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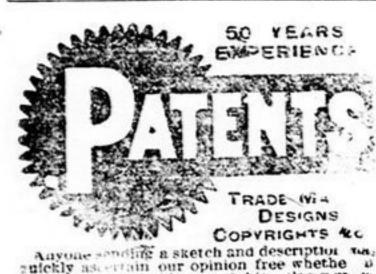
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CHAPTER XIX.

AYMOND did not see Ann at breakfast next morning, but sent word by Louis that important work in the mine detained him, and the girl was hurt by the neglect. It was not a cheerful going at best, for Mrs. Kelly was broken hearted and frankly pessimistic.

"You'll never come back," she said. "You'll forget the Kellys-you'll forget you ever lived in a log hut and swept floors." "Why, Nora, I'm only going to Valley

Springs. Maybe I'll come back, and soon." "You say so, but you are going far. I have two eyes, and I can see. You've

broken Rob's heart too. I know why he isn't here this morning-he couldn't faced game with us." bear to see you go, and no more can I." The tears came to Ann's eyes. Never had such sincerity, such directness of affection, touched her. "I'll come back.

"Come back!" shouted Kelly, who had entered the door. "Why, sure thing! She can't keep away. D'ye think Louis is going to leave the peak? Not for long. He has just been telling me when to expect him." Somehow Kelly's tone helped Ann as well as

you come to the Springs to live."

"I am not going back to New York till spring."

"Let me tell you something," Kelly resumed, with ponderous effort at being confidential. "Your Wall street lawyer is all right. He's a man of substance, but Rob is going to sluice a stream of gold out o' this hill that'll make the lawyer chap look like a worn

They reached the Springs without accident, and were greeted as if they had escaped from a robber's cave. Mrs. Barnett and her friends were all greatly excited over the events of the high country, which had been distorted, magnified by the shadows of the clouds, till they were of the most monstrous proportions. Munro was already a bogy-a sort of cowboy Napoleonand Ann laughed at the questions hurled at her head by the Barnetts when they found she had known and liked the captain of the patrol.

"Not at all," she replied. "I found him very amusing. No, he was not drunk, and I never saw any weapons upon him. Mr. Raymond considers him a dangerous force because of his zeal to serve the miners. Yes, it is true that Mr. Raymond is the leader of the free miners and that he and Mr. Munro are friends. Yes, Kelly and Raymond have made a strike, but they are unable to get the men they need to

work their mine." Barnett came home looking hard and worn, quite unlike his jovial self, but he greeted Ann warmly. "I am glad to see you here. I want to know all about things up there. Where is Pea-

body?" Mrs. Barnett replied: "Dressing for dinner. Hurry, Don; you're late."

After he left them Ann remarked to Mrs. Barnett, "He looks worried." "He is worried to death. He insists on trying to be the head and front of sing Raymond." this citizens' committee of safety. He's chairman of it and is away all hours of the day and night. Do you know the whole city is patrolled?"

"Patrolled! What for?" "So that the miners cannot come rushing down here some night and

burn us all up." This amused Ann. "How silly! Why

should they do that?" "Because we mine owners live here. It is not a laughing matter to us. Word has come to us through reliable sources that your nice friend Munro has planned a raid, and every young man in the town has been enrolled in the 'home guard.' "

Ann laughed outright at this. "Jeannette, you people have been eating too much lobster salad and ice cream.

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You're all suffering from nightmare. There isn't a word of truth in what you've been saying."

When Don came down she continued to mock, and all through dinner she perversely defended Munro and listened to Barnett's boastings of what they were going to do to open their mines with entire lack of sympathy.

"I don't pretend to comprehend what you men call business," she said, "but it seems to me that rather than waste millions on a useless war I would allow the miners a few more cents pay just as a matter of economy."

"But it's the principle of the thing. We don't intend to be dictated to by these 'red neckers.' They must come to our terms. I've been deceived in Rob. He and Kelly are playing a two

"I beg your pardon, they are not!" she hotly answered. "They are doing just what you ought to do. They're paying their men good wages and treating them properly."

