

HESPER (Continued from Page Three)

Out of the tumult of his doubt he emerged with an accession of confidence in himself. "It's come to a choice between us, my chances are as good as Jack's. Her tolerance of him is due to ignorance of his real character. Mrs. Kelly must tell her."

He repeated of his resolute passing of her door when he heard next day that a couple of the independent operators had spent the entire evening with Kelly and that one of them talked a great deal to Ann. The sting of it lay in the fact that Tracy was a fine young fellow, studious and capable. "You are a fool," Raymond said to himself. "You threw away a chance to be happy. Don't do it again."

CHAPTER XVI

NOT a day passed that the captain of the patrol did not ride down to the door of the Kelly cabin to offer his friendly greeting, carefully and earnestly uttered. So much he retained of his Kentucky breeding. "The sheriff's army grows apace, but does not march," he announced one morning.



"Dip it!" he curtly commanded. "Dip gun!"

"Meet it and bust it!" "Tell me, now," she said to him at another time, "what is your real motive? Why should you be the champion of the rights of labor?"

He astonished her by giving back earnestness for earnestness. "I'll tell you, my lady. Labor has got to fight. This union is the coming thing. The toilers have not only got to stand together, but they've got to drill. I happen to have a little military training, and I'm going to give western labor its first lesson in the power of military organization."

"Rob and Kelly both stand for the thing that is going out. They think any man has the same chance they have, but I tell you this union that they despise is the coming order."

In truth, Kelly and Raymond were watching Munro's rise to power with growing uneasiness. He was now in almost complete control of the camp, and though he still deferred to the union and its committees, his reckless bravery, his prompt execution of orders and his knowledge of military forms had made of him the chief source of command, the only adequate executive force on the peak. Those on the outside did not hesitate to call him "the arch devil of the district," and the whole western world was filled with his doings, his reckless speeches.

His fame had fired the hearts of all the dead shots and restless spirits of the west, and from an irregular squad of twenty-five or thirty men his forces had risen to nearly 200 heavily armed and hardy horsemen.

Raymond, though keeping keen eyes upon Munro, was unable to find cause for war in any word or act of the gambler, nor could he fathom Ann's mind either toward Munro or himself. She appeared to find Munro diverting and spoke of him only in that way. If she understood his "home life," it made no change in her attitude. It was inconceivable that a refined girl should tolerate a man who passed from one ignorant and vicious woman to another, and yet Ann's greeting remained gracious, if not friendly. What it was when they were alone, he dared not think.

As for Raymond himself, he continued to punish himself by putting aside the many opportunities which came to plead his own suit, and took a morbid sort of pleasure in his own reprobation. "There will be one man at least who will not persecute her," he said savagely and bent his best energies to the work of developing his mine.

At once, and I hope I shall never see it or hear it spoken of again." CHAPTER XVII ANN'S disgust and bitterness over her self accusation wore away as she faced the resolving sun-light and measured her scars against the breast of mighty Mogolay. In the dawn of the second day the incident, having lost much of its shame and terror, was debatable, and under Matt's kindly counsel she reached a certain resignation.

"No one but ourselves need know what took place," he said in conclusion. "Woo is no talebearer, and when the woman herself sobers off she'll not remember a word of it. Furthermore, I warned her that Jack would wring her neck if he knew what she had done. So I wouldn't give another thought of it—not one."

"I'll try to forget it," she promised humbly, but she could not at once put the experience out of mind. She could only wait for that besotted face to fade into a grisly apparition. In the end she pitied the poor woman who loved and was not willing to defend her love.

Raymond was chilled by the change in Ann—by a return to the cold aloofness of her manner at Barnett's—and was profoundly troubled by it. The day following the woman's visit Munro rode down as usual to call and seemed amazed when Mrs. Kelly greeted him coldly. "Ann does not want to see you or any one else this morning—your least of all."

Munro whistled. "Another cold blast. It's sure drafts up here on the side hill, isn't it? What do you suppose is the cause of it?" From the inner room a clear, low voice, icy as a mountain stream, replied, "Miss Rupert is not receiving Captain Munro today or at any other time."

He took a step toward the door. "What have I done to get a crack like that?" The door closed with a decided jar and a bolt slid. Munro bowed. "I understand. I take the hint. But some day when you are feeling jolly I'd like to know what has frozen the air down here among the aspens."

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"I can tell you," said Nora, with the directness of a woman who has known rough men all her life. "Ann has learned the kind of life you live, and she despises the sight of your face."

For the first time in his life Munro was confounded. He stood for a moment revolving an explanation. At last he said, "You mustn't take an enemy's report of me."

"We do not," said Nora calmly. "Your wife has called on us." "My wife?" "The woman who calls herself your wife. "This all one so far as we are concerned."

Munro frowned. "Claire called! Here? Then with a leer that was characteristic of him, he added, 'I hope you had a pleasant chat.' "Ask her. She did all the talking." Munro became very serious and very winning. "Now, see here, Nora—" "Call me Mrs. Kelly," she interposed shortly.

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Worrying about the garden is the experience of a great many people at this time of the year.

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