her head, and refused to give any information. This both puzzled and worried him. There was some mystery connected with this affair, and he made up his mind to find out what it was.

Hurrying down the street and past the store, he was almost to the edge of the thicket, when several natives barred his way, and sternly ordered him to go back. There was nothing he could do, so he was reluctantly obliged to obey. He returned to the store, and standing outside listened intently in an effort to learn whatever he could. Neither did he have long to wait, for presently up from the gloomy thicket rose the blood-curdling yells of someone in distress, and he knew that it must be Curly undergoing the Ordeal, whatever that might be. A cold chill swept over him, accompanied by a fierce anger. Was this village the abode of murderers, with Jim Weston as their leader? he asked himself. Were they murdering Curly down there, and had other men been treated in a similar manner? And would he himself be the next victim?

He had heard enough, and as there was nothing he could do, he went back to the house, where he passed a sleepless night. He could not get those cries of distress out of his mind, and he wondered whether he should not try to escape under cover of night. He banished this idea, however, as useless. He thought, too, of Glen. Would she allow the Indians to put him to death? He recalled what she had said about her father; how little she understood him, and that she had no idea what he might do.

Early the next morning he was standing by the side of the lake, when he saw *The Frontiersman*

cutting through the water, headed downstream. A lone figure was standing well aft, and he at once recognized it as Glen. She waved her hand to him as the boat sped by, and he could see her standing there until a bend in the shore hid her from view. Going back to the house he learned from Klota that the master of Glen West had gone down to the Yukon River for his mail. It was always left at the trading-post by the steamers on their way down river. It generally took a whole day to make the trip there and back. This information caused Reynolds considerable disappointment, as he would not be able to meet Weston or his daughter that day.

The sun was just disappearing beyond the mountain peaks when *The Frontiersman* returned, and ran up the creek to her wharf. Reynolds, watching, hoped to see Glen upon the deck. But he looked for her in vain, and he wondered what had become of her. Was it possible that her father had sent her outside? he asked himself.

Sconda did not come home for supper, but about an hour later he appeared with two other Indians, and informed Reynolds that the Big White Chief wished to see him. Reynolds now knew that the critical moment had arrived, so without the least hesitation he accompanied his guards, who conducted him at once to the big house on the hill.

Jim Weston was seated at his desk as the prisoner was ushered in. The first glance at the man told Reynolds that he was a person who would stand no nonsense or quibbling. Boldness must be met with boldness, and nothing but candour and truthfulness would serve him now. He looked about the room. Shelves well filled with books showed that their owner was a reader and a student. The walls were adorned with trophies of the chase, such as fine antlers of moose, caribou, and great horns of mountain sheep, while several large and valuable bear and wolf-skin rugs were stretched out upon the floor.

"What are you doing here, young man?"

These words deliberately uttered brought Reynolds back from his contemplation of the room.

"Do you really want to know?" he asked, looking Weston full in the eyes.

"Certainly. What did I ask you for, then?"

"Well, I am here because I was brought in on your boat."

"I know that," wag the impatient reply. "But what were you doing in this region?"

"I was looking for your daughter, sir. That's what I was doing."

Jim Weston's eyes grew suddenly big with amazement at this candid confession. Had the prisoner made any other reply he would have known at once what to say. But to see him standing so calmly there, looking him straight in the eyes, disconcerted him for a minute.

"Looking for my daughter, were you?" he at length found voice to ask.

"That's just it. But she found me instead."

"Are you not afraid to make such a confession, young man?"

"Afraid! Of what?"

"Of what might happen to you."

Reynolds shrugged his shoulders, and smiled.

"Why should I be afraid? I have done nothing wrong. You are the one, sir, to blame."

"I!" Weston exclaimed in astonishment.

"Yes, you, for possessing such a captivating daughter. Why, she won my heart the first time I saw her. She is the most charming girl I ever met, and it was love at first sight with me."

"Look here," and Weston shifted uneasily in his chair. "Are you in earnest, or are you making fun of me? Do you realise what you are saying? Have you the least idea what my daughter means to me? Why, she is more to me than life, and all my interests are bound up in her."

"I can well understand it, sir. And let me tell you that you are not the only one. She is also to me more than life, and all my interests as well as yours are bound up in her."

"You certainly have a great deal of impudence to speak in such a manner about my daughter," Weston retorted. "You surely must have heard what a risk it would be to venture into Glen West. Others

have come here in the past, and I suppose you have some idea how they fared."

"I am not worried about what happened to them, sir. From what I know, I believe they deserved all that came to them. But my case is different. I love your daughter, and merely came to see her. If she does not return my love, that is all there is about it. I shall go away and trouble her no more."

"And so you were willing to run such a risk with the vague uncertainty of winning my daughter? Did you stop to count the cost?"

"I did. But it has been said by one, who is considered an authority, that

"He is not worthy of the honey-comb
That shuns the hive because the bees have stings."

"Who said that?" Weston asked.

"No less a person than Master Shakespeare himself. He is a safe guide to all young lovers."

"I like those words," and Weston glanced toward his books. "I have read much in Shakespeare, but cannot remember that saying. I admire your spirit, too, and it is a great pity that you have not used it in some other cause. Were you alone in this fool-chase of yours?"

"Not at all. For a while I had the company of a fine old man, Frontier Samson by name. No doubt you have heard of him."

"Indeed, I have, and a bigger rascal never lived."

"Rascal! do you say?"

"Yes, and a mean one at that. He is a deceiver, and should be driven out of the country. He has given me more trouble than any man I ever met."

"Then the fault must be yours, sir, and I am sorry for you. That old prospector has been to me a true friend ever since I met him on the Northern Light. I fear he is much worried over my disappearance, and no doubt he thinks that I am lying dead somewhere in the wilderness."

"H'm, don't you worry about him. Most likely he is pleased to be rid of you."

"I cannot believe that of him," Reynolds stoutly defended. "Anyway, he would not treat a man as a prisoner and a criminal such as you do. He is a true friend, so I believe, and one of Nature's gentlemen."

"A queer gentleman," and Weston smiled for the first time during the interview. "I am surprised that you consider him as one."

"I wish I could consider all I have met in the same light. Such men are altogether too rare. He is the only perfect gentleman, to my way of thinking, I have encountered since coming north."

"Do you not consider me one?"

"Not from what I have so far observed."

"How dare you say that?"

"I have always been in the habit of fitting my words to whom I am talking. To a gentleman I talk as a gentleman, and to a brute as a brute."

"And a brute you consider me. Is that it?"

"Not altogether. I could not imagine a brute of a man having such a daughter as you are blest with. There must be something good about you, but just what it is, I have not yet discovered. But, there, I have said enough. I want to know why you brought me here. I am not a child nor a fool, neither am I a criminal, and I do not wish to be treated as if I were one of them."

"You had better be careful how you speak," Weston warned. "You are in my hands, remember, and I can do what I like with you."

"Can you? But who gave you authority over the lives of others? Did you not assume it yourself? And to aid you in your work of terrorizing people, you have gathered around you a band of Indians, who obey your slightest command."

"Talk all you like," and again Weston smiled. "Your boldness and impudence are refreshing after the craven spirits which have appeared before me in the past. But you will change your tone when you face the Ordeal."

"Act like Curly did last night? Is that what you mean?"

"What! did you hear him?"

"How could anyone help hearing him? I thought he would uproot the trees with his yells. What were you doing to him? Sticking pins in him?"

"You seem to treat the Ordeal as a joke," and Weston looked keenly at the young man.

"And why shouldn't I? In fact, I consider you and your tom-foolery as the biggest joke I ever heard."

"But it was no joke to Curly."

"Apparently not, judging by the noise he made. What did you do with him?"

"What did I do with him! Just wait until you see the blackened tree to which he was bound, and then you won't ask such a question."

"I can readily understand how Curly would blacken anything he touched, even a tree. But you didn't burn him. Such a diabolical thing is not in your makeup."

"What did I do with him, then?"

"Scared him almost out of his wits, and then let him go."

"How did you learn that?" Weston demanded. "Have the Indians been telling you anything?"

"I don't have to depend upon the natives for common sense. I have a little left yet, thank God, and reason tells me that Curly is now beyond the Golden Crest, cursing and vowing vengeance upon you and your associates."

"And no one told you all this?" Weston inquired. "Are you sure?"

"Certain. No one told me a word. You have your Indians well trained."

Weston gave a deep sigh of relief, and remained silent for a few minutes. What he was thinking about Reynolds had not the faintest idea. Nevertheless, he watched him closely, expecting any instant to be ordered away for the Ordeal. He believed that his boldness and straightforward manner had made some impression upon the ruler of Glen West, but how much he could not tell.

And as he stood waiting, a sound from the room across the hallway arrested his attention. It was music, sweet and full of pathos. Reynolds at once knew that it must be Glen. It could be no other, and he was determined to see her once more ere her father should drive him from the place.

Turning suddenly, he started to leave the room, but his guards sprang forward and caught him by the arms. Savagely he threw them aside, for nothing but death, could stop him now. The Indians were about to leap upon him again, when a sharp command in the native tongue from Weston caused them to desist. In another second Reynolds was out of the room, and hurrying toward her for whom he had ventured so much.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE PREPARED ROOM

The trip down to the big river was not altogether to Glen's liking. She preferred to stay at home, as she hoped to be able to spend part of the day with Reynolds, But her father had insisted upon her accompanying him, for he well knew why she wished to remain behind.

"It will do you good," he told her. "You need a change."

"I certainly do," was the emphatic reply. "I wish you would leave this place, daddy. I am tired living

up here, where there are no people of my own age with whom I can associate."

Weston looked at his daughter in surprise.

"You used to be happy here, Glen. What has come over you?"

"I am older now, daddy, and see things in a different light. What is the good of my education if I am to spend the rest of my days in a place like this? The north is all right in a way, but for a girl such as I am the life is too narrow. It is a splendid region for a person who wishes to lead the quiet life, but I am not ready for that at present."

Weston made no reply to his daughter's words, but remained silent for some time as he stood with Sconda in the wheel-house. A worried expression appeared in his eyes, and his brow often knit in perplexity. He was keenly searching his own heart and mind such as he had not done in years. It was the first time that Glen had spoken to him so candidly about leaving the north, and he realised that she meant what she said.

There was a large bag of mail waiting for them, at the trading-post, and among the letters Glen found several from a number of her girl friends of the Seminary. As she read these on her way back upstream, she became more discontented than ever. They all told of the good times the girls were having in their various homes during their holidays, of parties, auto rides, and the numerous incidents which mean so much to the young. Glen laid each letter aside with a sigh. It was the life for which she longed, and what could she write in return? There was only one event which deeply interested her, and of that she could not speak.

She was tired when she reached home, and after supper went at once to her own room. She took with her a number of books, magazines, and newspapers, and although the latter were several weeks old, she eagerly read the doings of the outside world, especially items of news about persons she knew. She was lying upon a comfortable couch as she read, near the window fronting the lake. The light from the shaded lamp on the little table at her head threw its soft beams upon the printed page, and brought into clear relief the outlines of her somewhat tired face. It was a face suddenly developed from girlhood into womanhood, as the bud blossoms into the beautiful flower. Glen's heart cried out for companionship, and the bright sunshine of happy young lives surrounding her.

Throughout the day her thoughts had been much upon him who had recently come into her life. The sight of him standing upon the shore that morning had thrilled her, and she longed to give him a word of encouragement. So lying there this evening, with her paper at length thrown aside, she wondered what he was doing, and how he was enduring his captivity. Surely her father would not submit him to the Ordeal after what she had told him about her love. She tried to think of something that she could do, but the more she thought the more helpless she seemed to be.

At last she arose and went downstairs. She heard voices in her father's room, but who was with him she could not tell, as the door was almost closed. Going at once to the piano, she struck the few notes which brought Reynolds to her side. His unexpected presence startled her, and by the time she was on her feet, he had her hand in his and his strong arms around her. Not a word was said for a few seconds as he held her close. A great happiness such as she had never known before swept upon her. He loved her! That was the one idea which surged through her wildly-beating heart. Time was obliterated, fears and doubts vanished, and with him whom she loved holding her in his arms, it seemed as if heaven had suddenly opened. Her face was upturned to his, and in an instant Reynolds bent and imprinted a fervent kiss upon her slightly parted lips.

With a start Glen glanced toward the door, and gently untwined her lover's arms. Her face, flushed before, was scarlet now. Never before had the lips of man except her father's touched her own, and the rapture of the sensation was quickly succeeded by a strong maidenly reserve. What should she do? she asked herself. How could she atone for her indiscretion? She turned instinctively to the piano.

"Play. Sing," Reynolds ordered in a low voice, charged with deep emotion.

"What shall I play?" Glen faintly asked as she mechanically turned over several sheets of music.

"Anything; it doesn't matter, so long as you play. There, that, 'The Long, Long Trail'; I like it."

Touching her fingers lightly to the keys, Glen played as well as the agitated state of her mind would permit. And as she played, Reynolds sang, such as he had never sung before. Presently Glen joined him, and thus together they sang the song through.

Across the hall Weston sat alone and listened. The stern expression had disappeared from his face,

and his head was bowed in his hands.

"It has been a long, long trail to me," he murmured, "but the end seems in sight."

The music of another song now fell upon his ears. Again they were singing, and he noted how perfectly their voices blended. Ere long the music was interrupted by laughter, the cause of which Weston could not tell, but he was fully aware that the young couple were happy together, and apparently had forgotten all about him. At one time this would have annoyed him, but it affected him now in a far different manner, at which he was surprised.

Glen and Reynolds, however, had not forgotten the silent man in the other room, and at times they glanced anxiously toward the door. They both felt that their happiness would soon end, and then would come the cruel separation. But as the evening wore on and nothing occurred to mar their pleasure, they wondered, and spoke of it in a low whisper to each other. They sang several more songs, but most of the time they preferred to talk in the language which lovers alone know, a language more expressive in the glance, the flush of the cheeks, and the accelerated heartbeats, than all the fine words of the masters of literature. Time to them was a thing of naught, for they were standing on the confines of that timeless kingdom, described on earth as heaven.

The entrance of Nannie at length broke the spell, and brought them speedily back to earth. They knew that she was the bearer of some message from the master of the house, and what would that message be? But the woman, merely smiled as she came toward them, and informed Reynolds that it was getting late, and that his room was ready.

"Do you mean that I am to spend the night here?" he asked in surprise.

"It is the master's wish," was the reply. "He gave the order, and your room is ready. I will show you the way."

Reynolds glanced at Glen, and the light of joy that was beaming in her eyes told him all that was necessary.

"You are the first visitor to spend the night here," she said. "May your dreams be pleasant, for they are sure to come true.

"Dreams to-night which come to you
Will prove at length to be really true."

"May they be pleasant ones, then," Reynolds laughingly replied, as he reluctantly bade the girl a formal good-night, and followed Nannie out of the room.

The latter led him at once upstairs, and showed him into a room on the west side of the house. Reynolds was astonished at the manner in which it was furnished. He looked about with undisguised wonder and admiration.

"Why, this is a room for a prince!" he exclaimed. "I never slept in such a luxurious place in my life. Your master must have notable visitors at times." Then he recalled Glen's words. "But am I really the first visitor who ever stayed here all night?"

"You must be the favored one for whom this room has been waiting," the woman quietly replied. "You must be the prince."

"And this room has never been occupied before?"

"Never. When I came here years ago, the master told me that this room was not to be used, but must always be in readiness, for some day it would be unexpectedly needed. I never understood his meaning until to-night. But, there, I must not talk any more. Good-night, sir, and may sweet dreams be yours."

Reynolds found it difficult to get to sleep, although the bed was soft and comfortable, and he was tired after the excitement of the day and evening. At times he felt that he must be dreaming, for it did not seem possible that he had again met Glen, held her close, kissed her, and she had not objected. His heart was filled with happiness, and when at last he did fall asleep, his dreams were of her. But mingled with his visions was Curly, who appeared dark and sinister, threatening not only himself, but her who was so dear to him. He saw the villain in the act of harming her, while he himself was powerless to assist her. He was bound, and no matter how he struggled, he was unable to free himself.

He awoke with a start, and looked around. It was only a dream, and he gave a sigh of relief. He then remembered what Glen had said to him the night before, and he smiled. He was not the least bit superstitious, and had no belief in such notions. Let Curly or anyone else attempt to lay hands on the

girl he loved, and it would not be well for him. He knew that the expelled rascal was capable of any degree of villainy, but that he would venture again near Glen West was most unlikely.

It was daylight now, so hurriedly dressing, Reynolds hastened downstairs. Glen was waiting for him in the dining-room, and a bright smile of welcome illumined her face as he entered. They were alone, and Reynolds longed to enfold her in his arms, and tell her all that was in his heart. He refrained, however, remembering how his impetuosity had carried him too far the previous evening. But it was different then, as he expected it would, be the last time he might see her, and he needed the one sweet kiss of remembrance. Now she was with him, and he felt sure of her love.

Weston and Nannie did not make their appearance, and as Glen sat at the head of the table and poured the coffee, she explained that they already had their breakfast.

"They are earlier than we are," Reynolds replied. "I had no idea it was so late."

"Didn't you sleep well?" Glen asked.

"Never slept better, that is, after I got to sleep. The wonderful events of last night kept me awake for a while."

Glen blushed and her eyes dropped. She did not tell how she, too, had lain awake much longer than anyone else in the house, nor that her pillow was moist with tears of happiness.

"I hope your dreams were pleasant," she at length remarked, "You know the old saying."

Reynolds' mind seemed suddenly centred upon the piece of meat he was cutting, and he did not at once reply. This Glen noticed, and an expression of anxiety appeared in her eyes.

"Do you wish me to tell you?" Reynolds asked, lifting his eyes to hers.

"If you don't mind. But I am afraid your dreams were bad."

"Not altogether; merely light and shade. The light was my dream of you, while the shade was of Curly."

"You dreamed of him!" Glen paused in her eating, while her face turned pale.

"There, now, I am sorry I mentioned it, Miss Weston. I knew it would worry you. But perhaps it is just as well for you to know."

"Indeed it is, especially when it concerns that man. Oh, he is not a man, but a brute. Please tell me about your dream."

In a few words Reynolds told her all, and when he had ended she sat for some time lost in thought. Her right arm rested upon the table, and her sunbrowned, shapely fingers lightly pressed her chin and cheek. She was looking out of the window which fronted the lake, as if she saw something there. The young man, watching, thought he never saw her look more beautiful. Presently a tremor shook her body. Then she gave a little nervous laugh, and resumed her breakfast.

"I am afraid I am not altogether myself this morning," she apologized. "But how can I help feeling nervous so long as Curly is anywhere in this country?"

Reynolds was about to reply when Nannie entered and told him that the master of the house wished to see him. With a quick glance at Glen, and asking to be excused, he left the room, expecting that the storm which had been so mercifully delayed was now about to break.

CHAPTER XIX

THE TURN OF EVENTS

The master of Glen West was sitting at his desk as Reynolds entered. He was smoking, and at the same time reading a newspaper in which he was deeply interested. The latter he at once laid aside, and motioned his visitor to a chair. He then picked up a box of cigars lying near.

"Do you smoke?" he asked. "If so, you will enjoy these. They are a special brand."

"Thanks," Reynolds replied, as he lifted one from the box, and proceeded at once to light it. This reception was so different from what he had expected that he hardly knew what to think. Anyway, the first move was favorable, and that was a good token.

"You left me very abruptly last night," Weston charged, looking keenly at the young man.

"I certainly did," and Reynolds smiled. "But sometimes there is a virtue in abruptness, especially——"

"Especially what?" Weston queried, as Reynolds hesitated. "Go on."

"When a situation becomes tense and awkward."

"And you think it was so last night?"

"I am sure of it."

"What is your reason?"

"My own common sense."

Weston was silent for a few seconds, and puffed steadily at his cigar. Reynolds watching him out of the corner of his eye, wondered what was passing through his mind.

"Have the Indians been telling you anything?" Weston presently asked.

"About what?"

"Curly, and what happened to him?"

"Nothing. Didn't I tell you so last night?"

"I know you did, but I can hardly believe it. Are you sure?"

"I am positive. They were as silent and mysterious as the Sphinx. You deserve great credit, sir, for the way you have them trained."

This seemed to relieve Weston, and he even smiled.

"I was afraid they had been telling you something, but I am thankful to know that they can be trusted. But, see here, someone must have told you. Was it Glen or Nannie?"

"Oh, no; they are not to blame."

"Well, then, how in the world did you find out?"

"And so I was right?" Reynolds asked.

Weston removed the cigar from his mouth, and looked curiously at his visitor.

"Were you not sure?" he queried.

"Not at all," and Reynolds laughed. "I was not sure last night, though I am now."

A sudden cloud overspread Weston's face, which, passed away, however, almost instantly.

"I wish I had known this sooner, young man. You would not have got off so easily, let me tell you that. I was positive that you understood everything. But tell me, what led you to suspect the truth about Curly?"

"That you had not burned him alive?"

"Yes."

Reynolds deliberately removed the band from his cigar, and laid it carefully in the ash-tray. He was enjoying Weston's perplexity, which he believed was a new experience for this autocrat of Glen West. What a story he would have to tell his old friend Harmon. The editor would surely forgive him for going on what he called "a wild-goose chase," instead of searching for the missing Henry Redmond. What a write-up all this would make for his paper.

"Did you hear what I said?" Weston's voice was somewhat impatient.

"I beg your pardon," Reynolds apologized. "My mind was wool-gathering."

You asked what led me to suspect the truth about Curly, did you not?"

"I did."

"Well, apart from yourself, and what I saw in you, there were four things which influenced my judgment. I only thought of one until I met you last night."

"And what are they?" Weston was keenly interested.

"First of all, I could not imagine that a man would burn a fellow-being alive who kept that near him," and Reynolds motioned to a book lying upon the desk.

Weston turned, and his face brightened.

