MYSTERY OF DEADMAN'S FLAY

A ROMANTIC STORY OF THE FAR WEST.

By the Author of "Love or a Lie," "Winning Her Inheritance," Etc.



HE sun was sinking behind the distant sier-ras; their snow capped summits were tinted with the fading flush of the dying day. Down in the forests of pine that fringed the and stretched far

away through miles of level land, there lingered only the

darkens suddenly into night. The air was full of the aromatic fragrance of resin, and the silence was so intense that the crackling sound of the dry wood, upon which the flerce sun had shone down all day, was charp and clear, while every now and then the chirp of the grasshopper could be distinctly heard.

A man leaning against one of the redpine boles noticed neither silence nor fragrance; the chirping of the grasshop-pers did not disturb him, and the fact that the sun was sinking fast behind him away over the sierras did not trouble him in the least. He was far too satisfied with his own position to think of anything but himself, and the comforting fumes of his pipe soothed his senses infinitely better than balsamic odors.

Presently he pulled out his watch and looked at it: then he uttered an impreca tion, and his face assumed the expres sion that had gained for him from his friends the suggestive title of "Go-for-Him Tom." He was not accustomed to being played false. He took out from his breast pocket a greasy, shabby note book, and, turning over some dirty papers, found a short note, which he slowly read through; after doing so he tore it up savagely into a hundred pieces and flung them from him. An evening breeze sweeping at that moment through the forest caught the pieces and whirled them away into bush and cranny. What prompted him to commit such a foolish act it was difficult to say; perhaps, in spite of his savage wrath against the per-son who was keeping him waiting, he felt too sure of his own position to act with the prudence that generally guided him. By destroying that paper he de stroyed the one clew to the mystery of which that lonely tryst among the pines was the beginning. After venting his anger upon the note he drew out of an inner pocket a woman's dainty handkerchief. He looked at it for a moment, a flerce light stealing into his eyes; then he raised it to his lips and, with a low laugh, kissed it. As the laugh, insolent in its triumph, cruel in its pitilessness, broke upon the evening air, a tongue of red flame flashed out from a thorn bush some yards behind him, followed by a loud report. With a wild cry of pain, "Go-for-Him Tom" turned sharply round the handkerchief still in his hand, and made a plunge towards the bush. Before he could reach it he staggered, and, with a revolting execration upon his lips d a convulsive sob of agonv. face downwards upon the earth.

The last rays of the sun vanished from the sierras and night fell suddenly upon the forest. The darkness hid the motionless figure which was not to rise up to greet another dawn, and closed over the horrible red stream which gradually soaked into the carth.

In the east was a pale glimmer of light; but it was too feeble to penetrate into the depths of the forest, where darkness still lingered, though already the weird melancholy notes and sounds which haunt forests at night were growing silent, as the animals and insects who did not care to face the light withdrew to their hiding places, leaving behind them that hush which precedes the joyous waking of all things that love the

The dead man was still lying where he fell; but there was human life near. Some few hundred yards away a young man had encamped for the night. was sitting up in his blankets, cogitating over his position, which was eminently unsatisfactory; his handsome eyes were growing more haggard, his tired face der and more downcast, when suddenly he saw straight before him a pale figure, sharply defined against the black ness of its surroundings. His keen eves accustomed to the darkness, could, after having once caught sight of this figure, even distinguish its outline. It stood, a light and shadowy looking object, at the end of the opening which he knew had faced him when he went to sleep. The more he stared at it, the more puzzled and interested he became. It was not an Indian-they never appeared light against a dark background; it could hardly be one of the miners who formed the population of Deadman's Flat-they certainly did not walk abroad in ethereal garments. He did not imagine it to be a ghost, because he did not believe in such things; but for a moment his blood ran cold in his veins as the white shadowy figure suddenly glided forward through the darkness, and came straight towards him. His hand had already instinctively grasped his rifle, which was lying close by him, and he now raised it into position, in case it should be needed but within twenty feet of him the glid ing white form stopped. "By George-a woman!"

The exclamation broke from his lips almost involuntarily, as the unmistakable sound of a woman's sobs fell upon his ear. If there had been any doubt in his mind it would have vanished at the sound of the shrick that echoed among the pines when, springing to his feet, he plunged through the darkness to her side.

