

Ellis Edward Sylvester

A Waif of the Mountains



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CHAPTER I

AT NEW CONSTANTINOPLE

IT had been snowing hard for twenty-four hours at Dead Man's Gulch. Beginning with a few feathery particles, they had steadily increased in number until the biting air was filled with billions of snowflakes, which whirled and eddied in the gale that howled through the gorges and cañons of the Sierras. It was still snowing with no sign of cessation, and the blizzard blanketed the earth to the depth of several feet, filling up the treacherous hollows, caverns and abysses and making travel almost impossible for man or animal.

The shanties of the miners in Dead Man's Gulch were just eleven in number. They were strung along the eastern side of the gorge and at an altitude of two or three hundred feet from the bed of the pass or cañon. The site protruded in the form of a table-land, offering a secure foundation for the structures, which were thus elevated sufficiently to be beyond reach of the terrific torrents that sometimes rushed through the ravine during the melting of the snow in the spring, or after one of those fierce cloud-bursts that give scarcely a minute's warning of their coming.

The diggings were in the mountain side at varying distances. The success in mining had been only moderate, although several promising finds raised hopes. The population numbered precisely thirty men, representing all quarters of the Union, while five came from Europe. The majority were shaggy, bronzed adventurers, the variety being almost as great as the numbers. Some had been clerks, several were college graduates, a number were the sons of wealthy parents, and one was a full-fledged parson, while there was a certain percentage who had left their homes to escape the grip of the offended law.

With that yearning for picturesqueness which is a peculiar trait of Americans, the miners felt that when their settlement had attained the dignity of nearly a dozen dwellings, it was entitled to an appropriate name. The gorge, which seemed to have been gouged out of the solid mass of boulders and rocks, when the mountains were split apart in the remote past, was known from the first by the title already given, which also clung to the diggings themselves.

The single saloon presided over by Max Ortigies, was the Heavenly Bower,—so *that* point was settled, but when it came to naming the settlement itself, the difficulties were so numerous that days and weeks passed without an agreement being reached. No matter how striking and expressive the title offered by one man, the majority promptly protested. It was too sulphurous, or too insipid or it lacked in that nebulous characteristic which may be defined as true Americanism. It looked as if the problem would never be solved, when Landlord Ortigies, taking the bull by the horns, appointed a committee of three to select a name, the others pledging themselves to accept whatever the committee submitted.

But the mischief was to pay when on the night of the blizzard the committee met at the Heavenly Bower to make their report. The chairman insisted upon "E Pluribus Unum," the second member's favorite was "Murderer's Holler," while the third would not listen to anything except "Wolf Eye," and each was immovably set in his convictions.

Budge Isham was not a member of the committee, but he was known as a college graduate. From his seat on an overturned box at the rear of the room, where he was smoking a pipe, he asked troublesome questions and succeeded in arraying the committeemen so fiercely against one another

that each was eager to vote, in the event of failing to carry his own point, in favor of any name objectionable to the rest.

The chairman as stated favored the patriotic name “E Pluribus Unum,” and boldly announced the fact.

“It has a lofty sound,” blandly remarked Isham; “will the chairman be good enough to translate it for us? In other words, what does ‘E Pluribus Unum’ mean?”

“Why,” replied the chairman with scorn in his manner; “everybody oughter know it means, ‘Hurrah for the red, white and blue.’”

“Thank you,” returned Isham, puffing at his pipe.

Vose Adams, the second committeeman, felt it his duty to explain his position.

“The trouble with that outlandish name is in the fust place that it has three words and consequently it’s too much to manage. Whoever heard of a town with three handles to its name? Then it’s foreign. When I was in college (several disrespectful sniffs which caused the speaker to stop and glare around in quest of the offenders); I say when I was in college and studying Greek and Chinese and Russian, I larned that that name was made up of all three of them languages. I b’leve in America for the Americans, and if we can’t find a name that’s in the American language, why let’s wait till we can.”

This sentiment was delivered with such dramatic force that several of the miners nodded their heads in approval. It was an appeal to the patriotic side of their nature—which was quick to respond.

“Mr. Chairman,” said Budge Isham, addressing the landlord, who, by general consent, was the presiding officer at these disputations, and who like the others failed to see the quiet amusement the educated man was extracting, “if it is agreeable to Mr. Adams, to whose eloquent speech we have listened with much edification, I would like him to give us his reasons for calling our handsome town ‘Murderers’ Hollow.’”

The gentleman appealed to rose to his feet. Turning toward the man who had called upon him, he gave him a look which ought to have made him sink to the floor with mortification, preliminary to saying with polished irony:

“If the gentleman had paid attention as he oughter, he would have obsarved that I said ‘Murderer’s Holler,’ not ‘Murderers’ *Hollow*.’ I would advise him not to forget that he ain’t the only man in this place that has received a college eddycation. Now as to the name: it proclaims our stern virtue and love for law.”

The orator paused, but the wondering expression of the bronzed faces turned toward him showed that he would have to descend to particulars.

“When violators of the law hear that name, what does it say to them? It says that if any murderer shows his face in this place, he will receive such rough handling that he will have to holler ‘enough,’ and will be glad to get out—I don’t see what there is to laugh at!” exclaimed Vose angrily, looking threateningly around again with his fists clenched and his gaze fixed specially upon the grinning Budge Isham.

“There’s some sense in what Vose says, which ain’t often the case,” remarked Ike Hoe, the other member of the committee, “but the trouble will be that when folks hear of the name, they won’t think to give it the meanin’ that he gives it. They’ll conclude that this place is the home of murderers, and, if it keeps on, bime by of hoss thieves. If it warn’t for that danger, I might go in for backing up Vose with his name, but as it stands it won’t do.”

The argument of Ike had produced its effect. There was little sympathy in the first place for the title, and that little was destroyed by the words of Ike, who proceeded to plead for his own choice.

“Now as to ‘Wolf Eye.’ In the first place, it is short and easy to say. There ain’t any slur in the name, that might offend a new comer, who would think the ‘Murderer’s Holler’ contained ungentlemanly allusions to his past. It is warning, too, that the place has got an eye on everybody

and has teeth as sharp as a wolf. Then there is poetry in the name. Gentlemen,” added Ike in a burst of enthusiasm, “we oughter go in for poetry. How can any one live in such a glorious country as this with the towering kenyons around him, with the mountains thousands of feet deep, with the grand sun kissin’ the western tips in the morning and sinking to rest at night in the east,—with the snow storms in summer and the blazing heat in winter—with the glo—”

“Hold on! hold on!” called Budge Isham, rising solemnly to his feet, with hands uplifted in protest; “if Ike doesn’t stop, he’ll have us all standing on our heads. There’s a brand of liquor down in Sacramento called ‘Wolf Eye;’ I don’t make any charges, gentlemen, against my friend Ike, but you can draw your inferences. Wolf Eye won’t do.”

A general laugh greeted this sally, seeing which the indignant Ike turned the tables upon Budge with an admirable piece of sarcasm.

“Seeing as how all of us together don’t know ’nough to git up a name that will suit, I move that the college eddycated gentleman supplies the brains and does it himself.”

The crushing irony of this remark was spoiled by Budge accepting it in all seriousness. He bowed his head and gracefully thanked the satirical Vose.

“I shall be very glad to do so. The committee meant well enough, but the trouble was that there were too many fools on it—”

At this point Wade Ruggles sprang to his feet, with the fierce question:

“Does the gentleman refer to *me*?”

His hand was at his hip on the butt of his revolver and matters looked squally, but the tactful Budge quelled the rising storm with Chesterfieldian grace. Waving his hand and bowing, he said:

“I did not intend the remotest reference to you.”

Vose Adams came up promptly.

“Then it’s *me* and I’m ready to make any man eat his words.”

“My good friend is mistaken; nothing could induce me to apply such a term to him; I hold him in too high esteem.”

Since this left Ike Hoe as the only remaining member, he began to show signs of explosion, perceiving which the incomprehensible Budge proceeded to mollify him.

“And Ike knows that I would be the last person in the world to slur a gentleman from whom I as well as the others have received so much instruction.”

Ike was mystified. He looked at the other members of the committee and then into the faces of the group. He couldn’t make it out.

“If it’s all the same, Mr. Chairman, since the gentleman has said there was too many fools on the committee, and has just explained that he didn’t mean any one of us three, I’ll be obliged if he’ll explain who in thunder he did mean.”

This sounded unanswerable, but the cunning Budge was equal to the occasion.

“It gives me pleasure to answer the question of the gentleman: my remark was made in a Pickwickian sense.”

He leaned forward with a beaming smile, as if his explanation left nothing to be added. No one understood to what he referred, but all were too proud to admit the fact. There was a general nodding of heads, and Ike, with the manner of a man who magnanimously accepts the humble apology of him whom he has worsted, leaned back on his stool and audibly remarked:

“That makes it all right.”

Budge Isham resumed his seat, when he was reminded that he was expected to submit a name for the new settlement.

“I beg pardon,” he said, rising again, “it is a fact known to this highly intelligent assemblage, that every city of prominence in Europe has from one to forty namesakes in this country. There is one exception, however; doubtless all know to what city I refer.”

In response to his inquiring looks, the group tried to appear as if the name was familiar to them, but no one spoke.

"It is hardly necessary for me to mention the city, but I may say it is Constantinople."

A contemptuous sniff greeted this proposal.

"That's the worst yet," said Wade Ruggles, drawing a match along the thigh of his trousers to relight his pipe, which had gone out during the excitement; "the man that insults this party with such a proposition, ought to be run out of the place."

"What's the matter with it?" demanded Budge.

