(Continued from last week)

she pondered long and hesitated modestly when she saw its low cut, which exposed her neck and shoulders in a totally unaccustomed manner, for it struck her as amazingly indecent until she scurried through her magazines again and saw that its construction, as compared with others, was most conservative. Even so she shrank at sight of herself below the line of sunburn, for she was ringed about like a blue winged teal, the demarcation being more pronounced because of the natural whiteness of her skin. She sat down, dress and all, in the thick softness of a great brown bearskin and thought it over.

How odd it was, now that she considered it, that she needed no aid with these alien garments; that she knew instinctively their every feature; that there was no intricacy to cause her more than an instant's trouble.

She was interrupted in her reverie by the passing of a shadow across her window and the stamp of a man's feet on the planks at the door. Of course it was Poleon, who had come back to see her. So she rose hastily, gave one quick glance at the mirror above her washstand, choosing the side that distorted her image the least, and, hearing him still stamping, perfunctorily called:

"Come in! I'll be right out." She kicked the train into place behind her, looping the shawl carelessly about her in a way to veil her modesty effectively. She crossed proudly to the reading table to give him a fair view of her splendor and was in the middle of the room before she looked up. Taken aback, she uttered a little strangled cry and made a quick movement of retreat, only to check herself and stand with her chin high in the air, while wave after wave of color swept

over her face. "Great lovely doye!" ejaculated Burreli fervently, staring at her.

"Oh, I-I thought you were Poleon. He"- In spite of herself she glanced toward her room as if to flee. She writhed at the utter absurdity of her appearance and knew the lieutenant must be laughing at her. But flight would only make it worse. Burrell, however, was not laughing.

"I was looking for your father," he said, wondering if this glorious thing -could be the quaint half breed girl of yesterday. There was nothing of the native about her now, for her lithe young figure was drawn up to its height, and her head, upon which the long black braids were coiled, was tipped back in a haughty poise. She had flung her hands out to grasp the table edge behind her, forgetful of her shawl, which drooped traitorously and showed such rounded lines as her ordinary dress scarce hinted at This was no Indian maid, the soldier vowed. No blood but the purest could pulse in such veins; no spirit save the highest could flash in such eyes as these. A jealous rancor irked him at the thought of this beauty intended for the Frenchman's eyes.

"Can't you show yourself to me as well as to Polecar" ne said.

"Certainly not!" she declared. "He bought this dress for me, and I put it on to please him. After he sees it I will take it off, and"-

"Don't-don't take it off-ever," said Burrell. "I thought you were beautiful before because of your quaintness and simplicity, but now"-his chest swelled-"why, this is a breath from home. You're like my sister and the girls back in Kentucky, only more wonderful."

"Am I? she cried eagerly. "Am I like other girls? Do I really look as if I'd always worn clothes like these?" "Born to them," said he.

Her warmth and unaffected frankness suffused him as she stood out, turning to show the beauties of her back him up, at least five of them." tremulously as she talked.

her rubber boots. It's too big in here across the counter confidentially. must have had a bad chest. But oth- take some feller along to help me, and erwise it fits me as if it had been we'll transfer this military post." shoes-aren't they the dearest things? the trader. See!" She held her skirts back, show-

broke in impulsively:

tiful you are?" his change of voice, then added naive-

ly, "That's why I hate to take it off." like that?" he questioned. "Where did ing. you get that-well, that air?"

all where they belong. It's instinct, I you." suppose, from father's side."

"Probably. I dare say I should understand the mechanism of a dress suit, even if I'd never seen one," said the man, amused, yet impressed by her argument deed of med and

"I've always had visions of women dressed in this kind of clothing, white women, never natives, not dressed like this exactly, but in dainty, soft things, not at all like the ones I wear. I seem to have a memory, although it's hardly that either; it's more like a dream, as if I were somebody else. Father says it is from reading too much." "A memory of what?"

"It's too vague and tantalizing to tell what it is, except that I should be called Merridy."