She turned to fly, but her foot slipped and she swayed for a second. His strong arms caught her before she could reach the ground, and the next moment she was a helpless prisoner in his arms.

"Oh, please let me"-she cried in a terrified tone; and then the sweet sound of a woman's voice ceased abruptly, and Mr. John Smith found himself holding a limp, senseless burden. He had frightened her into a swoon.

Anathematizing his brutality, he carried her over to his blankets, and laying her down upon them struck a light. It went out immediately, and before he could strike another the woman revived. She sat up and broke into such hysterical weeping and cries of terror at finding herself in the darkness with an unknown man by her side, grumbling over his re fractory matches, that Mr. John Smith was nearly beside himself too.

"Come. I say, my good woman-ta-

thousand snakes! My dear girl, can't you keep quiet a few moments—you're perfectly safe. Ah, that's better"—as the lighted match set fire to a little pile of dried pine needles and twigs he had of dried pine needles and twigs he hastily gathered together and a cheerful blaze lighted up the scene. She gradually succeeded in repressing

her sobs after his appeal, which had such a ring of genuine discomfiture and vexation that even her overwrought nerves were soothed, and she became

"Now then, that's something like! Take a pull at this," he said, bending over her with his flask.

He was nearly startled out of his wits again, however, by her thrusting the flask from her, and breaking into a peal of laughter which seemed as if it would never come to an end.

After the first alarm at the sudden and unexpected change of mood, he felt re-

"That's better," he said consolingly-"laughing is better than crying!" But he grew more alarmed than ever as the wild laughter continued, for he began to think she was mad. Hestood stupidly staring at her, his eyes wide open, his jaw dropping, and the spectacle he thus presented in the firelight upset the girl's

self control still more.
"Oh, don't stand staring at me like that! You'll drive me mad! Say something!" she ejaculated.

"I'm real sorry!" he began feebly. wish you wouldn't, you know!"
"Not like that! Just scold me-bea me—anything!" she gasped out, between her wild hysterical fits of laughter and

He began to see that this laughter was only another form of agony. His face grew grave, and a new expression came into it as he again bent gently over the

'Now, you will just do as I tell you," he said, in a cool, authoritative voice. "You are to drink some of this."

He held his flask to her lips with one hand, passing his other arm round her to hold her up, for she was shaking like a reed. The quiet imperiousness of voice and manner had its effect. The girl let him moisten her lips, sinking back heavily against his encircling arm; but he felt that she was quite unconscious as to whether it were human or only a block of wood.

She suddenly drew herself from it with a hot flush. "I thought it was the tree," she said.

in a weak, confused voice.
"It doesn't signify," he returned bluntly. "Now you'll lie down till I get along with a meal. It is just morning.

His firmness and coolness again mastered her and she lay down, letting him wrap her up in his blanket, being indeed really too weak and exhausted to make much resistance. She remained per-fectly quiet, watching him languidly through her half closed lids as he came and went in the light of the fire, which he had now enlarged to a size convenient for cooking.

The pale light in the east reached the

woods and valleys at last, and it was day. In a moment all the forest was echoing with shrill notes and the whir of wings. Some bird, with a joyous rush through the sweet air of the morning, flashed across the glade in front of the young man. Almost before he knew what he was doing, he had snatched his revolver from his belt and brought the bird down. It seemed cruel; but he was hungry, and so, probably, was his guest. As he glanced at her, he saw that not even the report had roused her from the heavy sleep into which she had at last fallen. When she did awake, it was to see him absorbed and anxious before the fire, carefully attending to the roasting of half a dozen little birds which he had arranged on improvised spits of forked wood. As soon as they were ready he turned to see what she was doing, and found her contemplating him with so much interest that he felt uncomfort-

His equanimity was still more disturbed when, sitting upright, with the broad light of day shining upon her, he saw her clearly for the first time.

"Do you know that last night I thought once you might be a grizzly?" he said. with a rather awkward laugh, looking at her with the frankest admiration, and wondering more than ever where she could have come from and who she was She flushed and laughed, and then shuddered.

