

Munroe Kirk

The Copper Princess: A Story of Lake Superior Mines



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Содержание

CHAPTER I	5
CHAPTER II	8
CHAPTER III	11
CHAPTER IV	14
CHAPTER V	17
CHAPTER VI	20
CHAPTER VII	23
CHAPTER VIII	26
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	27

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CHAPTER I

STARTLING INTRODUCTION OF TOM TREFETHEN

"Look out, there!"

"My God, he is under the wheels!"

The narrow-gauge train for Red Jacket had just started from the Hancock station, and was gathering quick headway for its first steep grade, when a youth ran from the waiting-room and attempted to leap aboard the "smoker." Missing the step, he fell between two cars, though still clutching a hand-rail of the one he had attempted to board.

With cries of horror, several of those who witnessed the incident from the station platform averted their faces, unwilling to view the ghastly tragedy that they believed must occur in another instant.

At sound of their cries, a neatly dressed young fellow, broad-shouldered and of splendid physique, who was in the act of mounting the car-steps, turned, and instantly comprehended the situation. Without a moment of hesitation he dropped the bag he was carrying and flung his body over the guard-rail, catching at its supporting stanchions with his knees. In this position, with his arms stretched to their utmost, he managed to grasp the coat-collar of the unfortunate youth who was being dragged to his death. In another moment he had, by a supreme effort, lifted the latter bodily to the platform.

Those who witnessed this superb exhibition of promptly applied strength from the station platform gave a cheer as the train swept by, but their voices were drowned in its clatter, and the two actors in their thrilling drama were unaware that it had been noticed. The rescued youth sat limp and motionless on the swaying platform where he had been placed, dazed by the suddenness and intensity of his recent terror; while the other leaned against the guard-rail, recovering from his tremendous effort. After a few minutes of quick breathing he pulled himself together and helped his companion into the car, where they found a vacant seat.

A few of the passengers noted the entrance of two young men, one of whom seemed to be in need of the other's assistance, and glanced at them with meaning smiles. There had been races at Hancock that day, and they evidently believed that these two had attended them. No one spoke to them, however, and it quickly became apparent that the supremest moment in the life of one of the two, which would also have been his last on earth but for the other, had passed unnoticed by any of the scores of human beings in closest proximity to them at the time.

It was hard to realize this, and for a few minutes the young men sat in silence, dreading but expecting to be overwhelmed with a clamor of questions. It was a relief to find that they were to be unmolested, and when the conductor had passed on after punching their tickets, the one who had rescued the other turned to him with a smile, saying:

"No one knows anything about it, for which let us be grateful."

"You can bet I'm grateful, Mister, in more ways than one," answered the other, his eyes filling with the tears of a deep emotion as he spoke. "I won't forget in a hurry that you've saved my life, and from this time on, if ever you can make any use of so poor a chap as me, I'm your man. My name's Tom Trefethen, and I live in Red Jacket, where I run a compressor for No. 3 shaft of the White Pine Mine. That's all there is to me, for I 'ain't never done anything else, don't know anything

else, and expect I'm no good *for* anything else. So, you see, I hain't got much to offer in exchange for what you've just give me; same time, I'm your friend all right, from this minute, and I wouldn't do a thing for you only just what you say; but that goes, every time."

"That's all right, Tom, and don't you worry about trying to make any return for the service I have been able to render you. I won't call it a slight service, because to do so would be to undervalue the life I was permitted to save. Besides, you have already repaid me by giving me a friend, which was the thing of which I stood in greatest need, and had almost despaired of gaining."

"Why, Mister – "

"Peveril," interrupted the other. "Richard Peveril is my name, though the friends I used to have generally called me 'Dick Peril.'"

"Used to have, Mr. Peril? Do you mean by that that you hain't got any friends now?"

"I mean that five minutes ago it did not seem as though I had a friend in the world; but now I have one, who, I hope, will prove a very valuable one as well, and his name is Tom Trefethen."

"It's good of you to say so, Mr. Peril, though how a poor, ignorant chap like me can prove a valuable friend to a swell like you is more than I can make out."

At this the other smiled. "I don't know just what you mean by a swell," he said. "But I suppose you mean a gentleman of wealth and leisure. If so, I certainly am no more of a swell than you, nor so much, for I have just expended my last dollar for this railroad ticket, and have no idea where I shall get another. In fact, I do not know where I shall obtain a supper or find a sleeping-place for to-night, and think it extremely probable that I shall go without either. I hope very much, though, to find a job of work to-morrow that will provide me with both food and shelter for the immediate future."

"Work! Are you looking for work?" asked Tom, gazing at Peveril's natty travelling-suit, and speaking with a tone of incredulity.

"That is what I have come to this country to look for," was the smiling answer. "I came here because I was told that this was the one section of the United States unaffected by hard times, and because I had a letter of introduction to a gentleman in Hancock whom I thought would assist me in getting a position. To my great disappointment, he had left town, to be gone for several months, and, as I could not afford to await his return, I applied for work at the Quincy and other mines, only to be refused."

"Is it work in the mines you are looking for?" asked Tom Trefethen, evidently doubting if he had heard aright.

"Yes, that or any other by which I can make an honest living."

"Well, sir, I wouldn't have believed it if any one but yourself had told me."

"But you must believe it, for it is true, and I am now on my way to Red Jacket because I have been told there is more work to be had there than at any other place in the whole copper region, or in the State, for that matter."

"And more people to do it, too," muttered Tom Trefethen, as he sank into a brown-study.

By this time the train had climbed from the muddy level of Portage Lake, which with its recently cut ship-canals bisects Keweenaw Point, making of its upper end an island, and was speeding northward over a rough upland. Its way led through a naked country of rocks and low-growing scrub, for the primitive growth of timber had been stripped for use in the mines. Every now and then it passed tall shaft-houses and chimneys, belching forth thick volumes of smoke, which, with their clustering villages, marked the sites of copper-mines. Finally, as darkness began to shroud the uninteresting landscape, the train entered the environs of a wide-spread and populous community, where huge mine buildings reared themselves from surrounding acres of the small but comfortable dwellings of North-country miners. Everywhere shone electric lights, and everywhere was a swarming population.

Peveril gazed from his car window in astonishment. "What place is this?" he asked.

"Red Jacket," answered his companion. "That is, it is Red Jacket, Blue Jacket, Yellow Jacket, Stone Pipe, Osceola, White Pine, and several other mining villages bunched together and holding in all about twenty-five thousand people."

"Whew! and I expected to find a place of not over one thousand inhabitants."

"You don't know much about the copper country, that's a fact," said Tom Trefethen, with the slight air of superiority that residents of a place are so apt to assume towards strangers. "Why, a single company here employs as many as three thousand men."

"I am willing to admit my ignorance," rejoined Peveril, "but I am also very anxious to learn things, and hope in course of time to rank as a first-class miner. Therefore, any information you can give me will be gratefully received. To begin with, I wish you would tell me the name of some hotel where my grip will serve as security for a few days' board and lodging."

"A hotel, Mr. Peril! You can't be feeling so very poor if you are thinking of going to a hotel. Or perhaps you don't know how expensive our Red Jacket hotels are. You see, there is always such a rush of business here that prices are way up. Why, they don't think anything of charging two dollars a day; and they get it, too – don't give you anything extra in the way of grub, either. I can do lots better than that for you, though. There's a-plenty of boarding-houses here that'll fix you up in great shape for five a week. You just wait here at the station a few minutes while I go and look up one that I know of."

Without waiting for a reply Tom Trefethen hurried from the train, which was just coming to a stop at the bustling Red Jacket station, and disappeared in the crowd of spectators who had gathered to witness its arrival. Peveril followed more slowly, and, depositing the handsome dress-suit case that he had learned to call a "grip" in a vacant corner of the platform, prepared to await the return of his only acquaintance in all that community, "or in the whole State of Michigan, so far as I know," reflected the young man.