"Merridy? Why that?" "I'll show you. See." She slipped her

hand inside the shawl and drew from her breast a thin gold chain on which was strung a band ring. "It was grandmother's. That's where I got the fancy for the name of Merridy, I suppose." MAY I TOOKY

"Of course. But I daren't take it of I haven't had it off my neck since I was a baby." She held it out for him to examine, and, although it brought his head close to hers, there was no trace of coquetry in the invitation. He read the inscription, "From Dan te Merridy," but had no realization of what it meant, for he glimpsed the milk white flesh almost at his lips and felt her breath stirring his hair, while the delicate scent of her person seemed to loose every strong emotion in him. She was so dainty and yet so virile, so innocent and yet so wise, so cold and yet so pulsating.

"It is very pretty," he said inanely. At the look in his eyes as he raised his head her own widened, and she withdrew from him imperceptibly, dismissing him with a mere inflection.

"I wish you would send Poleon here. It's time he saw his present." As Burrell walked out into the air he

shut his jaws grimly and muttered: Hold tight, young man. She's not your kind-she's not your kind."

Inside the store he found Doret and the trader in conversation with a man he had not met before, a ragged nondescript whose overalls were blue and faded and patched, particularly on the front of the legs above the knees, where a shovel handle wears hardest; whose coat was of yellow mackinaw, the sleeves worn thin below the elbows, where they had rubbed against his legs in his work. As the soldier entered the man turned on him a small, shrewd, weather beaten face with one eye while he went on talking

"It ain't nothin' to git excited over, but it's wuth follerin'. If I wasn't so cussed unlucky I'd know there was a pay streak som'ere close by."

"Your luck is bound to change, Lee," said the trader, who helped him to roll up a pack of provisions.

"Mebbe so. Who's the dressmaker?" He jerked his bushy head toward Burrell, who had stopped at the front door with Poleon to examine some yel low grains in a folded paper,

"He's the boss soldier." "Purty, ain't he?"

"If you ain't good he'll get you," said Gale, a trifle cynically, at which Lee chuckled.

The one eyed man snorted derisively. "It ain't wuth considerin'!" "Why not?" insisted Gale guardedly.

"Maybe I've got a record. You don't "If you have, don't tell me nothin' about it," hastily observed Lee. "I'm a God fearin' citizen myself, leanin' ever

toward peace and quietudes, but what's

past is dead and gone, and I'd hate to see a lispin' child like that blue and yeller party try to reezureck it." "He's got the American army to gown, her brown hands fluttering "Five agin a hundred. He aims to overawe us, don't he?" snickered the

"It's my first party dress, you know, unregenerate Lee, but his wrinkles and I'm as proud of it as Molly is of changed and deepened as he leaned and too small right there. That girl "You say the word, John, and I'll

made for me, doesn't it? And the "Pshaw! I'm just supposing," said

"All right. It's up to you. Howing her two feet side by side, her ever, if I happen to leap down on this dainty ankles slim and shapely in their pay streak before it sees me comin' I'm goin' to put my friends in first "They don't wear as well a mocca- and foremost and shut out these dresssins." Both laughed delightedly till he makers complete. So long!"

Having given Necia's message to Po-"Oh, girl, don't you know how beau- leon, the lieutenant took up his business with the trader. It concerned the "Of course I do," she cried, imitating purchase of certain supplies that had been omitted from the military outfit, and when this was concluded he re-"Where did you learn to wear things ferred to the encounter of that morn- Runnion returned. He came on an up-

buttons and the hooks and the eyes are you, and I want to be friends with

"I'm willing," said Gale, "Nobody dislikes playing policeman more than I do, but it's a part of my



"Oh, I-I thought you were Poleon. He"duty, and I'll have to do it," continued the young man.

"I reckon you simply aim to keep peace, eh? You ain't looking for nobody in particular?"

"Of course not-outside of certain notorious criminals who have escaped justice and worked north."