"Oh, you mean the Bible. So that was one of your reasons, eh? But do you not know that the deepest-dyed villain often keeps the Bible close at hand? Such a man is generally fearful as well as superstitious, and so considers the Bible as a charm to ward off evil. It has been said, you remember, that the devil himself can quote Scripture for his own purpose. I venture to say that his satanic majesty knows the Bible better than many professing Christians. It is necessary for him to do so in order to answer the arguments it sets forth. Perhaps that is the way with me. Anyway, we shall dismiss that evidence as faulty. What next?"

"Your daughter, sir. I cannot believe that any man is a downright villain who is fortunate enough to have such a daughter."

"I see, I see," and Weston stroked his heavy moustache. "Did you not say something of a similar nature last night? But are you aware that a man may have a noble daughter, and still be a villain? Facts of history bear out what I say, unless I am greatly mistaken."

"That may have been true in some cases, sir," Reynolds replied. "However, I am not concerned about the past, but the present only. No matter what you may say to the contrary, you will not convince me. And besides, there is something else which hinges upon this reason."

"And what is that?"

"You are very fond of your daughter, are you not?"

"Certainly. She is all I have in the world, and she is dearer to me than life itself."

"Just so," and Reynolds smiled. "And for her sake, at least, you would not dare to burn any man alive."

"Wouldn't dare! Why not?"

"Simply because you would be hunted down as a murderer, and hung. Why, the Mounted Police would have had you in their clutches long before this."

"They would, eh? What do I care about law? Am I not a law unto myself?"

"In a way you are, so long as you do not commit any crime. But even though you might not care about yourself, you would not dare to do anything wrong for your daughter's sake. She means so much to you, that you would not dare to commit any desperate act for fear of disgracing her. Is not that so?"

Weston made no reply, but sat looking intently into Reynolds' face.

"There is another reason," the latter continued, "to which I feel certain you can make no objection, and it is *that*."

He pointed as he spoke to a framed picture hanging above the desk. It was the face of a woman of remarkable beauty, and closely resembling Glen, although somewhat older.

Weston, too, looked, and as he did so his face underwent a marvellous transformation. He tried to control himself, but in vain. Rising suddenly to his feet, he paced rapidly up and down the room. Once he stopped and fixed his eyes upon the picture. At length he turned toward his visitor.

"It is true. It is true," he declared, almost fiercely. "To your other reasons I could make some defence, but not to this. I would not dare to do anything wrong for my dear dead wife's sake. Her memory is most precious. Young man, you have hit me hard."

He paused and looked again at the picture. Then he sank down upon his chair, and buried his face in his hands.

Reynolds rose and was about to leave the room, when Weston lifted his head.

"Don't go yet," he ordered, endeavoring to control himself. "I am somewhat unnerved this morning. There is something more I wish to say to you. It is years since I have talked to anyone as I have to you. Sit down and tell me what you are going to do."

"That remains with you, sir," Reynolds replied, as he resumed his seat.

"With me! It remains with me! I do not understand."

"Am I not your prisoner, sir? It is not what I am going to do, but what you are going to do to me."

"Ah, yes, quite true," and Weston was silent for a few seconds. "But suppose you are given your freedom, what then?" he asked.

"I should go at once in search of my old friend, Frontier Samson," was the decided reply. "He must be greatly concerned about my disappearance, and no doubt he is still seeking for me out in the hills."

"And should you find him—?"

"We would at once visit the gold mine I discovered when I was lost."

"What! did you discover gold? Where?"

"On that last ridge before I reached the river," Reynolds explained. "I took shelter in a cave from a furious storm, and there found more gold than I ever expected to see in my whole life. The walls of the cave are full of it, and it seems to be of the best quality."

"Do you think you can find the place again?" Weston asked.

"I believe so," and Reynolds briefly described the situation.

"I know it! I know it!" Weston exclaimed. "It is the highest peak on that ridge between here and the Tasan. The side this way is very steep and rocky, is it not?"

"Yes, and the summit is bare. It was there I had a desperate fight with an eagle, killed it, and carried off its eggs, which saved my life. From the high point I caught the first glimpse of the river."

"And suppose you find the gold, what then?" Weston asked.

"Oh, I shall take my share of it, of course."

"And after that?"

"I am not altogether sure. But there is one thing I should do before undertaking anything else. In fact, I am almost pledged to it. Harmon will never forgive me if I don't."

"Harmon, did you say?" Weston questioned. "I once knew a man by that name."

"It is Harmon, editor and principal owner of the *Vancouver Telegram* and *Evening News*. He has been a father to me, and is greatly interested in my welfare. He has a hobby which I call 'a wild-goose scheme,' and he thinks that I am the only one who can carry it out. He is not the Harmon you knew, I suppose?"

Weston did not at once reply, but sat staring straight before him as if he saw something strange in the wall. His bronzed face had a peculiar pallid color, and his eyes expressed wonder and incredulity. He was forced to keep his hands clasped before him, so great was his emotion. Reynolds watched him curiously, but said nothing.

"And what is Harmon's hobby?" Weston at length found voice to enquire.

"Oh, a pet scheme for the finding of a man who disappeared years ago."

"And the man's name?" Weston was once more calm.

"Henry Redmond, so he told me. He was a prominent business man, but after the death of his wife he mysteriously vanished, and left no trace of his whereabouts."

"Strange, was it not?" Weston queried, as he furtively eyed the young man. "Perhaps he is dead."

"That is what I suggested to Harmon, but he would not entertain the idea at all."

"Did he give any reason for his belief that the man is alive?"

"He showed me a clipping taken from a paper years ago. These are the words which I committed to memory:

"I go from the busy haunts of men, far from the worry and bustle of business life. I may be found, but only he who is worthy will find me, and whoever finds me, will, I trust, not lose his reward. From the loop-holes of retreat I shall watch the stress and fever of life, but shall not mingle in the fray."

"Was there any name signed to that?" Weston asked, when Reynolds had finished.

"I understand there was none."

"Why, then, does your friend Harmon imagine that it refers to Redmond?"

"Because it appeared immediately after the man's disappearance, and Harmon told me it was just like Redmond to do such a thing."

"It is all mere conjecture, then?"

"It is."

"And upon the strength of that your friend, would have you undertake the wild-goose adventure, as you term it. What are his reasons?"

"He wishes me to find an outlet for my restless spirit; to satisfy his own curiosity; and finally, to have a series of special articles for his paper."

"What! Does Harmon want you to write a full account of your adventure, and all about the missing man should you find him?"

"It seems so, though I guess he will have to wait a long time. I must first of all find Frontier Samson, and get that gold. Then, perhaps, something else may interfere with Harmon's plans."

"Yes, yes, you must find the old prospector and get the gold," Weston agreed. "But you will need assistance. I know the region as well as any man, and I have a comfortable cabin in the hills. Allow me to go with you to direct your search."

Reynolds' eyes opened wide with amazement, and he stared at Weston as if he had not heard aright. Could it be possible that this man, the stern ruler of Glen West, and Glen's father, was really offering to assist him? Weston divined his thoughts, and smiled.

"I know you are astonished," he told him. "But, you see, I am not yet beyond the lure of gold, and should we find that mine, there might be something in it for me. We might go partners, eh?"

"That would be great," Reynolds replied with enthusiasm. "But we must not leave the old prospector out."

"Oh, no, that would never do. We shall see that he gets his share, providing we find him. I am really anxious to be off at once," and Weston rose as he spoke.

"When shall we start?" Reynolds asked.

"In a couple of days, if that will suit you. It will not take long to make the necessary arrangements for the trip, and we shall take two Indians to look after our welfare."

Weston was almost like a boy in his excitement, and Reynolds could hardly believe him to be the same man he had faced the night before.

"You may go and tell Glen about our proposed trip," Weston said. "She must be wondering what we are talking so long about."

"And will she go too?" Reynolds eagerly asked.

"Certainly. It would not do to leave her behind. She would be very angry if we did. And, besides, she must have a share in that mine. Ho, ho, there will be four of us on the ground-floor, all right, and the rest can have what we leave, providing there is any. Hurry away, now, and tell Glen to get ready. It generally takes a woman two or three days to prepare for a journey."

CHAPTER XX

A SHOT FROM THE GOLDEN CREST

Glen was greatly agitated when her father summoned Reynolds into his presence. She felt that the critical moment had arrived, and she dreaded what might follow. Although she loved her father, yet at times she feared him. Suppose he should send Reynolds away at once, and forbid his return to Glen West? He had treated others in a harsh manner, and why should he act differently now? Her only ray of hope lay in the thought that he had allowed the young man to stay at the house over night, and had permitted him to sleep in the room which had never before been occupied.

She sat for some time after Reynolds had left, with her elbows upon the table, and her hands propping her chin. Her appetite had suddenly left her, and her coffee remained untasted. The morning sun flooding the room, fell upon her hair and face, and had her lover seen her then, he would have admired her more than ever. She was in a most thoughtful mood, and at the same time she listened intently for any sound of strife that might come from her father's study.

At length she arose, picked up her broad-rimmed straw-hat, and went out of doors. It was a hot morning with not a breath of wind astir. The water was like a mirror, and the high hills were reflected in its clear depths. It called to her now, and appealed to her as of yore, and urged her to seek comfort upon its placid bosom.

Walking swiftly down to the wharf, she launched her light canoe, one which had been brought in from the outside for her own special use. Sconda was standing near *The Frontiersman*, and he offered to accompany her. But Glen smilingly told him that she wished to be alone this morning, and that perhaps Klota needed him more than she did. The Indian was quite surprised at her refusal, and somewhat piqued as well. It was the first time she had ever spoken to him in such a manner, and he stood silently watching the girl as she settled herself in the canoe, and dipped her paddle into the water. Then he wended his way slowly homeward, wondering what had come over his young imperious mistress.

But Glen was not thinking about Sconda, and she had no idea that she had in any way annoyed the faithful native. She paddled straight across the creek until she reached the opposite side. Here she ran the canoe ashore, and watched most intently the big house in the distance.

She remained here for some time anxiously observing all that was taking place around the house, expecting at any moment to see Reynolds come forth. And when he did come, would he at once go down to the village, to be conducted beyond the pass? Perhaps her father might send for the guard, who would lead him forth as a prisoner. At this thought a tremor shook her body, and she nervously drove the paddle into the water, and sent the canoe reeling from the shore. Only in action now could she endure the strain of waiting.

She had just reached the middle of the creek, when, glancing toward the house, her heart gave a great leap, for there coming down to the wharf was the very one of whom she was thinking. He was walking rapidly and at the same time waving his hand to her. Instantly she headed the canoe for the shore, and when its graceful bow touched lightly against the wharf, he was standing there waiting to receive her. The smile upon his face and light of joy in his eyes told her that all was well, and so great was her happiness that for a moment she had no word to say. Her cheeks were flushed with the invigorating exercise, and the eyes which were turned to her lover's were moist with tears, and gleamed like sparkling diamonds. Reynolds, too, was speechless for a few seconds. A feeling of almost sacred awe swept upon him as he looked upon that fair pure face. Although his life was clean and above reproach, yet he felt most unworthy when in the presence of such a beautiful, unsullied being. It never had affected him so intensely as on this bright morning on the shore of that inland water. What right had he to presume to love such a girl? he asked himself.

For several seconds neither spoke. It was that mysterious silence which sometimes comes when heart responds to heart, and where love is true and deep. Then they both laughed and the spell was broken. Just why they laughed they could not tell, although they felt very happy.

"Come for a spin," Glen suggested. "I want to hear all. You paddle," she ordered, as she turned herself about in the canoe. "I have already had my morning's exercise."

"And so have I," Reynolds laughingly replied, as he seated himself astern and sent the canoe from the wharf.

"But of a different nature, though?" and Glen looked quizzically into his face.

"Quite different. I exercised my lungs, and your father did the same."

"Not in anger, I hope."

"Oh, no. We had a great heart to heart talk, and got on splendidly. We parted like two lambs, and are the best of friends."

"You are!" The girl's lips merely breathed the words, but they told of her great relief.

"Yes, it is true. And more than that, we have already planned for a trip together in the hills, and you are to go with us, that is, if you wish to go."

At these words, Glen's face underwent a marvellous change.

"Don't go," she pleaded. "Stay where you are."

"Why, what is the matter?" and Reynolds looked his surprise as he paused in a stroke.

"Have you forgotten your dream last night? It was bad, and first dreams in a new place are sure to come true."

Reynolds laughed, as he again dipped the paddle into the water.

"Surely you are not superstitious, Miss Weston. Why should one be alarmed at dreams? They are nothing."

"That may be true," and Glen trailed her hand in the water. "But an uneasy feeling has taken possession of me which I cannot banish. I was brought up among Indians, you know, and they are naturally superstitious."

"And they have filled your mind with nonsense, I suppose."

"I am afraid so," and the girl gave a deep sigh.

They were some distance up the creek now, and the canoe was gliding almost noiselessly through the water. Glen asked Reynolds about his conversation with her father, and he told her all that had taken place. She listened with the keenest interest. Her face was aglow with animation, and her eyes shone with the light of astonishment.

"I can hardly believe it," she exclaimed when Reynolds had finished. "Anyway, I am so thankful that daddy did not get angry, I hope he will not change his mind. He is so gentle and good at times, and again he is so stern and harsh. Oh! what is that?" she cried, as something struck the water with a zip near the canoe.

Reynolds had ceased paddling, and was staring back at a spot where the water had been ruffled, but not by the motion of the canoe. Then he glanced shoreward, and his eyes keenly searched the high ridge of the Golden Crest.

"It must have been a fish leaping for a fly," he somewhat absently suggested.

"But I heard the report of a rifle," Glen declared. "It came from up there," and she motioned to the right.

"Perhaps someone is hunting, and a stray bullet may have come this way."

"It may be so, but let us go home." Glen's face was pale, and her eyes bore an anxious expression.

Reynolds at once swung the canoe around, and paddled with long steady strokes toward the village. He knew that Glen was somewhat unnerved, and he upbraided himself for telling her about his dream. Why are some people so foolish as to believe in such things? he asked himself.

"Suppose we go over to Sconda's," Glen suggested. "I want to see Klota. She is doing some work for me."

"I understand," Reynolds replied. "You wish to find out how that bearskin is getting along."

Glen glanced quickly at him, smiled, and slightly blushed.

"You saw it, then? You recognized it?"

"Sconda showed it to me. It is a beauty."

"Do you want it?"

"Oh, no. I have no place to keep such a thing. It pleases me to know that you are anxious to have it as a—"

"As a souvenir of my deliverance," the girl assisted, as Reynolds hesitated.

"And of our first meeting," he added.

Glen did not reply, but looked thoughtfully out over the water toward the shore. She was glad that Reynolds believed she wished to go to Sconda's merely to see about the skin. But in truth, there was something far more important, and it was this which now disturbed her mind. She did not wish to exhibit her anxiety, so the idea of viewing the bearskin was as good a pretext as any other.

They found Klota at the back of the house busily engaged upon the skin, which was stretched over a log. She paused in her work and smiled as the two approached. Glen spoke to her in Indian, and asked her how she was getting along. Seeing Sconda across the street talking with an Indian, Reynolds went at once to him to discuss the proposed trip into the hills. This suited Glen, as she wanted to be alone for a time with Klota.

"Is Sconda going with us on our trip?" she asked.

"Ah, ah. Sconda is going," was the reply. Then an anxious expression appeared in the old woman's eyes as she turned them upon her fair visitor. "Don't you go," she warned. "Stay home."

"Why, Klota?" Glen asked as calmly as possible, although her fast-beating heart told of her agitation.

"Something might happen out there," and the Indian woman motioned to her left.

"What has Klota seen? Has she heard anything?"

"Klota has seen and heard. Don't go."

"What have you seen and heard?" Glen urged.

"Bad, ugh! Bad dream. Bad white man."

"Curly?" Glen's face was very white.

"Ah, ah, Curly. Bad, all same black bear. Don't go."

Klota resumed her work upon the skin, and although Glen questioned her further, she only shook her head, and refused to talk. What had this woman heard? Glen asked herself, or was it only a dream? She knew how much stress the Indians laid upon dreams, and how she herself had been so strongly influenced since childhood by weird stories she had heard from the natives.

She was unusually silent and thoughtful as she and Reynolds walked slowly up the street toward the big house. She longed to tell her companion what Klota had said, but she hesitated about doing so. Would he not consider her weak and foolish? She knew that her father would only laugh at her if she told him. She did not wish to make herself ridiculous in their eyes, and yet she could not get her lover's dream nor Klota's warning out of her mind. She thought of them that afternoon as she made preparations for the journey. Her father had told her that they were to start early the next morning, and if she wished to go she must be ready. She did want to go, for she enjoyed the life in the hills. Nevertheless, she often found herself standing at the window looking out over the lake. Why should she go if there was any risk? she asked herself. She knew that Curly was capable of almost any degree of villainy, but was he not far away at Big Draw? It was hardly likely that he would again venture near the Golden Crest. But if he did, would she not have her father and Reynolds to protect her?

Hitherto she had only thought of harm to herself. But there suddenly came into her mind the fear that something might happen to another, and she flushed as she thought who that other would be. Had she not seen Curly's face, and heard some of his terrible words the day of his arrest as he was being taken up the street? It would, therefore, be upon Reynolds that he would endeavor to give vent to his rage. Just how he would do this, she could not tell, but it would be necessary for her to be ever on guard.

A feeling of responsibility now took possession of her such as she had never known before. She felt that the life of her lover was in her keeping, and perhaps her father's as well. She knew that they would not listen to any warning from her, and so she might as well keep silent. The dream and Klota's words might amount to nothing, yet it was well to be ready for any emergency.

Opening a drawer in her dresser, she brought forth a revolver, and held it thoughtfully in her hand

for a few minutes. As a rule she carried it with her on all her trips beyond the Golden Crest, and she had been well trained in the use of the weapon since she was a mere girl. She was a good shot, and was very proud of her accomplishment.

"A girl should always be able to take care of herself," her father had told her over and over again.

"In a country such as this one never knows what might happen, and it is well to be prepared."

That evening as she sat at the piano and played while Reynolds sang, she forgot for a time her anxiety. His presence dispelled all gloomy fears, and the sound of his voice thrilled her very being. They were both happy, and all-sufficient to each other.

Across the hall in his own room, Jim Weston sat alone, ensconced in a big comfortable chair. He was re-reading one of his favorite books, "Essays of Nature and Culture." He was engrossed in the chapter, "The Great Revelation," and as he read, the music across the way beat upon his brain, and entered into his soul. "Every bit of life is a bit of revelation; it brings us face to face with the great mystery and the great secret." . . . He paused, and listened absently to the music. "All revelation of life has the spell, therefore, of discovery." . . . The words of the song the young people were now singing again arrested his attention. He liked "Thora"; it was a song of the north, and Glen had often sung it to him. "There is the thrill, the wonder, the joy of seeing another link in the invisible chain which binds us to the past and unites us to the future." The words of the essay startled him. He laid aside the book, and rested his head upon his hand. "Another link in the invisible chain which binds us to the past." He thought of her who had made his life so pleasant. He glanced above his desk, and a mistiness came into his eyes. Memory now was the only link which bound him to the past, to those sweet days of long ago.

And as he sat there, the singing still continued. He only half comprehended the meaning of the words, for he was living in another world. But presently he started, clutched the arms of his chair, and bent intently forward.

"'Tis a tale that is truer and older
Than any the sagas tell;
I loved you in life too little,
I love you in death too well!"

In the adjoining room the happy young couple went on with their singing, and when the song was finished, they stopped, said something in a low voice, and then laughed joyously. But the ruler of Glen West paced restlessly up and down his study. He heard no more singing that night, for he had softly closed the door. Long after the rest had retired, and the house was wrapped in silence, he continued his pacing, only stopping now and then to gaze longingly at the picture above his desk. Since his return from the hills Jim Weston had learned a new lesson, but before it could be applied, it was necessary for him to undergo the severest mental and spiritual struggle he had ever known.

CHAPTER XXI

THE PLOTTERS

After Curly had been dumped unceremoniously beyond the Golden Crest, and sternly ordered never to return, he had sped hurriedly forward. He was careless whither his steps led, so long as he was away from Glen West and that frowning mountain ridge. Fear still possessed his soul, and he believed that he had escaped death as if by a miracle. He was so frightened that he did not realise how tired and hungry he was until he had done a considerable distance, stumbling at every step, and at times falling prone upon the ground. His bruises he hardly felt until he had almost reached the foot of the long slope down which he was speeding. Then a great weakness came upon him, and his body trembled. Then he knew that he was very hungry and a long way from Big Draw. What should he do? How could he drag his tired body any farther through the night, with no trail to guide him? In fact, he did not know where he was. Then the terrible truth flashed upon his mind that he was lost. This brought him to his senses, and his terror vanished. In its stead, a burning rage swept upon him, filled his heart, and made him once more a brute thirsting for revenge. Before his distorted vision rose the mocking face of Jim Weston, and a deep growling curse spued from his lips. Then he saw Glen standing with Reynolds by the side of the street, and turning swiftly around he faced the Golden Crest, and lifting his dirty bleeding right hand, he shook his clenched fist, and hurled forth a stream of terrible imprecations. But every word sent forth came back with a startling clearness from the mysterious depths of the brooding forest. Nature could

not contain such language within her unsullied bosom, but returned it immediately to the vile source from whence it came.

When Curly's rage had somewhat spent itself, he began to meditate upon swift and dire revenge. But first of all he needed food, and assistance from someone as base as himself. Big Draw could supply him with the former, but he had no idea where he could find the latter. He thought of Slim Fales, his recent companion. Him, however, he soon dismissed from his mind as unsuitable. Slim had not suffered as he had, and would not enter heartily into any proposal he might make. And, besides, Slim had fled and left him to his fate. No, he must find someone as desperate as himself upon whom he could thoroughly depend.