"As for friends, I wonder if I have any anywhere. This Tom Trefethen claims to have a friendly feeling towards me, and, if he comes back, I will try to believe in him. It is more than likely though that his leaving me here is only a way of escaping an irksome obligation, and I shouldn't be one bit surprised never to see him again. It seems to be the way of the world, that if you place a fellow under an obligation he begins to dislike you from that moment. My! if all the fellows whom I have helped would only pay what they owe me, how well fixed I should be at this minute. I could even put up with a clear conscience at one of Tom Trefethen's two-dollar-a-day hotels. What an unsophisticated chap he is, anyway. Wonder what he would say to the Waldorf charges? And yet only a short time ago I thought them very moderate. It's a queer old world, and a fellow has to see all sides of it before he can form an idea of what it is really like. I must confess, however, that I am not particularly enjoying my present point of view. Must be because I am so infernally hungry. Odd sensation, and so decidedly unpleasant that if my friend with the Cornish name doesn't return inside of two minutes more I shall abandon our tryst and set forth in search of a supper."

At this point in his dismal reflections Peveril became aware of a short, solidly built man, having a grizzled beard, and wearing a rough suit of ill-fitting clothing, who was standing squarely before him and regarding him intently. As their eyes met, the new-comer asked, abruptly:

"Be thy name Richard, lad?"

"Yes."

"What's t'other part of it?"

"Peveril. And may I inquire why you ask?"

"Because, lad, in all t'world thee has not a truer friend, nor one more ready to serve thee, than old Mark Trefethen. So come along of me, and gi' me a chance to prove my words."

CHAPTER II

PEVERIL TIES "BLACKY'S" RECORD

"Are you the father of Tom Trefethen?" asked Peveril of the man who had so abruptly introduced himself.

"Certain I be, lad, feyther to the young fool who, but for thee, would never have come home to us no more. His mother was that upset by thought of his danger that she couldn't let him leave her, and so bade me come to fetch you mysel'. Not that I needed a bidding, for I'm doubly proud of a chance to serve the man who's gied us back our Tom. So come along, lad, to where there's a hearty welcome waiting, together with a bite and a bed."

"But, Mr. Trefethen, I can't allow you to – "

"Man, you must allow me, for I'm no in the habit o' being crossed. Besides, I'd never dare go back to mother without you. This thy grip?"

With this the brawny miner swung Peveril's bag to his shoulder, and started briskly down the station platform, followed closely by the young man, who but a moment before had believed himself to be without a friend.

They had not gone more than a block from the station, and Peveril was wondering at the crowds of comfortable-looking folk who thronged the wooden sidewalks, as well as at the rows of brilliantly lighted shops, when his guide turned abruptly into the door of a saloon.

Following curiously, the young man also entered, and, passing behind a latticed screen, found himself in a long room having a sanded floor, and furnished with a glittering bar, tables, chairs, and several queer-looking machines, the nature of which he did not understand. Several men were leaning against the counter of the bar; but without noticing them other than by a general nod of recognition, Mark Trefethen walked to the far end of the room, where he deposited Peveril's bag on the floor beside one of the machines already mentioned.

It was a narrow, upright frame, placed close to the wall, and holding a stout wooden panel. In the centre of this, at the height of a man's chest, was a stuffed leathern pad, on which was painted a grotesque face, evidently intended for that of a negro, and above it was a dial bearing numbers that ranged from 1 to 300. The single pointer on this dial indicated the number 173, a figure at which Mark Trefethen sniffed contemptuously.

"Let's see thee take a lick at 'Blacky,' lad, just for luck," he said.

Although he had never before seen or even heard of such a machine as now confronted him, Peveril was sufficiently quick-witted to realize that his companion desired him to strike a blow with his fist at the grinning face painted on the leathern pad, and he did so without hesitation. At the same time, as he had no idea of what resistance he should encounter, he struck out rather gingerly, and the dial-pointer sprang back to 156.

Mark Trefethen looked at once incredulous and disappointed. "Surely that's not thy best lick, lad," he said, in an aggrieved tone; "why, old as I am, I could better it mysel'." Thus saying, the miner drew back a fist like a sledge-hammer, and let drive a blow at "Blacky" that sent the pointer up to 180.

"Now, lad, try again," he remarked, with a self-satisfied air; "and remember, what I should have telled thee afore, that the man who lets pointer slip back owes beer to the crowd."

Wondering how he should cancel the indebtedness thus innocently incurred, and also at the strangeness of such proceedings on the part of one who had just invited him to a much-longed-for supper, Peveril again stepped up and delivered a nervous blow against the unresisting leathern pad, driving the pointer to 184.

The miner's shout of "Well done, lad! That's spunky," attracted the idlers at the bar and brought them to the scene of contest. They arrived just in time to see Trefethen deliver his second blow, the force of which drove the sensitive needle six points farther on, or until it registered 190.

With a flush of pride on his strongly marked face, the old Cornishman exclaimed, "There's a mark for thee lad, but doan't 'ee strike 'less thee can better it, for I'd like it to stand for a while."

Peveril only smiled in answer, and, taking a quick forward step, planted so vigorous a blow upon the painted leather that the pointer gained a single interval. So small were the spaces that at first it was thought not to have moved; but when a closer examination showed it to indicate 191, a murmur of approbation went up from the spectators. Mark Trefethen said not a word, but, throwing off his coat and baring his corded arm for a mighty effort, he again took place before the machine. Carefully measuring his distance, he drew back and delivered a blow into which he threw the whole weight of his body. As though galvanized into action, the needle leaped up four points and registered 195.

"A record! A record!" shouted the spectators, while the miner turned a face beaming with triumph towards his athletic young antagonist. On many an occasion had he played at solitaire fisticuffs with that leathern dummy, but never before had he struck it such a mighty blow, and now he did not believe that another in all Red Jacket could equal the feat he had just performed.

"Lat it stand, lad! Lat it stand!" he said, good-humoredly, but in a tone unmistakably patronizing. "You've done enough to take front rank, for not more than three men in all the Jackets have ever beat your figure. Besides, the beer is on the house now for a record, but 'twill be on any man who lowers yon – so best lat well enough alone."

This advice was tendered in all sincerity, and was doubtless very good, but Peveril was now too deeply interested in the novel contest to accept defeat without a further effort. Besides, the stroke-oar of a winning crew in the great Oxford-Cambridge boat-race, which is what Dick Peveril had been only two months earlier, was not accustomed to be beaten in athletic games.

So he, too, threw off his coat and bared the glorious right arm that had at once been the pride of his college and the envy of every other in the 'varsity. In breathless silence the little group of spectators watched his movements, and when, with sharply exhaled breath, he planted a crashing "facer" straight from the shoulder squarely upon the leathern disk they sprang eagerly forward to note the result. For an instant they gazed at each other blankly, for the needle, though trembling violently, remained fixedly pointing at the figure 195.

Then they realized what had happened. Mark Trefethen's score had been neither raised nor lowered, but had been duplicated. A double record had been established, and that in a single contest. Such a thing had never before happened in Red Jacket, where trials of strength and skill similar to the one they had just witnessed were of frequent occurrence. As the amazing truth broke upon them, they raised a great shout of applause, and every man present pressed eagerly about the two champions with cordially extended hands.

But Peveril and the old miner were already shaking hands with each other, for Mark Trefethen had been the first to appreciate the result of his opponent's blow, and had whirled around from his examination of the dial to seize the young man's hand in both of his.

"Now I believe it, lad!" he cried. "Now I believe the story boy Tom told this night. I couldn't make it seem possible that you had lifted him as he said, and so I wanted proof. Now I'm got it, and now I know you for best man that's come to mines for many a year. Pray God, lad, that you and me'll never have a quarrel to settle wi' bare fists, for I'm free to say I'd rather meet any ither two men in the Jackets than the one behind the fist that struck yon blow."