"I shall never forget it-that awful night! I lost my way. Can you tell me

where I am?" "I reckon you're near Deadman's he said, thinking that he had before heard so sweet a voice. But he was frightened at the effect of his words upon her, for she had turned ghastly pale. "Oh, I must get away!" she exclaimed,

springing to her feet. "I mustn't be near that place alone! Oh, I did not know!" "It's all right," he said, anxious to soothe her-"we're some way off!" "Oh, but there is some one there-I-

oh, what shall I do?" she cried wildly, wringing her hands.

She was in such a frenzy of fear and herror that the young man was afraid she would break down again, as she had done during the night. If the experi ence had been painful to him then, when he could scarcely see if she were as old and ugly as a witch, it would be twenty times more dreadful now that he had discovered her youth and beauty. "You sha'n't go there, and no one

into his head to calm her. "I'll take you anywhere you like. Heaven knows, there are people there I'd rather shoot than meet!"-with an outburst of flerce "Have you, too, an enemy?" she asked, in a strange low tone. Oh"-her passionate emotion again overpowering her

from there shall worry you either," he

exclaimed, saying anything that came

If I were a man, and had an enemy, I would kill him!" There was something terrible in the gleam of fierce anger in the dark depths of her eyes, in the wild passionate tone of her voice. She looked at that moment as if she could deal a death blow without

-"why should a man have an enemy!

a tremor. He gazed at her curiously, vaguely troubled at her flerce hate and passion. Looking up at his face, she saw at a glance the thought that was passing through his mind. She flushed hotly,

and then became deathly pale. "You do not know!" she said, in a hard, constrained voice. "You are a man! You cannot even guess what such an enemy as Tom Cairnes can be to a wo-

"Tom Cairnes-Go-for-him Tom! Is he tott enemy too! Heaven help any we-

than who has to deal with him!" he ex-claimed, betraying his own hatred. "Then he is your enemy as well? You will understand how I hate him!" She nched her slender hand, her lithe beautiful figure quivering from head to foot "I shocked you by saying a moment ago that I could kill him; but, if you could

feel what it is to be a woman, persecuted by such a man as that, you would take a Derringer in your hand and shoot him down like a dog!"

Her terrible excitement imparted an additional beauty to her face that daz-zled him, and he understood what she meant by "Go-for-him Tom's" persecu-tion. The hot blood flew to his face at this infamous presumption. He would have shot Tom Cairnes down "like a dog" that very instant. Perhaps she un-derstood something of the feeling she had aroused in him, for she flushed, and, the ferce, angry light fading from her eyes, she looked up at him with the half shamed, half shy appeal of a woman who feels the need of, and is grateful for, the protection of a strong man.

Being a man, he found her even more beautiful in this new mood than in the

"Let us have something to eat," he said abruptly, his voice considerably affected by this fresh influence. It was a prosain expression for such an occasion, but he felt he must say something. After all, he could think of nothing more appropriate, for they were both hungry.

They sat down to their repast, which, though frugal in some ways and particularly deficient in knives and crockery. was a remarkably pleasant one. Anxi-ety for the future and dread of the past vanished, and they were conscious only of this delightful al fresco meal in the

The morning air was still cool, though already wavy lines, betokening heat, were rising like a mist over the clearing in which stood the settlement of Deadman's Flat, about three miles distant. Soon, even in the depths of the great forest, the heat would be intolerable. On every side of them stretched the slender boles of larch and pine, the fragrant needles covering the ground. The joyous chorus of birds and insects greetg the new day was sweet music these two young people, and every tuft of feathery fern, every bush of furze and thorn, contained some sight of busy life to amuse them. There were all sorts of wonders in the thick undergrowth to dream of, and to impart that air of mystery to the place which always lingers over the unseen.

They sat a long time over that meal, although she did not eat much-indeed, he was distressed at her want of appetite. He began to see too that the excitement produced by the novelty of the situation was wearing off, and that her face was growing very pale. The thought that Mr. Tom Cairnes was the cause of her evident suffering made the young

fellow grind his teeth with rage.

But even such a meal as this, with only a handsome young man and a beautiful girl to sit at it, with the mystery and loneliness and beauty of the great primeval forest shutting them in together from all the discord and weary noises of the world beyond, could not last forever.