This feeling of revenge gave Curly new strength. He must reach Big Draw, obtain food, and make whatever plans would be necessary. Once more he headed for the valley, lying dark and sullen below. By following this, he expected to reach the big creek on which the mining camp was situated.

Arriving ere long at the bottom of the hill, he moved as fast as possible down the creek. There was no trail to guide him, and it was with much difficulty that he made his way through the forest, which was here thick and scrubby. So painful did this at last become, that he was forced to follow the little brook which flowed down the valley. This, too, was rough, and at times he was compelled to walk in the water. But there were no trees to bother him, so he accordingly made better progress.

He had thus gone some distance when, rounding a bend in the creek, he was surprised to see directly before him the light of a camp fire. Hope at first leaped into his heart. Then he became cautious, for he could not tell whether it was the stopping place of friend or foe. Carefully now he advanced, and when near enough to recognize the face of a man sitting before the blaze, he emitted a whoop, and rushed forward.

At this startling sound from the grimness of the forest, the lone camper started, seized his rifle, and leaped to his feet.

"Who are you?" he demanded. "Stop, or I'll shoot."

"It's only me," Curly hastened to reply, as he stepped forth, into the circle of light. "Ye wouldn't shoot a friend, would ye, Dan?"

The latter lowered his rifle, and stared with undisguised surprise upon his visitor.

"Well, fer the love of heaven!" he exclaimed, scanning closely the wretched creature who had so unexpectedly appeared. "Where did you drop from? and what has happened?"

"Give me something to eat," Curly gasped, "an' then I'll tell ye. I'm almost dead."

Laying aside his rifle, the other opened a bag nearby and produced several hard-tack biscuits. Like a ravenous beast Curly seized and devoured them.

"More, more," he begged.

"I'm short myself," Dan informed him, as he again thrust his hand into the bag. "There, take them," and he tossed over two more biscuits.

When Curly had eaten the last crumb, he searched into a hole in his jacket and brought forth an old blackened pipe.

"Got any tobacco, Dan? Mine's all gone."

Without a word the latter passed him part of a plug.

"A match," was the next request.

"What d'ye think I am?" was the curt reply; "a store? Get a light fer yourself," and Dan motioned to the fire. "I can't spare any matches."

Curly did as he was ordered, lighted his pipe with a small burning stick, and then stretched himself out before the fire. He was a sorry looking spectacle, and Dan watched him curiously.

"What's the matter, Curly?" he asked. "Where have you been?"

"Where d'ye think I've been?" was the surly reply. "Where do I look as if I'd been? To a Garden Party?"

"Well, no, judging by your appearance. Haven't been mauled by a grizzly, have you?"

"No, worse than a grizzly. I've been in the hands of devils, that's where I've been. And his Satanic majesty was there, too."

"H'm, it's rather early, isn't it, Curly?" and Dan grinned.

"Early! What d'ye mean?"

"Nothing, except that ye didn't expect to meet the devil an' his bunch until ye cashed in, did ye?"

"Oh, I see. But we'll be pardners, then, Dan, never fear. But if the devil an' his gang are any worse than the ones at Glen West, then the outlook isn't very bright for either of us."

"So you've been in Jim Weston's hands, eh?" Dan queried, while his eyes closed to a narrow squint.

"Should say I have, an' just barely escaped. It was terrible!" Curly's hands trembled, and into his eyes came a look of fear as he glanced apprehensively around. "Ye don't suppose they've followed me, do you?"

"Don't be a fool," Dan chided. "D'ye want me to tell ye something?"

"Sure. Go ahead."

"Jim Weston and his Indian gang were only bluffing."

"Bluffing!"

"That's what I said. Look here, Curly, they did the same thing to me, and scared me nearly to death when I was prowling around Glen West. I thought fer certain that I had escaped just by the skin of me teeth. But since I've talked with several others who were treated in the same way, I know that the whole thing is a bluff, an' nothin' more."

Curly's eyes were big with amazement, and slowly he comprehended the meaning of it all.

"An' ye think they wouldn't burn a man alive?" he gasped.

"No. Take my word fer it, they have never done such a thing yet, an' never will. Jim Weston wants to keep all white men away from Glen West, an' so he puts up that bluff. It's on account of his daughter. He knows that more than you an' me have their eyes on her. That's what took you there, wasn't it?"

"Sure. D'ye think it'd be anything else than a woman that would put me into such a scrape?"

"An' didn't get her after all. That's too bad."

"But I will get her," Curly declared with an oath. "That slick gentleman sucker isn't going to have her."

"Who d'ye mean?"

"Oh, you know, don't ye? It's that guy who knocked off the bottles. He's at Glen West now, an' very chummy with Jim Weston's daughter."

"How in h—— did he get there?"

"Search me. But he's there, all right, an' from all appearance he's going to stay, for a while at least, until I show me hand."

"What can you do? It seems to me that you've had enough of that place already."

"So I have, but not of the girl. My, she's worth riskin' one's neck for. But, say, Dan, what are you doing out here?"

"Prospectin', of course. What else would I be doin'?"

"Strike anything?"

"Not yet, though I've good prospects in sight, 'specially since you've arrived."

Seeing the look of surprise in Curly's eyes, Dan laughed.

"Yes," he continued, "I'm prospectin' in the same way that you are."

I'm after Jim Weston's gal."

"You are!" Curly's face brightened. "How long have you been at it?"

"Oh, fer about a week. Ye see, I got into the same scrape that you did, an' was pitched this side of Golden Crest, with strict orders to head fer Big Draw at once."

"An' did ye?"

"Sure. I did as I was told. But I returned, built a shack in the hills, an' have been prowlin' around ever since waitin' me chance. Jim Weston's daughter sometimes rides alone on this side of the Crest, but so far I've missed meetin' her. But I'll get her one of these days, an' then her devil of a father will know that Dan Hivers has some of the Old Nick in him as well as he has. It's a mighty poor game, to my way of thinkin', at which two can't play."

"Yes, and more than two," Curly eagerly replied. "You're just the man I need. Let's work together, Dan, an' we'll be company fer each other. Have you any grub?"

"Lots of it in me shack. I brought a good supply from Big Draw, an' fresh meat is plentiful in the hills. I've an extra rifle, too, if ye need it."

"What's your plan?" Curly asked. "You know this region better'n I do."

Dan did not at once reply, but sat looking thoughtfully into the fire.

"An' ye say that guy's got the cinch on the gal?" he at length queried.

"Seems so. He was with her when I was led past, an' they seemed mighty happy together."

"Is that so? An' I suppose he'll be with her wherever she goes."

"Most likely. But we can fix him, can't we?"

"We'll have to find some way, but the question is, how?"

"The gun-route might be the best," and Curly motioned significantly toward the rifle. "Accidents sometimes happen, ye know."

"But what about the old man? He might make trouble."

"Then, settle him, too. He goes alone into the hills, doesn't he?"

"Why, yes. I never thought of that. He's got a cabin over yonder. I know where it is. He often spends days alone there, with not a soul around, prospectin', so I understand."

"Something might happen there, too, eh?" and Curly grinned. "Then the girl will be ours."

"But what about the Police?" Dan warned. "They'd be on our trail like greased-lightning."

"But it will be an accident like the other, won't it?"

"But suppose the accidents don't happen?"

"The devil do I care. Let me get the girl, an' I'll look out fer myself after that. I've been in such scrapes before, an' I guess you have, too, Dan."

For some time the two villains sat that night before the fire, and discussed in detail their nefarious plans. They were men in whose bosoms no feeling of pity or sympathy dwelt. To them a pure noble girl was merely an object of their vile passions. Others had been victimized by these brutes, and they had now sunk so low that they were willing to sacrifice innocent lives in order to gratify their base desires.

Next morning found the two plotters moving steadily on their way up toward the Golden Crest where it curved in to the lake. They kept away as far as possible from the pass for fear of watchful Indians. But farther north where the land was more rugged, they would be safe. From this vantage ground they could look down upon the village and observe much that was taking place there. Curly was feeling the effects of his experiences the previous day and was surly and ugly. Dan had fed him and supplied him with a buck-skin jacket which made him more presentable. But Curly's temper was bad, and he vented his spleen upon Reynolds and Jim Weston in no mild language.

The high ridge of the Golden Crest was not reached until about the middle of the morning, and here

from a concealed position the two men looked down upon Glen West lying snugly by the water's side. They could see the big house quite plainly, and they eagerly watched Glen as she paddled alone upon the creek. She was beyond their reach, however, so they were helpless. But when the girl was at length joined by Reynolds, and the canoe was headed upstream, Curly's eyes glowed with the fire of hatred and jealousy, while his hands gripped hard the rifle he was holding. He was lying flat upon the ground, peering over the edge of a big boulder with Dan close by his side. As the canoe came nearer, Curly thrust his rifle impetuously forward and fired. With a curse, Dan reached out and laid a firm hand upon the weapon.

"What in h— d'ye mean?" he demanded. "Ye've spoiled everything."

"I wanted to get that cur down there," was the snarling reply. "I missed him that time, but I'll get him yet."

"No, ye don't," Dan declared, as Curly tried to free the rifle from his companion's grasp. "If ye shoot again, we'll have a pack of Indians after us. There, look now!" and he pointed to the canoe which was heading down the creek. "That's what you've done. You've scared our game and sent them back to give the alarm. Most likely they intended to land somewhere up the creek, an' do some private spoonin'. We could have crept down, knocked out the guy, an' carried off the gal. But now—bah! ye've spoiled the whole show!"

Curly made no reply, but lay there watching the canoe until it had reached Sconda's landing. His heart was bitter with rage as he recalled his expulsion from Glen West, while his opponent was in full possession of the girl he was seeking. Several times during the morning he voiced his sentiments to his companion.

"Just wait, Curly," Dan comforted. "Our turn will come, never fear, providin' ye don't lose yer head as ye did this mornin'. I know something about lovers. They generally like to get off somewhere by themselves to do their spoonin'. They'll be wanderin' up along that trail between here an' the water some time this afternoon, an' that'll be our chance."

But this time Dan was mistaken. The young lovers did not come up the trail, neither did they see them again during the remainder of the day, although they stayed there until the sun had gone down. They accordingly went back to Dan's cabin a sulky and ugly pair. Lustful, and filled with the spirit of revenge, they became all the more determined and desperate the more they were baffled in their plans.

Early the next morning they again took up their position on the high crest. They did not have long to wait now, for in less than an hour they beheld something upon the trail below them which gladdened their devilish hearts. At once they vanished from the summit, and like panthers stole cautiously through the forest, and cautiously began to stalk their unconscious prey.

CHAPTER XXII

THE CABIN IN THE HILLS

Glen's fears and forebodings of the previous night passed away as she rode Midnight along the trail on that beautiful summer morning. For a time a feeling of security filled her heart. Was she not well guarded by her father, her lover, and two reliable Indians, Sconda and Natsu! Why should she fear? Curly was evidently at Big Draw, and so discouraged over his reception at Glen West that he would hardly venture near the place again. It was a bright happy face that she turned to Reynolds as he rode by her side wherever the trail permitted their horses to ride abreast. They rejoiced in each other's company, and words were unnecessary, for love has a silent language all its own.

Jim Weston rode ahead, while the two Indians brought up in the rear. The horses which the natives rode bore a few extra provisions for several days' outing, such as tea, coffee, sugar, flour, and a supply of canned goods.

Glen rode Midnight gracefully. She was dressed the same as on the day Reynolds first saw her on Crooked Trail. She was perfectly at home in the saddle, and what to Reynolds was difficult riding to her was a pleasure. At times she smiled at his awkwardness as he tried to maintain his position where the trail was unusually rough and steep.

"You are better with the rifle, are you not?" Glen bantered.

"I certainly am," was the reply. "I have had very little experience on horse back. I wish I could ride like you, for you are so much at ease."

"I should be," and again the girl smiled. "I cannot remember the time when I did not know how to ride. But, then, you have not seen me at my best. Sconda has, though, and he knows that I can hold my own with the most expert rider. Oh, it's great when you're going like the wind, clearing rocks and fallen trees with tremendous bounds. Midnight understands, don't you, old boy?" and she affectionately patted the horse's glossy neck.

Reynolds watched the girl with deep admiration. He felt that her words were no mere idle boast, and he longed to see an exhibition of her skilful riding.

At noon they stopped by the side of a little stream which flowed out from under the Golden Crest, and ate their luncheon.

"We shall have a great dinner to-night," Weston informed them. "We must do honor to such an occasion as this."

"And if we can find Frontier Samson, all the merrier," Reynolds replied.

"Sure, sure, we must find the old man," Weston agreed. "But, then, it's unnecessary to worry about him. He's all right, never fear, though no doubt he is somewhat anxious about his runaway partner."

The ruler of Glen West was in excellent spirits. Glen had never seen him so animated, and at luncheon he joked and laughed in the most buoyant manner. During the afternoon he pointed out to his companions numerous outstanding features of nature's wonderful handiwork. At times he would look back, and draw their attention to a peculiar rock formation, a small lake lying cool and placid amidst the hills, or to some beautiful northern flowers by the side of the trail. Thus the afternoon passed quickly and pleasantly, and evening found them before the little cabin in the hills.

It was a beautiful spot where Weston had erected his forest habitation. The cabin nestled on the shore of a very fine lake. At the back stood the trees, which came almost to the door. The building was composed entirely of logs, and contained a small kitchen, two bed-rooms, and a living-room. A stone fire-place had been built at one end of the latter, while the walls were adorned with trophies of the chase. Books of various kinds filled several shelves, and magazines and newspapers were piled upon a side-table. It was a most cozy abode, and Weston was greatly pleased at the interest Glen and Reynolds took in everything.

"My, I should like to spend a few weeks here," Reynolds remarked, as he examined the books. "What a grand time one could have reading and meditating. You have a fine collection, sir," and he turned to Weston, who was standing near.

"I bring only the masters here," was the reply. "One cannot afford to pack useless truck over the trail. In a place such as this the mind is naturally reflective, and one craves for things that are old and firmly established."

"But what about those?" and Reynolds pointed to the magazines and newspapers.

"Oh, they have their place, too," and Weston smiled. "Even in the wilderness a man should not lose touch with the busy world outside. I consider that the study of the past and present should go together. By keeping abreast of the times one can form some idea how the world is progressing, and by reading the masters of other days one can interpret all the better the problems of the present."

While Weston and Reynolds discussed the books, Glen was busily engaged setting the table for supper. Natsu had taken the horses down to the wild meadow some distance away, and Sconda was in the kitchen. The latter was an excellent cook, and prided himself upon his ability to provide a most delicious repast, whether of moose meat or fried salmon. It was the latter he was preparing this evening, the fish having been brought from Glen West. Several loaves of fresh white bread, made the night before, had been provided by Nannie, as well as some choice cake and preserves.

In a little less than an hour supper was ready, and Glen took her place at the head of the table. Cloth for the table there was none, but the rough boards were spotlessly clean. The dishes were coarse, and all the dainty accessories of a modern household were wanting. But Reynolds never enjoyed a meal as he did that one in the little cabin by the mirroring lake. To him it was the girl who supplied all that was lacking. She performed her humble duties as hostess with the same grace as if presiding at a fashionable repast in the heart of civilization. He noted the happy expression in her eyes, and the rich

color which mantled her cheeks whenever she met his ardent gaze.

Glen was happier than she had ever been in her life, and while her father and Reynolds talked, she paid little attention to what they were saying. She was thinking of the great change which had come over her father during the last few days. He had made no reference to her confession of love for the young man, for which she was most thankful. She believed that he liked Reynolds, and found in him a companion after his own heart. Her cares had been suddenly lifted, for in the presence of the two men she loved her fears and forebodings were forgotten.

After supper they sat for a while in front of the cabin. The men smoked and chatted. It was a perfect night, and not at all dark, for a young moon was riding over the hills. Not a ripple ruffled the surface of the lake, and the great forest lay silent and mysterious around. Weston told several stories of his experiences in the wilderness, especially of his encounter with a grizzly.

"I am very proud of the final shot which brought the brute down," he said in conclusion. "I wish you both could have seen it."

"I do not believe it was any finer than the one which brought my grizzly down," Glen challenged. "You should have seen that, daddy. It was wonderful!"

"Where did you learn to shoot so well?" Weston asked, turning to Reynolds.

"Over in France. I was a sharpshooter for a while."

"Well, that is interesting," and Weston blew a cloud of smoke into the air, while his eyes wandered off across the lake. "Had some lively experiences, I suppose?"

"Yes, at times. But, then, no more than others. All did their share, and did it the best they could."

"Did you get anything; that is, were you wounded?"

"I have a number of scars; that's all," was the modest reply.

"And were you decorated? Did you receive a medal?" Glen eagerly enquired. She had often wished to ask that question, but had hitherto hesitated. She had fondly dreamed that her lover was a hero of more than ordinary metal, and had carried off special honors. But he was so reserved about what he had done that never until the present moment had she found courage to voice the question.

Reynolds did not at once reply. It was not his nature to make a display of his accomplishments. He thought of the two medals securely fastened in his pocket. They were the only treasures he had brought with him. All else he had left behind. But he could not part with the medals which meant so much to him. He had not brought them for exhibition, but for encouragement in times of depression and trouble. In his terrible wanderings in the wilderness he had thought of them, and had been inspired. But why should he not show them now? he asked himself. It would please Glen, he was sure, and the medals would tell her father that he was no coward.

"I have something which you might like to see," he at length replied, touching his breast with his hand. "But perhaps we had better go inside, as it is getting dark out here."

"When once within the cabin, Reynolds brought forth his two medals and laid them upon the table. Eagerly Glen picked up one, and examined it by the light of the shaded lamp.

"For Distinguished Conduct on the Field," she read. "Oh, isn't it great! I knew that you had done something wonderful," and she turned her sparkling eyes to her lover's face. "What is the other one for, daddy?" she asked, for her father was examining it intently.

"This is 'For Bravery on the Field,'" Weston read. "Allow me to congratulate you, young man," and he grasped Reynolds by the hand. "I am so thankful now that I did not submit such a man as you to the Ordeal."

Reynolds smiled, although, he was considerably confused.

"You reserved it for this moment, I suppose," he replied. "This is somewhat of an ordeal to me."

"Then, let me increase your agony," and Glen's eyes twinkled as she, too, held out her hand.

Reynolds took her firm, brown hand in his, and held it tight. He found it difficult to control himself. How he longed to stoop, clasp her in his arms, and take his toll from those smiling lips. That would have been the best congratulation of all. He merely bowed, however, and remained silent. His heart

was beating rapidly, and his bronzed face was flushed.

"Suppose you tell us some of your experiences at the Front," Weston suggested, divining the cause of the young man's confusion. "It has not been my fortune to meet anyone who has come through what you have, and I am sure Glen will enjoy it as well as myself."

Although somewhat loath to tell of his adventures, Reynolds could not very well refuse such a request, so, seating himself, he simply related the story of his service under arms. He said as little as possible about his own part in the fray, and touched but lightly upon the scenes wherein he had won his special decorations. Weston, sitting by his side, listened as a man in a dream. At times a deep sigh escaped his lips, for he himself had ardently longed to enlist, but had been rejected owing to his age.

Not a word of the tale did Glen miss. With her arms upon the table, and her hands supporting her cheeks, she kept her eyes fixed earnestly upon her lover's face. Her bashfulness had departed, and she only saw in the young man across the table her ideal type of a hero. She had no realization of the beautiful picture she presented, with the light falling softly upon her hair and animated, face. But Reynolds knew, and as his eyes met hers, he became slightly confused, and hesitated in his story. What a reward, he told himself, for all that he had endured. He had been happy when the decorations were pinned upon his breast. But that reward was nothing, and the medals mere baubles compared to the joy he was experiencing now. If the love of such a woman had been his during the long, weary campaign, what might he not have accomplished? How he would have been inspired to do and to dare, and in addition to those medals there might have been the coveted Victoria Cross.

"Oh, I wish I were a man!" Glen fervently declared when Reynolds had finished his tale. "How I would like to have been 'over there.' You needn't smile, daddy," she continued. "I know you consider me foolish, but I mean every word I say."

"I understand, dear," was the quiet reply. "I know just how you feel, for it is only natural. However, I am glad that you are not a man, for you are of greater comfort to me because you are a girl. But, there, I think we have talked enough for to-night. You both must be tired after to-day's journey, and we have a hard trip ahead of us to-morrow."

CHAPTER XXIII

AT THE REVOLVER'S POINT

Glen awoke early the next morning, tired and depressed. She had slept but little during the night, for her old fears had returned as she recalled the dream and Klota's warning. Her excitement over Reynolds' story assisted, too, in driving sleep from her eyes, and she pictured him on the field of battle, with shells dropping on every side. He was the one who stood out in clear relief above all others. To her he was the hero in every scene, and she saw all looking to him for inspiration and guidance. The glamor of love and hero-worship enwrapped her a willing victim in its enchanting embrace.

Reynolds was quick to notice the tired expression in Glen's eyes and the lack of color in her cheeks as she came forth from her room and took her place at the table.

"What's wrong, dear?" her father anxiously enquired. "Didn't you sleep well?"

"I didn't sleep at all, daddy. Perhaps it was yesterday's excitement which kept me awake."

"Then, you must not go with us to-day, Glen. You stay here, and Sconda can remain with you. That will delight the old fellow, for he has been trying to invent some excuse for not going. In fact, he doesn't want me to go, either, and suggested that we all should return at once to Glen West."

"Why, what was his reason?" and Glen looked her surprise.

"Reason! Did you ever know an Indian to have a reason for anything? He acts from instinct or superstition, and the latter is what ails Sconda now. Klota has been telling him some bosh about a presentiment she had, that something terrible is going to happen to us out here in the hills."

"And does Sconda believe it, too?" Glen asked, controlling her feelings with a great effort.

"Certainly he believes it. I laughed at him, and told him that he should have more sense than to pay

any attention to such things."

"But suppose he should be right?" Glen queried. "The natives, you know, see things at times which are not revealed to us."