"You will never meet him in a quarrel if I can help it, Mr. Trefethen," replied Peveril, flushing with gratified pride, "for I can't imagine anything that would throw me into a greater funk than to face as an enemy the man who established the existing record on that machine. But, now, don't

you think we might adjourn to the supper of which you spoke awhile since? I was never quite so famished in my life, and am nearly ready to drop with the exhaustion of hunger."

"Oh, Jimmy!" groaned one of the listening spectators. "If 'e done wot 'e did hon a hempty stummick, hit's 'eaven 'elp the man or the machine 'e 'its when 'e's full."

"Step up for your beers, gentlemen," cried the bartender at this moment. "The house owes two rounds for the double record, and is proud to pay a debt so handsomely thrust upon it."

This invitation was promptly accepted by the spectators of the recent contest, all of whom immediately lined up at the bar. Mark Trefethen stood with them, and when he noticed that Peveril held back, he called out, heartily, "Step up, lad, and doan't be bashful. We're waiting to take a mug wi' thee."

"I thank you all," rejoined Peveril, politely, "but I believe I don't care to drink anything just now."

"What! Not teetotal?"

"Not wholly," replied the other, with a laugh, "but I long ago made it a rule not to take liquor in any form on an empty stomach."

"Oh, it won't hurt you. And this time needn't count, anyway," said one of the men, whose features proclaimed him to be of Irish birth.

"I think it would hurt me," replied Peveril, "and if my rule could be broken at this time, of course it could at any other. So I believe I won't drink anything, thank you."

"You mane you're a snob, and don't care to associate with working-men," retorted the other.

"I mean nothing of the kind, but exactly what I said, that I don't propose to injure my health to gratify you or any other man. As for associating with working-men, I am a working-man myself, and have come to this place with the hope of finding a job in one of the mines. If I hadn't wanted to associate with working-men I shouldn't be here at this minute."

"Well, you can't associate with them in one thing if not in all, Mr. Workingman," rejoined the Irishman, sneeringly, "and so, if you won't drink with us, you can't become one of us."

"That's right," murmured several voices.

"Moreover," continued the speaker, "you don't look, talk, or act like a working-man, and I'm willing to bet the price of these beers that you never earned a dollar by honest labor in your life."

"If I didn't, that's no reason why I shouldn't."

"But did you?"

"No, I never did."

"I knew it from the first," exclaimed the other, triumphantly, "you're nothing but a d – d – "

"Shut up, Mike Connell! don't ye dare say it!" shouted Mark Trefethen, shaking a knotted fist in close proximity to the Irishman's face. "How dare you insult the friend I've brought to this place? Lad's right about the liquor, too, and damned if I'll drink a drop of it myself. Same time, working-man or no, he's worth any two of you wi' his fists, and, I'll bate, has more brains than the rest of us put together. So keep a civil tongue in your head in the presence of your betters, Mike Connell. Come, lad, time we were getting home. Mother 'll be fretting for us."

Thus saying, the sturdy miner laid his toil-hardened hand on Peveril's shoulder and led him from the place.

CHAPTER III

A 'VARSITY STROKE STRIKES ADVERSE FORTUNE

Richard Peveril, student at Christ Church, was not only one of the most popular men in his own college, but, as stroke of the 'varsity eight, was becoming one of the best known of Oxford undergraduates when the blow was struck that compelled him to leave England and return to the land of his birth without even waiting to try for his degree. He had been an orphan from early boyhood, and, under the nominal care of a guardian who saw as little of his charge as possible, had passed most of his time in American boarding-schools, until sent abroad to finish his education. While his guardian had never been unkind to him, he had not tried to understand the boy or to win his affection, but had placed him at the best schools, supplied him liberally with pocket-money, and then let him alone.

Although the lad had thus been denied the softening influence of a home, the tender care of a mother, and a father's counsel, his school-life had trained him to self-reliance, prompt obedience to lawful authority, a strict sense of honor, and to a physical condition so perfect that in all his life he had never known a day's sickness. Having always had plenty of money, he had never learned its value, though in his school-days his allowance had been limited by the same wise rules that also checked undue extravagance. Thus, while brought up to live and spend money like a gentleman, he had not been permitted to acquire vicious habits.

Even at college his allowance had always been in excess of his needs, and so, though ever ready to help a friend in trouble, he had never run into debt on his own account.

Another influence for good was the lad's inherited love for all out-of-door sports, and he could not remember the time when he was not in training for a team, a crew, or an athletic event of some kind. Thus the keeping of regular hours, together with a studied temperance in both eating and drinking, had been grafted into his very nature.

Life had thus been made very pleasant for our hero, and, believing himself to be heir to a fortune, he had never been disturbed by anxieties concerning the future. Of course, while he had hosts of acquaintances, most of whom called themselves his friends, he was well aware that some of them were envious of his position and would rejoice at his downfall, should such an event ever take place. It was partly this knowledge, partly his own sense of absolute security in life, and partly a habit acquired during a long career of leadership among his school companions that rendered him brusque with those for whom he did not particularly care and contemptuous to the verge of rudeness towards such persons as he disliked. Thus it will be seen that our young man possessed a facility for the making of enemies as well as friends.

Of his secret enemies the most bitter was a fellow-student, also an American, named Owen, who, possessed of barely means enough to carry him through college, and with no prospects, had, by relinquishing everything else, taken much the same stand in scholarship that Peveril had in athletics. As a consequence, each was envious of the other, for the stroke of the 'varsity eight was so little of a student that he had never more than barely scraped through with an examination in his life, and was always overwhelmed with conditions. This jealousy would not, however, have led to enmity without a further cause, which had been furnished within a year.

Owen had crossed on a steamer with Mrs. Maturin Bonnifay, of New York, and her only daughter, Rose. They did London together, and never had the young American found that smoke-begrimed city so delightful. At his solicitation the Bonnifays consented to visit Oxford, and permitted him to act as their escort. In contemplating the pleasure of such a visit, Owen had lost sight of its dangers; but, alas for his happiness! they became only too quickly apparent.

The ladies must be taken to the river, of course, and there the one thing above all others to see was the 'varsity eight at practice. Of the entire crew none attracted such instant attention as the stroke-oar, and when they learned that he was an American their interest in him was doubled.

Of course he and Mr. Owen, being compatriots in a strange land, and both having done so splendidly at the dear old university, must be friends.

Oh, certainly.

Then wouldn't Mr. Owen present his friend? It was always so pleasant to meet the right kind of Americans when abroad. "Why! There he comes now! I am sure that must be he; isn't it, Mr. Owen? Though one does look so different in a boat and out of it."

It was indeed Peveril, who had purposely sauntered in that direction for a closer view of the pretty girl whom "Dig" Owen, of all men, had picked up; and, in another minute, Owen, with an extremely bad grace, had introduced him.

From that moment, as is always the case when athletes and scholars compete for feminine favor, the scholar was almost ignored, while his muscular rival was petted to a degree that Owen declared simply scandalous. Although the latter was still allowed to act as second-best escort to the ladies, and form a fourth in their various excursions, it was always Peveril who walked, sat, strolled, and talked with Miss Rose, while Owen was monopolized by her mother.

The Bonnifays had only intended to spend a day or two in Oxford, but the place proved so charmingly attractive that they remained a month, and when they finally took their departure for the Continent Miss Rose wore a superb diamond ring on the third finger of her left hand, that had very recently been placed there by Peveril.

Before they separated it had been arranged that he and they should travel through Norway together during the following summer. Owen had also been invited to join the party, but had declined on the ground that immediately upon taking his degree he would be obliged to return to America.