"Then there are a few that you want, eh?". ..... "Yes, certain old timers. The offi-

cers at every post have descriptions of a few such, and if they show up we will take them in and hold them till courts are established." "If you've got their names and de-

scriptions mebbe I could help you." said the trader carelessly. "Thank you. I'll bring up the list, and we'll go over it together. You

must have been here a good while." "About ten years." "Then Miss Necia was born out in

the States?" Gale shot a startled glance at the soldier before he answered in the affirmative, but Burrell was studying a pattern of sunlight on the floor and did not observe him. A moment later he inquired hesitatingly:

"Is this your first marriage, Mr. Gale?" When the other did not answer he looked up and quickly added: "I beg your pardon, sir. What led

me to ask was Miss Necia. She is sowell, she is such a remarkable girl." Gale's face had undergone a change, but he answered quietly:

"I ain't never been married."

"What?" "When I took Alluna it wasn't the style, and neither one of us has thought much about it since."

"Oh, I see," exclaimed Burrell hurriedly. "I'll bring that list with me the first time I think about it." And, nodding amiably, he sauntered out. But his mind was in a whirl, and even after he had reached his quarters be found himself repeating:

"The other was bad enough. Poor

little girl! Poor little girl!" Gale likewise left the store and went into his house, the odd look still strong in his eyes, to find Necia posing in her new regalia for Poleon's benefit. At sight of her he fell into a strange and unexpected humor and to their amazement commanded her roughly to take the things off. His voice and manner were harsh and at utter variance with any mood he had ever displayed be-

CHAPTER IV. THE SOLDIER FINDS AN UNTRODDEN VAL-

EADE BURRELL had experienced a profound sense of pity for Necia upon learning her father's relation to Alluna, but this also largely vanished when he found that the girl was entirely oblivious to its significance. He had tried her in many subtle ways and found that she regarded the matter innecently, as customary, and therefore in the light of an accepted convention. nor did she seem to see anything in her blood or station to render her inferior to other women. She questioned him tirelessly about his sister, and he was glad of this, for it placed no constraint between them.

As for her, each day brought a keener delight. She unfolded before the Kentuckian like some beautiful woodland flower and through innumerable, unnoticed familiarities took him into

her innermost confidence. A month of this went by, and then going steamer. The manner of his "I don't want you to think I bungle coming was bold, for he stood fairly There's nothing strange about it. The for I don't. I want to work with was evil now, as it had been before.

With him was a stranger. When the boat was at rest Runnion sauntered down the gangplank and up to the lieutenant, who stood above the landing place and who noted that the scar, close up against his hatband, was scarce healed. He accosted the officer with an insolent assurance.

"Well, I'm back again, you see, and I'm back to stay."

"Very well, Runnion. Did you bring an outfit with you?" "Yes, and I'm pretty fat besides." He shook a well laden gold sack at the

officer. "What do you want in this place anyhow?" demanded Burrell curiously. "None of your d-d business," the

man answered, grinning. "Be sure it isn't," retorted the lieu-

tenant, "because it would please me right down to the ground if it were. I'd like to get you."

"I'm glad we understand each other," Runnion said, falling into conversation with the stranger, who had been surveying the town without leaving the boat. Evidently this man had a voice in Runnion's affairs, for he not only gave him instructions, but bossed the crew who handled his merchandise, and Meade Burrell concluded that he must be some incoming tenderfoot who had grub staked the desperado to prospect in the hills back of Flambeau. As the two came up past him he saw that he was mistaken. This man was no more of a tenderfoot than Runnion. On the contrary, he had a bearing of one to whom new countries are old, who had trod the edge of things all his life. There was a hint of the meat eating animal about him. His nose was keen and hawklike, his walk and movements those of the predatory beast, and as he passed by Burrell observed that his eyes were of a peculiar cruelty that went well with his thin lips. He was older by far than Runnion; but, while the latter was mean visaged and swaggering, the stranger's manner was noticeable for its repression.

Impelled by an irresistible desire to learn something about the man, the lieutenant loitered after Runnion and his companion and entered the store in time to see the latter greet "No Creek" Lee, the prospector, who had come into town for more food. Both men spoke with quiet restraint.