"They see too many things, and that's the great trouble with them," Weston replied. "If they would dream less and do more it would be far better for all concerned. I never had any faith in their fantastic presentiments, and I am too old to change my views now. But Sconda might as well stay with you to-day, for I do not wish to leave you alone, and I am not anxious to have the old rascal with me with his head filled with such nonsense."

Glen made no further reply to her father. She was well aware how useless it would be to try to reason with him, and if she told him about the dream and her fears he would laugh at her, and consider her childish and foolish.

When breakfast was over, the men began to prepare for their day's trip. This did not take them long, and soon they were all ready for their departure. They decided to leave the horses behind, as there was no trail, and their course would take them over several hills where riding would be impossible. They took only their rifles, while Natsu packed the scanty supply of food necessary for the day.

"We expect to be back by sundown," Weston informed Glen. "But should we be delayed, do not worry as we shall be all right. We may be longer than we imagine in reaching the place, and if we discover the gold, we may take leave of our senses for a time and forget everything else. But Sconda will look after you, and there is plenty of reading matter to keep you out of mischief."

As Weston stooped and kissed his daughter, he noted that she clung to him more tenderly than formerly, and that her body trembled slightly. Thinking that this was due to her lack of sleep, he did not give it any attention, but telling her to take a nap through the day, he picked up his rifle and strode off into the forest.

Reynolds was more deeply concerned about Glen's wearied look than her father, and after they had gone a short distance he spoke of it.

"She is tired, that's all," was the reply. "A good sleep will make her all right again."

"Perhaps she is worried about what Sconda said."

"She may be, but she will soon get over that. It is a great mistake to humor people in such nonsense. I have often talked to Glen, but I cannot help feeling that the native beliefs have made a considerable impression upon her mind. She has been with them so much that I suppose it is only natural."

Reynolds said no more, but all through the day Glen's tired face and anxious eyes were ever before him. How he longed to go back and stay with her. The lure of gold had now lost its fascination for him, and he could only think of the girl in the little cabin by the mirroring lake.

Glen stood at the window and watched the men as they swung on their way, until the forest hid them from view. She could see them for some distance while they followed the shore before striking across a wild meadow at the upper end of the lake. She remained there for several minutes after they had disappeared. She felt very tired, lonely and unhappy. She thought of her father's words, and they hurt her. She knew that he loved her, but for all that she was fully convinced that he did not understand her. She longed then, as she had often longed in the past, for her mother, in whom she could confide the deep, sacred emotions of her heart. Her eyes became misty, and tears stole slowly down her cheeks.

A step in the room startled her, and looking somewhat guiltily around, she saw Sconda advancing toward her. The Indian was excited more than usual, at which Glen wondered, for she had never seen him so agitated before.

"See, see!" and he pointed out of the window up toward the wild meadow.

"What is it?" Glen asked, brushing away her tears in an effort to see more clearly.

"White man! Running, all same wolf. Ugh!"

Glen looked, and saw a man speeding across the meadow right on the trail of her father and Reynolds. Instantly she grasped its meaning, and with a cry of fear she turned to the Indian.

"Is it Curly?" she gasped. "Do you think he means any harm?"

"Curly follow Big White Chief," was the reply. "Curly track white man. Bimeby Curly shoot."

"Oh! do you think so?" Glen clasped her hands before her, while her eyes grew big with apprehension. "What can we do? I know. You go after that man, and stop him. Never mind me, for I am all right. Look," and she thrust her hand into the bosom of her riding-dress and brought forth her revolver. "I can shoot and take care of myself. Go at once and save daddy and Mr. Reynolds."

Sconda needed no second bidding, for he was anxious to be away. His fears had vanished at the presence of the skulking enemy, and no matter how he might tremble at the thought of unseen ghostly foes, he was never known to flinch before the face of a living earthly being. Glen knew that he was the finest trailsman in the north, and she felt more satisfied as she watched him, rifle in hand, disappear amid the trees.

For some time she stood at the window, straining her eyes to see Sconda reappear and cross the wild meadow. But she watched in vain, for the native had taken another route, which, though rougher, was less exposed to view.

Glen was about to turn away from the window, when, happening to glance to her left, she saw someone coming from the lake toward the house. She recognized him immediately. It was Curly! At first she imagined that she must be dreaming, for was not Curly away on the trail of her father and Reynolds? What did it all mean? Sconda must have been mistaken, for there was the villain walking cautiously from the shore. Intuitively Glen placed her hand to her heart, as if to stop its wild beating, while she tried to think of some way of escape. What should she do? Where could she go? she frantically asked herself. But she must not remain there, for she was well aware of the purpose of Curly's visit. He had planned a plot with the assistance of someone as vile as himself, and had caught her in his trap. But he should not take her in the house, and she knew it would be useless to fasten the door against him. She would meet him in the open, and if it came to the worst she knew what she could do. Her hand touched her heaving bosom where the revolver was resting, and it somewhat calmed her fears, and inspired her with courage.

Swiftly crossing the room, she reached the open door and stepped outside just when Curly was but a few yards away. He stopped, surprised at the girl's unexpected appearance. He noted her agitation, and his lips parted in a grin, such as a wolf might assume when about to pounce upon an innocent lamb. It was this grin which dispelled Glen's fear and aroused in her breast an intense anger. As she looked upon the dirty and unkempt creature before her, and thought of the mean advantage he was taking of a woman, the paleness left her face and her cheeks crimsoned with indignation. Why should she become a victim to such a vile thing?

Glen was perfectly composed now, and looked Curly steadily in the eyes. She had no intention of parleying with the villain, and the sooner he realised her mettle the better it would be.

"What do you want?" she demanded. "My father is not here, if you wish to see him."

"It's you I want to see," Curly replied with a grin.

"What do you want to see me for?" Glen's words were so cold, firm and business-like that Curly was somewhat taken aback.

"Oh, I just thought I would drop around an' see ye, that's all," he prevaricated.

"Well, you might have saved yourself the trouble, for I don't want to see you."

"Ye don't, eh?" Curly snarled, for the girl's words stung him. "I don't care whether ye do or not. It's not what you want, but what I want."

"What do you mean by those words?"

"I guess ye ought to know. Didn't I tell ye at the dance that I love ye?"

"Love me!" and Glen's eyes flashed. "Do you know the meaning of the word love? I suppose you told the same to many girls you have ruined."

"I never loved anyone as I love you," the villain whined.

"I suppose I should be flattered, but I am not. I don't want what you call your love, or anything to do with you."

"D'ye mean that yer goin' to throw me over?"

"Throw you over! I don't understand you."

"Yes, throw me over fer that slick guy you're so chummy with. I suppose he's been tellin' ye what a bad man I am, an' so turned ye against me."

"What right have you to say that? You were never anything to me except just what you are, a creature capable of almost any deed of villainy. I only met you two or three times in my life, and why should you presume to think that you had won my affection?"

"Well, if ye think I'm bad to the core, I will soon show you that I am. It's no use, I see, to beat about the bush any longer. If I can't get you one way I will another, an' I'll have you ahead of that d—— guy who has won your heart. You're here alone with me, remember, an' that's all I want."

Curly had thrown aside all pretense now, and his face bore an ugly expression as he stepped quickly forward. But it was only a step or two he took, for he stopped short with a surprised jerk when he beheld the menacing point of a revolver directed straight at his head. The hand that held the weapon was firm, and the blaze in Glen's eyes was sufficient warning. This was more than he had expected, and he knew not what to do.

"Keep back," the girl ordered.

"Surely ye wouldn't shoot, Miss?" the brute whimpered.

"Take another step forward and you'll soon find out." The voice was stern and business-like.

"But I won't harm ye."

"No, indeed you won't. I'll see to that."

"I was only foolin'," the wretch lied. "I didn't mean anything."

"Well, I'm not fooling, and I mean what I say. You thought in your base heart that I would be an easy victim, didn't you? But you now know that Glen Weston has some of her father's spirit. She can shoot, too, and if you doubt it, just try any more of your nonsense."

Curly was in a trap, and when he found that this slip of a girl was more than his match he started to give vent to his rage in vile, insolent language.

"Stop that," Glen sternly ordered. "It is bad enough to have you here without having to listen to such language. Stop; I say," she again commanded, as Curly was about to continue. "Yes, I mean it, so you needn't doubt my word. And you might as well put your hands together. Hurry up; I give you two seconds. You are not to be trusted."

Slowly Curly obeyed, and stood before the girl, his hands clasped, and completely subdued. A smile of victory flitted across Glen's face, though her eyes and mouth were expressive of the deepest scorn.

"You didn't expect this, did you?" she bantered.

"Expect what?"

"To be standing so meekly before a woman. You imagined that she would be doing that to you."

"You're not a woman," Curly growled; "you're a she-devil."

"Oh, so you've changed your opinion of me," and Glen laughed. "I am very glad of that, for you won't be crazy about me any more."

"Crazy! Your face an' figure would drive any man crazy."

"Dear me, do I look as horrible as all that? It's a wonder you are not a raving lunatic."

"I will if you keep me here much longer. Let me go an' I'll never trouble you again. That slick guy can have you fer all I care. I don't want anything to do with a woman who holds ye up at the point of a gun."

"No, I am sure you don't, Curly. You prefer to prey upon women who are helpless, and who cannot lift a hand in self-defense. But I am different, as you have found out to your cost."

"Let me go, will ye?" the wretch pleaded. "I've had enough of this."

"Oh, have you, eh? Well, that's interesting. But, look here, I am not through with you yet. You came here without any invitation, though in a way I am glad that you did come, and I intend to keep you here for a while."

"H'm, ye must like my company after all," Curly sneered. "You're a queer one."

"Yes, I like your company at present better than your absence," Glen confessed. "I know just where you are, and that you can do no mischief while you are under my charge. If I should let you go now it would be an injustice to others. You must settle this affair with my father, and you know what that will mean."

"I'm not worryin' about yer dad, or anyone else," Curly replied. "He'll have all he can attend to without botherin' about me. Most likely he's in a hotter place now than ever he struck on earth."

Into Glen's eyes leaped an expression of wild fear, as the meaning of Curly's words dawned upon her.

"Ye understand?" Curly sneered. "Two can play at this game, remember, an' mebbe more'n two."

"Was that your partner who followed my father?"

"Sure. It was Dan, an' he means business."

"What business?"

"Oh, Dan'll tell ye when he comes back."

"Do you mean that he intends to shoot my father and Mr. Reynolds?"

"Mr. Reynolds!" Curly mockingly repeated. "Yes, Mr. Reynolds, too."

Glen's outstretched arm was tired, but these words renewed her strength, and her fingers clutched more firmly the butt of the revolver. Curly was fully aware that the girl was becoming wrought up to a high pitch of excitement, and he regretted that he had told her anything about Dan. What might not this girl do? he asked himself. In fact he was very near death just then, for Glen in her agitation was unconsciously pressing the trigger slightly with her forefinger. But Curly knew, and his face blanched.

"Fer God's sake, be careful what yer doin'!" he screamed. "That gun'll go off, if ye don't look out!"

"Perhaps it might be well if it did," was the reply. "I am strongly tempted to shoot you where you stand. But I guess I will wait until Sconda comes back. And then, remember, if my father and Mr. Reynolds are dead, you die, and at my hands at that. You can remain just where you are, and I shall guard you, even if I have to wait here all day."

"But I can't stand here," Curly whined. "Let me sit down."

"No, you must stay just where you are, and keep your hands clasped. I shall sit down, though," and Glen seated herself upon the doorstep.

Curly started to remonstrate, but was sternly checked.

"I do not wish to hear anything more," Glen emphatically told him. "You can keep your thoughts and your words to yourself. And do not annoy me, or I might lose control of myself and do something rash."

Seeing that the girl was thoroughly in earnest, Curly said no more, but stood there with his eyes fixed straight forward. The only time Glen spoke was whenever she detected his look wavering in the slightest degree. Then she called him sharply to attention, and warned him to be mindful of what he was doing.

Thus slowly and wearily the morning wore away. With nerves strung to the highest tension, Glen guarded her prisoner, at the same time listening anxiously for the sound of Sconda's returning footsteps.

CHAPTER XXIV

WHEN THE RIFLES CRACKED

Ever since leaving for the hills Reynolds had the strong feeling that the ruler of Glen West was studying him very closely. In various subtle ways he could tell that he was being tested, and so this

morning as they moved forward he seemed like one undergoing a peculiar examination. That his war record had made a deep impression upon Weston he was well aware. But the man did not yet seem satisfied. He evidently wished to probe to the very soul of the one who had captured his daughter's heart.

After Weston had expressed himself concerning Indian superstition, little was said until they had crossed the wild meadow and partly encircled the opposite side of the lake. From here their course would take them directly overland toward the high hill with the cave of gold.

They were about to leave the shore, when Reynolds suddenly paused and looked excitedly around. Then his eyes fell upon the remains of a campfire, and nearby, fastened to a stick in the ground, he saw a piece of paper. This he quickly seized and read the brief message it contained. He at once turned to Weston, who had been silently watching his every movement.

"It's from Frontier Samson," Reynolds explained. "The old man is greatly worried over my disappearance, and has been searching for me several days. He must have known about your cabin, sir, for he mentions it here, and advises me to go there at once should I return. It is strange that he didn't mention it to me."

"He thought it hardly worth while, I suppose," Weston replied. "You were not bound that way."

"But we must have been, though," Reynolds insisted. "How else could we have reached Glen West but by the trail over which we travelled yesterday? Surely he must have known that."

"It is difficult at times to fathom an old prospector's mind," Weston replied, as he threw his rifle over his shoulder and continued on his way. "So you two were bound for Glen West, were you?" he queried, after they had gone a short distance.

"We certainly were, until I spoiled everything by getting lost."

"You must not be too sure about that, young man. It is hard to tell what might have happened to you had you reached Glen West by the trail. You must have been aware of the risk you were running."

"Oh, the risk is nothing when a great ideal lies ahead. I for one would rather die following a noble vision than lie grovelling among the broken shards of life. It was that which led so many to sacrifice their all in the Great War. Lack of vision means repression, and often ruin; vision, expression."

"In what way? Go on, I am much interested."

"In what way?" Reynolds repeated, as he stopped and looked far away upon some towering mountain peaks which just then were visible through an opening among the trees. "Take the steam-engine for example. Repress the power, and what do you get? Destruction. But give that power expression, and how beneficial it becomes. So it is with man. There is a mighty power within him. Repress that power, keep it back, and you get nothing. But let that power be released, and it expresses itself in thousands of ways for the benefit of mankind."

"But what has that to do with vision?" Weston asked.

"A great deal. It is the vision, the lure of something beyond, which calls forth that power and compels it to undertake great things. All the wonderful achievements of the past are due to men of vision. They saw what others could not see, and in the face of opposition and discouragement they went steadily forward."

"And what did you expect to accomplish when you started for Glen West?"

At these words Reynolds gave a slight start, and glanced curiously at his companion.

"I hoped to win the fairest and noblest flower of womanhood that it has ever been my lot to know except one, and that was my mother."

"Other men have said the same thing, young man," and Weston smiled.

"They, like yourself, followed attractive faces, pleasing forms, and luring voices, and when it was too late they found out their mistake. You know the legend of the Sirens, I suppose?"

"That has been true, sir, in many cases. But mine is different. Some women have many outward attractions, but no souls. The first time I beheld your daughter I detected something in her that I never saw before in any woman, and that is saying a great deal. Since I have known her better, I have found that I was right, and that she is worthy of a man's noblest vision. A woman such as she is would elevate

a man who has the least spark of nobleness."

"You are right, young man, you are certainly right," Weston acknowledged, and his voice was somewhat husky. "You are more than fortunate in having such a vision. But what will it lead to?"

"That remains to be seen," Reynolds slowly replied. "Anyway, the vision I have been following has made a new man of me already. Before I saw your daughter on the street one night, I had no aim in life. I was ready to drift anywhere and into anything. But the sight of her brought me up standing, and gave me a new impulse. Even though my vision should never be attained, I am better and stronger, for what the poet says is true, that 'The striving makes the man.'"

They were crossing a wild meadow now, and before them loomed the high hill up which Reynolds had so wearily climbed in his great battle for life. He could hardly believe that they were so near the place, and he expressed his astonishment to his companion.

"We have come in a straight course," Weston explained, "and that makes the difference. When you were lost, you wandered around for a long time until you happened by chance upon yonder hill. It is a wonder to me that you ever found your way out of this region."

"So it is to me," Reynolds replied. "And to think that I was so foolish as to chase that moose after what Frontier Samson told me. I see now that the old man was right. I wonder where he can be. Perhaps he has gone back to Big Draw. I must go there, too, as soon as we return, for I feel sure that Samson is worrying about me."

"If we find that mine, you will have to hurtle to Big Draw to record our claims," Weston reminded. "One of the Indians can go with you to show the way."

"I suppose the miners will make a wild stampede into this place as soon as they hear of the discovery."

"Most likely. But there have been so many 'wild-cat' claims recorded of late that they may merely consider this another, and pay little attention to it. However, do not say much about it, and they may take no notice. We can get our haul first, and then they may come as fast as they like."

After they had crossed the wild meadow it was necessary to travel several hundred yards up the little stream at which Reynolds had slaked his thirst. The meadow ere long ended, and the high, frowning sides of the two opposing hills shouldered toward each other, thus forming a deep draw about fifty yards in width.

"It was up there where the eagle fell," Reynolds explained, as he stood looking up the ravine. "Poor creature, it was hard when it was merely doing its duty. But it saved my life, though, and perhaps that was something."

"It is always the way," Weston made answer. "Little is accomplished in this world without sacrifice, and often the innocent are the sufferers. And I reckon we shall not get that gold without sacrificing something. I see that Natsu is not altogether pleased at the prospect of climbing this hill. But it cannot be helped, so we might as well begin at once."

It took them some time to ascend, and often they were forced to draw themselves up by means of rocks and small trees. Occasionally they rested, for combined with the steep climb the sun was pouring its fiery beams full upon their heads.

"I do not believe the miners will find this place in a hurry," Reynolds panted, as he sat upon a ledge of rock where he had with difficulty dragged himself. "When I first climbed up here I worked my way along the side of the hill, which was somewhat easier. Short cuts don't always pay."

"That must have been the reason why you didn't take one to Glen West," Weston replied, as he, too, rested upon the rock.

"It's a definite proof, sir, of what I just said, that short cuts don't always pay. I was cursing myself for getting lost in the wilderness, when all the time it was the only way whereby I could reach Glen West in safety. Had I gone any other route, by a short cut, for instance, you would have pitched me at once beyond the Golden Crest."

Weston made no reply, and once more they continued their climb. Up and up they slowly made their tortuous way, and at length Reynolds, who was leading, gave a shout as his eyes fell upon the desired cave. With a bound he sprang forward, reached the place and was standing before the opening when his companions arrived.

"There it is!" he cried, stooping and pointing into the cave. "And, look, there are the remains of my fire which the rain nearly put out."

Weston was greatly excited now, and drawing a candle from his pocket, he lighted it, and together the three made their way into the mine. They had not proceeded far when the richness of the cave became most apparent, and Weston stared in amazement at the wealth he beheld on every side.

"Why, it's a regular King Solomon's mine!" he exclaimed. "It has never been worked, and being so far up the side of the hill it has been missed by the prospectors who have scoured this region. The place is full of gold! Just look at that!" and he held out a handful of earth he had taken from the right hand wall. "Our fortunes are made."

"Suppose we get something to eat," Reynolds suggested. "I am almost starved. We can examine our treasure afterwards."

It did not take Natsu long to prepare their simple repast at the mouth of the cave, as their luncheon consisted merely of sandwiches and cake. But there was plenty, and they thoroughly enjoyed the meal. When it was finished Weston and Reynolds leaned back against a big rock, filled and lighted their pipes.

"My! this is comfort," Reynolds remarked. "It is not much like the first time I visited this place. I little expected to be here so soon again."

"And it won't be the last time, either," Weston replied, as he puffed thoughtfully at his pipe. "The amount of gold in this cave astonishes me."

"You thought it was all a cock-and-bull story I was telling you, I suppose?"

"I really did," was the candid confession. "I believed that the fearful experiences through which you passed had affected your brain for a time, and that you imagined you had discovered a rich mine."

Reynolds laughed as he looked down the steep cliff.

"How are we to get the gold out of this place?" he asked. "It will be difficult to take it by the way we have just come."

"Oh, that will be no trouble, as we can easily get it to the Tasan, and from there take it down on *The Frontiersman*. I have been some distance up the river and know that it can be navigated. We can——"

Weston never finished his sentence, for the sharp crack of a rifle suddenly split the air, and a bullet, passing through the top of Reynolds' hat, spattered on the rock close to his head. Instantly another shot rang out, farther down the creek, followed immediately by a wild, piercing shriek of pain. Then all was still.

Greatly surprised and mystified, the men leaped to their feet, and stood staring across at the opposite hill from whence the sounds had come. But nothing could they see except the great silent wall of rock and earth. Each man grasped his rifle in readiness for any emergency, not knowing what to expect next.

"Who can it be?" Weston asked. "What is the meaning of that second shot, and the scream of pain? There's something wrong over there, that's quite evident."

"Suppose we cross over and investigate," Reynolds suggested. "It may have been a stray shot which went through my hat. But, hello! who's that?"

"Where?" Weston asked.

"Don't you see him?" and Reynolds pointed to his left. "Look, he is moving along the top of the hill toward where we heard the first shot."

The form of a man could be seen, gliding swiftly and cautiously forward, carrying a rifle. Only brief glimpses could be obtained of him as he emerged now and then from behind rocks and clumps of stunted trees, so it was impossible to make out whether he was a white man or an Indian. At length he vanished entirely for several minutes, while the curious and anxious watchers waited for him to reappear.

It seemed to them much longer than it really was before they saw him again, and this time he was standing upon a huge rock motioning with his arms.