"It's too long in the fust place," commented Ike Hoe; "it bothers a man to git his mouth around it and it hain't any music, like the other names such as Starvation Kenyon, Hangman's Noose, Blizzard Gorge and the rest. I stick to mine as the purtiest of all."

"What's that?"

"'Blazes,' short and sweet and innercent like."

Landlord Ortigies was leaning with both elbows on the bar. The new name struck him favorably.

"I'm inclined to agree with Budge," he said, "cause there hain't any other place that's hit onto it. All of them names that you chaps have tried to spring onto us, have been used in other places, or at least some part of the names, but, as Budge has observed, no galoot has scooped 'Constantinople.'"

"'Cause no one ain't fool enough," observed Ike Hoe, who noted the drift of the sentiment.

"But they'll pounce onto it powerful quick if we don't grab it while it's passin'; it's a good long name, and what if it does make a chap sling the muscles of his jaw to warble it? All the better; it'll make him think well of his town, which I prophesy is going to be the emporium of the West."

"Let's see," growled Wade Ruggles, "Constantinople is in Ireland isn't it?"

"Where's your eddycation?" sneered Ike Vose; "it's the oldest town in Wales."

Landlord Ortigies raised his head and filled the room with his genial laughter.

"If there was anything I was strong on when I led my class at the Squankum High School it was astronermly; I was never caught in locating places."

"If you know so much," remarked Ruggles, "you'll let us know something 'bout that town which I scorn to name."

"I'm allers ready to enlighten ign'rance, though I've never visited Constantinople, which stands on the top of the Himalaya Mountains, in the southern part of Iceland."

"That's very good," said Budge Isham, who with his usual tact maneuvered to keep the ally he had gained, "but the Constantinople I have in mind is in Turkey, which is such a goodly sized country that it straddles from Europe to Asia."

"Which the same I suppose means to imply that this ere Constantinople will do likewise similar."

"No doubt that's what it'll do in time," assented the landlord.

"I beg to offer an amendment to my own motion," continued the oily Budge; "when the boom strikes this town, as it is bound soon to do, and it rivals in size the famous city on the other side of the Atlantic, there should be something to distinguish the two. We have no wish to rob any other place of the honors it has taken centuries to gain; so, while we reserve the principal name, I propose that we distinguish it from the old city by prefixing the word 'New.'"

"You mean that this town shall be 'New Constantinople?'" was the inquiring remark of the landlord.

"Precisely; and I now make the motion that that be our name."

There were seventeen persons present and it looked as if a decision was inevitable. The landlord was shrewd. His first act was to invite all to drink at his expense, after which he made each

pledge himself to abide by the decision, whatever it might be. These preliminaries being arranged, a show of hands was called for. The vote was eight for and eight against the new name.

“That’s a tie,” commented the landlord from behind his immense beard; “and therefore the question ain’t settled.”

“It’s easy ’nough to settle it,” said Ike Hoe.

“How?”

“Take another vote.”

“I don’t see how that’ll do it, unless some one changes his mind; but again, gentlemen: all who favor the new name, raise their right hands.”

Eight horny palms were elevated in air, while the same number were displayed in the negative. The landlord looked troubled.

“We must keep it up till some one weakens,” observed Wade Ruggles.

The host scanned the earnest faces in front of him.

“Which of you gentlemen will promise to weaken if we keep this thing up for half the night?”

“I’ll stay here a week,” was the reply of Vose Adams, while the general nodding of heads showed that he echoed the sentiments of the others. The landlord met the crisis with becoming dignity.

“Gentlemen, when I was a member of Congress, all questions that was tied was settled by the presiding officer casting the deciding vote, and which as aforesaid we don’t lay any claim to being higher than Congress, I therefore, by virtue of the aforesaid right vested in me, cast my vote in favor of this city being called New Constantinople, which the same is on me again; gentlemen, what will you have?”

It was a coup d’etat, the victory being clinched before the opposition realized it. Ere the company had fairly recovered from their bewilderment, Budge Isham declared that the victory was really his, due to the good sense and high toned chivalry of his friends, and he insisted upon doing the honors. He would accept no denial and the engaging style in which he acquitted himself of this duty restored good humor. Thus it was that the little mining town of the Sierras in the days that are gone received its title.

The Heavenly Bower consisted of two large apartments, both on the ground floor. The one at the rear was used by Landlord Ortigies for sleeping, eating and partial storage purposes. When Vose Adams made his quarterly visits to Sacramento, he was accompanied by two mules. They were not necessary to take and bring the mail, since the pocket of Adams’ great coat was sufficient for that, but they carried down to Sacramento several empty casks which came back filled, or rather they were thus when the return journey was begun, but to the dismay of the proprietor of the Heavenly Bower, he found that they were barely two-thirds full, when unloaded at his place. Vose explained that the leakage was due to the roughness of the trail. Since there seemed no other way of overcoming this, the landlord sent an extra cask with the request to Vose that he would confine his leakage to that and Vose kindly obliged him.

The stuff thus provided for the Heavenly Bower was generally in concentrated form, thereby permitting a dilution which insured a full supply for the customers who were afflicted with an eternal thirst.

The bar room was of extensive proportions. Nearly all of one side was occupied by the bar. Opposite was the huge fireplace, and scattered around were a number of stools, rickety chairs and strong boxes which served equally well for seats.

The crackling fire, the genial warmth and good cheer within the room were the more striking because of their contrast with the howling storm without. The gale roared around the corners of the rude but strong structure, rattling against the massive door and the log walls, spitting vicious gusts down the chimney and flinging great drifts hither and yon with a fury that threatened to send the building skurrying through the snowy space.

“It’s the worst blizzard we ever had,” remarked Wade Ruggles, after one of these violent outbursts; “God pity any one that’s abroad to-night.”

“It reminds me of that zephyr last winter,” observed Vose Adams, “when I was bringing your freight, Max, from Sacramento.”

“I remember,” nodded the landlord; “you started with two kegs and got here with about half a one; the leakage was tremenjus on that trip.”

“True; the blizzards is always rough on Mountain Dew, and sorter makes it shrink,” replied the unblushing Vose.

“Can’t you stop the casks leaking so much,” inquired Felix Brush, who had been a parson in Missouri, and claimed that he had never been “unfrocked.”

The landlord solemnly swayed his head.

“Not as long as Vose has charge of the freight—”

At that instant a dull but resounding thump was heard on the roof overhead. It shook every log in the structure, checked speech and caused each man to look wonderingly at his neighbor.

“The mountain has fell on us!” exclaimed Ike Hoe in a husky whisper.

“If it was the mountain,” said Budge Isham, slightly raising his voice, as the courage of the party came back; “none of us would be able to tell of it.”

“Then it’s a rock—well, I’m blessed! the thing is moving!”

Something was certainly astir in the mass of snow overhead.

“I guess it’s a angel that has lost its way,” submitted Hoe.

“More likely it’s a grizzly b’ar that’s stumbled off the rocks—”

But all these speculations were scattered to the winds by the sound of a voice muffled and seemingly far away, which came to them through the storm:

“Helloa, the house!”

CHAPTER II

WHAT THE BLIZZARD BROUGHT TO NEW CONSTANTINOPLE

A moment after the hail was heard from the roof, the muffled noise which accompanied it ceased. The stranger groping about in the snowy gloom had stepped off the roof into the huge drift outside the Heavenly Bower, and a minute later, lifted the latch of the door and pushed in among the astonished miners. They saw the figure of a sturdy man holding something in his arms, so wrapped round with blankets and coverings that no one could tell its nature. He stamped the snow from his boots, shook himself like a shaggy dog, then walked heavily to the chair which Budge Isham placed near the fire for him, and almost fell into it.

“Good evening, friends,” he said in a grave voice; “It was no fault of mine that I tried at first to enter by the roof.”

“When I built the Heavenly Bower,” replied Landlord Ortigies; “I meant to place a door up there, but there wasn’t anybody in New Constantinople with enough sense to know how to do it. I ’spose you was looking fur it, stranger.”

“No,” was the reply, “I wasn’t looking for anything; I was just walking, walking through the storm, not knowing or caring where I went. I can’t say how far I came, but it must have been a number of miles. I was still plodding on, when I set my foot on vacancy and down I went.”

“Gracious! you fell nearly a hundred feet,” said Parson Brush; “it was a wonderful providence that saved you from being dashed to death.”

“The snow on the roof must be five or six feet deep,” replied the stranger; “for it received me as if it were a feather bed. I saw a glow from the top of your chimney against the rocks and knew I was on the roof of a house. I hardly felt jarred and groped my way off into a lot more snow and here I am.”

The astonishment of the listeners did not make them forget the laws of hospitality. Budge Isham looked significantly at the landlord, but he had already drawn a glass of spirits and was coming from behind the bar with it.

“Stranger, swallow this; you look cold; you’re welcome to the Heavenly Bower, whether you come through the roof or down the chimbley.”

“Thank you; I’ll take the whiskey in a minute.”

And then feeling that he owed those who made him so welcome some explanation of his coming among them, the stranger said:

“My friends, my name is Maurice Dawson. About two months ago, I left Independence, Missouri, with an emigrant train for the Pacific coast. The elements, disease and the Indians made such inroads upon us that after a time only half a dozen families remained. As if that wasn’t enough, the few survivors quarreled over the course to follow, most of them aiming for a pass through the mountains into Southern California, while I, the greatest fool of them all, set out to find Dead Man’s Gulch, of which I had heard from a party of trappers. My canvas covered wagon, with a single span of horses, contained all my worldly goods, and my companions were my wife and little girl Nellie, only three years old. Everything might have gone well but for this blizzard, which jumbled up the points of the compass and made traveling so difficult that after a time it became impossible.”

