

KEEPERS OF THE GATE.

"You look as if you really meant to shove this time, Martin," said the House Surgeon. "I'll bet you don't finish it. There's many a slip 'twixt the shave and the very young gentleman on ambulance duty."

"My poor, poor Henry," she murmured. "Oh, Mother, help him—help him—understand!"

"But, Henry, there is your writing and lectures," she said. "Yes, I hold a pen—and my lectures—but, Floy," he said excitedly, "I can't do that. I could not stand it—to stand there before them and lecture about the things I can no longer do—to tell them how it should be done—and leave it to others to show them!"

"The engineer's rolling chair was drawn up close to Curtis's bed. 'I didn't know a word about it till yesterday,' he began falteringly. 'I asked them why you stopped coming to see me, and they told me you were away. You see, they kept it from me. After I found out I couldn't eat or sleep till they let me come, I'll do my faults, and I can never forgive myself. I only had listened to you that night!'"

The long summer day was drawing to a close. A cool shadow filled all the valley, and the sun was fast climbing up the mountain that bordered the eastern side of the river.

Every traveler through Old Mexico hears of one spot which is more attractive to tourists from abroad than any other. This is the volcano of Popocatepetl. America called it the "Veasvius of America," owing to the frequent eruptions which have marked its history; but unlike Vesuvius, its crater has been entered by man, and remarkable as it may seem, here has been for centuries the site of a great natural industry. Popocatepetl has been producing sulphur probably for ages, according to the opinion of geologists and other experts who have examined the interior of the crater as far as it has been possible to venture with safety. True, it is by no means an extinct volcano. By day clouds of steam and smoke arise from the summit of the mountain, and at times in the night the sky above is illuminated by the glow from the fiery mountain's occasional vent here and there in the temporary bottom of the crater. It is a strange sight to witness human beings toiling in this abyss day after day, extracting the sulphur ore, as it is called, with pick and shovel, and "packing" it on their backs to the edge of the crater where it is hoisted to the top. Some of the peons have labored in these depths 550 feet beneath the earth's surface for the greater part of their lives, since sulphur mining, as it is called, has been carried on in the bowels of Popocatepetl for four centuries; yet no one knows when an eruption may occur which would destroy every living thing for miles around.

Half an hour later Dr. Curtis and his staff were gathered round Martin's patient in the receiving ward. He was a large, heavy-set man in blue overalls, and still wore the little light-fitting black cap so common among trainmen. His coat was off, and the left shirt sleeve was split almost to the armpits. The House

"I am relieved at the Skin and Cancer for the present, until I get my appointment on the Island," replied Shippen. "I think I'll settle down then—that is, unless I can get the contagion."

"I'm afraid you are confirmed faster, Dr. Shippen," laughed Curtis, as he left the room.

"What a confounded cold-blooded fish that fellow is, Buck!" he remarked. "I'm glad to see your hip is still on. What did Curt have to say to you?"

"Say! Good Lord! didn't he say enough in here? That's what comes of being too lenient with your subs, darn it! but Mart is such a lovable chap that you can't be hard on him, and he wasn't more than three or four minutes late."

When the plans of the new owners are carried into execution, the crater will become the site of a most interesting series of operations. Arrangements have been made to install pneumatic machinery which will allow the sulphur to be obtained merely by the use of the pick and shovel, since it exists in such a loose formation. A tramway will be built along the floor of the crater with tracks reaching the principal workings. As the sulphur is mined it will be loaded into cars and hauled to the foot of a cableway consisting of a series of huge buckets, traveling along an endless wire rope. As fast as the buckets are filled with sulphur, they will be hoisted to the edge of the crater, thence carried down the mountain to a refinery which is to be built at the foot. Here the impurities will be separated from the sulphur and it will be transported by another cable system to the Inter-oceanic Railway, whence it will be shipped to the city of Vera Cruz, the nearest seaport.