"Why, it's Sconda!" Weston exclaimed in amazement. "What does he want?" he asked, turning to

Natsu, who all the time had remained perfectly silent.

"Come quick,' Sconda say," was the reply.

"Ask him what is the matter," Weston ordered.

This Natsu at once did, but all the answer he received was the request to hurry.

"What ails the fellow, anyway?" Weston growled. "Why can't he tell us what's wrong? Anyway, we might as well go and find out for ourselves, for there is something mysterious about this whole affair. Confound it all! I want to make a further examination of this mine and see how far it extends. This is certainly provoking."

It did not take them long to reach the bed of the creek, although they received a number of bruises and scratches in the swift descent. But the climb up the opposite hill was a difficult undertaking, and by the time they reached the top they were almost exhausted. Here they rested a few minutes, and then hurried as fast as possible toward the spot from where Sconda had signalled his message. The latter they did not again see until they had scrambled over a series of jagged rocks, and plowed their way through a tangle of scrubby bushes and trees. At last they suddenly beheld him bending over something lying upon a rock, which as they drew nearer they found to be the form of a man.

Weston now was in the lead, and at the first glance he recognized the prostrate man.

"It's the villain Dan!" he exclaimed. "What in time is he doing here? Is he dead?" he asked, turning to Sconda.

"Dan no dead," was the reply. "Dan all same sleep."

"Unconscious, eh?" Weston queried as he stooped and felt the man's pulse. "He's alive, all right, but bleeding. Did you shoot him, Sconda?"

"Ah, ah, Sconda shoot."

"Why did you shoot him?"

"Dan shoot first. Dan shoot at Big White Chief," and Sconda pointed to the cave across the ravine.

Weston looked at Reynolds as the light of comprehension dawned upon his mind.

"It seems to me that there is something in Indian presentiment, after all," he confessed. "How did you know that Dan was going to shoot me?" he asked Sconda.

The latter, however, made no reply. He merely shook his head and glanced furtively and anxiously around. This Weston noticed, and it aroused his curiosity.

"What's the matter, Sconda? You seem to be nervous. Do you expect more shooting?"

"Sconda no savvey. More bad white man. Ugh!"

"Well, then, let us get away from this place as soon as possible."

"What about Dan?" Reynolds asked. "We can't leave him here."

"That's true," and Weston turned toward the wounded man. "He deserves to stay, though, for his base treachery. But we cannot do that, so must tote him back to the cabin. It will be a hard task, and the villain isn't worth it. But, come to think of it, we must not let him die until we hear his story. There may be others in this plot, and we must find out who they are. Come, Sconda, give us a hand. Surely four of us can carry him."

An exclamation from Natsu caused the white men to look quickly around, and as they did so they saw Sconda some distance away, bounding like a deer from rock to rock. At first Weston stared in amazement. Then he called and ordered him to come back. For the first time in his life Sconda paid no heed to his master's command, but sped rapidly forward, and in a few minutes was entirely hidden from view.

CHAPTER XXV

It seemed to Glen as if the morning would never wear away as she sat and guarded her prisoner. The severe strain was showing its effect upon her face, which was unusually pale. Her eyes never once left the man before her, and the revolver, as it rested lightly upon her lap, was pointed straight toward him, ready for immediate action. She would not allow Curly to speak, and whenever he made the attempt she sternly checked him and menacingly raised her weapon of authority. Her brain was very active, and her thoughts were by no means happy ones. Suppose her father and lover should be shot ere Sconda could do anything, what would be the outcome? she asked herself. She was well aware that Sconda and Natsu would be more than a match for Dan, but he might escape and get back to the cabin first. Her face became stern as she thought of this, and she made up her mind what she would do. She could deal with Curly all right, and settle his account. She would then have only Dan to face. Anyway, she was determined that she would never fall into the hands of those two villains so long as her revolver held true and while the last cartridge remained.

And thus she retained her post through the slow morning hours. The sun rode high in the heavens and beat upon her throbbing head. Birds flitted and sang around her, and squirrels chattered and scolded among the trees. Would Sconda never return? she wondered. What could be keeping him! At times she felt that she could endure the strain no longer, but when she realised how much was at stake she always nerved herself by a mighty effort.

Curly watched Glen's every movement, and seeing how weary she was becoming trusted to catch her off guard, spring forward, strike the revolver from her hand, and seize her in his arms before she could shoot. This was his only hope, but whenever he was on the point of making the desperate attempt, the stern word of command and the slightly lifted weapon caused him quickly to desist. Glen seemed to divine his purpose, and always checked him in time.

So desperate did Curly at length become that he decided to throw all caution to the wind. He was very anxious over Dan's tardiness in returning, and feared lest his scheme had failed. He knew full well that if Jim Weston should suddenly appear and find him in such an embarrassing situation it would go hard with him. It would be death, anyway, without any chance of defending himself. He knew how furious Weston would be at the attempt made not only upon his own life but upon his daughter's honor. The perspiration poured in great beads down his face as he thought of this. Glen saw his agitation, and attributed it to the heat of the sun and weariness. She little knew what was passing through the villain's mind. And, in fact, she never learned, for at this critical moment Sconda bounded from the forest and stood by her side. A cry of joy escaped Glen's lips as she beheld her deliverer and knew that she was saved.

In a twinkling Sconda grasped the situation, and with a terrible roar of rage he brought his rifle to his shoulder and would have shot Curly where he stood, had not Glen leaped to her feet and laid her hand firmly upon the smooth barrel.

"Don't shoot!" Curly yelled, wild with terror, ere Glen could say a word. "Fer God's sake, let me go!"

But the enraged Indian was not easily diverted from his purpose, and it was only with much difficulty that Glen was able to make him listen to reason.

"Curly bad," he argued. "Curly all same black bear. Ugh!"

"I know that, Sconda," Glen agreed. "But I want you to mind me now, and let him go. Search him, and take his gun."

Very reluctantly Sconda obeyed, and in a few seconds he was holding in his hand Curly's revolver and a big, sharp, dangerous knife.

"There, I feel safer now," and Glen breathed a deep sigh of relief. "Take him away, Sconda," she ordered. "I want to get him out of my sight."

As Sconda seized the wretch roughly by the arm, and was about to hurry him away, Curly emitted a cry of fear, and turned toward Glen.

"He'll kill me!" he yelled. "I can see it in his eyes. He'll get me down among the trees an' shoot me! Don't let him take me! Save me! Fer God's sake, save me!"

"You need not be afraid of Sconda," Glen replied, while her eyes flashed with contempt. "He is a true man, and respects me and my orders. He will not harm you, so you need not fear him. But there are others you might well fear should they Hear of what you have done to-day. That is all I have to say. Take him away, Sconda."

Glen went at once into the cabin, and the coolness of the place was a great relief to the intense heat outside. She watched from the window as Sconda conducted Curly down along the shore of the lake until they disappeared from view.

In about a quarter of an hour Sconda returned. Glen met him at the door, and enquired anxiously about her father and Reynolds. She spoke in the Indian language, and this always pleased Sconda. His face brightened, and as he looked at the animated face before him his lips parted in a smile.

"The white men are safe," he told her. "They will come into camp by and by."

"And where is Dan?" Glen enquired. "Did you see him?"

"Ah, ah. Dan tried to shoot the white men, but Sconda was too quick. Dan now all same sleep."

"Not dead, is he?"

"No, no; all same sleep."

"Unconscious, eh?"

"Ah, ah."

"And so you came to tell me that daddy and Mr. Reynolds are safe?"

"Sconda ran away. Big White Chief wanted Sconda to help carry Dan into camp. But Sconda run away fast."

"Why?"

"Sconda think maybe Curly here. Sconda was right, eh?"

"Oh, I understand," Glen replied. Her eyes were shining with gratitude as she turned them upon the face of her valiant protector. "You thought I might be in danger. You knew that Dan and Curly had plotted together, and that when Curly was not out there he must be here trying to harm me. How can I thank you, Sconda, for what you have done for me to-day? I do not know what would have happened had you not come just when you did."

"Missie Glen hold up Curly, all same man, eh?" and Sconda smiled.

"Indeed I did. But I could not have stood it much longer, I was afraid that I would have to shoot him."

"Why did Missie Glen not let Sconda shoot Curly?"

"Because it would be murder, that's why. If you had shot Curly, the Mounted Police would take you away, and most likely hang you. Just think of that."

"But Curly bad, ugh!"

"I know that, Sconda. But it wouldn't make any difference. You would be considered a murderer, and I don't want to lose you yet. And, remember, Sconda, don't you dare to tell anyone that Curly was here."

"Sconda no tell! Why?"

"Because if daddy hears of it, he will be so angry that he will kill Curly. You must not tell anyone, so daddy and Mr. Reynolds will know nothing about it. You will promise, won't you, Sconda?"

With considerable reluctance Sconda agreed to keep the secret. He knew that it was not the wisest thing to do, for he was fully convinced that Curly should be punished. But he would do anything rather than displease his young mistress, for whom he had such an unbounded admiration.

"Missie Glen hungry, eh?" he unexpectedly asked.

"I really don't know," Glen laughingly replied. "I have not had time to think about it. Are you?"

"Ah, ah; Sconda hungry."

"Well, then, you can get dinner ready, and perhaps I shall be able to eat something, too."

Sconda at once set to work, and in a remarkably short time he had a simple meal prepared. He served Glen first, and waited upon her until she had finished.

"How long will it take the men to come back?" Glen asked as she rose from the table.

"Till sundown, maybe," was the reply. "Dan is heavy and hard to carry."

"Well, then, I am going to lie down for a while, Sconda. I did not sleep any last night, and the excitement of to-day has made me very tired. You will keep watch around the cabin, will you not?"

"Ah, ah, Sconda will watch. Sconda will shoot Curly if he comes back."

"Oh, I guess Curly will not come here again, especially when he knows that I have such a noble protector."

Sconda was pleased at these words of praise, and after he had eaten his dinner he sat and smoked contentedly before the door of the cabin. He was happier than he had been in many a day. He had saved the white men, knocked out Dan, rescued his master's daughter, and headed Curly for Big Draw. His only regret was that he had not been allowed to shoot Curly, and thus rid the earth of another villain.

Glen was completely wearied out, and a few minutes after her head touched the pillow she was fast asleep. She slept soundly for several hours, and when she awoke the shadows of night were stealing in through the little window. The sound of voices in the adjoining room informed her that her father and Reynolds had returned. She also heard the rattle of dishes and knew that Sconda was preparing supper. Hastily arranging her hair, and with a final glance in the small mirror, she softly opened the door. Weston and Reynolds were already seated at the table, while the lighted lamp told Glen that it was later than she had imagined.

"Hello!" Weston accosted, as he turned and beheld his daughter. "You are a sound sleeper. Been sleeping all day, I suppose!"

Reynolds had risen to his feet the instant Glen appeared, and he waited until she had taken her place at the table ere he resumed his seat. He was pleased to see her looking so bright and animated. The color had returned to her cheeks, and the expression of fear had vanished from her eyes.

"Where is the wounded man, daddy?" Glen at once asked.

"In the bunk out there," and Weston motioned to the kitchen. "He doesn't deserve all the trouble we've had to-day. My, he was a heavy load! And to think that Sconda should have run away and left us. I wonder what came over the rascal?"

"Is Dan seriously wounded, do you think?" Glen enquired, evading her father's reference to Sconda.

"No, just a scratch, which made him unconscious for a time. He'll be all right in a few days, I am sorry to say. Such a treacherous creature is better dead than alive."

"What will you do with him, daddy?"

"Keep him here for a while and patch him up. I must find out why he tried to shoot us, and if there are others in the plot, I know the villain is very revengeful, and that may have been his sole purpose for following us to-day. How did Sconda know about him, Glen?"

"He saw him hurrying along this side of the lake shortly after you had disappeared beyond the wild meadow. I thought it best for Sconda to go."

"And mighty fortunate you did. Why, the villain would have shot us all if Sconda hadn't been on hand."

"Do you intend to stay here a while, daddy?"

"Long enough to look after my patient. But you must go home, and Natsu will go with you. Reynolds has to hurry down to Big Draw to record our claims."

"And so you found the gold?" Glen eagerly asked.

"I should say we did. Why, that cave is full of it. We shall be as rich as Croesus in a short time."

"Oh, I am so glad," and the girl gave a sigh of relief. "When we get the gold why cannot we leave this country, daddy, and go outside? I want to travel and see the world, and enjoy life. There, now, I know you will either scold or laugh at me. But I mean every word I say."

"I shall do neither, dear," was the quiet reply, "so you need not fear. I have known for some time that

you wish to leave this country, and I have given it very serious consideration. But you must wait a while, that is, for a few days at least. It all depends upon something about which I do not care to speak now, as I must have more time to think it over."

Weston rose suddenly from the table and went into the kitchen. Glen and Reynolds looked at each other without a word. They were both surprised at Weston's words and the abrupt manner in which he left them. Moved by the same impulse, they, too, rose from the table and went out of doors. It was a beautiful evening, and the sky beyond the mountain peaks was aglow with the lingering light of departing day. The lake lay like a mirror, its borders black with the shadows of the near-by trees.

At the kitchen window Weston stood wrapped in thought. Forgotten was the man lying in the bunk, for his mind was upon the two slowly wending their way to the lake. The room seemed to stifle him, so he went to the door and stood there, silent and alone. He was fighting the hardest battle of his life, much harder, in fact, than the one he had fought in his study the night he had first interviewed Reynolds. He knew that he was at the parting of the ways. That Glen had given her heart to the young stranger he was certain, and he believed that she would never be happy apart from him. They would leave the northland, and should he remain? That was the question which was now agitating his mind. How could he live alone without Glen's inspiring presence? There was no one to take her place, and he was getting well along in years. He thought of her who had meant so much to him in the sweet days of old. What agony had wrung his soul when she was taken from him, and how his whole life had been changed. A slight groan escaped the lips of the unhappy man, and mechanically he reached out his hands into the night. At once there flashed into his mind the words Glen and Reynolds had sung together at Glen West:

"'Tis a tale that is truer and older
Than any the sagas tell.
I loved you in life too little—
I love you in death too well."

The sound of happy laughter from the shore fell upon his ears. He started and looked down toward the shore. He could dimly see the two standing near the water close to each other, and intuitively he knew its meaning. They had forgotten him and everything else. They were sufficient to each other, and all cares for the time had vanished. Weston knew that the old, old tale was being repeated by the shore of that inland lake, and that two young hearts were responding to the sweet, luring charm of that divine influence, which banishes all grief and care, and transfigures life with the halo of romance.

CHAPTER XXVI

THROUGH THE STORM

Next morning Reynolds started with Sconda for Big Draw. As he mounted his horse in front of the cabin, Glen stood nearby, and he thought that he had never seen her look so pretty. If any man had ever been tempted to express all that was in his mind he had been the previous evening as they stood by the shore of the lake. He believed that Glen loved him, and he up-braided himself for not speaking and telling her of the deep feeling of his heart. But he would return, and then he would not let such another opportunity pass.

Glen stroked the horse's proudly-arching neck as he champed impatiently at his bit.

"Take care of your master, Pedro," she ordered, "and bring him safely back to Glen West."

"Then you wish me to return, eh?" Reynolds queried.

"Why shouldn't you?" and the girl blushed. "You have to arrange about that gold, you know."

"So I have. I am glad you reminded me." They both laughed, and Reynolds looked longingly into Glen's eyes. "You must promise, though, that the Indians will not drive me beyond the pass, and that your father will not subject me to the Ordeal."

"I think I can answer for them," was the low reply. "You are one of us now, and that makes a great difference. But here comes daddy; he will scold me for delaying you."

"I wish I did not have to go," Reynolds declared. "I would much rather go with you to Glen West. But I

shall hurry back."

"And be careful of yourself at Big Draw," the girl warned. "Curly is there, and he hasn't any love for you."

"Oh, I guess I shall be able to match that villain, so do not worry. Good-by; I must be off, for Sconda is getting impatient."

Reynolds rode rapidly down the trail, turning once to wave his hand to Glen, who was watching him before the cabin door. He was very happy, for he believed that he had won the heart of the purest, sweetest, and most beautiful girl in the whole world. He sang snatches of songs as he rode along, and at times laughed aloud in boyish glee, much to Sconda's astonishment. Life was bright and rosy to him on this fine summer morning, and the future looked most promising. He could hardly believe that he was the same person who had entered the country but a few weeks before, and who had travelled over that same trail with Frontier Samson. He was hoping to find the old prospector at Big Draw; who would be anxious to hear of his adventures.

About an hour later Glen bade her father good-by. She was all ready to start for home.

"Don't stay here long, daddy," she pleaded. "Come as soon as you can, for I shall be lonely without you."

"And will you really miss me?" Weston asked.

"Certainly I shall miss you. Life is not worth living when you are not at home."

"Not even when Reynolds is present?"

Glen blushed furiously, and her father smiled, a sad smile, which Glen was quick to notice. Throwing her arms impulsively about his neck, she kissed his bronzed cheek.

"I love you dearly, daddy," she murmured. "But because I love him does not lessen my love for you."

"I know it, dear, I know it," and Weston's voice was husky as he held his daughter close. "I am glad to know that you are happy, and I have every reason to believe that Reynolds is worthy of your love. Your confidence means very much to me. But, there, now, you had better be off. Natsu will look well after you. I was forced to send Sconda with Reynolds, as Natsu is not to be trusted at Big Draw. There are some unscrupulous fellows at the mining camp who might fill him with bad whiskey, and when he is half drunk he is liable to talk too much."

Glen enjoyed the ride over the long crooked trail, and her spirits, which had been somewhat depressed at the parting from her father and Reynolds, revived. There was nothing which thrilled and stimulated her so much as riding on Midnight through the great wilderness. Her lithe, supple body swayed in a rhythmical motion as the horse sped on his way. Riding was one of the few attractions which made the northland tolerable, and she wondered what she would do outside to replace it.

"I shall take you with me, old boy," she confided, as she affectionately patted Midnight's neck. "It would not do to leave you behind. My, what a great time we shall have upon the level roads!"

Then she fell to thinking about the joy of visiting different lands, and seeing strange sights. But she always associated her travels with Reynolds. She pictured him by her side as they went from place to place, eager and delighted at everything they beheld. It was certainly a pleasant dreamland in which she was living on this beautiful morning. Not a shadow dimmed her vision. All was rosy and fair, and like another speeding on his way to Big Draw, she was surrounded by the halo of romance.

It was supper time when Glen at length reached home, where she at once handed Midnight over to Natsu, and entered the house. Nannie was greatly surprised to see her back so soon, accompanied only by the Indian. But a little later, as they sat down to supper, Glen related the tale of experiences in the hills, omitting only her adventure with Curly.

"And just think, Nannie!" she enthusiastically exclaimed in conclusion, "daddy is seriously thinking about leaving the north and going outside. Isn't it great?"

"Is he, indeed?" and the elderly woman looked her surprise.

"Oh, yes. When I spoke to him about it he said that he wished to think it over, and might let me know in a few days. Oh, I hope that he will decide to go, don't you?"

Nannie made no reply for a few minutes, but went on with her supper.

"And what will become of me?" she at length asked.

"Why, you must go with us, of course. You will not mind going, will you?"

"Not now," was the quiet reply. "I have been quite happy here because I had you to think about and love. But you will be leaving soon, I feel sure, and how could I endure this place without you? You have little idea how much I missed you when you were away at school."

"Why do you think I shall be leaving soon?" Glen asked.

"I am not altogether blind, dear," and Nannie smiled. "You know the story of the Sleeping Beauty. Only the man who was bold enough could win her, and when he did venture into the enchanted place, a marvellous change ensued. So it has happened here."

"But I am not a sleeping beauty, Nannie," and Glen blushed, for she well understood the meaning of her companion's words.

"A very active beauty, I should say," and the woman looked with admiration upon the fair face before her. "But the principle is the same. The Prince has come, he has won your heart, and a great change has been wrought in this place, which has affected even your father. Now, isn't that true?"

Glen rose suddenly to her feet, and threw her arms lovingly about Nannie's neck. There were tears in her eyes, but they were tears of joy.

"You dear, dear old Nannie!" she cried. "How in the world did you learn the secret of my heart?"

"How could I help it?" was the laughing reply. "Your face alone would have betrayed the secret, even if I had not guessed it. And the Prince really loves you, Glen. But, there, I suppose he has told you all this."

"Indeed he has not. He never said a word to me," was the emphatic denial. "I don't believe he ever thought of doing so."

Nannie merely smiled at the girl's charming candour and unaffected simplicity. It pleased her to know that Glen was not ashamed of her love, and it was good to watch her bubbling over with the happiness of her new-found joy.

Glen spent much of the next morning upon the water in her canoe. She visited the places where she and Reynolds had gone that first day they had been together. She lived over again that happy time, marred only by the shot from the Golden Crest. She had almost forgotten it now, and her former anxiety had nearly vanished. She had a slight feeling of fear as to what Curly might attempt to do to Reynolds at Big Draw, but when she thought of her lover's strength she smiled confidently to herself.

About the middle of the afternoon she decided to go down to see Klota. Telling Nannie that she would not be long, she donned her hat, and had just stepped out upon the verandah when she saw Sconda riding furiously toward the house. His horse was white with foam and panting heavily. For an instant Glen's heart almost stopped beating, as she was certain that the Indian bore some bad news. He had gone with Reynolds, and what would bring him back so soon and in such a manner unless something was seriously wrong? All this flashed through her mind as she hurried down the steps just as Sconda drew rein in front of the house.

"What is the matter, Sconda?" she demanded. "Tell me, quick."

"White stranger in trouble," was the brief reply.

"Where?" Glen asked, while her face turned pale.

"At white man's camp. Curly catch him. Curly make big trouble."

"Are you sure? Did Mr. Reynolds send you here for help?"

"White stranger did not send Sconda. Titsla tell Sconda at foot of Crooked Trail."