So that winter the scholar, filled with envy and bitterness, ground away gloomily but persistently at his books; while the athlete, radiant with happiness, steadily cheerful and good-natured, labored with his crew. Finally, he stroked them to a win on the Thames, and then, at the height of his glory, began to consider his chances for a degree. At this moment the blow was struck, and it came in the shape of a cablegram from a New York law firm.

"Return at earliest convenience. Carson dead. Affairs badly involved."

Boise Carson was the guardian whom Peveril had so seldom seen, but who had always controlled his affairs and provided so liberally for all his wants. Upon coming of age, a few months before, Peveril had sent over a power of attorney, and his ex-guardian had continued to act for him as before. They were to have had a settlement when the young man took his degree, for which purpose he had planned to run over to New York, spend a few days there, and return in time for his Norway trip with the Bonnifays. In the autumn he and they would sail for New York together, and the wedding would take place as soon thereafter as was practicable.

Now this wretched cablegram promised to upset everything, and he must look forward to spending the summer in trying to disentangle an involved business, instead of spending it with the girl of his heart. Perhaps, though, "badly involved" did not mean so *very* badly, and possibly he might get through with the hated business in time for the Norway trip after all, if he only set to work at once. Of course that would necessitate the giving up of his degree, but what difference did that make? Other things were of infinitely more importance.

So Peveril bade farewell to Oxford, wrote a long letter, full of love and hopeful promises, to Rose Bonnifay, at Rome, sent her a reassuring telegram from Southampton, and sailed for New York. Having been so long absent, he found very few friends in that city, and it seemed to him that some even of those few greeted him with a constraint bordering on coldness.

As Boise Carson, who had lived and died a bachelor, had roomed at the Waldorf, Peveril also established himself in that palatial caravansary, and was then ready to plunge into the business that had brought him to America.

His first shock came from the lawyer who had summoned him, and who at once told him that he feared everything was lost.

"I don't exactly understand what you mean," said Peveril.

"In plain terms, then, I am afraid that your late guardian not only squandered his own fortune in unwise speculation, but yours as well. Perhaps this note, left for you, will explain the situation."

Thus saying, the lawyer handed Peveril a sealed envelope addressed to him in the well-known handwriting of Boise Carson. Tearing it open, the young man read as follows:

"My Dear Richard:

"Having lost everything, including your fortune and my own honor, I have no longer an object in living. I therefore conclude that it will be best to efface myself as speedily as possible. I have made a will, leaving you my sole heir and executor. You are welcome to whatever you can save from the wreck. All papers belonging to your father and left in my charge will be handed you by Mr. Ketchum. Good-bye.

"Yours, for the last time,

"Boise Carson."

"He didn't commit suicide?" exclaimed Peveril, incredulously.

"It is to be feared that he did," replied the lawyer, "and the state of his affairs bears out the supposition."

After this Peveril spent a month in New York, trying to recover something from the wreck of his fortune. At the end of that time he found himself with less than one hundred dollars over and above his obligations. Realizing at length that he must for the future depend entirely upon his own efforts, he made several applications for vacant positions in the city, only to find in every case that they were also sought by men more competent to fill them than he.

One day, when, for want of something better to do, he was mechanically looking over a package of old papers that had belonged to his father, he came across a contract of partnership between his parent and a certain Ralph Darrell. It was for the opening and development of a mine, to be known as the "Copper Princess," and located in the upper peninsula of Michigan. By the terms of the contract the partnership was to exist for twenty years, and, if either party died during that time, his heir or heirs were to accept the liabilities and receive all benefits accruing to an original partner. It was, however, provided that the claims of such heirs must be made before expiration of the contract, otherwise the entire property would fall into possession of the longest-surviving partner or his heirs. The document bore a date nineteen years old.

"Well," said Peveril, reflectively, as he finished reading this paper, "although everything else is lost, it would seem that as my father's sole heir I am still half-owner in a copper mine. I wonder if it is worth looking up?"

CHAPTER IV

STARTING IN SEARCH OF THE COPPER PRINCESS

Viewed through the sanguine eyes of youth, the possession of a half-interest in a copper mine seemed to offer a ready solution of Peveril's recent difficulties. He vaguely recalled stories of great fortunes made in copper, and speculated concerning the market value of his newly discovered property. "There must be plenty of people ready to buy such things, if they are only offered cheaply enough," he said to himself; "and Heaven knows I wouldn't hold out for any fancy price. Ten thousand dollars, or even five, would be sufficient for the Norway trip, and after that something would be certain to turn up."

Of all his trials none had seemed so hard to bear as the giving up of that journey to Norway, and now it might be accomplished, after all. He had written several letters to Rose since reaching New York, and at first they had been filled with hopes of a speedy reunion. Then, as he began to realize the condition of his fortunes, they became less frequent and less hopeful, until for some weeks, not knowing what to write, he had not written at all.

Now filled with a new courage, he wrote a long and cheerful letter, in which he stated a belief that his business troubles were so nearly ended that he would speedily be able to join his friends in Norway. This letter, finished and mailed, the young mine-owner visited his lawyer, to inform him of his discovery and learn its probable value.

Mr. Ketchum smiled grimly as he glanced at the contract on which Peveril was building such high hopes, and then, handing it back, said, pityingly:

"My dear boy, I hate to dash your hopes, but I doubt if this thing is worth anything more than the paper on which it is written. Boise Carson brought it to us years ago, and we looked into it at that time. We discovered that a property located somewhere in Northern Michigan, and supposed to be rich in copper, had been purchased at a stiff price by your father and this Ralph Darrell, who was a banker in one of the New England cities – Boston, I believe. They christened it the 'Copper Princess,' invested nearly a million dollars in a complete mining-plant, and sank a shaft into barren rock. Not one cent did the mine ever yield, and the deeper they went the poorer became their prospects. Finally, Darrell, completely ruined financially, became crazed by his troubles and disappeared; nor has he ever been heard from since. Your father, having put half of his fortune into the venture, brooded over its loss until his death, which, I am convinced, was largely caused by the failure of the Copper Princess."

"What became of the property after that?" asked Peveril, who had listened with a sinking heart to this recital.

"I believe it stands to-day, as it was abandoned years ago, one of the many monuments of ruined hopes in that country of squandered fortunes."

"But there is copper in that region, is there not?"

"Certainly there is, and in fabulous quantity, but apparently not in the immediate vicinity of the Copper Princess."

"Did you visit the place yourself?"

"No. We conducted our inquiries through a mine-owner of Hancock, which was at that time the nearest town of importance to the property."

"Does your correspondent still live there?"

"I believe so. At any rate, he did within a year."

"Will you give me a note of introduction to him, and also a paper of identification, by which I may substantiate my claim to a half-ownership in the Copper Princess?"

"Certainly I will; but may I ask how you propose to use such documents? You surely do not intend to visit the property with the hope that anything can be realized from it?"

"I don't think I have much hope of any kind just now," replied Peveril, bitterly. "But I suppose there is as much work to be done in the copper country as anywhere else, while my chances of obtaining employment there will at least be as good as they are here. Besides, it will be a sort of satisfaction to gaze upon the only existing evidence that there ever was a fortune in the family. You said that buildings of some sort had been erected on the property, did you not?"

"Yes, according to my recollection there was quite a village of miners' houses, besides all the other necessary structures."

"Then I may at least discover a roof under which I can dwell, rent free, while the sensation of finding myself lord of a manor will be decidedly novel."