With a woman's natural instinct she had for some time been conscious of and depressed by the fact that her hair was untidy, her face unwashed and her white dress limp with night dews and stained and soiled with travel. The young man's continually increasing and very evident admiration had aroused in her an ardent desire to make a better appearance before him. His admiration, however, was shown only in the most chivalrous and courteous manner, though his eyes, being naturally handsome and expressive, were beyond his control.

The sound of the rippling stream which he had brought water for their meal, and which ran through a thicket some yards from where they sat, attracted her attention, it promising to aid her in at least a limited toilet.

The opportunity came when a few moments later the young man, prompted by a feeling of delicacy, rose suddenly. He was afraid that he had been forcing his society upon her, and was fully conscious of her helpless position. It was a long time since Mr. John Smith had felt bashful; but he did now, as, shouldering his rifle, with the explanation that he was going to reconnoiter, in case any unpleasant acquaintance from Deadman's Flat should be hanging about, he marched off between the trees. He felt like some awkward schoolboy, and was painfully conscious of what seemed to him a foolish, stumbling gait.

She, gazing after him as he walked off between the pines, looking neither to the right nor to the left, thought what a splendid figure he had and what a free and graceful air. He was very shabbily dressed, his clothes being of the poorest quality, and everything about him bore the mark of privation and poverty. His language, though shorn of expressions not suitable to his present company, was that of the ordinary miners she had met, though there were moments when he seemed to slip unconsciously into a grace of expression curiously at variance with his coarse dress and rough hands. There was something indefinable about him which brought back vividly to her mind the life she had once known. It seemed to her at that moment as though she had been wandering about the face of the earth for ages with a ruined, gambling, drunken father, who had speculated and lost comfort, home, honor, everything except the affection of a daughter, who, to save him if possible from himself, had given up ease and turned her back upon the homes willingly offered her by friends and relations. Surely, if anything could have saved him from himself this beautiful daughter's love should have done so. But unfortunately James Snaresbrook was beyond even the help of a guardian angel, and at the moment when his daughter, travel stained and weary, lost by him in the pine woods, was dependent on a strange young man for protection and hospitality, he was quite comfortably drunk at the back of a roughly built grog shop, close to the pump to which he had in his last lucid moment conveyed himself, in order to be conveniently near its handle when he should awake.

Probably the young woman had some suspicion of the fact, for her face grew very hard and haggard as she sat by the fire for a few minutes after the young man's departure, forgetting even her untidy hair and soiled gown, and her beautiful eyes were bright with bitter pain and contempt. Suppose this young man should meet him, what would be think of her father? Would he not despise her? A man's degradation drage down his children, and she must bear some of her father's shame.

With a heavy shuddering sigh, forced from a heart which felt that its burden was beyond its strongth, she rose at last and went towards the stream.

Mr. John Smith, feeling painfully conscious of his ungraceful deportment, was obliged to turn aside at last to get out of the sight of those bright pursuing eyes, for he had a strong conviction that they could be mockingly mirthful on occasion, and, with a sense of humility which was quite new to him, he felt that everything about him was wrong and askew. This abrupt deviation of his course

brought him in a straight line with the thick undergrowth of furze and thorn which enclosed the spot where lay the rigid body, with its down turned face hideous and stained with earth and

He reached the thick growth of bush which stretched for some distance on either side of the spot where he stood, not knowing exactly what he did. His pulses were beating violently with pleasant feel-ings of excitement and confusion, in which half-formed thoughts rushed wild-ity through his brain, always breaking of ly through his brain, always breaking off before and confounding themselves with one central impression—a girl with great dark eyes and flushing and paling tints in her cheeks. He turned aimlessly aside, and, skirting the thick growth of them, passed round into the glade beyond. When he first saw the man lying there, it did not excite much feeling in his it did not excite much feeling in his heart, except the natural shock that death must bring to the most hardened. John Smith was by no means hardened, though of late, among the lawless men with whom his lines had been cast, he had grown almost accustomed to see death follow fast on active, boisterous

This man was dead-the first, glane told him that, even before he ran with swift, long strides to his side. Somehow, he felt very sorry for this man, as sorry as he would have been long ago, when his heart was still fresh, generous, and unhardened by contact with the callous recklessness of a wicked world. He began to wonder, in the same vague dis-turbed fashion in which he had been thinking since he left her, whether this man had ever cared for any woman, or if any woman had ever cared for him. He was wondering about this as he reached the rigid, ghastly thing, when something familiar in it, horribly famil-iar, seemed to make his blood run cold.