"Oh, I see," Glen mused. "Titsla was at Big Draw with meat for the miners, and he found out that Curly was planning to harm Mr. Reynolds, eh?"

"Ah, ah, Titsla come quick. Titsla tell Sconda."

"And you rode fast to tell me?"

"Sconda come like the wind. Look," and he motioned to his weary horse.

Glen was thoroughly aroused now. She was no longer the happy, free-from-care girl who had emerged from the house a few minutes before, but a woman stirred to a high pitch of anger, the same as when she faced Curly in front of the cabin by the lake. Her father's spirit possessed her now, and when Glen Weston's eyes flashed as they did when she was aware of her lover's danger, those best acquainted with her knew that she was capable of almost any deed of heroism. Of a gentle, loving disposition, and true as steel to those who were true to her, there was hidden within her something of the primitive life of the wild, which, when stirred resembled the rushing tempests of her familiar mountains.

Turning to Sconda she gave a few terse orders, and when the Indian had received them, he wheeled his horse and headed him for the village. Glen at once hurried back into the house, went to her own room, and in a short time reappeared, clad in her riding-suit. She met Nannie at the foot of the stairs, and briefly explained the object of her mission.

"But surely you are not going to Big Draw!" the woman exclaimed in dismay. "What will your father say?"

"Yes, I am going," was the decided reply. "What would daddy say if I shirked my duty?"

"But you are not going alone!"

"No. I have given Sconda orders to get twenty of the best men in the village to accompany me. We shall go by way of Crooked Trail, and should reach Big Draw by night. God grant we may be in time!"

"But it isn't safe, Glen," Nannie urged. "I can trust you with the Indians, all right, but suppose something should happen to you down there?"

"Don't you worry, dear," the girl soothed, as she gave the woman a parting kiss. "I am quite capable of taking care of myself."

"But where will you sleep to-night, or get anything to eat?" The question showed Nannie's thoughtful, motherly concern.

"Oh, I haven't thought about such things. Anyway, I do not care whether I eat or sleep. Most likely the Indians will take some food with them, and they will share with me. There, now, I must be off. So, good-by, Nannie, dear, and do not worry about me."

"You must take your riding-cloak, though," Nannie insisted. "It may be cold to-night, and should it rain you will feel the good of it. There, that's better," she added, as she placed the garment over the girl's shoulders. "I am afraid that your father will blame me for letting you go."

Glen smiled at the woman's fears as she again kissed her, and picking up her riding-gloves, she hurried out of the house and down to the village. Here she found the twenty men awaiting her arrival, and Sconda holding Midnight. She smiled as she saw them, and her heart warmed as never before to these faithful natives. They were proud, too, of their young mistress, and were ready and willing to follow her anywhere, and to obey her slightest wish. They were anxious, as well, for a tilt with the miners at Big Draw, for whom they had no great love.

In a few minutes Glen, mounted upon Midnight, was leading her little band out of Glen West on their ride over Crooked Trail. The entire population of the place was on hand to watch their departure, for word had speedily spread about the trouble at Big Draw. Men, women and children were clustered about the store, who gazed with the keenest interest as the column of relief pulled out of the village. Glen's eyes kindled with pride and animation as she turned and waved them a cheery good-by. Then she touched Midnight lightly with her whip, at which the noble animal leaped forward, up the trail, through the woods, across the wild meadow, and into the pass. The Indians found it difficult to keep pace with their young mistress, for Midnight was the fleetest horse that ever trod a northern trail.

As they advanced, however, it was necessary to travel slower, for the way was steep and rough, and it was only with considerable care that the horses could pick their steps. Glen became impatient at this delay, for the sun was swinging low beyond the far-off mountain peaks, and she realised that if night overtook them in the hills it would greatly retard their progress, and perhaps make them too late in reaching Big Draw.

As they were moving slowly down Crooked Trail, the sky suddenly became overcast, and then black. Great, threatening clouds were massed together far up in the hills, and the wind began to draw down the ravine. It steadily increased in strength, and in a short time a gale was upon them. Then followed

the rain, which struck them just as they reached the valley. It was one of those sudden mountain storms, the dread of the most hardened trails-man, and the utter consternation of the chechahco. Fortunately the wind was in the backs of the travellers, and the trail was smoother now. Never for a moment did Glen hesitate, and Midnight responded splendidly to the occasion, inspiring with courage the horses following. The roar of the wind was terrific, and the trees bowed like reeds beneath its onslaught. Never had Glen experienced such a storm on the trail, and most thankful was she for the riding-cloak which Nannie had placed upon her shoulders. Her hat had been torn from her head, and her hair was tossed in the wildest confusion about her face and half blinded her. It was certainly a strange and weird sight as that slight girl led her determined band down that valley right through the heart of the storm.

It was difficult now to see far ahead, and Glen had to trust entirely to Midnight. Not once did the faithful animal stumble or exhibit the least sign of hesitation. He seemed to realise that much was at stake, and that everything depended upon his efforts. With ears pointed straight forward, and with head lowered, as if to guard his steps, he surged onward, every nerve keenly alert, and his entire body quivering with excitement.

For about an hour the storm beat upon them in all its fury, and notwithstanding the riding-cloak, Glen became thoroughly soaked. But she never once thought of herself, for her mind was ever upon Reynolds. Would they be in time to help him? she asked herself over and over again. She wondered what was the nature of the plot Curly had concocted, and whether all the miners were involved. Any danger to herself never once entered her mind, for she was so sure of the loyalty of her dusky followers. To reach the man she loved was the one great object which upheld her as she rode through that howling tempest.

At length they came to a place where the draw swerved sharply to the left. Here the trail left the valley and circled up a small hill behind the mining camp. The storm, following the draw as if it were a funnel, rushed roaring on its way, while the riders gaining the higher ground were somewhat beyond its reach, and, turning, saw it sweeping below like a torrent in full spate.

With a great sigh of relief, Glen paused for a moment on the summit, viewed the magnificent sight, and waited for her followers as they struggled, one by one, from the grasp of the mighty monster of the mountains. Then she spoke to Midnight and moved onward.

It was quite dark now, and the opposite slope which they soon began to descend was wrapped in the shadows of the hills. But Sconda knew every step of the way, and for the first time since leaving Glen West he took the lead and guided the band. Not a word was spoken as they defiled down that steep, narrow trail, and to anyone watching, they would have appeared like spectres coming from the unseen world.

Glen was nerved now to the highest pitch of excitement, for she felt that the critical moment, whatever it might be, was not far off. Anxiously and eagerly she peered forward, and just as they had almost reached the foot of the trail, a bright light suddenly pierced the darkness. Instantly every rider drew rein, and the horses stopped almost as one. All eyes were fixed, upon a blazing fire ahead, around which they could see a number of men moving. Then Glen gave a slight cry of dismay, touched Midnight sharply with her whip, and bounded forward, straight for that burning pile.

CHAPTER XXVII

IN THE TOILS

Curly reached Big Draw only a couple of hours ahead of Reynolds and Sconda. He had travelled fast, impelled by a burning rage, eager to impart to others as vile as himself the story he had concocted in his venomous mind. He was seated in the roadhouse, surrounded by his favorite gang, as Reynolds and his guide rode into camp. He reminded his hearers how the former had gone with Frontier Samson in quest of gold, and that the old prospector had mysteriously disappeared. He informed them that he had met Reynolds at Glen West with Jim Weston's daughter, and that they had both sneered at him.

"I was walking along the street," the liar continued, "when I saw the two standing together, an' very chummy. When Reynolds saw me he tried to hurry away into an Indian's shack. But I stopped him, an' asked him what he had done with Frontier Samson. This made him mad, an' he told me it was none of my business, an' if I didn't leave Glen West at once he'd set the Indians upon me."

"What did you do?" one of the listeners eagerly asked, as Curly paused and lighted a cigarette.

"Oh, I just laughed an' told him that I didn't care a rip for him or the Indians, an' that I would leave when I got ready. Then he an' the girl made fun of me, told me I was a queer looking guy, an' if I was anxious about the old prospector I had better go an' hunt for him myself. I left them at that, an' strolled about the place for a while. But that night didn't the Indians come upon me. They took me down into the woods, tied me to a tree, an' were all ready to burn me alive. Say, it was hell fer a while, an' I thought sure I was a goner. But just as a big devil stooped to light the dry wood at my feet, Jim Weston arrived, beat them off, an' set me free. An' all the time I was tied to that tree, didn't Reynolds stand by an' make fun of me. He said he would shut my mouth once an' for all about Frontier Samson. When I told him I was certain he had killed the old man, he flew into a rage an' cursed like a pirate. That's what he did, the cuss. Hand me over a drink, Tom; I'm thirsty."

While Curly and his gang were talking and drinking, across the street Reynolds was recording three double claims, for Jim Weston, Glen Weston, and himself, as discoverers. He produced a specimen of the gold which he carried in his pocket, and explained the exact position where the claims were situated. This work completed, he went at once to the roadhouse, and asked for his mail. He saw Curly and his companions, but paid no heed to them. He was more interested in the letters awaiting him, for there were two, and from his friend the editor, at that.

"You've been a long time away," Shorty remarked, as he looked curiously at the young man.

"Yes, I suppose I have," was the absent-minded reply, for Reynolds was looking at his letters.

"Strike anything?"

"I believe so. But, say, is Frontier Samson here? Have you seen him lately?"

"W-why, no," Shorty stammered. He had overheard Curly's remarks, so this unexpected question somewhat embarrassed him. "He went with you, didn't he?"

"He certainly did, but I got lost out in the hills, and haven't seen the old man since. I hope nothing has happened to him."

Not a word of this escaped the men at the table, and when Reynolds had left the building they stared at one another for a few seconds.

"Did ye hear what he said about the gold?" Curly eagerly asked. "I believe he's struck it rich, an' most likely he has put Samson out of the way."

"But he asked about him, though," one of the men replied.

"Oh, that was just a ruse, an' nothing more. He wanted to find out if we suspect anything. I say, Shorty, bring us something," he ordered. "This is my treat."

When the liquor had been brought, the men drank and talked in low voices. What they said Shorty could not hear, although he strained his ears in an effort to catch the drift of the conversation. After a while other men entered the room, and these were soon acquainted with Reynolds' return, the gold he had discovered, and the mysterious disappearance of Frontier Samson. A few agreed with Curly that it was strange that the old prospector had not been seen for some time, and that his partner had returned alone. Where was the discovery made? they wanted to know.

"Near the Tasan," a man replied. "I've just been to the Recording Office, and found that three double claims have been entered there in the names of Jim Weston, Glen Weston, and Thomas Reynolds. But I don't put any stock in that. Why, I've cruised all over that region, and so have others. There's not enough gold there to fill the eye-tooth of a mouse. I've been on too many fool stampedes of late, and I'm sick of them. What does that chechahco know about gold?"

"But Jim Weston is in with him," Curly reminded. "What d'ye make of that?"

"H'm, Jim Weston knows more about robbing Indians than he does about mining. He wouldn't know the real stuff from 'fool's gold.' No doubt that's what they've found."

The talk now became general and continued for some time. Several thought it worth while to go and see what the new discovery was like, but others scoffed at the idea. They also discussed the disappearance of Frontier Samson, and even hinted that perhaps his partner knew more than he was willing to tell. Curly suggested that he should be brought before them and questioned. This met with considerable favor, although no one seemed inclined to take upon himself such a responsibility. It was late when the men at length left the store, and took themselves off to their various cabins. Curly and his

band went together, and for the rest of the night they communed and plotted in a lonely shack some distance up the creek.

With no idea that he was the centre of such interest, Reynolds slept soundly in his own little tent, for he was tired after his experiences in the hills. It was late when he awoke in the morning, and after he had eaten his frugal breakfast, he went over to the roadhouse for a supply of tobacco. Shorty was the only one present, for most of the miners were busy up the creek. Curly and his companions were still asleep after their night's vigil, and evidently would not show themselves for several hours. Shorty tried to learn from Reynolds something about the gold he had discovered, and also asked about Frontier Samson. But so little information did he gain, that he was much annoyed and became suspicious as well.

Reynolds went back to his tent, filled and lighted his pipe, and brought forth the two letters he had received, and read them again. They interested him, for they contained scraps of news of the outside world. But they were mostly filled with the editor's expressions of regret that Reynolds was wasting his time in the north, when he might be off on the great quest which was so near his heart.

"I hope you will return soon," he wrote, "and begin the search for Henry Redmond. Only yesterday I received what I consider a clue as to his whereabouts. I met a man who has been overseas, and telling him about Redmond, he informed me that he believed he knew where he was. He said that while in Switzerland he came across an old man and his daughter. The girl was about eighteen or nineteen years of age, and that corresponds with the age of the child Redmond took with him, for she was only three or four at the time of his disappearance. He said that the man had plenty of money, lived in a house beautifully furnished, and possessed a good library. But he was most reticent about himself, although he acknowledged that he was acquainted with Canada, and had lived here for some time. So you see, I have reason for believing that the man is Henry Redmond, and that you should go at once and hunt him out. Even after you meet him, your task will still bristle with difficulties, for he is evidently hard to approach."

Reynolds smiled as he read these words. He knew how anxious the editor was for him to return that he might start at once upon the search. But he had no idea of going to Switzerland, or anywhere else for that matter, while the northland held such attractions. He decided to write and tell his old friend to be patient a while longer, and then perhaps he would receive the greatest surprise of his life. He tried to picture the look upon the editor's face should he unexpectedly walk into his office with Glen by his side. He believed that he would be greatly pleased, for could any man in his right mind resist the girl's charms? He knew that Harmon would be somewhat annoyed, for a woman would ruin his hope of ever finding the missing Henry Redmond.

Reynolds spent part of the afternoon writing a long letter to the editor. He had much to tell him about the country, his experiences in the wilderness, and the mysterious ruler of Glen West. But of Glen he said little, nothing, in fact, that would in any way arouse Harmon's suspicion of the writer's deep interest in the girl.

When the letter was finished he took it over to the roadhouse to mail, and then spent the rest of the afternoon upon the creek in an effort to learn, if possible, something about Frontier Samson. But although he questioned all the miners he saw, not one could enlighten him in the least degree. He thought that several looked at him curiously when he asked about the old prospector, and he wondered what they meant.

He spent some time far up the creek, and ate the lunch he had brought with him in a quiet place near the stream which flowed down the valley, and provided the necessary water for the sluice-boxes where the precious gold was washed out. He enjoyed the seclusion, as it gave him an opportunity to think over what the editor had written, and also about Glen. He intended to leave early the next morning for Glen West by way of Crooked Trail, and he knew that Glen would be waiting and eager to greet him. Her face stood out clear and distinct in his mind, and he recalled the words she had spoken, and her charming manner. His heart beat fast as he thought of her, and he believed that she loved him. He chided himself for not pouring out his heart to her that evening as they stood by the side of the inland lake. The expression in her eyes and the tone of her voice were those of a woman whose heart must be filled with love, so he reasoned. Yes, he would speak to her just as soon as he reached Glen West. The way would be short, for she was his guiding star, and he would speed swiftly to the one he loved.

It was dusk when he at length rose to his feet and started down the creek. He did not hurry as he had the whole evening before him, and there was no one awaiting his coming. But there would be someone tomorrow, and his heart thrilled, and his eyes shone with animation as he thought of the girl beyond the Golden Crest.

Part way down Big Draw valley, and on the left side, was a sharp break in the bank, where a small creek met the larger one. This in ages past had evidently been a river, whose bed was now dry. It was up this creek that the trail led out into the hills, the one that Reynolds had always taken when he went forth on his hunting expeditions. The entrance to this draw was now wrapped in semi-darkness, for the high tree-clad banks shouldered toward each other, thus shutting out the dim light of departing day.

Reynolds reached this place, and with a glance up the trail which he would take in the morning, he had almost reached the opposite side, when, without a word of warning, a light was flashed into his eyes, and in an instant he was swept from his feet, hurled to the ground, and his arms securely bound. He had no chance to defend himself, for everything happened so quickly. There seemed to be quite a crowd of men holding him fast, some sitting upon his body, while others held his hands and feet. Although He strained and struggled desperately to free himself, his efforts were of no avail, and he soon realised that he might as well reserve his strength for whatever lay ahead.

"Now get on yer feet, an' be d— quick about it, too." It was Curly's voice, and Reynolds knew that the villain was at the bottom of this affair.

He made no reply, however, but at once struggled to a standing position and looked around. There appeared to be more than a dozen men, and by the dim light he recognized several. They had been drinking, he could easily tell, and were in a quarrelsome mood, and wrangled with one another as to what they should do with their captive. One was for stringing him up to a tree; another was for shooting him; while a third suggested that they should pitch him head first down one of the mining-shafts. But Curly would not listen to these propositions, and gave orders that the prisoner should be taken up the creek in the direction of Crooked Trail.

"It's safer there," he told them, "an' we don't want our fun spoiled by the Police."

"There's none in camp to-night," one explained. "They're all off on the trail."

"An' lucky fer us," Curly replied. "Anyway, let's hustle an' get out of this."

Reynolds was immediately seized and hurried up the creek. He tried to think and plan some way of escape. He realised that the situation was serious, for with Curly, devilish and full of revenge, and at the head of a band of half-drunken men as reckless as himself, there was no knowing what he might do. But he was determined to be game, and await further developments as calmly as possible.

As they moved forward he partly learned from the men's conversation why they had waylaid him. He found out that Curly had been filling his companions' minds with gross lies, and now inflamed with impure whiskey they were willing tools in the hands of their revengeful leader.

CHAPTER XXVIII

HELP FROM THE HILLS

After they had stumbled on for about fifteen minutes Curly called a halt, and ordered the men to build a fire.

"This is as good a place as any," he told them. "No one will bother us here to-night, an' that's all we care."

Cursing and grumbling in a maudlin manner, several of the men gathered a number of sticks, and soon a fire was started. As the flames shot up Reynolds could see plainly the faces of his captors, and as he watched them his prospects did not seem very bright. They were men as reckless as Curly himself, and being half drunk they had lost all sense of responsibility. They did exactly what their leader commanded, notwithstanding their incessant complaints. This was exactly what Curly wanted. He had supplied them with liquor, but had taken little himself.

When the fire had been lighted, Reynolds was securely tied to a tree standing near. The rope which bound him was drawn tight and caused him considerable pain, although he exhibited no outward sign. But his heart was hot within him, especially when he looked upon Curly's sneering and jubilant face. If he could only be free for a few minutes he would attack the entire bunch, and revel in the fight. But to be bound and helpless was most galling.

"How d'ye like it?" Curly asked, coming up close to Reynolds. "Having a good time, eh? This is our

picnic to-night."

"So I see," and the captive's lips curled in a sarcastic smile. "But just let me free for about five minutes, and then you'll see whose picnic it is."

"Not on yer life. We've got ye sure now, an' intend to keep ye that way until we're through with ye. What would yer little girlie say if she could see ye now?"

"To whom do you refer?"

"Oh, I guess you know, all right," and Curly grinned. "She's pretty, isn't she? But she has no use for me. She prefers a white-livered sucker like you."

"Who was the big white-livered sucker during the war?" Reynolds retorted. "I didn't hide away in the hills like you did, Curly. You are a coward, and you know it."

"Who killed his pardner, though?" Curly snarled, for the prisoner's words stung him to the quick.

"What do you mean?" Reynolds asked in surprise.

"Where is Frontier Samson? What happened to the old man?"

Reynolds' eyes grew big with amazement as the meaning of Curly's words dawned upon his mind. So these men believed that he had killed the prospector! His face turned pale at the thought. What could he say in self-defense? Curly noted his embarrassment as well as the change of countenance, and he was greatly elated.

"Ye can't deny it," he charged. "Look, boys," he shouted. "See the white streak about his gills."

"Where ish Samson?" a bleary-eyed man demanded, thrusting his whiskey-reeking mouth up close to Reynolds' face. "Where ish my old friend?"

Reynolds made no reply, although it was with difficulty that he restrained himself. To try to explain to such men would be useless, he was well aware. Others now surrounded him, who asked, not only about Samson, but about Jim Weston's daughter. They made the night hideous with their oaths and vile questions, until they seemed to Reynolds more like imps of the infernal regions let loose than human beings. He saw that they were becoming more and more reckless as they talked, shouted, and quarrelled with one another, and he expected at any minute to see them turn upon him and inflict some bodily injury, and, perhaps, tear him to pieces.

All this pleased Curly immensely, as he stood a little aside and watched his followers. His eyes seldom left the captive's face, but he looked in vain for any show of weakness on Reynolds' part. This was not altogether to his liking. He wished to see his victim show signs of fear, to cry aloud and plead for mercy. He had done so himself, and he longed to find it in Reynolds that he might taunt him with weakness and cowardice.

When he had waited in vain for fully half an hour, he ordered the men to pile dry wood about the prisoner's feet. They readily obeyed, and all took part, anticipating some rare sport.

"We'll take that sneer off yer face," Curly remarked, as he stepped up close to Reynolds. "We'll make ye yell."

"The same as you did at Glen West, I suppose?" Reynolds retorted. "Your lungs must have been sore after such yelps. Who showed the white liver then?"

Curly spat contemptuously at the captive, and motioned the men to bring a burning stick from the fire. Several at once hastened to obey, tumbling over one another in their eagerness. One, more active than the rest, extricated himself, seized a flaming torch, and rushed toward the prisoner. He had almost reached him, and Reynolds felt that the moment of doom had arrived. But just at this critical instant a peculiar noise fell upon his ears, and he listened intently. Then his heart bounded with hope, for it was the sound of galloping horses. His captors heard it, too, and the man carrying the torch hesitated and then stopped. It was an ominous sound to them, and their hearts smote them with a great fear. But they had little time for thought, for at once nine hundred pounds of quivering horse flesh, bone, and sinewy muscle leaped out of the darkness into their midst, and reared wildly when suddenly checked by a pair of strong, tense arms. With head tossed high, and champing madly at his bits, Midnight reeled back almost upon his haunches in such a manner that an inexperienced rider would have been unhorsed in an instant. But Glen was not in the least perturbed by the rearing steed, and maintained her seat with an easy composure. In truth, she never thought about herself, but only of him whose life was in danger.