Having thus decided upon a course of action, our young mine-owner lost no time in carrying out his newly formed plans. That very afternoon he purchased a ticket for Buffalo, from which point he proposed to economize his slender resources by taking a lake steamer to his point of destination. His last duty before leaving New York, and the one from which he shrank most, was the writing of a second letter to Rose, telling her that the trip to Norway was no longer a possibility, so far as he was concerned. He wrote:

"I am suddenly confronted with the necessity of taking rather a long Western journey, to investigate the condition of a mine in which I own a half-interest. I hate to go, because every mile will lengthen the distance between us, and am more bitterly disappointed than I can express at being compelled to give up our Norwegian trip. But my call to the West is imperative, and must be obeyed. So, dear, let us bear our disappointment as best we can, for I hope it is one to you as well as to me, and look forward to a joyful reunion in this city next autumn."

The epistle, of which the above is but a fragment, not only caused Miss Bonnifay to utter an impatient exclamation as she read it, but also led to complications.

Feeling that, with Peveril safely across the Atlantic, there might be some hope for him, Owen had reconsidered his determination not to go to Norway, and had written from Oxford, offering to escort the ladies on that trip. His letter reached them in company with that from Peveril announcing that he too would shortly be with them. Thereupon Mrs. Bonnifay replied to Owen that, while they should be delighted to have him join their party, he must not inconvenience himself to do so, as Mr. Peveril's business was in such shape that he would be able to carry out his original intention of accompanying them.

Then came Peveril's second letter, stating that he could not leave America, after all, and the elder lady hurriedly penned the following note:

"My Dear Mr. Owen:

"We are so glad that you can accompany us to Norway, the more so that Mr. Peveril will, after all, be prevented from so doing. He has just written that business of the utmost importance, connected with an immensely valuable mine that he owns somewhere in the West, will prevent his leaving America this summer. Of course he is in despair, and all that, while we are awfully sorry for him, but we shall not allow our grief to interfere in the least with the pleasure we are anticipating from a trip to Norway under your escort. Hoping, then, to see you here very soon,
"I remain," etc., etc.

Quickly as this letter followed its immediate predecessor, it arrived too late to accomplish its purpose; for, on the very day that he received it, Owen had cabled his acceptance of a position offered him in the United States and procured his ticket for New York.

"Was ever a man so cursed by fate!" he cried, as he finished reading Mrs. Bonnifay's note; "or, rather, by the stupidity of a blundering idiot! I don't believe Dick Peveril cares a rap for the girl; if he did, he would not desert her on any such flimsy pretext. The idea of his having business with a mine! He never did have any business, and never will. How I hate the fellow!"

With this, Mr. Owen composed a letter to Mrs. Bonnifay, in which his regrets at the miscarriage of their plans were skilfully interwoven with insinuations that possibly Peveril had found America to hold even greater attractions than Norway. He also promised to keep them informed concerning the latest New York news.

This promise he redeemed two weeks later by forwarding whatever of gossip he could gather regarding Peveril. It included the information that the latter had not only lost his fortune, but had sought so unsuccessfully for employment in the city that he had finally been obliged to leave it, and no one knew whither he had gone. Having accomplished this piece of work, Mr. Owen also departed from New York, and turned his face westward.

In the mean time, Peveril, happily unconscious of these several epistles, was finding his own path beset by trials such as he had never encountered on any previous journey, for they were those caused by a scarcity of funds with which to meet his every-day expenses.

His determination to economize failed because of his ignorance of the first principles of economy. Besides that, his appearance, his manner, his dress, and his personal belongings were all so many protests against economy. Thus, when he inquired concerning a hotel in Buffalo, no one thought of naming any save the most expensive, and he drove to it in a carriage, because he did not know how else to reach it. Then it happened that the first boat leaving for the Superior country was the *Northland*, one of the most luxurious and extravagant of lake craft. To be sure, she was also the swiftest, and would carry him through without loss of time; but when he left her at the Sault, as he found he must in order to reach the copper country, his scanty stock of money was depleted beyond anything he had deemed possible on so short a trip. From the Sault he travelled by rail, and finally reached Hancock with but five dollars in his pocket.

Then, failing to find the only person to whom he had a note of introduction, and also being unable to obtain work, he finally expended his last dollar for transportation to Red Jacket, where he knew he must either find employment or starve. And thus was our hero led to the point at which we first made his acquaintance.

CHAPTER V

THE TREFETHENS

As Peveril walked with his newly made acquaintance through the brisk mining-town, of whose very name he had been ignorant until that day, Mark Trefethen directed his attention to its various places and objects of interest. Of one small but handsome stone building, surrounded by grass and shade-trees, he said:

"There's where the swells get's their beer."

Peveril instantly knew it for a club-house, and, with a pang of regret for the lost comforts of such an establishment, glanced enviously at its cosy interior, disclosed through open windows.

At length they reached the modest cottage, built on the plan of a hundred others, that Mark Trefethen rented from the company and called his home. The room into which Peveril was ushered was scrupulously clean and neat, but seemed to him painfully bare and cheerless. It was lighted by a single, unshaded lamp, that stood in the middle of an oilcloth-covered table laid for supper. Half a dozen cheap wooden chairs and a sewing-machine of inferior grade completed its furnishing. The new-comer had only time for a single glance at these things as he entered the door, before his recent acquaintance of the train, who now seemed almost like an old friend, sprang forward with outstretched hand, exclaiming:

"I'm so glad you've come, for I was afraid father might not find you, or you might get tired of waiting, or that something might have happened to take you some other place. I would have gone back myself, only father wouldn't have it that way, and claimed 'twas his place to fetch you."

"Surely, son; and why not? Could I do less than give the first welcome to one who has done for us what Mr. Peril has? Mother, take a step and shake hands wi' him who saved our boy to us this day. I couldn't believe it till I seen him hit 'Blacky' such a blow as but one other in all Red Jacket has ever struck. What do you think of one ninety-five for a record?"

"Oh, father! you surely didn't take him –"

But Tom's words were lost in the heartfelt though somewhat trying greeting that Peveril was at that moment receiving from Mrs. Trefethen. She was a large woman, whose ample form was unconfined by stay or lace, and with whom to "take a step" was evidently an exertion. That she was also of an emotional nature was shown by the tears that rolled in little well-defined channels down her cheeks as she made an elephantine courtesy before her guest.

"Mister Peril, sir," she said, in a voice that seemed to bubble up through an overflow of tears, "may you never hexperience the feelinks of a mother, more especial the mother of a honly son, which 'arrowing is no name for them. As I were saying to Miss Penny this very day – a true lady, sir, if there is one in hall Red Jacket, and wife of No. 2, timber boss, my Mark being the same in No. 3 – Miss Penny, sez I – but, laws! what's the use of telling sich things to a mere man? as I frequent sez to my Mark and my Tom, which he hain't no more'n a boy when all's said and done, if he does claim to vote, and halways on the side of 'is father, when, if wimmen had the privilege – as Miss Penny, who is a geniwine lady, and by no means a woman-sufferer, has frequent said to me, that it's a burning shame they shouldn't – things would be more naturally equalled up. Same time, young sir, seeing has 'ow you've come –"

"And is also nearly starved," interrupted Mark Trefethen. "Let's have supper. You've done yourself proud, mother, and give Mr. Peril a master-welcome; but eating before talking, say I, and so let us fall to."

Faint with hunger as he was, the guest needed no second invitation to seat himself at the homely but hospitable table, on which was placed a great dish of corned beef and cabbage, another of potatoes, a wheaten loaf, and a pot of tea. Cups, plates, and saucers were of thickest stone-ware,

knives and forks were of iron, and spoons were of pewter, but Peveril managed to make successful use of them all, and though betraying a woful ignorance of the proper functions of a knife, ate his first working-man's meal with all of a working-man's appetite and hearty appreciation.

Mrs. Trefethen occupied a great rocking-chair at one end of the table, surrounded by a group of clamorous little ones, into whose open mouths she dropped bits of food as though they were so many young birds in a nest, and kept up an unceasing flow of conversation regarding her friend Mrs. Penny, to which Peveril strove to pay polite attention.