All were listening with the closest interest, and every heart was touched by the emotion of the man, which he could not control for several minutes. No one interrupted, and, feeling that his story was not quite completed, he added:

“I fired my gun in the hope of attracting attention, but fortunately for others I was the only one abroad. By and by the horses stopped. They could draw the wagon no further. They stood panting

and exhausted and soon lay down in the snow. I turned to speak to my wife, when I found she had been dead for some minutes, the cold carrying her off as quietly as if she were dropping asleep. Before she passed away, she wrapped nearly all her clothing about Nellie, who was cuddling beside her, so that really the mother, like the noble woman she was, gave her life for the little one. It was because Nellie was alive, that I jumped out of the wagon and began floundering through the snow. I ploughed blindly forward until providence guided me to you.”

While uttering the last words, Maurice Dawson was tenderly unwrapping the bundle in his arms. There were many folds to draw away, but at last he reached the treasure within, which was his Nellie, still sound asleep.

If the miners were startled by the resounding thump on the roof, they were now almost struck dumb with amazement. They sat with open mouths, staring eyes and for a minute no one spoke or stirred.

“God bless you, my Nellie,” murmured the father, bending his head and touching his lips to the cool forehead; “I had no hope of this when I left your dead mother and started on my tramp through the snow.”

A general sigh went up from the group of awed miners. Wade Ruggles, who had been leaning on the bar, with his gaze fixed on that of the handsome stranger, was the first to recover from the spell which held them all. Tiptoeing across the room, he paused in front of the father and his child and stared, wondering and speechless. Then one by one the others did the same, until the whole company were grouped around the man and child, each afraid to whisper, as if doing so would dissolve the heavenly vision.

When the wrappings had been laid aside, and the little one was placed upright, she stared bewildered into the shaggy faces around her. Her big blue eyes were open to their widest extent, the mass of golden curls rippled about her shoulders and the fairy-like feet were inclosed in thick, warm shoes and stockings. The dress of a dull brown color and thick texture, fitted her tiny frame perfectly and she formed a most winsome picture of infantile beauty.

For fully five minutes all stared in silence at the marvelous picture. As before, Wade Ruggles was the first to come to himself, but when he spoke, it was in an awed, hesitating whisper:

“Is she really alive?”

The sorrowful face of the father lit up with a faint smile as he answered:

“Yes; thank heaven; alive and well.”

“May I touch her?” timidly asked Ike Hoe, extending his finger which faintly brushed the rosy cheek, and was instantly snatched away as if he felt he had done a sacrilegious thing.

“I say,” ventured Ruggles gathering courage, “I wonder now if she would let me take her in my arms for a minute or so; I won’t drop her; but that’s too much to ask, howsumever.”

While he stood hopeful, hesitating and doubtful, Nellie with a half frightened smile, dived her head under the arm of her father, as if to get away from the embarrassing situation. He gently fondled the golden hair and drew her face into view again.

“There, little one, there’s nothing to be frightened at; these people are all your friends and will do anything they can to please you.”

“You’re right!” exclaimed Landlord Ortigies, with a shake of his head; “we’ll do anything in the world for you; if you say the word, I’ll stand on my head or stand any one else here the same way.”

And he showed an alarming inclination to invert himself for the amusement of the child, but she did not seem to grasp the meaning of the offer. She fixed her eyes upon Ruggles, who made bold by what seemed a favorable sign, took a step forward and invitingly extended his hands. She debated for a moment, whether to meet the proffer and then with the impulsiveness of infancy leaned toward him. With a thrill of pleasure the grizzled miner carefully placed his huge arms

underneath hers, and lifted her as if she were a doll from her father's knee. As he did so, every one saw the big tears trickling down his cheeks.

"I can't help it, boys," he said apologetically; "the last child I held in these arms was my own Jennie, and she was dead."

With infinite affection, he pressed his bearded lips against the chubby cheek, while she, relieved of all fear, flung her dimpled arms about his neck and kissed him in return. With one hand, she lifted the flapping hat from his head and with the other smoothed away the luxuriant hair from his forehead.

"I like you ever so much, but you are crying," she said sympathetically; "what makes you do that? Haven't you got a little girl like me?"

"No, my precious child; I once had just such a sweet tot as you, but the good Lord took her from me, and I love you just as I loved her."

"And that's what we all are going to do," remarked Ike Hoe, with a sniff as he drew his sleeve across his eyes; "this beats anything in the history of New Constantinople, by seven hundred and eighty-four thousand majority."

"Come, Wade, you must be fair with us," said the landlord, reaching out his arms; "we all claim an equal share in her."

The miner felt the truth of this, and without a word relinquished the treasure. Drawing his handkerchief, he wiped his eyes clear of their mist and jealously followed the surrendered one as she was fondled in turn by the others. First one and then another, until she had completed the round. All had something pleasant to say to her and she replied in her sweet innocent way, causing laughter and winning her path straight to the hearts of the hardy fellows, to whom such endearments had been unknown for years, but whose better natures were stirred by the presence of the child, as if she were in reality an angel sent from heaven.

Felix Brush had purposely left his turn for the last, hoping thereby to retain her longer than his friends. After chatting with her for a moment and repeating some rigmarole that set her laughing, followed by the request for him to say it again, he stood her on the bar. Then he danced in front of her, swung his arms like a jumping-jack, and told some outlandish fairy story from the stock that no one had ever suspected he possessed.

"Can you stand on your head?" asked Nellie, rippling over with fun.

"Certainly," he replied, as without a moment's hesitation, he inverted himself and cracked his heels together, though the attitude was such an unfamiliar one that he careened and went over on his back with a thump that made the room tremble. Nellie clapped her chubby hands with delight and before Brush could repeat the performance, she called:

"Catch me; I'm going to jump."

"All right; I'm ready for you."

She recoiled a step to gather momentum and Landlord Ortigies, terrified at the fear that she might step off backward, made a dive round the end of the bar, catching his foot in an obstruction and falling with a crash that drew all attention to him.

"I'm so sorry; be you hurt?" asked Nellie, turning her head and surveying him, as his face came up to view like the full moon rising above the horizon.

"Not a bit; I done that on purpose to make you laugh; I always do that to please good little girls like you."

"Bime by I'll let you fall all the time, but just see me jump."

Felix Brush was still standing, with arms outstretched, and, without a second's hesitation the child leaped off into space. She showed no fright, for there was no cause for it, since she was caught fairly and securely. Inasmuch as she had been fondled by every one, and the parson had had her longer than anyone else, he set her down on the floor and she began running here and there,

displaying a childish curiosity to understand everything in sight. Going to the half-opened door, communicating with the darkened apartment at the rear, she peeped timidly in.

“Who lives in dere?” she asked, turning around and addressing the whole group who were laughingly watching her.

“That’s where I live,” replied Ortigies.

“Do you live all alone?”

“Yes, my child.”

“Haven’t you got any little girl like me?”

“No; I’d give all I have in the world if I had.”

“Wouldn’t you like to have me for your little girl?”

“Indeed I would; will you be my little girl?”

The baby face became thoughtful. She thrust one finger in the corner of her mouth and looked down at the floor.

“What would papa do and those other folks? I will be the little girl for all of you.”

This struck the party as the brightest and wittiest expression ever made by a mortal. They laughed, clapped their hands and striking each other on the shoulder wanted to know whether anything of the like had ever before been heard. Certainly not. Without paying any heed to them, Nellie was peering into the room again.

“It’s dark and cold,” she said in an awed voice, turning her face around, the better to communicate the information; “but I ain’t afraid.”

Before she could fairly enter the place, her father, who was affectionately watching her, said:

“I guess you would better not go in there, Nellie; it’s growing late and is time you prepared for bed.”

“I’ll fix a place for her,” said Ortigies; “we ain’t much on style here, but I can manage to make her comfortable.”

“But will it not discommode you?”

“That little gal can’t discommode any one in New Constantinople; if she would prefer to have me go out and sleep in the snow, I’ll be glad to do it.”

“I’ve just the place for her,” interposed Wade Ruggles; “couldn’t be better if I had taken a week to get it ready.”

“Can’t begin with my quarters,” Felix Brush hastened to say, and there would have been a general wrangle for the privilege of accommodating the little one, had not her father, seeing how matters were going, smilingly raised his hand in protest.

“I cannot tell you, my friends, how much I thank you all for your kindness. Ah, if my poor wife could have held out until she reached here, but that was not to be. I shall be glad to stay with Mr. Ortigies to-night, and with your permission shall remain for a few days in your settlement. I have lost everything I owned in the world, and will need some time to decide what is best to do. Our stay in New Constantinople will give all a better chance to get acquainted with Nellie. I’ll surrender her to you until you get tired of her.”

“Get tired of her!” repeated Vose Adams, voicing the sentiments of all; “we’re not the kind of galoots to git tired of an angel.”

The father expressed his thanks with such winsome grace, that every man instinctively felt that he was a born gentleman. There was not a miner in the room who did not sympathize with him in his affliction, and yet they envied him the possession of the child, whose innocence and beauty impressed them as more wonderful than they had ever looked upon before. When Felix Brush whispered to Budge Isham that arrangements must be made in some way to keep the father with them, for the sake of having the child, his friend nodded his head, and said he had made up his mind to the same effect from the moment the parent referred to the matter. And the sentiments of these two were those of the rest.

“Come, Nellie, let me prepare you for bed; it’s a long time since you have had that privilege.”

The little one obediently walked to her father and turned her back to him that he might better remove her clothing.