"Nine years since I saw you, Stark," said the miner. "Where you bound?" "The diggings," replied Stark as Lee addressed the stranger.

"Mining now?" "No: same old thing, but I'm grub staking a few men, as usual. One of them stays here. I may open a house in Dawson if the camp is as good as they say it is."

"This here's a good place for you." Stark laughed noiselessly and without mirth. "Fine! There must be a

hundred people living here." "Never mind; you take it from me, said the miner positively, "and get in now on the quiet. There's something doing." His one sharp eye detected the lieutenant close by, so he drew his friend aside and began talking to him earnestly and with such evident effect as to alter Stark's plans on the moment, for when Runnion entered the store shortly Stark spoke to him quickly, following which they both hurried back to the steamer and saw to the unloading of much additional freight and baggage. From the volume and variety of this merchandise it was evident that Mr. Stark would in nowise

be a burden to the community. Burrell was not sufficiently versed in the ways of mining camps to know exactly what this abrupt change of policy meant, but that there was something in the air he knew from the mysterious manner of "No Creek" Lee and from the suppressed excitement of Doret and the trader. His curiosity got the better of him finally, and he fell into talk with Lee, inquiring about the stranger by way of an opening.

"That's Ben Stark. I knew him back in the Cassiar country," said Lee. "Is he a mining man?"

"Well, summat. He's made and lost a bank roll that a greyhound couldn't leap over in the minin' business, but it ain't his reg'lar graft. He run one of the biggest places in the northwest for years."

"Saloon, eh?" "Saloon and variety house-seven bartenders, that's all. He's the feller that killed the gold commissioner. Of course that put him on the hike again."

"How do you mean?" "Well, he had a record as long as a sick man's drug bill before he went into that country, and when he put the commissioner away them Canadian officials went after him like they was killin' snakes, and it cost him all he had made to get clear. If it had happened across the line the coroner's jury would have freed him, 'cause the "It seems to me I've always known. everything in that manner," he said, upon the ship's deck, and his smile commissioner was drunk and started the row. But it happened right in !

Stark's saloon, and you know Canucks is stronger than vitriol for law and order. Not bein' his first offense, it went hard with him."

"He looks like a killer," said Burrell. "Yes, but he ain't the common kind. He always lets the other man begin, and therefore he ain't ever done time."

"Come, now," argued the lieutenant, "if it were the other man who invariably shot first, Stark would have been killed long ago."

"I don't care what would have happened, it ain't happened, and he's got notches on his gun till it looks like a cub bear had chawed it. If you was a western man you'd know what they say about him. 'The bullet ain't been run to kill him.' That's the sayin'. You needn't grin. There's many a bet-

ter man than you believes it." "Who is it that the bullet hasn't been run to kill?" said the trader's deep voice behind them. He had finished with his duties and now sauntered forward.

"Ben Stark," said Lee, turning. "You know him, John?"

"No; I never saw him, but I know who he is; used to hear of him in the Coeur d'Alenes."

"That's him I was talking to," said the miner. "He's an old friend of mine, and he's going to locate here."

Burrell thought he saw Lee wink at the trader, but he was not sure, for at that moment the man of whom they were speaking re-entered. Lee introduced him, and the three men shook hands. While the soldier fell into easy conversation with the newcomer, Gale gazed at him narrowly, studying him as he studied all men who came as strangers. As he was doing so Alluna entered, followed by Johnny and Molly. She had come for sugar and asked for it in her native tongue. Upon her exit Stark broke off talking to the lieutenant and turned to the trader.

"Your squaw, Mr. Gale?" The old man nodded.

"Pah-Ute, eh?"

"Yes. Why, do you savvy the talk?" "Some. I lived in California once." "Where?" The question came like a

"Oh, here and there! I followed the mother lode for a spell," "I don't recall the name," said the

trager after a DIL "Possibly. Where were you located?" "I never lit on any one place long

enough to call it home." It seemed to Burrell that both men were sparring cautiously in an indirect, impersonal manner.