"Cowards!" she cried. "Unloose that man!" and she pointed to Reynolds.

But no one moved to obey her imperious command. The men stared as if she were an apparition, so sudden and unexpected was her arrival. And in fact, she did seem like a leader of the legendary Valkyries, with her flashing eyes and wind-swept hair, mounted upon that prancing horse as black as night itself. It was little wonder that the men trembled as they watched her, while several crossed themselves as if to ward off some malign influence.

Curly, who had staggered back aghast at this sudden intrusion, was the first to recover. He glanced apprehensively around, as if meditating flight. But Glen's keen eyes detected his design, and she sternly ordered him to remain where he was. Then she turned and spoke a few words to her followers in the Indian tongue. At once a rapid movement took place, as the natives formed themselves in a circle around the white men and thus barred every avenue of escape. This brought the miners somewhat to their senses, and seeing that their unwelcome visitors were not ghosts, their hands slipped to their hip-pockets. But a mighty roar from Sconda paralyzed their hands, causing them to drop by their sides as the baffled men stared sullenly upon almost a score of rifles pointing straight at their hearts.

It seemed to Reynolds as if he must be beholding a vision, so wonderful did it all appear. He gazed upon Glen with intense admiration. He could hardly believe it possible that such a sweet, confiding girl could be so changed into an imperious leader in such a short time. Could she be the same who had bade him such a tender farewell by the shore of the lake in the hills? She looked more beautiful than ever now, but it was the beauty of wild abandon in the glory of a noble cause, which for the time had transformed this tender maiden into a woman of unselfish daring. She held him spellbound as she sat so superbly upon her now quiet horse. Forgotten were his bonds as he watched her, and his one thought was of her. How had she heard of his trouble? and how had she managed to arrive just at the critical moment? He longed to hear the story from her own lips. A passionate desire swept upon him to enfold her in his arms, to tell her how proud he was of what she had done, and to press his lips to hers. And she was the girl who had been so grossly insulted by his villainous captors! The thought stung him, and he turned sharply toward the cringing Curly. The brute was standing there, sullen and defiant. Reynolds knew that he would soon be free, and then he would deal with the cur. He heard Glen speak and saw Sconda dismount and disarm the miners. Last of all he came to Curly, and when the Indian reached for his revolver, the serpent spat at him and cursed wildly. With a marvelous restraint, Sconda merely took the weapon from the enraged man's pocket, and then walking over to Reynolds, swiftly cut the cords which bound him to the tree and freed his hands.

Finding himself unbound, Reynolds cast one glance toward Glen, and saw her looking at him with a peculiar expression in her eyes. He seemed to read there a challenge, which could have but one meaning. He turned to Curly, and beholding that sneer of contempt still upon his face, he sprang forward and confronted the villain.

"I am free now," he cried, "and am able to answer your insult to the purest woman upon earth. It is man to man, and we shall settle it right here."

But Curly was in no mood for a fight; that was not his nature. He was a coward at heart, though the failure of his plot made him so angry that he was daringly reckless. With a curse he started to turn away, but Reynolds caught him by the shoulders and swung him roughly around.

"No, you don't get off so easily," he told him. "One of us must get a drubbing here to-night, and if you can give it to me, come on."

"Take that, then," and Curly drew off and hit him a savage blow on the face.

It was all that Reynolds needed, and springing forward, he felled his antagonist to the ground with a single blow. And there Curly lay, and made no attempt to rise. He had enough, and he knew in his heart that he was no match for the man standing over him.

"Get up," Reynolds ordered. "I'm not through with you yet."

But Curly did not move. He lay there as if dead. Reynolds did not know what to do, for he was unwilling to inflict further punishment upon the creature while he was down.

"Curly." It was Glen's voice, and it had an ominous note. "Get up at once, and explain the meaning of this night's affair. Why this insult to Mr. Reynolds?"

To this command, however, Curly paid no heed, but remained as he had fallen. Glen's eyes flashed with a dangerous light as she tapped impatiently with her riding-whip upon the pommel of her saddle.

"Get up," she again ordered, "or I shall hand you over to the Indians."

They will not be so considerate of you as we are."

As Curly still made no effort to rise, Glen uttered just two Indian words to Sconda. The latter immediately turned and roared a command to his followers. At once half a dozen natives sprang eagerly forward, but before they could lay hands upon him Curly was on his feet, trembling violently. He leaped aside from the natives, his face ghastly pale.

"Keep them off!" he yelled. "Don't let the devils touch me!"

"I thought that would bring you somewhat to your senses," and a smile of contempt hovered about the corners of Glen's mouth as she spoke. "But I mean what I say, you can be assured of that. Tell me, now, what is the meaning of all this? Why did you bring Mr. Reynolds here, and what were you going to do to him?"

"He murdered his pardner," was the low reply.

Glen gave a violent start at this accusation, and looked keenly at Curly. Her hands trembled, and it seemed to her as if her heart had stopped beating.

"Who was his partner?" she at length found voice to ask.

"Frontier Samson, of course. He was a friend of ours, and we were about to avenge his death, when you interfered."

"But how did you learn that Frontier Samson is dead?" Glen inquired.

"Because no one has seen him since he left camp with this guy," and he motioned to Reynolds who was standing nearby. "Samson hasn't shown up at Big Draw, an' his pardner doesn't care to explain what happened to him."

For a few seconds there was a dead silence, save for the crackling of the fire, and the restless movements of the horses. Then from out of the darkness came a roar of laughter, and while all turned and stared in astonishment, Frontier Samson himself bounded into their midst and confronted Curly.

"Do I look like a dead man?" he demanded. "D'ye think I've been murdered by me pardner?"

Curly's only reply was a fearful stare as if he had seen a ghost. He tried to speak, but words would not come.

"Frightened, are ye?" and the prospector took a step closer to the unhappy villain. "But ye'll be more frightened before I git through with ye, let me tell ye that. What's the meanin' of sich actions? Out with it."

"I t-thought y-you were dead," Curly stammered.

"An' so ye was takin' the matter of justice into yer own dirty hands, eh?"

"Somebody had to do it."

"H'm," Samson grunted as he glanced around upon the miners. "Queer justice, I call it. Why didn't ye let the Police look after the affair, if ye thought me pardner had murdered me? No, ye can't answer that," he continued, for Curly made no defence. "It's yer own bad heart, that's what made ye do it. Yer jealous; that's what's wrong. An' as fer justice, you'll git plenty of it soon, an' more'n ye'll care fer. An' you talk about a man murderin' his pardner, an' givin' him justice! Who murdered Bill Ducett, at Black Ravine, tell me that?"

Curly's eyes, which were big with fear, now fairly burst from their sockets as the old prospector laid this startling charge. His knees trembled, and it seemed as if he must fall to the ground, so great was his terror.

"H-how d'ye know about Bill?" he gasped.

"Never mind how I know," Samson replied. Then he turned toward Glen. "Excuse me, Miss," and he lifted his old weather-beaten hat, "I'm real sorry that you have to witness sich a scene as this. But it can't be helped, fer thar stands the worst criminal that ever came into this region. An' to think of him talkin' about murder an' justice, when he himself murdered his own pardner!"

"It's a lie!" Curly denied with an oath. "What d'ye mean by making such a charge?"

"It's no lie, Curly," and the prospector looked sternly into the cur's bloodshot eyes. "I've got all the

proof that's necessary to stretch yer neck. But it'll keep until the right ones git hold of ye. In the meantime, we might as well go down to Shorty's an' git something to eat. I'm as hungry as a two-year-old bear. We'll take these fellers along," and he motioned to the miners. "Jist let yer Injuns look after 'em, Miss. An' ye'd better see that Curly is tied tight so's he can't git away. We don't want to run any risk with him."

It took but a few minutes to carry out this latter suggestion, and then all headed for the mining creek. The miners were marshalled by the Indians, with Samson walking watchfully by Curly's side, while Reynolds kept close to Glen. No one spoke, and it was a strange procession which wound its way down the creek, and at length halted in front of the roadhouse.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE OLD TRUE STORY

There was great indignation at Shorty's when the miners heard of the villainous attempt upon Reynolds' life. At first they would hardly believe it, but as they listened to Frontier Samson, whose words were confirmed by Glen, and Reynolds, they knew that it must be true. Then when they learned that Curly was guilty of the murder of his partner, Bill Ducett, they became thoroughly aroused.

These miners were the finest men at Big Draw. They worked hard and minded their own business. They were not given to much talk, due, no doubt, to long years in the wilderness. Neither were they carried away by any sudden impulse on the spur of the moment. They never had anything in common with Curly and his gang, although they had often listened to their vapid boastings. So now when they learned of the despicable affair up the narrow creek, they did not take matters into their own hands, and visit upon the miscreants swift and dire punishment. They decided, after a brief consultation with Frontier Samson, to keep close guard upon Curly and hand him over to the Mounted Police, who were expected back the next day. His companions would be allowed their freedom until needed.

"Such actions must be stopped," one big weather-beaten veteran of many trails declared. "Curly and his bunch, as well as all others of such breed, must learn first as last that the Police are here to give British justice, and a fair trial to every man, no matter who he is. It's not for any of us to deal with such brutes as Curly and his gang."

"I agree with you, Tom," another replied. "But it's a pity we didn't hear sooner about what was taking place up the draw. We'd a been there in no time. I can't understand how that Indian Titsla learned the news. He was here yesterday selling meat, but he never mentioned a word to us."

"I imagine he thought the hull bunch of yez was in the plot," Samson replied, "an' so he hit the trail fer Glen West as fast as he could. That's the way with them Injuns." Then he turned suddenly and walked over to Shorty. "Say, old man," he began, "rustle up some grub fer them Injuns outside, will ye? I'd like to give 'em a good feed before they leave. An' hand out something to the rest of us while yer at it. I'm most starved, an' I guess the rest are, too. I'll foot the bill."

In less than an hour Shorty had the Indians fed, and when Samson had provided each with a large plug of tobacco, they all left in the best of spirits for Glen West.

Reynolds' entire solicitude was for Glen. He thought not of himself, and paid little heed to the miners as they discussed Curly and his companions. His only concern was for her who was sitting in the one arm-chair the room contained with such a weary look in her eyes. The stern expression had vanished from her face, and she was the real Glen again. She did not care to talk, although she listened intently to everything that was said. But after the miners had left, and she sat down to the supper Shorty had prepared, she became more animated.

"Oh, I am so glad that we are alone at last!" and she breathed a deep sigh of relief. "It seems as if I have had a fearful dream."

"You'll be all right, Miss, as soon as ye git a good night's sleep," Samson replied. "Yer a bit used up at present."

"I suppose so. But where shall I sleep?"

"Here, of course. Shorty's goin' to give ye his best room, an' not a soul will disturb ye until mornin'.

Then ye must be up bright an' early. Yer dad wants ye at his cabin."

"Is anything wrong?" Glen anxiously asked.

"Nuthin', Miss. But yer dad wants ye as soon as ye kin git thar."

"How does he know I'm here?" and Glen looked her surprise.

"How does he know?" Samson slowly repeated. "Wall, that's fer you to find out. I jist come from thar to-day, so I know that he wants ye. What's the use of askin' how Jim Weston finds things out? Why, he seems to know what a man miles off is thinkin' about. Ye'd almost imagine that he has a wireless outfit fixed up in his head."

Glen and Reynolds laughed, and even the old man smiled. He seemed to like to see them both happy, and when supper was over he told several humorous stories in his quaint, droll fashion. For a time Glen forgot her exciting experiences of the afternoon, and Samson did not once allude to them. At length he arose and laid his hand upon Reynolds' shoulder.

"Come, young man, it's time fer us to be goin' if the lassie is to git any sleep," he reminded. "I know you'd like to sit here all night an' watch. But she'll be as safe as in her own little nest at home. We'll be around early in the mornin', remember, Miss."

Glen held out her hand as she bade each good night. Reynolds held her hand for a few seconds and looked lovingly into her tired eyes. How he longed to put his arms around her to comfort her and tell her how brave and noble she was. But no, he would not do that now, as she might resent it. Instead, he merely bent his head, and lifting her hand touched it lightly with his lips, and hurried out of the building. Alone in the little room that night, ere she laid herself down upon the rough cot, Glen pressed her hand to her lips and kissed the spot where her lover's lips had rested. Tired though she was, a sweet peace stole into her heart. Forgotten was Curly, and she thought only of him she had rescued, and of whose love she felt assured.

Frontier Samson made no allusion to Reynolds' presence at Big Draw. He never even asked what had befallen him when he was lost out in the hills. This did not seem strange to Reynolds for a while, as his mind was much filled with the stirring events of the night. But when lying wrapped up in his blankets in his tent he thought it all over, and the silence of the prospector did seem strange. Then he remembered that Samson had been at the cabin in the hills, and no doubt Weston had told him the whole story.

No reference was made to the matter the next day until they were well advanced on the trail. Glen was like her former self once more after her refreshing sleep, and the color had again returned to her cheeks. She was full of spirit and animation, and laughed gaily at Samson's quaint remarks as he rode by her side wherever the trail permitted.

Reynolds, too, was happy, and Glen's buoyant cheerfulness affected him like magic. To listen to her voice and merry laughter made him perfectly contented. Life was very pleasant to him this morning, with the dark clouds all rolled away.

Suddenly a moose appeared on the trail ahead, which gazed for an instant upon the riders, and then bounded off into the woods.

"Like to chase it, eh?" Samson queried, as he looked quizzically at Reynolds.

"Not this time," was the laughing reply. "I have learned a lesson."

"In the school of experience, I guess. It's the only school in which some people'll ever learn anything."

"Chiefly babies and fools, so I've heard," Reynolds replied. "I was certainly a fool, all right, for not obeying orders and leaving a moose alone unless one is in need of meat. But, then, things turned out all right after all. If I had not got lost, I would not have reached Glen West as I did."

"An' not have found the gold, either."

"Why, did you hear about the discovery?" Reynolds eagerly asked.

"Sure. I heard all about it, an' how ye staked a claim fer yer old pardner, Frontier Samson. It was sartinly kind of ye to think of me."

"But I didn't stake any claim for you," Reynolds confessed, while his face crimsoned.

"Ye didn't, eh? An' we was pardners, too! Wall, that's queer."

"Oh, I am sorry," the young man acknowledged. "But I staked two claims, so you shall have one of them. How will that do?"

"No, thank ye. I've got enough to do me, I guess, to the end of me tether. An', besides, mebbe you'll need a hull gold mine to keep a-goin' by the looks of things. Women need a lot these days." His eyes twinkled as he turned them upon Glen's face, and noted that she was blushing, for she understood the meaning of his words. "But, then, it'll all depend upon the woman," he continued, "Now, some wouldn't be satisfied with a dozen gold mines, while others would be perfectly contented with a little log shack, so long as the place was built of love. I guess that'd be the way with you, Miss, from what I've seen of ye. But, hello! who's this? Why, it's the rascal Dan, I do believe! He seems to be in a hurry."

And Dan certainly was in a hurry. He was not at all inclined to talk, but anxious to get along as fast as possible.

"What's yer rush?" Samson asked.

"I want to get to Big Draw before night," was the curt reply.

"Where's daddy?" Glen questioned.

"Blamed if I know. He cleared out shortly after you did, and left me to die out there. I haven't seen him since."

Dan's arm was in a sling, and the haggard expression upon his face showed that he had suffered a great deal both mentally and bodily. The three watched him as he hurried on his way, until a bend in the trail hid him from view.

"An' to think of that critter bein' free!" Samson exclaimed. "Why, he should be linked up with Curly, an' git the same dose. Thar's something comin' to him, an' he'll git it in time, mark my word."

"What do you suppose has become of daddy?" Glen enquired, as they resumed their journey. "Did you hear what Dan said?"

"Oh, yer dad's all right, Miss," Samson assured her. "He knows how to take care of himself. Mebbe he's off to that mine. He's sartinly much interested in it."

"But where did you see Mr. Weston?" Reynolds unexpectedly asked.

"Whar did I see him?" and Samson ran the fingers of his right hand through his hair in an abstracted manner. "Wall, let me see. It was somewhar out in the hills. I've been in so many places that it's hard fer me to tell one from t'other. I do git terribly mixed up these days."

No further reference was made to the matter during the rest of the day, although Reynolds was not at all satisfied with the prospector's lame explanation. He wondered why the old man should have such a sudden lapse of memory as to what had so recently happened. There was some reason for it, he felt quite sure.

It was evening when they at length reached the little cabin in the wilderness. Sconda had ridden on ahead, and had an appetizing supper ready by the time the others arrived.

"I wonder where daddy can be," Glen remarked as they sat down to the table. "I was hoping that he might be here to receive us."

"Oh, he's all right, an' will be back soon," Samson replied. "He'll be here this evenin' fer sure."

The sun had just disappeared beyond the far off mountain peaks as Glen and Reynolds walked down to the shore of the lake. Not a ripple disturbed the water, and the sombre trees along the shore were mirrored in the clear depths. It was a scene of restful peace and quietness.

"Isn't it beautiful here to-night!" Glen exclaimed, while she gave a sigh of contentment. "I have no fear now of any danger lurking within those dark shadows, such as I had the last time we were here."

"And were you fearful then?" Reynolds asked.

"Indeed I was, for I thought Curly might be lurking around. He was here that day, and I do not mind confessing it now." She then briefly told of Curly's visit, and how she had guarded him until Sconda arrived.

They were walking along the shore now, about one hundred yards from the cabin. Reynolds was amazed at the story, and when Glen finished he suddenly stopped.

"Oh, I wish I had known of this sooner," he declared, while his hands clenched hard. "Why didn't you tell me before?"

"I was afraid," Glen confessed in a low voice.

"Afraid! Of what?"

"Of what you might do to Curly."

For an instant Reynolds stared at the girl. Could it be possible that she was concerned about the villain's welfare?

"And you thought I might kill him?" he asked.

"Yes; that was it."

"But he deserves to be killed after doing such a contemptible thing. Why, it is as bad as the Huns would do, and you know what we did to them."

"But that was war," Glen reminded. "If you shot an enemy over there, you were not considered a murderer, and condemned to death, were you?"

"No, certainly not," Reynolds emphatically replied, as the meaning of the girl's words dawned upon his mind. "And so you kept silent for my sake?" he asked. "Were you afraid that I might do something desperate to Curly, and become a murderer?"

"Yes, I was," and Glen lifted her shining eyes to his.

"And you really care that much for me?"

"Why shouldn't I? Wouldn't anyone think of a friend, and his welfare?"

Only for an instant did Reynolds hesitate, while his heart beat wildly with hope. Then he caught the girl's hands in his, and looked longingly into her eyes.

"Glen, Glen!" he passionately cried, using her Christian name for the first time, "is it possible that you love me? I wanted to tell you of my love but I was afraid."

"Why, you did tell me," Glen whispered, making no effort to free her hands.

"I did! When?"

"Don't you remember that night at Glen West when we first sang together?"

"But I didn't say a word to you about my love."

"No, but you showed it in your face and manner. You know what you did."

"I kissed you; that was it."

Releasing her hands, he drew the girl close to him, and imprinted a fervent kiss upon her burning lips.

"Glen, Glen!" he murmured. "You are mine at last. I know you love me, and are now my very own. Tell me that you love me."

In reply, Glen threw her arms around his neck, while tears of joy stole down her cheeks.

"I love you. I love you," she whispered. "Oh, I am so happy! You will never leave me, will you?"

For some time they stood there, lost to the world around them. It was the old true story being repeated by that wilderness lake. It was love made perfect by the union of two young hearts, the flowing together of two souls, the sudden bursting into bloom of the seed of affection, which had been steadily developing for weeks past.

And as they stood there, whispering of things revealed only to true ardent lovers, and their faces aglow with the light of a great and a new-found joy, the atmosphere suddenly changed. Great clouds had massed on the mountains, and the wind was whipping down the valley, ruffling the surface of the lake. The air grew cold, and Glen shivered. Then it was that they first realised the change that had taken place, and they both laughed. But Glen's face grew instantly sober.

"What will daddy say?" she breathed. "We must tell him as soon as he comes home."

"How does he generally punish a thief?" Reynolds smilingly asked as they walked slowly back to the cabin. "I have stolen the greatest treasure he possesses, the heart of his only child."

"That remains to be seen," was the laughing reply. "He may punish you, though, by inflicting upon you for life that which you have stolen. Won't that be punishment enough?"

CHAPTER XXX

THE UNMASKING

Frontier Samson was sitting before an open fire as Glen and Reynolds entered. The flames were licking around the big sticks, lighting up the room, and playing fantastic tricks upon the walls and ceiling. They fell, too, upon the prospector's face, and had not the young couple been so full of their own happiness they would have noticed the sad, far-away look in the old man's eyes. He was huddled in his chair, but straightened himself suddenly up at the first sound of approaching footsteps. By the time the young people were at his side, he was the same genial companion as of old.

"Having pleasant dreams?" Glen asked, as she took a seat by his side, while Reynolds sat opposite.

"Evenin' dreams, Miss," Samson thoughtfully replied, as he looked into the girl's bright, animated face, and intuitively divined the meaning of her happiness. "They're different from day-dreams, ye know, 'specially when yer settin' before a fire like this. Things come to ye then which ye imagined ye had forgotten long ago."

"You must have had some wonderful experiences in this land," Reynolds remarked. "And what scenes you have witnessed, especially in winter. If only you were an artist or a poet, what masterpieces you could produce."

Samson reached for his pipe, filled and lighted it in thoughtful silence. Glen and Reynolds gazed into the fire, fascinated by the leaping, curling flames. Their hearts were so filled with joy that they could think of little but their own overflowing happiness.