“I suppose you have plenty of covering for her?” remarked the parent inquiringly to the landlord.

“There’s all she can need.”

Lifting her on his knee, the father began removing the shoes and stockings, the little one giving what aid she could, when it came to the garments. One of the last acts of the affectionate mother had been to place upon her child the gown she was accustomed to wear while asleep. When at last she was ready, she looked up to her father and asked in a half whisper:

“Where’s mamma?”

“She will not be with us to-night.”

“Then she will come in the morning?”

“Wait until then, my child; don’t say anything more about mamma now.”

She was satisfied, and signified that she was ready to have her father carry her to her bed. Then she exclaimed with a laugh:

“Ain’t that funny?”

“What’s that?”

“I like to fordot to say my prayers.”

And slipping from her father’s knee, she knelt on the floor, with her hands covering her face which, as it pressed his knee, was hidden by the mass of golden ringlets clustering and falling about it. Not a man stirred or spoke. All were so silent that the sifting of the snow against the logs, the moaning of the gale and the soft rustle of the embers that broke apart on the hearth were audible. But all these were as the “voice of silence” itself, so that when the child began her prayer in a low voice, every syllable was heard.

“Now I lay me down to sleep.
I pray the Lord my soul to keep;
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take.
God bless papa, mamma and make Nellie a good girl; bless—”

Wheeling short round at the silent, awed group, she looked at the landlord and asked:

“What is your name?”

“Or-ti-gies,” he replied, pronouncing it carefully.

She made rather sorry work at first, but there could be no doubt that the One to whom she was addressing the petition understood her wishes. When she had satisfied herself and included the landlord in her prayer, she ceased again, and this time looked up at her father whose hand was resting on her head.

“I must pray for *all* of them, musn’t I?”

“Certainly, my child.”

“But I don’t know dere names.”

“They will all tell them.”

No act of worship in church or grand cathedral was more solemn and reverential than that of the men, as each in turn stepped softly forward with bowed head, and repeated his name to the tiny petitioner, who immediately included it with those for whom she had already prayed and it was wafted upward through space to Him who delights to hear and answer such petitions.

She did not forget one. To make sure, she looked up while still on her knees and asked:

“Did I fordot any of you?”

“No,” replied the parent; “you have not missed any. That’s a good girl.”

“And I know they will all be good, for I asked God to make ’em so.”

The father now rose to his feet with her in his arms, and she called a general good night, flinging a kiss to all. Landlord Ortigies had lit an extra lamp and with it in hand, he led the way to the rear room, where as he stated, comfortable quarters were provided for the little one. Since the Heavenly Bower was the only place in the mining settlement where the wanderer, who occasionally made his way into that remote part of the world, could expect to find sleeping accommodations, Ortigies was always prepared for visitors. Thus he was able to furnish the father with a couch so placed that he virtually shared the bed with his child.

Ten minutes later, when he stole back into the room with the landlord to see whether everything was right with his child, she was found sunk in the sweet, dreamless slumber of infancy. The picture was so winsome as she lay with her cheek resting upon the rough pillow, that Ortigies stepped softly to the door and beckoned to his friends. Everyone stole forward, and stood looking down for several minutes upon the sleeper, and, as he did so, new resolves sprang into his heart. Already it may be said they were better men because of the blessed messenger that had come among them.

CHAPTER III

A SLIP OR TWO

The blizzard gradually subsided toward morning, but when the fall of snow ceased, it lay to the depth of several feet on the level, while the gorges were choked with vast drifts. The cold was below zero and no work could be done in the diggings until a rise in temperature came.

It was hardly light, however, on the succeeding morning, when three of the miners accompanied Maurice Dawson in his search for the abandoned wagon and team. There was not a trace of anything resembling a trail, the footprints of the man having been obliterated by the wind-driven snow, and the skill of the party was taxed to the utmost. Several times they were compelled to rest, and Dawson himself suggested that the search be given up until a change in the weather; but the kind hearted men saw how deeply he grieved, and their sympathy kept them toiling until about noon when success came.

The wagon was so covered with snow that it resembled a hummock, which ordinarily would have been passed without notice. The horses and the inanimate form within were like blocks of wood. The slight figure was lifted tenderly from its resting place and brought to Dead Man's Gulch.

Since the last recollection of Nellie was when she supposed her mother alive, it was deemed kinder that she should not look upon the lifeless form again. With hard labor the picks and shovels hollowed out a shallow grave into which the form, wrapped about with a single blanket, was laid away to rest until the last day.

The father, when questioned by the little one, explained that her mother had gone on a long, long journey and there was no saying when she would be seen again. Nellie cried a good deal and it saddened her parent's heart, when stealing softly into her room, he saw the traces of tears on her cheeks. Who can tell the sorrows of childhood when such a cruel affliction comes upon it? But it is a blessed truth that time is the healer of all wounds, and after awhile the little one ceased to ask about her mother. When the whole truth was told her, she had become old enough to bear the blow.

Maurice Dawson's first purpose was to remain only for a week or two with the friends of himself and child. He had set out for the Pacific coast, and, although it was still a thousand miles distant, he felt it his duty to press on, but he suffered himself to be dissuaded, when it was explained that the prospect of obtaining gold was as good at New Constantinople, whereas, if he continued his journey, he would have to make his home among strangers, who were not likely to feel the interest in him and his child that was felt by those who were the means of saving their lives. Furthermore, since he had lost his team, he was without the means of pressing on. None of the emigrant trains turned so far out of their course as to come to Dead Man's Gulch, and nothing was plainer than that the citizens of that place would not give the least help in an enterprise that was to deprive them of Nellie. It is impossible to say what would have followed, had he persisted in his first decision, for while the men might have consented to let him go, they would have rebelled had he attempted to take the child from them.

And so it came about, we repeat, that Maurice Dawson decided to make his home indefinitely in the town that had been christened New Constantinople. With the help of his neighbors, Landlord Ortigies divided his rear room into two apartments, one of which was turned over to the parent and his child. Nearly every miner brought some article, such as a fragment of mirror, a picture or trinket and presented it to the little one, whose room naturally became the finest in New Constantinople.

Dawson himself joined the miners at their work, all showing an eagerness to lend him a helping hand, and there was reason to hope that in time there would be a fair reward for their labor. He was not only an educated man, but was strong and enterprising, considerate of the feelings of others, and now that his life partner was gone, he had but the little daughter to live for. Gladly he

toiled for her, for no child was ever more tenderly loved by parent than she. His thoughts turned to the future, but for some years he believed it was better that she should remain where she was.

Nellie Dawson became the pet of the mining town. There was not a man in the place, no matter how rough his ways, nor how dark had been his past, who was not made the better by her presence. She touched a responsive chord in every heart. She awoke tones that had been silent for years, and stirred into life resolves that had lain dormant for a generation. When the weather grew milder with the approach of spring, she flitted like a bird from cabin to cabin, equally at home and dearly prized in all. Many a time when night came, the father was unable to find her, and perhaps saw nothing of her until the next day, but he never felt any solicitude. He knew that some of the men had persuaded her to remain with them, and he was too considerate to rob them of the pleasure of listening to her innocent prattle, while they racked their ingenuity and threw dignity to the winds in the effort to entertain her. Each one strove to make her think more of him than the others, and it ended by her loving them all.

As a rule, Nellie ate her morning meal at home, after spending the night with her father, and then she was off for the day, returning or remaining away as her airy fancy prompted. Her sweet influence in the mining camp was beyond the power of human calculation to fathom. No gauge could be placed upon it. Like the sweep of an angel's wing, her coming seemed to have wafted nearly all the coarseness, wrong and evil from her path.

"There's a serious question that I want to lay afore this company," gravely remarked Wade Ruggles one night in the Heavenly Bower. Dawson was absent with a brother miner at the lower end of the settlement, so the gathering felt at liberty to discuss him and his child. Wade of late had fallen into the habit of taking the lead in such discussions, and Landlord Ortigies was quite willing to turn over the honors of the chairmanship to the outspoken fellow.

The remainder of the company were smoking, drinking and talking as the mood took them, and all looked inquiringly at the speaker, seeing which Wade continued with the same earnestness he had shown at first:

"It is this: that little angel that was tossed down here in the blizzard is growing fast; she's larning something cute every day; she notices things that you don't think of; fact is she's the smartest youngster that was ever born. Does any gent feel disposed to dispoat the aforesaid statement?" he abruptly asked, laying his hand on the butt of his revolver and looking severely around in the faces of his friends.

No one questioned the assertion. Had it been left to them to choose the words, they would have made them stronger.

"Wal, the remark I was about to remark is that I hear some coarse observations once in awhile. I may say that I have indulged in a few myself when the 'casion was suitable and called for 'em, but I want to give notice that the thing must stop in the presence of the angel."

"Your suggestions generally ain't worth listenin' to," observed Ike Hoe, "but there's solid sense in them words. I have been troubled over the same thing and was goin' to submit a proposition."

"You're a purty one to do it," commented Vose Adams scornfully; "why it's only yesterday that I heerd you say 'darn' just because I happened to smash the end of your finger, with the hammer I was drivin' a nail with."

"Did the little one hear him?" asked Wade Ruggles, while an expression of horror settled on every countenance.

"No, sir!" declared Ike; "afore I indulged in the expression, so proper under the tryin' circumstances, I looked round to make sartin she wasn't in hearing distance."

"You must have looked very quick," said Vose; "for the horrible words was simultaneous with the flattenin' of your big forefinger. Howsumever, I gazed round myself and am happy to say she warn't in sight. If she had been, I'd smashed all your fingers."