"Those your kids, too, eh?" Stark continued. "Yes, and I got another one besides-

older, a giri." "She's a 'pip,' too," said "No Creek"

Lee fervently. "She's plumb beauti-"All of them half breeds?" ques-

tioned Stark. "Sure." The trader's answer w short, and when the other showed no intention of pressing the subject further he sauntered away, but no sooner was he out of hearing than Stark said; "Humph! They're all alike."

"Who?" "Squaw men." "This one ain't" Lee declared. "He's different. Aju't be, lieutenant?"

"He certainly is," agreed Burrell. This was the first criticism he had heard of Necia's father, and, although Stark volunteered no argument, it was plain that his opinion remained unaffected.

The old man went through the store at the rear and straightway sought Alluna. Speaking to her with unwonted severity in the Pah-Ute language, he said:

"I have told you never to use your native tongue before strangers. That man in the store understands." "I only asked for sugar to cook the

berries with," she replied. "True, but another time you might say more; therefore the less you speak it the better. He is the kind who sees much and talks little. Address me in

Siwash or in English unless we are alone." Suddenly she dropped her work and came close up to him. "Can he be the

one?" "I don't know. Stark is not the name, but he might have changed it. He had reasons enough."

"Who is this man Stark?" "I don't know that either. I used to hear of him when I was in British

Columbia." "But surely you must know if he is the same. She must have told you how he looked. Others must have told

you"-Gale shook his head. "Very little. could not ask her, and others knew him so well they never doubted that I had seen him, but this much I do know, he was dark"-

"This man is dark." -"and his spirit was like that of a mad horse"-"This man's temper is black."



"This man has evil eyes."

said the trader.

"He lacked five years of my

"This man is forty years of

Even Necia would have man

had she heard this revelation of

must be he," said the squaw

"The most wonderful thing has pened," she began.

father's age, for his hair and h were grizzled, and his face had look of a man of sixty, while a those who knew him well, like les were aware of his great strength the endurance that belied his am

"We will send Necia down to mission tonight and let Father h num keep her there till this m goes," said the squaw after some is eration.

"No; she must stay here," Gale a plied, with decision. "The man is come here to live, so it won't do good to send her away, and, after what is to be will be. But she is never be seen in that dance girses again, at least not till I lean m about this Stark. It makes no di ence whether this one is the mi not. He will come, and I shall in him. For a year I have felt that time was growing short, and to

"No, no!" Alluna cried. "We be no strangers here. No white me cept the soldiers and this one is come in a year. This is but all trading post."

"It was yesterday, but it ist day. Lee has made a strike, lie! one George Carmack made of Klondike. He came to tell me Poleon, and we are going back s him tonight, but you must say is ing or it will start a stampede." "Other men will come-a great of them?" interrogated Allum is ly, ignoring utterly the momes

"Yes. Flambeau will be and Dawson if this find is what Leets it is. I stayed away from the country because I knew crowds di would come from the States, feared that he might be among but it's no use hiding any There's no other place for us to 5 Lee has got a mine I'll have the next to it, for we will be the find on the ground. What happens that won't matter much. You for be provided for. We are to letter hour, one at a time, to arold

ment." "But why did this man stop be insisted the woman. "Why did be stay on the steamboat and go to

"He's a friend of Lee's. He's with us." Then he added, almos whisper, "Before we return !" know."

Alluna seized his arm. "Procome back, John! Promise will come back even if this she the man." "I promise. Don't worry, lin

man. I'm not ready for a re-As he turned away she laid be

on his arm and said: "If you do not know him be know you. Is it not so?" "Yes." "Then the rest is easy."

But he only shook his head fully and answered, "Perhaps, not sure," and went inside, " made up a light pack of bacok and tea, a pail or two, a coffer a frying pan, which he rolle robe of rabbit skin and b in turn with a light tarpauling

Continued on pas