Peabody put in a word. "If I might venture, I don't know a thing about it except what Munro and Raymond told me, but it seems to me Ann is right. As I understand it, these chaps are contending that in making this change from three shifts of eight hours each you shouldn't lay off a lot of men and put the rest on two shifts of nine hours each at eight hours' pay. Isn't that it?" "Well, yes; but, you see, it's really a

new system altogether." "But in the change you don't intend to accidentally pay 30 cents or 50 cents or whatever it may be for that extra

"The pay for a day's work will remain as it is now."

Peabody smiled. "A mere shuffle. Come, be frank. You fellows have fixed up a new deal in which the cards go against the miners. They protest, and now it is a matter of 'gun play,' as you say out here."

Mrs. Barnett looked relieved. "I wish you'd talk him out of it, Wayne."

Peabody, with a lawyer's pleasure, went on with his analysis. "But there's a third party here which is of more interest to me than either you or the unionists, and that is Raymond's party of the third part. They are standing clear for the present, but if you crowd them to the wall they'll take hold, and then, as Kelly said. 'you'll have a wildcat by the tail.' I wish I could wait and see how you come out, but I've got a big case on for the 16th and must be in Washington."

"The whole thing will be settled in a didn't know I had. It will seem abday or two," declared Barnett. "When we go up there again it will be with a thousand men and fully armed."

"That is a harsh arbitrament," said Peabody, with a gravity which was al-

most solemnity. "I would advise you to settle this case out of court." Ann interposed. "I think you both

take too serious a view of the whole thing. Mr. Raymond laughs over it." "Mr. Raymond was probably trying TYPEWRITING

to keep you unalarmed," answered Pea- COMMERCIAL LAW body. "And now that you are out of COMMERCIAL CORRESPONDit I do not think it well for either you or Louis to return to it."

Louis uttered indignant outcry. "Oh, see here! I've got to go back. I'm help-

"I guess he'll have to stagger along without you, Louis," replied Barnett. "You better not go into this mixup again."

"I'll go back whenever I please."

The dinner was finished with a pleasanter topic, and when the men were alone with ther cigars Peabody carelessly remarked: "I'm going to take Ann back with me if she'll go. I don't like the idea of this youngster dragging her into all this filthy turmoil. Why, I found her living in a log cabin with an Irish family-nice people, but no place for her."

"That's the singular part of it. She seems to enjoy it. She wrote Jeannette from up there pretty regularly, and she out and out said she liked it. And she is gay as a bird-she's lost some of her fat-I never saw her looking fitter."

Peabody mused. "She is changed. I can't quite make out why or how. She was like a schoolgirl for spirits last night. Do you suppose it's the high altitude?"

"My dear chap, I suspect it is a man, and I fear it is Munro," said Barnett. "I hope not, for her sake."

"I do, too, and for your sake; but I've seen too many women go to pieces in that way to feel any assurance. It wouldn't have been so bad if she'd taken up with Raymond, for he is a fine fellow aside from his present stand; but there, again, he was too respectful, too near her own type. It needed a wild devil like this cowboy captain to stir her imagination."

Peabody's cigar was broken between his fingers. "Don, you scare me!"

Barnett, having fairly crushed his friend, now tried to comfort him. "All this may be a wrong diagnosis, and I hope it is, but if I were you I would go to her and use words that would. startle her. She needs the strong hand."

Peabody rose, all the quizzical lines of his face lost in a plexus of doubt and hesitation.

Ann wondered at the change in Peabody, but had no chance to speak to him for some minutes, for a couple of young men were detailing their stern plans for invading Skytown.

The large library was soon filled ტტტტტტ**ტტტტტტტტტტტტტტტტტტტ**ტტტ with people who had heard of Ann's return from the peak, and the girl was profoundly amused to find herself taken for a fount of wisdom concerning the miners' war and their demands. The feeling against the camp was savage, and the men were loud in denunciation of the governor of the state, who had refused to order out the militia. "He is as bad as Munro, an absolute anarchist," declared one man. whose strident voice dominated all the others.