From the opposite end her husband expatiated between mouthfuls upon the fate that had overtaken 'Blacky' that evening, but Peveril was too hungry to talk, and so apparently was Tom. These four were waited on by a slim, rosy-cheeked lass, with demure expression but laughing eyes, to whom the guest had not been introduced, but who, from her likeness to Tom, he rightly concluded must be his sister. She was addressed as "Nelly."

After supper the three men adjourned to a little front porch, where Mark Trefethen lighted a pipe and questioned Peveril concerning his plans for the future. After listening attentively to all that his guest chose to tell of himself, he said:

"It's plain, lad, thee's not been brought up to work, and knows nought of mining; but thee's got head to learn and muscle to work with. So if 'ee wants job thee shall have it, or Mark Trefethen 'll know why. Now I tell 'ee what. Bide along of us, and be certain of welcome. Take to-morrow to look about, and by night I'll have news for you."

Gratefully accepting this invitation, the Oxford undergraduate slept that night in a tiny chamber of the Trefethen cottage, from which he shrewdly suspected Miss Nelly had been turned out to make room for him.

The next day he went with his new-found friends to the mine, where, in the "Dry," he saw the underground laborers change into their red-stained working-suits. Then he watched them clamber, a dozen at a time, into the great ore-cages and disappear with startling suddenness down the black shaft into unknown depths of darkness. After all were gone he spent some time in the "compressor-room" of the engine-house with Tom, who was there on duty. The remainder of the day he passed in wandering among shaft-houses, rock-crushers, ore-cars, and shops, making close observations, asking questions, and gaining a deal of information concerning the mining of copper.

That evening Mark Trefethen told him that he had made arrangements by which he could, if he chose, go to work in the mine the following morning. "Job's wi' timber gang, lad," he said, "in bottom level. It's hard work and little pay at first – only one twenty-five the day – but if 'ee's game for it, job's thine."

"I am game to try it, at any rate," replied the young man, gratefully, "and will also try my best to prevent you from being ashamed of me."

"No fear, lad. Only fear is I'll be proud of thee, and lat others see it, which would be very bad indeed. Now, I'll bate 'ee hasn't rag of clothing fit for mine work."

"I have only what I am wearing," answered Peveril, who had left his trunks in Hancock, "but I guess they will do until I can earn the money to buy others more suitable."

"Do, lad! They'd be ruined forever in first five minutes. Besides, thee'd be laughing-stock of whole mine, if 'ee went down dressed like Jim Dandy. No, no; come along of me and I'll rig 'ee out proper."

So Peveril was taken to the company store, where, with Mark Trefethen to vouch for him, he was allowed to purchase, on credit, two blue-flannel shirts, a suit of brown canvas, a pair of heavy hobnailed shoes, two pairs of woollen socks, a hard, round-topped hat, a dinner-pail, and a miner's lamp. As these things were, by order of the timber boss, charged to "Dick Peril," that was the name under which our young Oxonian began his new life and became known in the strange community to which erratic fortune had led him.

On the following morning he sallied forth from the Trefethen cottage with a tin dinner-pail on one arm, his working-suit under the other, and uncomfortably conscious that he was curiously regarded by every person whom he met on his way to the mine. As the "Dry" was already overcrowded, he shared Tom's locker, and was grateful for the opportunity of changing his clothing in the comparative seclusion of the compressor-room rather than in company with the two hundred men who thronged the steam-heated building devoted especially to that purpose.

Having assumed his new garments, and feeling very awkward in them, Peveril made his way to the shaft-mouth. There he was joined by Mark Trefethen, who regarded the change made in his protégé's appearance with approving eyes. Together, and in company with a stream of men talking in a bewildering Babel of tongues, they climbed flight after flight of wooden stairs to the uppermost floor of the tall shaft-house.

An empty cage that had just deposited its load of copper conglomerate was again ready to descend into the black depths, and, hurrying Peveril forward, Mark Trefethen, with half a dozen other miners, entered it. An iron gate closed behind them and a gong clanged in the engine-house.

"Hold fast, lad, and remember there's no danger," was all that the timber boss had time to say. Then the bottom seemed to drop out of everything, and Peveril, experiencing the sickening sensation of having left his stomach at the top of the shaft, found himself rushing downward with horrible velocity through utter blackness. Instinctively reaching out for something by which to hold on, he clutched a rough-coated arm, but his grasp was rudely shaken off, and a gruff voice bade him keep his hands to himself.

He could not frame an answer, for his brain was in a whirl, his ears were filled with a dull roaring, and a whistling rush of air caught away his breath. The motion of the cage was so smooth and noiseless that after a while he could not tell whether it were going up or down, though it seemed to be doing both, as though poised on a gigantic spring. At length faint glimmers of light began to flash past as it shot by the mouths of working levels, and finally it stopped with a jerk that threw its passengers into a confused huddle.

A gate was flung open, and as Peveril stumbled out of the cage he was only conscious of dancing lights, a crashing rumble of iron against iron, and a medley of shouting voices. At the same time all these sounds seemed far away and unreal.

CHAPTER VI

A MILE BENEATH THE SURFACE

"Swallow, lad!"

Mark Trefethen uttered the words, and Peveril, dimly comprehending him, instinctively obeyed. The effect of that simple muscular action was marvellous. His brain was instantly cleared of its weight, the ringing in his ears ceased, and his hearing was restored to its normal keenness. At the same time he was happily conscious that his stomach had been restored to its proper position.

"This is plat of bottom level, and we're a mile underground," continued Mark. "They put us down in one-thirty this time, but often they do it ten seconds better."

"I wonder how much longer it would take to drop from a balloon one mile above the earth?" reflected Peveril, at the same time gazing about him with a lively interest.

The place in which he stood was a spacious room, hewn from solid rock. Lighted by several lanterns and little, flaring mine-lamps, it was also smoothly floored with iron plates, and from it a narrow-gauge railway led away into the blackness. Articles of clothing and dinner-pails were hung about the walls, and on the side opposite the shaft was a bench of rude workmanship.

Every few minutes an iron car holding several tons of copper rock was run into the plat with a tremendous clatter from the little railway that penetrated to every "drift" and "stope" of the level. Each of these cars was pushed by a team of three wild-looking men, who were stripped naked to the waist. Their haggard faces and naked bodies were begrimed with powder-smoke, stained red with ore-dust, and gleamed in the fitful lamp-light with trickling rivulets of perspiration. The car-pushers were all foreigners – Italians, Bohemians, Hungarians, or Poles – and the uncouth jargon of their shouts intensified the wildness of their appearance. Theirs was the very lowest form of mine drudgery, and but few of them were possessed of intelligence or ambition sufficient to raise them above it.

One, who was accounted somewhat brighter than his fellows, by whom he was regarded as a leader, had indeed been promoted on trial by the timber boss to a position in his own gang. He was a perfect brute for strength, but so densely ignorant and of such sullen disposition that when a better man was offered, in the person of Dick Peveril, the boss was only too glad to return him to his hated task of car-pushing and accept the new-comer in his place. His sentence of degradation, pronounced only the day before, had been received as a personal affront by every wild-eyed car-pusher of the mine. All knew that some one must fill the place from which their leader had been ousted, and all were prepared to hate him the moment his identity should be disclosed.

Thus, as Peveril stumbled awkwardly out of the cage in which he had just made that breathless, mile-deep descent, he was instantly spotted as being a new man, and a team of car-pushers, slaking their thirst at a water-barrel in one corner of the plat, gazed at him with scowling intentness, that they might minutely describe his appearance to their fellows. As he knew nothing of the circumstances through which a place had been made for him, he paid no attention to these men, other than to note their savage appearance as a feature of his novel surroundings.

In fact, he had barely time to take a single comprehensive glance around the plat before a man who had been one of his fellow-passengers in the cage remarked, sneeringly:

"Pretty well scared, wasn't you, young feller?"