"Yes," Samson at length began, "I have seen some wonderful sights, an' no mistake. I ain't no artist nor poet as fer as puttin' things on paper or canvas is consarned. But it's all here," and he tapped his breast with the fingers of his right hand. "When I hear the great mountains a-roarin' at night when the wind is abroad, an' at times listen to the breezes purrin' down their sides, I tell ye I'm a poet then. An' at night, 'specially in winter, when the moon is full an' ridin' aloft above the highest peaks, an' the hull land is lit up with a wonderful glory, then I'm an artist. I s'pose them things are all right in their way," and the old man gave a deep sigh, as he looked wistfully into the fire. "But they don't altogether satisfy the soul. One needs the touch of human nature, the bond of fellowship, an' the warm fire of love to make life really worth livin'. Now, I could tell ye about a man—but thar, you two don't want to hear a yarn from me to-night. You've got other things to think about."

"Indeed we do," Glen declared. "I'm just in a mood for a story. It will help to pass the time until daddy returns. I wonder what in the world is keeping him."

"Oh, he'll be here shortly, so don't worry," Samson told her. "He'll come so suddenly, mebbe, that ye'll be surprised. I find that it's ginerally the unexpected that happens in this world. An' so ye want to hear me little yarn, eh?"

"Certainly we do," and Glen settled herself comfortably in her chair.

"Well, I warn ye at the outset that it's about some of the deepest things of life; of love an' sich like. But it's true as the Gospel."

"That should make it all the more interesting," Reynolds replied. "We are both young, remember, and are fond of such things."

"Sure, sure, I'm well aware of that," and the prospector's eyes twinkled. "Now, this story of mine goes back quite a number of years. It is about a man who was carryin' on a very prosperous bizness in a sartin city, the name of which I shall not mention jist now. He had everything that his heart could desire, sich as money, friends, a good home, a wife who was one in a million, an' a little child who made that home full of joy. Then suddenly a great change took place. His wife died, an' the man was left

dazed an' helpless. He no longer took any interest in his bizness, an' his one object was to git away from people, far off into the wilderness that he might be alone with his sorrow. The day at last came when he was missed in the city, an' his friends an' acquaintances did not know what had become of him. But thar was one thing that made them think he was not dead, an' that was something which appeared in one of the papers. I remember the exact words:

"I go from the busy haunts of men, far from the worry an' bustle of bizness life. I may be found, but only he who is worthy will find me, an' whoever finds me, will, I trust, not lose his reward. From the loopholes of retreat I shall watch the stress an' fever of life, but shall not mingle in the fray."

Before Samson had ended, Reynolds was on his feet, standing excitedly before him.

"That man is Henry Redmond!" he exclaimed. "Did you know him? Have you any idea where he is?"

"Set down, young man, set down," the prospector ordered. "Don't git excited. Yes, I'm speakin' of Henry Redmond. No doubt ye've heard of him."

"Indeed I have, and if you know where he is, tell me quick."

Samson's eyes twinkled with amusement as he waved Reynolds back to his chair.

"Jist be patient until I git through with me yarn, will ye? I'm mighty glad that yer so interested in the story. Yes, the man was Henry Redmond, an', as I told ye, he suddenly lit out to parts unknown. But I know what happened to him. He did leave the busy haunts of men, an' went far off into the wilderness, takin' with him his little child. He lived alone fer a time in a cabin that he built. He thought that he could be happy with nature, an' find comfort fer his great heart-ache in the loneliness of the wild. But he soon found out his mistake. He needed human companionship more'n he could git from his little child. After a while he jined himself to a band of Injuns, became their leader, an' ruled 'em with a strong hand. Fer a time this gave him some comfort, an' he believed that sich a life was all that he could desire. He had his books, an' when he wished he could talk with the natives, whose lingo he soon larned."

Samson paused and gazed for a few minutes steadfastly into the fire. Reynolds had listened to every word and he could not tolerate the least delay. A startling thought had come suddenly into his mind which stirred him to a high pitch of excitement.

"Go on," he ordered. "Finish your story."

Samson aroused from his reverie, and looked keenly into the young man's eager eyes.

"Whar was I?" he asked. "Oh, yes, I remember. It was jist whar Redmond had settled down among the Injuns. Me mind was wanderin' a bit, due, no doubt, to old age. Well, Redmond tried to find peace an' contentment in the little village. From the loopholes of retreat he did watch the ways of civilization, an' the more he watched, the more dissatisfied he became. He longed fer the companionship of people of his own kind, fer between him an' the Injuns thar was too wide a gap. He needed the company of white people, an' that he did not have. He did not care to visit the outside world fer fear of bein' recognized. Then something happened which made a great change."

"What was it?" Glen eagerly asked, for she, too, was intensely interested.

"It was the discovery of gold in the very region whar Redmond thought he was secure from all contact with civilized life. The miners flocked into the place, pokin' their noses into every hole an' corner, until Redmond found it necessary to keep them at arm's length an' at the same time strike terror into their hearts, that he might protect his Injuns from their evil influence."

"Why, that's just like daddy," Glen remarked. "He won't allow the miners to come to Glen West."

"Sure, sure. Any man would have done the same as Redmond did. Thar was nuthin' else fer him to do. But after the miners came, he had a great longin' to meet 'em, an' talk to 'em in a friendly way. At first he didn't know how to manage this without bein' found out. But by a lucky chance he came across an old Injun, who had once been a great medicine-man, an' was a mighty good hand at makin' disguises. So he fixed up Redmond in sich a way that no one could tell but what he was a real old sourdough prospector who had spent most of his life lookin' fer gold."

A half suppressed exclamation from Reynolds caused Samson to turn quickly in his direction.

"Hey, anything wrong?" he asked. "Ye seem to be somewhat excited. Nuthin' serious, I hope?"

"Yes, there is," was the emphatic reply. "But go on. Never mind me."

"I s'pose I might as well git along with me yarn," the old man continued. "Yes, Redmond got all fixed up as a prospector, an' then he visited the minin' camps fer miles around. No one suspected who he was, an' so he used to come an' go in a most mysterious manner, to their way of thinkin'."

"What did he call himself?" Reynolds asked.

"I'll come to that later, young man," and Samson slyly tipped him a warning wink. "We'll jist call him Redmond fer the present. He sartinly did have a great time of it, an' no one was the wiser. An' he uster travel to the outside, too, an' everybody put him down as an old prospector hardly worth considering. Say, it was great fun fer Redmond."

"But where was his child all this time?" Reynolds questioned.

"Oh, she jist stayed at home with a housekeeper Redmond got, an' grew up to be a fine slip of a gal. Then when she was old enough, her dad decided to send her outside to school. But when she came home fer the holidays she was somewhat unsettled, an' didn't want to stay in the north. She longed fer society, fine dresses, an' sich things. This worried her dad a great deal. But one day she happened to come across a chap who took her fancy, an' that made all the difference in the world. He saved her from a grizzly on Crooked——"

Samson never finished the sentence, for with a startled cry, Glen was on her feet, her body trembling with emotion, and her eyes wide with wonder.

"Are you Henry Redmond?" she demanded. "Are you my father?"

For an instant only did the old man look at the girl, then with a swift, deft movement he swept the long beard from his face, and the white hair from his head.

"Daddy!" It was all that Glen could say. She trembled, and would have fallen had not her father caught her in his arms, and held her close to his breast. For a time no one spoke, and Glen's sobs were the only sound heard.

"There, there, dear, don't feel so badly," her father at length told her. "Come, let me brush away your tears. One would think that I had committed some terrible deed."

"But I can't help it, daddy," the girl replied. "This is all so sudden, and such a great surprise. But I feel better now, so we can talk it all over. There are so many questions I want to ask."

The storm had now passed, and once more they resumed their seats. Glen, however, kept her eyes fixed intently upon her father's face.

"And to think that you have deceived me all these years," she upbraided. "Don't you feel thoroughly ashamed of yourself?"

"I suppose I should," was the laughing confession. "But I have had so much innocent fun out of it that my conscience doesn't trouble me in the least."

"And it was you all the time who travelled on the same steamer as I did," Glen mused. "I thought it strange that you should be going up or down the coast whenever I did."

"Yes, I was keeping a good watch over you. I must confess that you behaved yourself very well."

"Was it not difficult to play your part as a prospector?" Reynolds asked.

"Not after I got used to it, though at first it was a little awkward. But I threw myself so gladly and heartily into the character I had assumed that I really believed for the time that I was Frontier Samson. I might explain that he was a prospector I knew years ago, and was one of the finest men I ever met. So you see, it was quite easy for me to imitate him."

"How did you happen to lay claim to me, sir, on the *Northern Light*?"

"Oh, that is easily explained. I was always on the lookout for young men different from the ordinary miners who come to this country, and so spotted you at once. I surmised from the first that you were not on your way up here for gold alone, and so I was anxious to learn the story of your life."

"And did you?"

"Don't you think I did?" and a humorous expression shone in Redmond's eyes. "Didn't I listen to your

words and study you as you were never studied before, unless it was by your mother? But when I found that you were in love with a girl beyond the Golden Crest I became doubly interested, and determined to prove your soul and find out your worth. The final test was made that night you faced me in my study at Glen West. Had you faltered then or shown the white streak, you would have been dumped beyond the pass."

The speaker paused and gazed thoughtfully into the fire. There was an expression of sadness in his eyes, and his face was somewhat strained and drawn. Both Glen and Reynolds noted this as they watched him in silence. At length he turned sharply to Reynolds, and spoke in a rapid and agitated manner.

"Young man," he began, "you have found me. I had given up all hope of anyone doing so. I was not easily found, as I wrote in that note I left behind. You have found more than my mere body—you have found my soul, my real self, and that was what I meant. And you have found something else, which is more important in your eyes—you have found your reward—the treasure of all treasures to me. Take her; she is yours, and may God bless you both."

Outside, the wind howled through the trees and over the lake. It beat upon the cabin and drove the rain lashingly against the small window-panes. But within the cabin all was peace and happiness. The flames from the burning sticks illumined the faces of the men and the girl as they sat and talked far on into the night. Many were the questions asked and answers given. They opened their hearts to one another, and as they talked and planned, all the disagreeable events of the past were forgotten, and the future looked rosy and bright. It was especially so to the young lovers as they sat close to each other, hand in hand, heart responding to heart, each thrilled with a love, deep, pure and tender—a love which transformed the commonplace into a realm of enchantment, beauty, and peace.

CHAPTER XXXI

OUTWARD BOUND

It was Saturday night and Andrew Harmon, editor of the *Telegram* and *Evening News*, was sitting in an easy chair in his bachelor quarters. It was a cozy room, and the pictures on the walls and the well-filled book-shelves revealed the artistic and literary taste of the owner. The large shaded electric lamp on the table cast its soft light upon Harmon's face as he sat there with his right hand supporting his firm, clean-shaven chin. It had been a trying week, and he was very weary. He was thankful that it was Saturday night, as he would be able to rest the next day, and think over a special editorial he was planning to write.

Harmon was really a lonely man. Of a reserved and retiring disposition, he had no desire for publicity. As editor of one of the leading papers in the city, he could express his views and remain unknown to most of the readers. His editorials were always written with great care and thought, and they were eagerly read by friends and opponents alike. Such work had always given him considerable pleasure as he felt that he was doing his part in moulding the thought of the community along true and strong lines. But to-night it all seemed of little avail. He had labored, but what had been the result? The only one upon whom he had lavished his affection had disappointed him, and was almost a stranger to him now. Mechanically he picked up a telegram from the table and read it again.

"Am leaving to-night on the *Princess May*."

"TOM."

That was all. It was dated three days ago, from Skagway, Alaska. Harmon held the telegram in his hand for some time, although he was not looking at the words. He was thinking of the sender of that message, wondering what was bringing him home. What would he do with him when he arrived? he asked himself. He tried to think of something that would satisfy Reynolds' restless spirit; that would give an outlet to his abounding energy. He had fondly hoped that Tom would throw himself into newspaper work, and thus make the *Telegram* and *Evening News* a greater force than ever. New blood was needed on the staff, he was well aware, and Reynolds was just the man for the work. He sighed as he thought of the futility of his dreams, and how impossible it was to make the young see with the eyes of age and experience.

For some time Harmon sat there, lost in deep thought. At length he arose and prepared himself for dinner. He was about to leave the room, when a knock sounded upon the door, and in another instant Tom Reynolds stood before him. Eagerly Harmon rushed forward, seized him by the hand, and bade him a hearty welcome.

"Tom, Tom!" he cried. "I am delighted to see you. I had no idea the boat had arrived. Come, sit down and tell me all about yourself."

"Just a minute," Reynolds laughingly replied. "Have you had dinner yet? No? Well, that's fortunate, as I want you to come and dine with me at the 'Pacific.'"

"At the Pacific!" Harmon looked his surprise and disappointment. "Why did you go there? I was expecting you here. And, besides, isn't it rather expensive?"

"It was at one time," and again Reynolds smiled. "But I have struck it rich, so I want you to come and have a blow-out with me to-night. You will come, won't you? I shall feel badly if you don't. The car is waiting."

Harmon could not very well refuse, although he much preferred to remain where he was, and hear the young man's story in the quietness of his own room. He was surprised at Reynolds' animated face and happy manner. How he had changed since he had seen him last. He could hardly believe it possible that this was the young man who but a short time before had been so listless and indifferent to life.

Little was said as the car sped onward through the city, until it at length drew up before the big hotel. With the air of one who had the full right of way, Reynolds at once conducted Harmon to a door on the first floor, which he opened and entered. It was one of a suite of rooms, Harmon could tell at the first glance. It was luxuriously furnished, and to live here for even a short time would be most costly.

He had little time, however, to think of such things, for a curtain was suddenly drawn aside, and Redmond and his daughter appeared. Although years had somewhat changed the former, yet Harmon recognized him at once. He stood as if rooted to the floor, so great was his surprise. What happened next he was never able to tell with any degree of certainty. He knew that Redmond seized him by the hand, and presented to him his daughter. He felt that he made a fool of himself, for his eyes grew very misty and his words became confused as he tried to express himself. He saw Reynolds smiling at him good-naturedly as he stared first at Redmond and then at his daughter. He longed to get away to the quietness of his own room that he might think it all over. But there was no chance for that. He was entrapped by these friendly plotters, and here he was forced to stay.

"Do you remember the words I wrote?" Redmond asked. "I think you will recall them. I said, 'I go from the busy haunts of men, far from the bustle and worry of business life. I may be found, but only he who is worthy will find me, and he who finds me, will, I trust, not lose his reward.' That is part of my message, you remember."

Harmon merely nodded in reply.

"Very well, then," Redmond continued. "I have been found, and he who found me stands there," and he motioned to Reynolds.

"So I surmised," Harmon replied. "And gold, I suppose, is the reward?"

"No, no," Reynolds protested. "Here is my reward," and he stepped over to Glen's side. "Where are your senses, sir?"

"Sure, sure, what was I thinking about?" and Harmon placed his hand to his head in perplexity. "I seem to be all upset to-night. But, my, my, what a reward! Why didn't I undertake this quest? for then the reward might have been mine."

Redmond and Reynolds smiled, but Glen immediately stepped forward, and putting her arms about the neck of the embarrassed man, kissed him upon the cheek.

"There, you have your reward, sir," she announced. "And if you are willing you may have me as a daughter. How will that do?"

Harmon was now more confused than ever. Not since the last time his mother kissed him had a woman's lips ever touched his face. And this girl had really kissed him, Andrew Harmon, the staid and sober editor of the *Telegram* and *Evening News*! What would his associates think and say if ever they heard of it? He thought of all this as he stood there abashed with the girl's twinkling eyes fixed upon him.

"But perhaps you do not consider me a reward, sir." It was Glen speaking, so with an effort Harmon rallied his tumultuous senses. He must rise to the occasion, and say something. He mopped his perspiring brow with his handkerchief, and looked helplessly around.

"Reward!" he gasped. "Not consider you a reward! Oh, Lord! what have I done to merit such happiness? You as my daughter! You the fairest of the fair, the flower of womanhood, you, you——"

"Come, come, sir," Reynolds laughingly chided, as Harmon floundered for words. "You will make me jealous if you are not careful. But suppose we have something to eat, as I, for one, am hungry. Dinner is already served, and waiting for us. This is a part of our surprise; a private dinner, with plates set for four."

"It is certainly wonderful what money will do," was Harmon's comment as he took his seat at the table at Glen's right hand. "Little did I expect such surprises to-night."

"Isn't it delightful!" the girl replied. "I have heard so much about you lately, and what a great man you really are, that I felt quite nervous at the thought of meeting you. But I am not one bit afraid of you now."

Redmond and Reynolds laughed, and even Harmon smiled. The editor was happy and contented, and life seemed very pleasant just then. He was satisfied to listen in silence while Reynolds related the story of his experiences in the north, and his great triumph in winning the only daughter of the dreaded ruler of Glen West.

"It all seems to me like a fairy-tale," Harmon, remarked, when Reynolds had finished. "To think that in so short a time you have undergone such wonderful adventures, discovered my old friend, and won this fair maiden. And the gold; what of it? You will begin mining at once, of course."

"We intended to do so," Redmond replied. "But on our way here we were fortunate enough to sell our interests to one of the largest mining concerns in the United States for a most gratifying sum. You see, there was great excitement in that region when it was learned that gold had been discovered. Miners literally flocked into the place, and the wilderness has been suddenly converted into a busy mining camp. We were offered large sums for our claims, but refused all until we reached Whitehorse. There we were met by the agent of the great Hibberdash Mining Company, and so tempting and liberal was his offer, that we sold out our entire interests. We are perfectly satisfied, as we shall now be free from all mining worries."

"This is really wonderful!" Harmon exclaimed. "What a write-up that will make for my paper. You must let me have the entire story, Redmond. And you will write it, won't you?"

"Business as usual, I see," and Redmond smiled. "When time permits, I shall do what I can. I expect to be very busy for the next two weeks, and after that I must go north again."

"Go north again!" Harmon repeated. "Why, I thought you were through with the north forever."

"Oh, no, not at all. I have work to do there yet. It is necessary for me to be present at the trial of that villain, Curly, and that will take some time. Then I wish to visit Glen West, and attend to some matters there. Sconda and his wife will look well after our house, for we plan to go there every summer for a holiday. And we shall take you, too, for I know you would enjoy the scenery."

"That would be a great treat to me," Harmon replied. "But you will have time to write that article before you leave, will you not?"

The others laughed, so anxious was the editor for the welfare of his paper.

"I am afraid I shall not have time now," Redmond told him. "There is much to be done in the two weeks before the great event."

"The great event! I do not understand."

"Look," and Redmond drew his attention to Glen's blushing face. "Now do you understand?"

"Oh, I see," and Harmon smiled. "A wedding; is that it?"

"It seems so from all appearance, and that means a great deal of work for us all."

"And you will live here?" Harmon eagerly asked, turning to Glen.

"We hope to, Mr. Harmon, providing you care to have your daughter so near. If not, we can stay in China or Japan, and you will not be troubled with me."

"Stay in China or Japan! What do you mean?"

"We intend to go there on our wedding trip," Reynolds explained. "We have planned a tour around the world. We expect to see great sights, such as the fine art galleries of the old countries. Then when we come home, I shall continue my painting which I have neglected too long already."

"Lord bless us!" and Harmon held up his hands in amazement. "This is all wonderful, and my poor old head is confused and dizzy. Going abroad! Coming home to carry on your painting! My, what will money not do! So my paper must go to the wall when I am gone, all because of your art. Dear me!"

"Do not feel so badly about it, sir," Reynolds soothed. "Your son and daughter will help you out, and perhaps carry on when you are gone. But you are good for years yet, so do not worry. We shall do our best to cheer you up."

"And you will live here in the city?" Harmon questioned.

"Certainly," Glen replied. "We are going to look for the nicest and coziest place, with a garden and flowers. Nannie will be in charge until we return, and keep us straight afterwards. I could not get along very well without her. And it will be your home, too, Mr. Harmon, whenever you wish to come. I am sure that you and daddy will have wonderful evenings together talking over old times. Oh, won't it be great!" Glen's eyes sparkled, and her face beamed with animation.

Harmon believed that he had never met a more charming girl. As he sat in his own room late that night, and thought over the strange events of the evening, a picture of Glen's face was ever before his mind. It banished his care and weariness, and as he recalled the kiss she had given him, a smile illumined his face, and for a time Andrew Harmon was young again. Once more the fire of youth was kindled within him, and a vision of one fair face he had known years ago stood out clear and distinct, a face he had always cherished in his heart, the only real passion for a noble woman he had ever known. . .

Two weeks later Glen and Reynolds stood upon the bow of the *Empress of China* as she headed out to sea. It was early evening, and the glow of the departing sun shed its soft and rosy-tinted light upon the rippling water. They had been quietly married that afternoon in one of the city churches, and Redmond and Harmon had accompanied them to the steamer. They did not need a clamoring crowd to bid them farewell, as they were all-sufficient to each other. So as they stood there in the deepening twilight, they faced the eastern sky, all glorious with the light of the vanished sun.

"How beautiful!" Reynolds murmured, for his soul was stirred at the sight, and his heart overflowing with love and happiness. "It lies right before us, does it not, sweetheart? Perhaps it is a token of the joy that lies ahead."

"Only in a way," and Glen gave a sigh of contentment, as her hand stole gently into his. "That light will shortly fade, and it will be dark over there. But to us the light leading us on must never fade, for the future must be always bright with the glory of a love that never dies."

"You are right, darling," and Reynolds pressed her hand more firmly, and drew her closer. "No matter what happens the light of love shall always surround us and glorify the future. Oh, what happiness is ours! How much life holds in store for us!"

Glen's only reply was the lifting of her happy face to his and nestling closer to his side. And there they silently stood, lost to all around them, facing with the zest of youth and love the mighty Pacific, and at the same time the far greater and more mysterious ocean of life, with all its joys and sorrows, its seasons of tempests, and its days of calm and sunshine.

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