One by one the guests dropped away, and at last only the Barnetts and Ann and Peabody were left in the library. At a signal from Mrs. Barnett Don sauntered out of the room as if on some errand and forgot to return. A few moments she, too, begged to be excused "for a moment" and was seen no more.

Both Ann and Peabody understood these actions, but as he was intent on making an appeal to her and she knew there was no escape from it they faced each other with a tensity of emotion which seemed impossible a moment before.

Ann broke the silence. "How indelicate of them!"

"How considerate, say I, for I want to talk with you," he hurried on. want you to go back with me, Ann, as my wife. I can't go back alone. have missed you horribly. Dear girl, answer me, are you ready to go?"

Ann remained silent, her mind running over for the hundredth time the advantages, the duties involved, while his plea proceeded, earnest and manly, but leaving her cond. It permitted her to calculate, to criticise. He had much to give her. He was a man of large income, of unquestioned power, and his home was spacious. She liked him, she respected him very highly, she admired him, but-

The girl's dream was not yet faded out of her soul. She hoped-faintly, foolishly hoped-for a return of the glow, the mystery, the flooding, transforming power of a love that was more than respect, more than honor and adneiration.

She found herself saying: "I know, Wayne, we seem suited to each otherall our friends would say so-but I'm not so sure of it. It is silly in me, but I am still wanting to be sure. I don't care for you as I ought to do. I'm no longer a schoolgirl; I know what marriage means, and unless I can feel differently from the way I do now I shall not marry."

"Have you met any one else who rouses this other-emotion?" She flushed. "I don't know. I am

not sure." He sank back in his chair, heavy and inert. The muscles of his cheeks drooped, giving him the aspect of a man of fifty. "Don't throw yourself away. Ann, for God's sake, assert your common sense! If you cannot come to my home, don't waste your beauty, your culture, on some savage. It hurts me to see you out here living among these

sordid men"-She interrupted him. "There is another inexplicable thing. This life has interested me. It has developed in me a capacity for physical effort that I

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"I can never marry you."

surd to you, but I have grown to love sweet, little, patient Mrs. Kelly. I like grand old Matt. I like the rude walls | ing down to the office Wednesday afand the 'handmade stoves,' as Matt | ternoon of last week and bruised his calls the fireplaces"-

"And the tall young miner?" Peabody suddenly interrupted to ask, and, lean- | Economist, ing toward her, a flash of insight in his eyes, "Or is it the handsome, daredevil Munro?"

A swift flush rose to her face, she lost speech, her eyes fell. "Yes-I-I like them, too," she said. "They interest me. They are vital, unconventional, real."

In this swift interchange of highly emotionalized thought they had forgotten where they sat and all knowledge of time had failed them. Ann glanced at the clock and rose, but I'ea body said: "Please don't go! We will never have a more important subject to discuss." She sank back into her chair and he went on quite calmly, his eyes very grave and sweet. "Ann, I want you to be happy. I am not the kind of lover who would make his

bride a captive to her own sorrow." She shook her head sadly, but decisively. "You do not understand me, but no matter. This you must understand. I admire you, and I like you, but as I feel now I can never marry you. I'm sorry, but you must go back

alone." He took his dismissal quietly, but he suffered. His voice was tremulous with passionate regret as he bowed over her hand. "I accept your verdict, Ann, and I can only hope that your new light may not lead you into a slough of despond."

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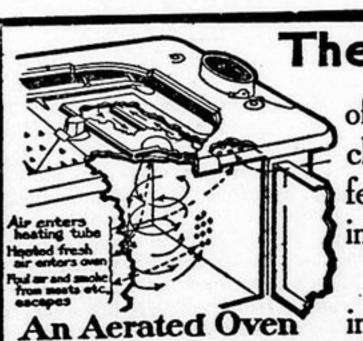
She-"I'm surprised to see you after the letter I wrote explaining why I could not be your wife. Didn't

you get it?" He-"Oh, yes, and that is why I called. I wished to ask if you would not kindly explain your explanation."

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