With a swift movement he turned the dead man's disfigured face up to the skies. There it lay—its eyes staring dreadfully upwards, as if pleading for vengeance—its lips parted still, as when the execration had died upon them.

John Smith stared down at it stupidly for some moments before his eyes began to take in other things. Half hidden by the man's arm was something that looked like a limp rag. Mechanically be pulled it out, and inspected it curiously, though all the time he felt he would rather de anything than touch that red saturated thing. It was a woman's handkerchief. marked in the corner with a monogram.

Her name was Elaine! She had laughed at having such a romantic title, when among other things they had discussed names. The conversation had arisen through his telling her that his name was John Smith, which he had said was convenient, because it had nothing distinguishable about it; it might belong to a villain or an honest citizen! She had laughed, and said she hoped he was the

It was some time before he returned to the spot where they had breakfasted, for it took him some minutes to hide the handkerchief as safely as he wished. He found her pacing restlessly to and

fro. There was a great change in her face, which was no longer lighted up with laughter, but was hard, haggard, bitter.

She was too absorbed in her thoughts to hear him approach, and he made no sound to warn her. The power to utter a commonplace in order to arouse her at-tention had gone from him. So it happened that she cought sight of him suddenly when he was close to her. He saw the look of startled horror that suddenly distorted her beautiful face; then she looked at him for a moment in an uneasy, questioning, confused fashion that sent a pang of anguish to his beari.

"What a long time you have been!" she exclaimed with a forced laugh, though that look of terror never left her eyes. "Have you seen or heard anything remarkable?"

"No," he said; but his eyes dropped before hers, and the hand that held the rifle, as it rested on the ground, trem-

She saw his confusion, and drew in her breath sharply as though with sudden pain. There was a moment's silence, which he broke by saving: "I think we had better be pushing on.

He spoke more naturally—it was such a relief to turn to ordinary topics. "Your friends will have reached Deadman's Flat by this time." She had told him that the friends she

had been separated from would be sure to go straight there. He remembered now that she need have no fear of going there, even alone, for her enemy lay a few hundred yards from them, powerless ever to return.

"I shall wait," she replied, flushing and trembling from head to foot. "Not here!" He interrupted her impetuously, thinking no more of the murder, only of her great danger. Suppose that body were found and she in its neighborhood? There were stern judges at Deadman's Flat, and the law was enforced there now with a severity in proportion to the terrible lawlessness that had prevailed only a year back. "Let me take you to a place of safety. You

can trust me, can you not?" "You had better have nothing to do with me," she said bitterly. "Go on and

He would not listen to her, however, and continued his entreaties till her face flushed hotly with anger.

"I thought you were a gentleman," she exclaimed, "and would not force" "As you wish," he interposed constrainedly.

He then began to pack up his belongings, which were few, and, with the dexterity of a man accustomed to knocking about, they were speedily thrown together. Too soon, indeed; for, now that the moment of parting had come, he realized how painful it was to him. He was bewildered at the thought that this woman, who had come into his life only just before the dawn of that day, should have in two or three hours become an influence in it which would change its whole tenor forever. It was strange and incomprehensible; but he knew that life

would never be the same to him again. She had been watching him during the process of packing: perhaps she too felt little of the pathos that underlies all these chance meetings on earth. He had en very good to her, and she had requited his goodness by speaking harshly to him. As he rose from the ground, on which he had been kneeling, his eyes met hers, and their look set all his pulses beating faster.

"Will you not let me help you?" he asked, stepping forward eagerly. "Is there nothing I can do? At any rate, don't stay here!"