“A very proper Christian spirit,” commended Wade; “I hope all the rest of you will strive to emeralate it.”

Felix Brush was leaning on the end of the bar with a glass of steaming toddy, which he had partly sipped, and was now caressing with his hand.

“Gentlemen,” said he impressively, “permit me a word. Wade has touched a subject which appeals to us all. I have given it much thought for the past few days and feel it my duty to look after the religious instruction of the child.”

Two or three disrespectful snickers followed this declaration. The parson instantly flared up.

“If any reprobate here feels a desire to scoff, he’s only to step outside for a few minutes and see who can get the drop on the other.”

Everybody knew that the parson was always well heeled, and no one questioned his courage. His friends contented themselves with pitying smiles and significant glances at one another. Felix hastily swallowed his toddy, with the evident intention of airing his emphatic views, when Wade Ruggles interposed:

“Pards, you’re gettin’ off the track; we hain’t got to the religious racket yit; that’ll come later. What I want to ’rive at is as to using cuss words and improper language where the angel hears it. It ain’t ’nough for us to agree that we won’t do it; it must be fixed so we don’t take no chances.”

This was not exactly clear and Wade was asked to be more explicit.

“I mean that there must be a penalty, such as will stop a galoot that has once offended from doing the same thing again.”

This clearly intimated that the punishment which the chairman had in mind was of a frightful nature. The landlord begged Wade to come down to particulars.

“My idee is that whoever offends this little one by improper language shall be filled full of bullet holes: how does *that* strike you?”

“It hits me just right!” responded the landlord, with several nods of his head; “but there’s one thing in the way.”

“What’s that?” demanded Wade, showing some temper at this attack upon his scheme.

“It ’lows a man to say the improper words in the hearin’ of the angel, *afore* he’s shot; so it won’t prevent her ears from being ’fended. Can’t we fix it some way, so that she shan’t hear ’em at all?”

“There’s no trouble about that,” solemnly remarked Budge Isham from his seat at the further end of the room; “You have only to find out when a fellow has made up his mind to use improper language in the presence of the child, and then shoot him before he can say the words.”

“But how shall we know he’s going to say ’em?” inquired the chairman, who in the earnestness of his feelings felt no suspicion of the honesty of his friend.

“You will have to judge that by the expression of his countenance. I think when a fellow has made up his mind to swear his looks give notice of what is coming. The rest of us must be on the alert and pick him off before the words get out of his mouth. And yet I am sorry to say,” added Budge gravely rising to his feet, “that there is one serious drawback to my proposition.”

“The chairman is anxious to hear it.”

“There might be mistakes made. A man’s expression is not always an index of his thoughts. He might be suffering from some inward pain, and be in the act of uttering some expression, but his face could have so mean a look that if our law was in force, he would be shot on sight. For instance, studying these faces all turned toward me, I should say, speaking on general principles, that all except one or two deserve, not shooting, but hanging, and if looks were to determine a man’s depth of infamy, mighty few of you would live five minutes.”

Budge sank gravely into his seat and resumed smoking, while his friends, understanding his trifling character, contemptuously refused attention to his disrespectful remarks. In the general discussion which followed, several insisted that the only proper punishment for the grave offence

was death; but the sentiment crystallized into the feeling that that penalty was somewhat severe for the first breaking of the law. It was proper enough for the second crime, but a man who had been accustomed to picturesque and emphatic words was liable to err once at least while on the road to reformation. The agreement finally reached was that the offender should be heavily fined, compelled to fast several days, or, more frightful than all, be deprived of the privileges of the bar for the same length of time. When the last penalty was fixed there were several suppressed groans and a general setting of lips, with the unshakable resolve to steer clear of that appalling punishment.

Everything was serene for several days, when, as might have been anticipated, the explosion came. Al Bidwell, in coming out of the Heavenly Bower, caught the toe of one of his boots and fell forward on his hands and knees. Two of his friends seeing him naturally laughed, whereupon, as he picked himself up, he demanded in the name of the presiding genius of hades, what they saw to laugh at. By way of answer, one of them pointed to Nellie Dawson, who ran forward to help him to his feet.

“Did you hurt yourself, Mr. Bidwell? I’s so sorry.”

“You may well be, little one,” was the bitter response, as he realized his awful offence; “for this will play thunder with me—there it goes agin! Please don’t say another word,” he exclaimed desperately, striding down the street to save himself from piling up a mountain of unpardonable crimes.

The committee did not gather until late that evening, for Nellie was at home and it was thought advisable to wait until she was asleep, so that she should not know anything of what was in the air. The conversation was in subdued tones until Mr. Dawson tip-toed out of the rear room, with the announcement that the little one was sunk in slumber.

“Such bein’ the case,” remarked Wade Ruggles, with becoming gravity, “this meeting will proceed to bus’ness. Pard, a hein’us crime has been committed among us. In the proud history of New Constantinople, we’ve had hangin’ bees; we’ve shot three Injins ’cause they *was* Injins; there has been any number of holes plugged inter them as was a little careless of speech, and more’n once there has been the devil to pay, but nothin’ like this, *never*! Vose Adams, you was one as heard this wretch Bidwell indulge in his shocking profanity. You’ll be good ’nough to give the partic’lars to the gents that I must warn to brace themselves fur the shock.”

Vose Adams told the story which was familiar to all. He and Budge Isham were approaching the Heavenly Bower that forenoon, the cause being a due regard for the requirement of the laws of health, when Albert Bidwell, the accused, stubbed his toe. Hearing a laugh, he looked up and demanded to know what the — they were laughing at. While the query, though objectionable on æsthetic grounds, might have passed muster in the diggings or anywhere in New Constantinople previous to the advent of the angel at present making her home with them, yet the horror of the thing was that the aforesaid angel heard it. She ran to the help of the villain, who added to his monumental crime by calmly remarking to her that what he had just said would play thunder with him.

This second offence was unanimously felt by those present to be more unpardonable than the first, since it was in the nature of an addendum, had nothing to do with the business proper, and worst of all, was addressed to Nellie herself.

Chairman Ruggles turned his severest frown upon the prisoner, who was sitting disconsolately on a box, and drawing at his brier wood pipe, which in the depth of his emotion, he failed to notice was unlighted.

“What has the prisoner to say fur himself?”

Bidwell shuffled to his feet, took the pipe from his mouth and looked around upon the cold, unsympathetic faces.

“Wal, pard,” he remarked, heaving a great sigh, “I don’t see that there’s anything partic’lar fur me to say. When a thing is fairly proved onto you, you can’t make nothin’ by denyin’ of the same. I’ve been tryin’ to walk a chalk line ever since the angel arrove among us. Two or three times

I fell over backward and bruised my head, owin' to my tryin' to stand up too straight. I was just bracin' myself to do the same as aforesaid, when comin' out of this disgraceful place, when I took a headlong dive and struck the earth so hard, I must have made a bulge in China. Two unmannerly ijuts that happened to see me, instead of expressin' sorrer for my mishap, broke out laughin', and in my righteous indignation, I asked them a emphatic question."

"Ord'narily," observed the Court, "your explanation would do. In the old times, nothin' would have been said if you'd drawed your gun and give 'em a lesson in manners, but that aint the question afore the house: Why did you do it in the presence of the angel?"

"Didn't see her till after the crime was committed."

"But why didn't you look fur her to larn whether she was in sight or was liable to hear your shocking words?"

"Didn't think of it."

"Your reply only aggervates the offence. If any man feels that he must swear or bust, he must bust, purvided the little one is in sight; or he must hold in till he can climb on top of the rocks, or creep among the foothills where he's sure of being alone. The Court hain't any 'bjection to your thinking all the cuss words you want to, but you mus'n't speak 'em when she's about. You understand the position of the Court?"

"I'd be a fool if I didn't," growled the accused.

"It's onnecessary to understand 'em in order to be a fool, Mr. Bidwell, but how 'bout your second offence, when you used the word 'thunder,' and addressed it to the gal herself?"

The prisoner felt that nothing could be said in palliation of this charge.

"That *was* bad bus'ness, I'll confess; but I was so disgusted with myself that I didn't know what I was doing or saying; the words come out afore I had time to pull myself together. I was so afeard of adding something still worser that I just rushed off to git out of danger."

"There's where you showed the first grain of sense the Court ever knowed you to show. If I had been in your place, I would have jumped off the rocks, into the kenyon, two thousand feet below. If you'd done that you'd been saved the disgrace of being put on trial in this honorable Court. Gents," added Ruggles, glancing from the prisoner into the expectant faces, "since the man owns up, it rests with you to fix the penalty for his crime of bigamous murder."

The prisoner resumed his seat and the chairman looked around, as an invitation for those present to express their views. When they came to do so, a wide diversity came to the surface. Vose Adams suggested that the criminal be compelled to go without any food for three days, but this was not favorably received, since the rough, trying life which each man had been compelled to follow at times during the past years, made the punishment much less than it appeared to be.

Ike Hoe suggested that instead of food, the accused's liquid refreshment should be shut off for the time named. The accused groaned.

When this had continued for some time, Felix Brush, the parson, took the floor.

"Gentlemen, it's a principle in law to be lenient with the first offence, and, since this is the first time that Bidwell has offended and he deeply feels his disgrace, why not require him to apologize to the young lady and stand treat for the crowd, with the understanding that his next crime shall be visited with condign punishment?"

"Do you propose to let him off?" demanded the wrathful chairman.

"Yes; for this once, but never again."

"I'll never consent to anything of the kind! The dignity of the Court must be preserved; the law must be executed, and any man who says 'devil' or 'thunder' in the presence of the little gal, I don't care what the circumstances, orter to be shot, so that there wont be any delay in his going to the devil, where he belongs."