"Yes, I was," replied Peveril, turning and facing his questioner. "But how did you know it?"

"By the way you grabbed my arm. If you'd done it again I'd have punched your head; for I don't 'low no man to catch holt on me that way."

Peveril had already recognized the speaker's face; but, without deigning a further reply, he turned to Mark Trefethen and said:

"Will you kindly give me the name of this unpleasant person, as I wish to file it away in my memory for future reference?"

"Person be blowed!" exclaimed the man, stepping forward with a menacing gesture. "What do you mean by calling me names, you damned –"

"Shut up, Mike Connell, and go about your business," commanded the timber boss. "Come, lad, he's not worth noticing," and, thus saying, Mark Trefethen led Peveril away.

Although the car-pushers had not caught the words of this brief conversation, they had readily understood Mike Connell's threatening gesture towards the new-comer, and several times during that day one or more of them might have been seen in low-voiced consultation with the scowling-faced Irishman.

"Here, lad, fill lamp wi' sunlight," said the timber boss, as he and his protégé were leaving the plat. "First rule of mine is always have lamp in trim, and carry candle, besides plenty of matches in pocket."

With this Mark scooped up in his hand a small quantity of a stiff, whitish substance from an open box beside them, and stuffed it into his lamp. The box was indeed marked "Sunlight," but when Peveril followed his companion's example he found its contents to be merely solidified paraffine.

With their lamps well filled and flaring brightly, the two walked for half a mile through a dry and well-ventilated gallery, which had been driven by drill and blast through solid rock, and from which thousands of tons of copper had been taken. Now Peveril learned for the first time what "timbering" a mine meant, and realized the necessity for the huge piles of great logs that he had seen above ground in close proximity to the shaft. Not only had it been incased on all four sides by logs mortised together and laid up like the walls of a house, but the drift through which he now walked was timbered from end to end. Its roof was upheld by huge tree-trunks standing from ten to twenty feet apart, and occasionally in groups of three or four together. Supported by them, and pressing against the roof or "hanging," were other great timbers known as "wall plates," and behind these was a compactly laid sheathing of split timber spoken of as "lagging."

As the two men advanced deeper into the drift, an occasional ore-car, pushed by its panting human team, rumbled heavily past, while every now and then came dull, tremulous shocks like those of an earthquake. These were blasts on other levels, or in other parts of the one on which they were.

At sound of a confused shouting from somewhere ahead of them, they stood still until, with a crashing roar that bellowed and echoed through the galleries like a peal of loudest thunder, one of these blasts was fired close at hand. A minute later they were enveloped in a pungent smoke, through which twinkled dimly a score of lights. Brawny, half-naked forms were already wielding pick and shovel amid the masses of rock just loosened, a powerful air-drill was being placed in position for another attack upon the wall of tough rock, and a small timber gang was struggling to hoist a huge log that they called a "stull" into position.

"Here's the place, lad. Take hold and give a lift. Now, boys, altogether"! shouted Mark Trefethen, and in another moment Dick Peveril found himself hard at work.

Within a few minutes the new hand was as begrimed and dripping with perspiration as any member of the gang, all of whom exchanged significant glances as they noted the willingness with which he exerted his great strength. Never had the heavy timbers been set in place so quickly, and never in their remembrance had a green hand "caught on" so readily.

"He won't last long, though, at that pace," remarked one of the older men to Trefethen, as he paused to wipe the sweat-drops from his eyes, "he's too fresh."

"Perhaps not," replied the timber boss. "We'll give him a bit of a try, though, before dropping him," and then he walked away to inspect the operations of another gang in a distant part of the mine.

Late that day, as Peveril's first shift of work drew towards its close, he ached in every part of his body, but was learning his new trade so rapidly that his fellows were already beginning to regard him as one of the best men in their gang. He had made several trips to and from the foot of the timber-shaft in company with others, and so, when, shortly before quitting time, the foreman of his gang sang out:

"Oh, Peril! Just run back to the stack and bring us one of them small sprags. Hurry, now!" the new man started without a moment's hesitation.

Without a word the miner directed his companion's attention to the figure still bending over the log pile, and made several significant gestures. The brutish face of the pusher lighted with an ugly leer, expressive of understanding, and he began to move cautiously towards the man who had that day displaced him from the timber gang. As he had left his light on the car, there was nothing to warn Peveril of his approach until he was close at hand and about to deliver a cowardly blow.

At that instant the mysterious premonition that always gives warning of human presence caused the young man to turn his head. Although he was too late to avoid the impending blow, it was deflected by his movement, and instead of stunning him it merely caused him to stagger and drop his lamp. He also partially warded off a closely following second blow, and then his own terrible fist was planted with crashing force full on his assailant's jaw.

The man uttered a scream of agony, covered his face with his hands, and started to run. At this moment the other two car-pushers appeared on the scene, and with fierce cries began a furious attack upon the young man whom they had sworn either to kill or drive from the mine. At this time the battleground was only dimly illumined by the flickering light of the miner who was thus far sole spectator of the contest. Peveril fought in dogged silence, but his assailants uttered shrill cries in an unknown tongue. Attracted by these, other lights began to appear from both directions, and all at once Mark Trefethen's gruff tones were heard demanding to know what was going on.

At this sound Peveril uttered a joyful shout, while at the same moment the light in Mike Connell's hat was extinguished.

Recognizing his protégé's voice, the timber boss sprang to his side, and within another minute the two car-pushers would have been annihilated had not the coming of a second car given them a reinforcement of three more half-naked savages.

Thus beset and outnumbered by more than two to one, Trefethen thought it no shame to call for aid, and, uplifting his mighty voice, he sent rolling and echoing through the rock-bound galleries the rallying cry of the Cornishmen:

"One and all for Cornwall! One and all!"

CHAPTER VII

CORNWALL TO THE RESCUE

"One and all!" The rallying-cry of the most clannish county in England. The one in which, from Land's End to Plymouth Sound, every family claims some degree of cousinship with every other, until, at home and abroad, "Cousin Richard" is the name proudly borne by all Cornishmen.

"One and all!" As the startling cry rang through the black underground depths it was heard and answered, caught up and repeated, until it penetrated the remotest corners of the far-reaching level. At its sound the men of Cornwall, working in stope or drift, breast or cross-cut, dropped their tools and sprang to obey its summons. By twos and threes they ran, shouting the magic words that Cornish tongues have carried around the world. They met in eager groups, each demanding to know who had first given the alarm and its cause. As none could answer, and the shouts still came from far away, they swept on, in ever-increasing numbers and with growing anxiety, for the call of Cornwall is never given save in an emergency.

In the meantime the fight between two and five rages with unabated fury; the two, with their backs to a wall, putting up the splendid defence of trained boxers against the fierce but untaught rush of mere brutes. Science, however, labored under the disadvantage of fighting in a gloom that was almost darkness, for Mark Trefethen's lamp had been extinguished at the outset, and the only one still burning was on a car standing at a distance from them.

Of a sudden the timber boss heard a groan at his side, and found himself fighting alone. His comrade had sunk limply to the ground, and an exultant yell from the others proclaimed their knowledge that they had no longer to fear his telling blows. As they were about to rush in and complete their victory, the battle-cry of Cornwall, accompanied by the flash of many lights, came rolling down the gallery.

Help was close at hand. If Mark Trefethen could hold out for another minute he would be surrounded by friends. With an answering shout of "One and all!" he sprang to meet his assailants, and, realizing their danger, they fled before him. At the same instant the lamp on their car disappeared, and in the utter darkness that followed Trefethen could only grope his way back to Peveril's side.