"I am not going to stay here," she said, averting her face. "Yes, there is one thing," she exclaimed passionately, a moment later, when, turning to him again, she saw the stern expression that was clouding his face-"don't condemn me-don't judge me even! You can't see into a fellow creature's life-there may be extenuating circumstances even in a case of murder"-a faint, pitiful smile flickering across her face. He flushed crimson, then paled to the

"I reckon I must be going," he said "Any more bad news?" he asked, decurtly. Then, shouldering his rifle, he started off in the direction of Deadman's

It was not till he had put quite a mile

betweeh himself and that slender lonely figure standing among the pines that he was able to realize the fact that his own enemy lay dead behind him, and that he might enter Deadman's Flat without fear of meeting him walking up the street. The realization of this fact brought him to another—that it would be better to enter the place from an op-posite quarter. If the body should be discovered, it would be well to avoid all

suspicion of having traveled a ross its The thought that troubled and worried John Smith most, however, was that he had left the fair woman, who had made so deep an impression upon him, without one kind word of greeting, and that perhaps they would never meet again for him to have the chance of explaining away this act of discourtesy. In his trouble about this matter he made several blunders in following the trail to Deadman's Flat, and his uneasy manner excited the notice of one or two acquaintances he met on his way.

CHAPTER III. In one of the rooms of a handsome house in New York a dainty luncheon was set out, the table being resplender with polished glass, silver and luxurian flowers. The men servants had just left the room, dismissed by the girl who sat alone at the head of the table. Her dress was costly and beautiful, like everything else in the room; her face was refined and pretty, too; but it looked very troubled, and the tears that gathered slowly in her eyes and fell upon her folded hands showed the reason for her wishing to be alone.

It was hateful to have to sit there to make a pretense of cating when her heart was aching, and she felt that every mouthful would choke her. The old uncle with whom she lived, though lav ishing every luxury upon her, was a stern martinet and would have thought that the orderliness of his household was in danger of being disturbed if his niece did not sit down every day at the same hour to the bountiful repasts laid out in the grand dining room. The only excuse he ever allowed was when she visited in the fashionable world to which they be longed.

While Miss Violet Churchill's cheeks were still wet with tears, the butler opened the door and solemnly announced a visitor, disappearing rapidly with much discretion, out of consideration to the visitor.

It was a young man, who, on seein Miss Violet's tearfu' condition, darte forward, and caught her in his arms almost before the discreet butler could

"My darling, what is it? Has that A contented sigh from the girl stopped

the flood of epithets he was beginning to pour upon the old man's head. "Don't, please, Jack!" She looked up at him as she nestled on his breast.

"He's very good—really—only"——
"Well, then, what is it?"—gazing anxiously down at her as she energetically dabbed her eyes with the smallest and flimsiest of pocket handkerchiefs. "That

thing is no good—you want a towel!"
"Oh, indeed, I haven't been crying very much, only I was lonely a little, think! The room is so large, and I feel lost at the table; and Miriam and the children are away, and"-"And - and - and" - impatiently -

"don't I know it all? You are left alone in this hot hole while all your friends are enjoying themselves in cool country places. And to think that I can't take you away too!"
"Don't, Jack!" smiling up at him through her tears, his impetuous angry outburst delighting her as a proof of his love. "I'm all right now, and I shall get

away soon. I wouldn't be such a selfish creature as to wish to leave uncle when he is ill-it wasn't that!" "You should leave him quickly enough if you were my wife!" exclaimed the young man wrathfully. "But what were you crying for? No, I won't sit down,

"I'll tell you if you will sit down. No, not there," as the young man pulled up a chair close to hers. "It wouldn't look well when Potter comes into the room! with a merry ripple of laughter, which showed how much her spirits were im-

and I won't eat a mouthful till you tell



"I'll tell you if you will sit down." "It would perhaps look a little conpicuous," admitted the young man, reluctantly retiring to a chair at the side of the great table. "But it is a beastly shame all the same! Why can't a husband and wife sit where they like?"

"But we aren't husband and wife yet." "Just as good. I tell you I shall sit where I like at our table when we are!" "And I tell you, sir, that I won't have the symmetry spoilt, nor will I be made ridiculous. Fancy the husband and wife sitting close by each other at the top of

great dining table!" "That's how it ought to be-not acres of table cloth between! But what were

you crying for?" She blushed, and her face became grave again; she did not like to allude to the subject of her grief. She knew, or rather felt, that this young English aristocrat, who loved her so well, was yet so proud, with all the long inherited pride f a great and honorable family, that he bitterly the annoyance and shame that had been brought upon her by the

brother she had been crying over. This brother was a young man, whose reckless fast living had made him the talk of New York. He had betted and gambled and at last disappeared, after being guilty of a shameful transaction, which, for the sake of his connections, had been hushed up. He was now an outcast from decent society. The only news they had ever had of him since his flight had come through a man whose friendship would have stamped any one with disgrace. He had been one of this brother's principal associates, and the very fact of their still being friends proved that Redfern Churchill was not improving in adversity.