"O, Mr. Ruggles, I heard you!"

A little figure dressed in white stood at the door leading to the rear room, and the startled auditors turning their heads, saw Nellie Dawson, with her chubby finger pointed reprov- ingly at the dumbfounded chairman.

CHAPTER IV

SUITING THE PUNISHMENT TO THE CRIME

Wade Ruggles was speechless. He sat with his mouth wide open and his eyes staring at the little figure, as if it were a veritable apparition. All the others looked in the same direction. Nellie Dawson stood for a moment with her finger pointed reprovingly at the chairman, and then turning about ran back into the rear room and plunged into her bed.

“Max, quick!” said Ruggles faintly, pointing to the black bottle at the rear of the bar. The landlord hastily poured out some of the fiery stuff, and the miserable fellow swallowed it at a gulp. It served partly to revive him, but he was really on the verge of collapse.

The only one of the company not impressed was Maurice Dawson, father of the little girl. He was sitting well back of the rest, where no one paid attention to him. Comprehending the meaning of this incident, he drew his hand across his mouth to conceal the smile that could not be wholly restrained. Then he hurried back into the room to see that his child was “tucked up” and properly covered for the night. Finding himself in the dark, where he could not be observed, he laughed deeply and silently, his mirth all the greater because of the oppressive gravity of every one else. Then bending over, he said, as he kissed the little one:

“I thought you were asleep, Nellie?”

“So I was, but Mr. Ruggles spoke those bad words so loud he woked me.”

“You mustn’t get up again, will you?”

“Not if you don’t want me to.”

“I have just told you I don’t wish you to.”

“Then I wont get up.”

The father lingered in the room, until he mastered his disposition to laugh, and then, when he walked out among his friends no countenance was graver than his.

“I say, Dawson,” said Ruggles, swallowing a lump in his throat, “will you oblige me by acting as chairman?—I don’t feel—very—well.”

The gentleman walked forward to where Ruggles had been standing with his back against the bar, looking down in the faces of his friends. The poor fellow seemed to have aged ten years, as he slouched off to an upturned box near the door, where he dejectedly seated himself.

“What is your pleasure, gentlemen?” asked Dawson, as if presiding over the deliberations of one of the most august assemblages in the land; “I am ready to hear any suggestion or motion.”

Al Bidwell rose to his feet.

“Mr. Chairman, I wish to endorse with all my heart, the soul-stirring, eloquent address to which we have just listened from the late Mr. Ruggles,—I mean the late Chairman. Them sentiments of his is as sound as a gold dollar. He maintains that any gent that uses an unproper word, such as he used and which I scorn to repeat, in the presence of the young lady, who has just listened to his remarks, oughter to be sent to the individooal whose name is too shocking fur me to pronounce, since the aforesaid young lady is in the adjoining apartment, from whence she was awoke by the awful profanity of the gent who lately served as our chairman.”

And having gotten back on Ruggles in this masterly manner, Bidwell sat down, slung one leg over the other, and relit his pipe. The oppressive silence was broken by a prodigious sigh from Ruggles.

Parson Brush, after the stillness had continued some minutes, rose to his feet.

“Mr. Chairman, an extraordinary state of affairs has arisen. You have not forgotten that I plead for charity for Mr. Bidwell, because it was his first offence. My plea was not well received, but my sentiments are unchanged, and I now make the same plea for Mr. Ruggles and on the same grounds.

When he was denouncing in fitting terms the sin of Bidwell, he had no thought of committing the crime himself, but in his earnestness he did. This being plain to all of us, I renew—”

Wade Ruggles bounded to his feet.

“I don’t want any one to plead for me! I ain’t pleading fur myself! I can take my medicine like a man; if there’s any galoot here—”

He suddenly checked himself with an apprehensive glance at the door of the rear room, and then resumed in a more subdued voice:

“I insist that Al Bidwell shall suffer for his onspeakable crime and me too, ’cause mine was onspeakabler. Jedgin’ from the evidence that showed itself, I must have awoke the little gal from peaceful slumber, by them awful words of mine.”

He paused and looked inquiringly at the chairman, who calmly returned his gaze, without speaking. It was Parson Brush who interposed:

“I should like to ask, Mr. Dawson, whether the supposition of Mr. Ruggles has any foundation in fact.”

“It has; when I asked Nellie what caused her to awake, she said it was Mr. Ruggles when he used those bad words.”

“Just what I thought!” exclaimed Ruggles, as if he enjoyed heaping fire upon his own head; “there ain’t any depth of infamy which I hain’t reached. For me to try to sneak out now, when I made such a—(Here he again threw a startled glance at the rear of the room) would be to do something which Wade Ruggles never done in his variegated career of nigh onto forty years. All I ask is that you’ll git through it as soon as you kin and fix our terms of imprisonment or our deaths and hev done with it.”

Al Bidwell took an unworthy delight in prodding the man who had been so severe upon him.

“I beg humbly to suggest to the gent that there are plenty of places in the mountains where he can make a jump of a thousand feet or two into the kenions. Wouldn’t it be a good idee fur the gent to try it?”

“I will if you’ll join me,” retorted Wade, turning upon him like a flash.

“I’ll let you try it first and see how it works,” replied Bidwell, so crushed that he remained silent henceforward.

“Since I am chairman,” said Dawson, with becoming dignity, “it is my duty to listen to suggestions and to hear motions. What is your pleasure, gentlemen?”

No one in looking at the countenance of Maurice Dawson would have suspected he was extracting the keenest enjoyment from these proceedings, yet such was the fact. There was something so intensely ludicrous in the whole business, that only by assuming preternatural gravity could he refrain from breaking into merriment. His policy was to egg on the discussion until the company were ready for a decision, when he would interpose with the proposal to wipe out the whole matter and begin over again. The earnestness of Wade Ruggles, however, threatened to check anything of that nature. He was on his feet several times until Budge Isham, who shrewdly suspected the sentiments of the chairman, protested.

“With all due respect to the parson, to Ruggles and to Bidwell, it strikes me, Mr. Chairman, that they should give the rest of us a show. We have listened to their yawping until it has grown monotonous. Having told us a dozen times, more or less, that he wants us to punish him all he deserves, Mr. Ruggles ought to let it rest with that; but he shouldn’t forget,” added Budge, with the solemn manner which always marked his waggery, “that, if we took him at his word, he would be kicking vacancy this minute. However, this hasn’t anything to do with his general cussedness, but concerns his offence against the young lady. That is all there is before the house, and I insist that we confine ourselves to that—”

“Isn’t that what I’ve been insistin’ on?” demanded Wade Ruggles.

“There you go again! I have the floor, and you have no parliamentary right to interrupt me with your frivolous remarks. Am I correct, Mr. Chairman?”

“You are most unquestionably; proceed.”

“Well, to bring this tiresome matter to a close, I move that Mr. Bidwell be deprived of the bar privileges of the Heavenly Bower for a period of four days, and that the same be denied to Mr. Ruggles for a period of one week. Did I hear a groan?” asked Budge, looking round at the two men, who were trying bravely to bear up under the threatened punishment.

Both shook their heads, afraid to trust their voices by way of reply.

“If the gentlemen will permit me,” said the chairman, “I should like to say a few words.”

“I am sure we shall be glad to hear from Mr. Dawson,” remarked the parson.

“Thank you. What I had in mind is this:—It is creditable to your honor that you should pledge yourselves to refrain from unbecoming language in the hearing of my little girl, for you cannot help being her instructors, no matter how much you may wish it were otherwise. But you are magnifying the matter. I am sure every man of you will strive just as hard, without being incited thereto by the fear of punishment. I would beg to suggest—”

He paused, for, looking at Wade Ruggles, he saw it was useless to go further. Bidwell would have been glad to receive leniency, but his partner in crime was immovable, and it would not do to punish one and allow the other to go free. Dawson was wise enough to accept the situation promptly.

“You have heard the penalties suggested for the offences of the two gentlemen accused. All who favor such punishment will show it by raising their right hands.”

Every man in the room, except the chairman, voted in the affirmative.

“It isn’t worth while to put the negative. The accused have heard the verdict, which is that Mr. Bidwell shall not drink a drop of anything except water or coffee for a period of four days, dating from this moment, while Mr. Ruggles is to undergo the same penalty for a period of one week.”

“That’s right,” growled Bidwell; “for he drank about half of what was in the bottle only a few minutes ago.”

“And you would have drunk it all,” retorted Ruggles, “if you’d knowed what was coming.”

CHAPTER V

A HUNDRED FOLD

All this may seem a trifling matter to the reader who does not understand the real punishment suffered by these two men, who, like all the rest of their companions, had been accustomed to the use of ardent spirits for many years. There was no deprivation which they could not have borne with less distress, but their great consolation was that both knew the penalty was fully deserved, and they would not have complained had it been made more severe.

"I tell you," said Bidwell, at the end of the fourth day, when he had celebrated his release from purgatory, "it pays, Ruggles."

"What pays?"

"The reward you git for all this. At the end of a week you'll have a thirst that you wouldn't take a thousand dollars fur."

"But the week isn't much more'n half gone and I'd sell my thirst mighty cheap now."

"Don't you do it! Hold fast to it."

"That's what I'm doing, 'cause I can't help myself. Howsumever it's the thirst that's holding fast to me."

"That's the beauty of it; it'll git stronger and stronger, and then it's so big that you can't well handle it. It seems to me that ten minutes after I've had a drink, I'm thirsty agin, which reminds me; I'd like to invite you, Wade."