A moment later the flaring lights of the Cornish miners disclosed the old man, with face battered and bleeding, standing grimly undaunted beside the motionless form of the newest comer to the mine. The latter lay unconscious, with an ugly wound on the side of his head, from which blood was flowing freely. It had been made by a fragment of copper rock, evidently taken from the loaded car close at hand, and flung from that direction. Several other similar pieces were picked up near where the two men had defended themselves, and, now that Trefethen had time for reflection, he recalled having heard these crash against the wall behind him.

Who had flung them was a mystery, as was the cause of the attack on Peveril. Even the identity of his assailants seemed likely to remain unrevealed, for these had slipped away in the darkness, and though the rescuing party searched the level like a swarm of angry hornets, they could not discover a man bearing on his person any signs of the recent fray.

In the gloom shrouding the scene of conflict, Mark Trefethen had not been able to recognize those with whom he fought, but only knew them to be foreigners and car-pushers. It afterwards transpired that a number of these had, on that evening, made their way to a shaft a mile distant, and so gained the surface. One of them was reported to have had his head tied up as the result of an accident, but no one had recognized him.

While certain of the Cornishmen searched the mine, Trefethen and others bore the still unconscious form of Richard Peveril to the plat, and sounded the alarm signal of five bells. Nothing

so startles a mining community as to have this signal come from underground. It may mean death and disaster. It surely means that there are injured men to be brought up to the surface, and the time elapsing before their arrival is always filled with deepest anxiety.

It was so in the present case, and when the cage containing the two battered miners, one of whom had also every appearance of being dead, emerged from the shaft, a throng of spectators was waiting to greet it.

These learned with a great sigh of relief that there had been no accident, but merely a fight, in which the men just brought up were supposed to be the only ones injured. Their revulsion of feeling led many of the spectators to treat the whole affair as a joke, especially as the only person seriously hurt was a stranger.

"It's always new-comers as stirs up shindies," growled a miner who, having reached the surface a few minutes earlier, formed one of the expectant group. "They ought not to be let underground, I say."

"How about Trefethen?" asked a voice. "He's no new-comer."

"Oh, Mark's a quarrelsome old cuss, who's always meddling where he has no call."

"You lie, Mike Connell, and you know it. My father never fights without good cause," cried Tom Trefethen, who had arrived just in time to resent the slurring remark.

"I'll teach you, you young whelp!" shouted the miner, springing furiously forward; but Tom leaped aside, leaving the other to be confronted by several burly Cornishmen, in whose ears was still ringing the cry of "One and all!"

"Lad's right, Maister Connell," said one of these. "If 'ee doan't believe it, come along and get proof."

But the Irishman, muttering something about not caring to fight all Cornwall, turned abruptly and walked away.

Tom Trefethen, not yet knowing that Peveril had been hurt, also hurried away to find his father, who, having left his young friend in the hands of the mine surgeon, had gone to change his clothing. At the same time poor Peveril lay in a small room of the shaft-house, having the gash in his head sewn up. Several spectators regarded the operation curiously, and among them was a gentleman, addressed by the doctor as Mr. Owen, whom none of the others remembered to have seen before, but who seemed to take a great interest in the still unconscious sufferer.

"Do you consider it a serious case, doctor?" he asked.

"No. Not at all serious. These miners are a tough lot, and not easily done for, as you'll find out before you have seen as much of them as I have. This one will probably be out and at work again in a day or two. I'm always having such little jobs on my hands, the results of accident, mostly, though this, I believe, is a case of fighting, something very uncommon in our mine, I can assure you. Splendid physique, hasn't he? Savage-looking face, though. Hate to trust myself alone with him. I understand old Mark Trefethen had a hard tussle before he brought him to terms."

"What was the trouble?"

"I don't know, exactly. Insubordination, I suppose; but old Mark don't put up with any nonsense."

"Do you know this fellow's name, or anything about him?"

"Um – yes. I have learned something, but not much. His name is Peril – Richard Peril. Odd name, isn't it? He's a new-comer, and, like yourself, has just entered the company's employ. Rather a contrast in your positions, though. Illustrates the difference between one brought up and educated as a gentleman, and one destined from the first for the other thing, eh? It is all poppycock to say that education can make a gentleman; don't you think so? In the present case, for instance, I doubt if even Oxford could make a gentleman of this fellow. His whole expression is a protest against such a supposition. But now he's coming to all right, and I'm glad of it, for I have an engagement at the club, and don't want to spend much more time with him."

Poor Peveril, whose begrimed and blood-streaked face was not calculated to prepossess one in his favor, began just then to have a realizing sense that he was still alive, and the doctor, bending over him, said:

"There now, my man, you are doing nicely, and by taking care of yourself you will be about again in a day or two. You had a close call, though, and it's a warning to behave yourself in the future; for I can assure you that one given to fighting or disobedience of orders is not allowed to linger in these parts. I must leave you now, but will call again this evening to see how you are getting along. What is your address?"

"He lives along of us, sir," answered Tom Trefethen, who had just entered the room; "and if you think it's safe to move him, we'll take him right home."

"Certainly you can move him; in fact, he could walk if there was no other way; but it will be as well to take him in a carriage. Let me see, your name is Trefethen, is it not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well; put your boarder to bed as soon as you get him home, keep him quiet, give him only cooling drinks, and I'll call round after a while. Now I must hurry along."

The stranger, who walked away with the self-important young doctor, was none other than Peveril's Oxford classmate – "Dig" Owen – who, having obtained a position in the Eastern office of the White Pine Mining Company, had been advised to visit the mine and learn something of its practical working before assuming his new duties. He had just arrived when the rumor of an accident caused him to hurry to the shaft-mouth. There he was thunderstruck at recognizing in one of the two men brought up from the depths his recent college-mate and rival. In the excitement of the moment he had very nearly betrayed the fact of their acquaintance, but managed to restrain himself, and was afterwards careful to keep out of Peveril's sight, foreseeing a great advantage to himself by so doing.

That same evening he sat in the comfortable writing-room of the club-house – at which poor Peveril had gazed with envious eyes – and composed a long epistle to Rose Bonnifay, in which he mentioned that he had just run across their mutual friend, Dick Peveril, working as a day-laborer in a copper-mine.

"This" [he continued] "is doubtless the mine in which he claimed to be *interested*, and under the circumstances one can hardly blame the poor fellow for putting it in that way. At the same time, I consider it only fair that *you* should know the real facts in the case.

"His misfortunes seem also to have affected his disposition, for on the very day of my arrival he was engaged in a most disgraceful fight with some of his low associates, by whom he was severely and justly punished. Of course I could not afford to recognize him, and so took pains to have him kept in ignorance of my presence. Is it not sad that a fellow of such promise should in so short a time have fallen so low?

"Within a few days I shall return to the East, where my own prospects are of the brightest," etc.

"There," said Mr. Owen to himself, as he sealed and addressed this letter. "If that don't effectually squelch Mr. Richard Peveril's aspirations in a certain direction, then I'm no judge of human nature."

CHAPTER VIII IN THE NEW SHAFT

When the mine-surgeon visited his patient that evening he found only Mrs. Trefethen, sitting on the porch and awaiting him, "her men-folk," as she informed him, "being on the trail of they murderers."

"Which, if they ain't so many Cainses this night, hit bain't their fault, as I sez to Miss Penny the moment I sees that pore lamb brought into the 'ouse just like 'e was struck down the same as a flower of the field that bloweth where hit listeth; and she sez to me – for me and Miss Penny was wishing at that blessed minute, like hit were providential – she sez – "

"It is certainly very kind of you to take such an interest in a stranger," ruthlessly interrupted the doctor; "but may I inquire how my patient is getting along?"

"You may indeed, sir, and may the good Lord preserve you from a like harm, which hit make my blood boil to think of my pore Mark's hescape, him being what you might call owdacious to that degree. He were telling me has'ow 'One and hall' was everythink that saved 'im, and they rocks pattering same has 'ailstones hall the time. Law, sir!"

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