"Invite all you want to, 'cause it won't do any more hurt than good; don't let me keep you," added Ruggles, observing the longing eyes his friend cast in the direction of the Heavenly Bower. Bidwell moved off with pretended reluctance, out of consideration for the feelings of his friend, but once inside, he gave another demonstration of the truth of his remarks concerning thirst.

As for Ruggles, only he who has been similarly placed can appreciate his trial. No man is so deserving of sympathy as he who is making a resolute effort to conquer the debasing appetite that has brought him to the gutter.

On that fourth night the thirst of the fellow was a raging fever. He drank copious draughts of spring water, but all the help it gave was to fill him up. The insatiate craving remained and could not be soothed. It seemed as if every nerve was crying out for the stimulant which it was denied.

"The only time I ever went through anything like this," he said to himself, "was twenty years ago, when a party of us were lost in the Death Valley. Three of 'em died of thirst, and I come so nigh it that it makes me shudder to think of it even at this late day."

A wonderful experience came to Wade Ruggles. To his unbounded amazement, he noticed a sensible diminution, on the fifth day, of his thirst. It startled him at first and caused something in the nature of alarm. He feared some radical change had taken place in his system which threatened a dangerous issue. When this misgiving passed, it was succeeded by something of the nature of regret. One consoling reflection from the moment his torture began, was the reward which Al Bidwell had named, that is,—the glorious enjoyment of fully quenching his terrific craving, but, if that craving diminished, the future bliss must shrink in a corresponding ratio, and *that* was a calamity to make a man like him shudder.

On the evening of the fifth day, he ventured for the first time during his penal term, to enter the Heavenly Bower. He wished to test his self-control. When he sat quietly and saw his friends imbibing, and was yet able to restrain himself from a headlong rush to join them, he knew that beyond all question, his fearful appetite had lost a part of its control over him. Still he believed it was only a temporary disarrangement, and that the following day would bring a renewal of his thirst, with all its merciless violence.

But lo! on the sixth morning, the appetite was weaker than ever. His craving was so moderate that, after a deep draught of mountain spring water, he was hardly conscious of any longing for liquor. He seemed to be losing his memory of it.

"I don't understand it," he mused, keeping the astonishing truth to himself; "It's less than a week ago that I was one of the heaviest drinkers in New Constantinople, and if anyone had told me of this, I would have been sure he'd lost his senses, which the same may be what's the matter with me."

But there was no awakening of his torment during the day, and when he lay down at night, he was disturbed by strange musings.

"If we had a doctor in the place, I would ask him to tell me what it means. The queerest thing 'bout the whole bus'ness is that I feel three thousand per cent. better. I wonder if it can be on 'count of my not swallerin' any of Ortigies' pison which the same he calls Mountain Dew. I guess it must be that."

But that night he was restless, and gradually his thoughts turned into a new channel. A momentous problem presented itself for solution.

"If I've improved so much after goin' six days without drinkin', won't I feel a blamed sight better, if I try it for six weeks—six months—six years—*forever*."

And as an extraordinary, a marvelous resolution simmered and finally crystallized, he chortled.

"What'll the boys say? What'll the parson think? What'll I think? What would that good old mother of mine think, if she was alive? But she died afore she knowed what a good for nothin' man her boy turned out to be. God rest her soul!" he added softly, "she must have prayed over me a good many hundred times; if she's kept track of me all these years, this is an answer to her prayers."

Budge Isham was the partner of Wade, and shared his cabin with him. He slept across the room, and noticed how his friend tossed and muttered in his sleep.

"Great Gee!" he exclaimed, "but Wade's got it pretty bad; I wonder if it's the jim jams that is getting hold of him; I'll sleep with one eye open, for he will need looking after. What a blessed thing it is that he has only one more day. Then he can celebrate and be happy. I have no doubt that by the end of another week, he will have brought things up to their old average."

And with this conclusion, the man who a few years before took the first honors at Yale, shifted his position, so as to keep an eye on his comrade, and straightway proceeded to drop into a sound slumber, which was not broken until the sun rose on the following morning.

The sympathy for Wade was general. Had he not insisted upon carrying out in spirit and letter the full punishment pronounced upon him, there would have been a unanimous agreement to commute his term by one or two days at least; but all knew the grit or "sand" of the fellow too well to propose it.

His actions on the seventh day caused considerable disquietude. He had labored in the mines, in a desultory fashion up to that time, but he did not do a stroke of work during the concluding hours of his ordeal. It was observed by his partner, Budge Isham, that his appetite was unusually good and he seemed to be in high spirits. His friends attributed this to the closeness of his reward for his abstention, but he took several walks up the mountain side and was gone for a good while. He wore a smiling face and Vose Adams declared that he overheard him communing with himself, when he thought he was too far off for the act to be noticed.

"No use of talkin'," whispered Vose; "Wade ain't quite himself; he's a little off and won't be exactly right till after two or three days."

"He has my sympathy," remarked the parson, "but it will serve as a lesson which he will always remember."

“And won’t we remember it?” said Ike Hoe, with a shudder. “When we’re disposed to say one of them unproper words, the picture of that miserable scamp going a full week without a touch of Mountain Dew, will freeze up our lips closer than a clam.”

That night the usual group was gathered at the Heavenly Bower. There were the same merry jests, the reminiscences, the conjectures how certain diggings would pan out, the small talk and the general good feeling. Common hardship and suffering had brought these rough men close to one another. They were indulgent and charitable and each one would have eagerly risked his life for the sake of the rest. Quick to anger, they were equally quick to forgive, mutually rejoicing in good fortune, and mutually sympathetic in sorrow.

There was more than one furtive glance at Ruggles, who was among the first arrivals. Whispers had passed around of his strange actions, and the surprise would not have been great had it been found that he had gone clean daft; but nothing in his manner indicated anything of that nature. He was as full of quip and jest as ever, and none was in higher or more buoyant spirits than he.

He suddenly called:

“Dawson, what time is it?”

The latest comer among them carried a watch which he drew out and examined.

“It is exactly half-past nine.”

“When did my punishment begin?”

“A week ago to-night, precisely at this hour; I began to fear that you had forgotten it.”

“No danger of my ever forgetting it,” grimly responded Ruggles; “what I want to know is whether I have served out my full term.”

“You have unquestionably.”

“Is there anyone here disposed to dispute this statement?” asked Wade, standing very erect and looking around in the faces of his friends.

No one interposed an objection. He had not only the sympathy but the respect of every one.

“You sarved your time like a man,” remarked Ike Hoe; “the week is up and you’ve give good measure.”

“Which the same being the case, I invite all to come forward and liquidate.”

Never was an invitation responded to with more enthusiasm. The grinning Ortigies set out a couple of bottles, intending as a matter of course to join in the celebration. He feelingly remarked:

“Wade, my heart bled for you and thar ain’t a pard here that wouldn’t have been willing to take your place—that is for a limited time,” the landlord hastened to add.

Each tumbler was half-filled with the fiery stuff and all looked in smiling expectancy at their host to give the cue. He poured a small quantity into his glass, and elevating it almost to a level with his lips, looked over the top.

“Are you ready, pards? here goes.”

Up went every glass and down went the stuff. But there was one exception. While the glass was at his lips, and while the familiar odor was in his nostrils, Wade Ruggles deliberately inverted the tumbler and emptied the contents on the floor.

It was the strangest incident that had ever occurred in New Constantinople.

CHAPTER VI

TEACHER AND PUPIL

The group looked at Wade Ruggles in breathless amazement. He had invited them to the bar to join in celebrating his release from thralldom; all had filled their glasses and he had raised his own to his lips, though several noticed that there was only a small amount of liquid in the tumbler. Then, when every glass was upraised and there was a general gurgling, he had turned his glass upside down and spilled every drop on the floor.

Before anyone could think of suitable terms in which to express his emotions, Wade said, with a smile that rather added than detracted from his seriousness:

“Pards, never again does a drop of that stuff go down my throat! I’ve suffered hell, but I’ve come out of the flames, and the one that fetched me through is the little gal which lays asleep in the next room.”

He did not attempt to deliver a temperance lecture to his friends, nor did they trifle with him. They questioned him closely as to how he had reached this extraordinary decision, and he gave a vivid and truthful account of his experience. It made several of the men thoughtful, but most of them felt dubious about his persistence in the new path he had laid out for himself.

“You know, boys, whether I’ve got a will of my own,” he quietly replied; “just wait and see how this thing comes out.”

It was noticed that Parson Brush was the most interested inquirer, and, though he had comparatively little to say, he left the Bower unusually early. He had begun his system of instruction with Nellie Dawson, and reported that she was making remarkably good progress. Had the contrary been the fact, it may be doubted whether it would have been safe for him to proclaim it.

And now the scene changes. It is the close of a radiant summer day in the Sierras. Far down in the cañon-like chasm between the mountainous spurs, nestled the little mining settlement, which had been christened but a short time before, New Constantinople. Here and there tiny wounds had been gouged into the ribs of the mountain walls, and the miners were pecking away with pick and shovel, deepening the hurts in their quest for the yellow atoms or dark ore which had been the means of bringing every man thousands of miles to the spot.

Far up toward the clouds were the towering, craggy peaks, with many a rent and yawn and table-land and lesser elevation, until, as if to check the climbing ambition of the prodigious monster, nature had flung an immense blanket of snow, whose ragged and torn edges lapped far down the sides of the crests. Ages ago the chilling blanket was tucked around the mountain tops, there to remain through the long stretch of centuries to follow.

Down the valley, at the bottom of the winding cañon, the air palpitated with the fervor of the torrid zone. He who attempted to plod forward panted and perspired, but a little way up the mountain side, the cool breath crept downward from the regions of perpetual ice and snow, through the balsamic pines and cedars, with a revivifying power that was grateful to all who felt its life-giving embrace.

The sun hovered in a sky of unclouded azure. It shot its arrows into the gullies, ravines and gorges, but made no impression on the frozen covering far up in cloudland itself. Long pointed ravelings on the lower edge of the mantle showed where some of the snow had turned to water, which changed again to ice, when the sun dipped below the horizon.

The miners were pigmies as they toiled in the sides of the towering mountain walls, where they had toiled for many a day. On the lip of a projecting crag, half a mile above were three other pigmies, who neither toiled nor spun. Viewed through a glass, it was seen that they wore stained feathers in their black hair dangling about their shoulders, with the blankets wrapped round their

forms descending to their moccasined feet. They were watching in grim silence these proofs of the invasion of their homes by the children of another race, and mayhap were conjuring some scheme for driving them back into the great sea across which they had sailed to occupy the new land.

One of the Indians was a chieftain. He had come in violent contact with these hated creatures and he bore on his person the scars of such meeting. All carried bows and arrows, though others of their tribe had learned the use of the deadly firearms, which has played such havoc with the American race.

Suddenly the chief uttered an exclamation. Then drawing an arrow from the quiver over his shoulder, he fitted it to the string of his long bow, and pointing downward toward the group of miners, launched the shaft. Except for the power of gravity, it would have been a foolhardy effort, but guided by the wisp of feather twisted around the reed, the missile spun far outward over the cañon, and dived through the vast reach of space, as if it were endowed with life and determined to seek out and pierce the intruders. The black eyes of the three warriors followed the arrow until it was only a flickering speck, far below them; but, before that moment arrived, they saw that it was speeding wide of the mark. When at last, the sharp point struck the flinty rock, and the missile doubled over upon itself and dropped harmlessly to the bottom of the cañon, it was at such a distance from the miners, that they knew nothing of it. They never looked up, nor were they aware of the futile anger of the red men, who seeing how useless was everything of that nature, turned about and soon passed from view.

The incident was typical of the futility of the red man struggling against his inevitable doom at the hands of his white brother.

Half way between the bottom of the cañon and the lower fringe of the vast mantle of snow, a waterfall tumbled over the edge of a rock, and with many a twist and eddy found its way to the small stream, which rippled along the bottom of the gorge, until its winding course carried it beyond sight. Now and then a rift of wind blew aside some of the foam, like a wisp of snow, and brought the murmur more clearly to the ear of the listener, shutting out for the time, the faint hollow roar that was wafted from the region of pines and cedars. It was a picture of lonely grandeur and desolation, made all the more impressive by the tiny bits of life, showing in the few spots along the mountain wall.

At the rear of the row of cabins, and elevated perhaps fifty feet above, was the comparatively smooth face of a rock, several square rods in extent. At the base was abundant footing for two persons, Parson Brush and Nellie Dawson. The teacher had marked on the dark face of the rock with a species of chalk, all the letters large and small of the alphabet. They were well drawn, for the parson, like others in the settlement, was a man of education, though his many years of roughing it had greatly rusted his book knowledge.

Standing to one side of his artistic work, like a teacher of the olden time, the parson, with a long, trimmed branch in his hand, pointed at the different letters in turn and patiently waited for his little pupil to pronounce their names.

It never would have done to make the child keep her feet like an ordinary mortal. With great labor, three of the miners had carried a stone of considerable size to the spot, which served her as a seat, while receiving instruction. It is true that she never sat still for more than three minutes at a time, but that was enough to establish the indispensable necessity of a chair.

"You are doing very well, my dear," said the parson, encouragingly; "you have received only a few lessons, but have mastered the alphabet. I notice that the 'd's' and 'b's' and 'h's' and 'q's' puzzle you a little now and then, but you have got them straight, and it is now time that we took a lesson in spelling."

"Oh, I can't do that, Mr. Brush," protested the queen, rising from the chair, adjusting her skirts and sitting down again; "I never can spell."

"What is it to spell?"

"I don't know; what is it?"

"I can best answer your question by showing you. Have you ever seen a cat?"

"Do you mean a pussy?"

"Yes; some folks call it that."

"Oh, yes; when we came from where we used to live,—I guess it must have been three or four hundred years ago, we brought my pussy along. Her name was Nellie, the same as mine."

"What became of her?"

"She died," was the sorrowful reply; "I guess she was homesick."

"That was too bad. Now will you tell me what letter that is?"

"Why, Mr. Brush, don't you know?"

"Yes, but I wish to find out whether you know."

"It is C; anybody knows that."

"And this one?"

"A."

"That is right; now this one?"

"T; I hope you will remember, Mr. Brush, because I don't like to tell you so often."

The teacher continued to drill her, skipping about and pointing at the letters so rapidly in turn that he was kept bowing and straightening up like a jumping-jack. Then, allowing her to rest, he pronounced the letters in their regular order, giving them the sounds proper to the word itself. Nellie, who was watching closely and listening, suddenly exclaimed with glowing face:

"Why, that's 'cat'!"

"Of course; now can you say the letters without looking at them?"

After one or two trials she did it successfully.

"There! you have learned to spell 'cat.' You see how easy it is."

"Does that spell 'pussy' too?"

"No,—only 'cat.' After a time you will be able to spell big words."

"Let me try something else, Mr. Brush."

The next word tackled was 'dog,' which was soon mastered. When this was accomplished, the teacher paused for a moment. He was trying to think of another word of three letters, but oddly enough could not readily do so.

"Ah," he exclaimed, "here is another. Now give me the name of that letter,"

"D."

"And that?"

"A."

"And that?"

"M."

"Now say them quickly, 'd-a-m;' what is the word?"

"Why, it's 'dam'; O, Mr. Brush, I heard you say that is a bad word."

The teacher was thunderstruck and stammered:

"I didn't think of that, but there are two kinds of 'dam' and this one is not a bad word. It means a bank of earth or stones or wood, that is put up to stop the flow of water."

CHAPTER VII

PUPIL AND TEACHER

Mr. Brush glanced nervously around, to learn whether any of his friends were within hearing, shuddering to think what the consequences might be. He believed that he could explain the matter to some of the folks, but the majority were so radical in their views that they would refuse to admit the distinction, and would take him to task for teaching improper language to his young pupil. It caused him another shudder at the thought that the same penalty that Wade Ruggles had undergone might be visited upon him, though it is doubtful if the issue would have been similar.

"Ahem, Miss Nellie, when we go back home, will you promise me to say nothing about this part of your lesson?"

"You mean 'bout that bad word?"

"Yes,—let's forget all about it."

"I'll try, but mebbe I'll forget to forget it."

"Likely enough," gloomily reflected the parson; "suppose we try some other words. Ah, we have a visitor."

At that moment Budge Isham climbed into view and sauntered smilingly toward them. Brush added a whispered warning to the little one not to forget her promise, though, since Isham was an educated man, there ought not to have been anything to fear in his case, but the teacher knew his waggish nature, and had good reason to fear the mischief he would delight in creating.

"Good day," was his cheery greeting, as he came up; "I hope I am not intruding, but I thought I should like to see how you are getting on, Nellie."

"Oh, Mr. Brush says I am learning real fast; I can spell 'cat,' and 'dog,' and 'dam.'"

Budge raised his hands in horror.

"What in the name of heaven, parson, does she mean?"

"Mr. Isham," said the gentleman, severely, "are you aware that you are using improper language in the presence of this young lady?"

"Explain yourself."

"It is wrong for you to appeal to heaven on so trifling a question; it is such a near approach to profanity that the dividing line is imperceptible. I am sorry you forgot yourself, but I will overlook it this time."

Budge was really frightened, for though the distinction was quite fine, he felt there was some justice in the position of the parson, but he bluffed it out.

"I doubt whether a jury would find me guilty, and in the meantime explain the remark just made by Nellie, if you please."

Thus cornered, the parson made a clean breast of it. Isham assumed a grave expression.

"The only criticism I can make is upon your taste in selecting a word, susceptible of a questionable meaning. You know as well as I that if this should be submitted to a jury at the Heavenly Bower this evening, the majority would sit down on you, and it would be hard work for you to escape the penalty."

"I'm afraid it would," responded the parson; "it was a piece of forgetfulness on my part—"

"Which is the plea that Bidwell and Ruggles made, but it didn't answer. However, I'll say nothing about it, knowing you will be more careful in the future, while I shall not forget to put a bridle on my own tongue. The trouble, however," he added with a smile, "is to make *her* overlook it."

"She has promised she will do so."

“Since that promise was made just before I got here, she has shown how readily she can forget it.”

“I will give her a longer lesson than usual and thus drive all remembrance out of her mind,” said the parson resolutely.

Budge Isham folded his arms, prepared to look on and listen, but the queen of the proceedings checked it all by an unexpected veto.

“Mr. Brush, I feel so tired.”

Her face wore a bored expression and she looked wistfully away from the blackboard toward the cabins below them.

“Does your head hurt you?” inquired the teacher with much solicitude, while the single auditor was ready to join in the protest.

“No, but mebbe it will hurt me one of these days.”

“It isn’t wise, parson, to force the child; a great deal of injury is done to children by cramming their heads with useless knowledge.”

The teacher could not feel sure that this counsel was disinterested, for there could be no danger of his taxing the mental powers of the little one too severely, but her protest could not pass unheeded.

“You have done very well, my child; you are learning fast, so we’ll leave the spelling for tomorrow. Suppose we now try the commandments: can you repeat the first one?”

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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