It is about Redfern," she said timidly, not during to look at her lover.

It was well she did not, for the Hon. Jack Newenham's brow contracted as he applied himself with some energy to the contents of his plate, although he answered her immediately in his usual

voutly hoping that he was about to hear that Redfern Churchill had been shot in some drunken brawl out west. "I am afraid it is," she replied, her

cears for ner prother overpowering all her scruples about hurting her lover's feelings. "You know—you have heard of Mr. Thomas Cairnes?"

"I have heard of that gentleman. The Hon, Jack smiled; but his brows were contracted sternly.

"Well—oh, you will think me dread-fully silly, I know"—and the tears began to gather again. "But, you know, I was so fond of Redfern! Indeed, he was always so very good to me—you don't know what a dear brother he was till— Even Miriam did not know, for she mar ried so young and had her childsen and husband. But I seemed to have no one but him—though uncle is very kind.
Then that dreadful thing kappened, and
he had to go away. And when Mr.
Cairnes wrotes to me last year that Redfern was starving, how could I help

"Do you mean to say that that scoundrel has been getting you to give him money?" interposed her lover angrily. "It was only for Redfern—I couldn't let him starve! Oh, I did—I do love him

so, and you mustn't be angry! I think I love you all the better because I can love my brother so well."

She was crying unrestrainedly now; and for the first time her lover did not attempt to kiss away her tears-he was so confounded by the news. He had seen how worried and ill she had looked for a long time, and had heard her uncle scolding her over and over again for not wearing a new dress-for hoarding up her money.

"They are a couple of confounded blackguards!" he cried, wrathfully. "Oh, not Redfern, I am swre!"

"A fellow who could take money from his sister in such circumstances is"-She rose quickly from her chair, and laid her hand upon his mouth. "Hush, dear! He does not know about

t-Mr. Cairnes said so, and told me that I was not to mention it to him. But that is not all. You know, Mr. Cairnes is the only one who knows the real facts of the case. Uncle, of course, does; but, for the sake of Miriam and me, he will not speak. This Thomas Cairnes, however, knows, and a fortnight ago I had this letter from him"-pulling an envelope out of her pocket. "I answered it, asking him for time, and begging him not to do the wicked deed he hinted at, and saying if I could send the money would. I have waited and waited for an answer, and I don't know what to do.

Suppose he has spoken already?" The Hon, Jack Newenham had taken the letter silently, as she, forgetting her fears, poured out all her trouble, turning to him in her despair for help and advice. He read the letter without comment but there was something in his face that frightened her, when he looked up at her, as she leaned against his shoulder.
"I will see about the matter for you,

he said quietly. "Leave it in my hands." "Oh, but"-"Don't be frightened, dear!" his face relaxing a little. "I will make it all square for your brother, if I shoot that

scoundrel first!" "Oh, but if he were to shoot you? Oh, Jack!"

He took her in his arms and kissed her, mauly! Never toush water—pumpsh free to all. Expecting my daughter—she'll



He took her in his arms and kissed her You need not trouble your little head about that! I'll come back safe and sound, to worry your uncle into giving you to a pauper younger son. Who knows-perhaps I shall strike 'ile' onlet me see Deadman's Flat, isn't it? I'll start this afternoon. I might be able to

marry you in a month's time." He found it a difficult task to quie her, for she felt she was in danger now of losing her lover and her brother too. It was a very disconsolate tearful eyed little specimen of girlhood that the Hon. Jack Newenham left behind him half an

hour later. He secured Mr. Thomas Cairnes' letter -a highly classical effusion, for that gentleman had once taken high honors in an English university. In neatly rounded sentences he announced his in tention, unless a certain sum was forthcoming immediately, of giving to the world the secret of Mr. Redfern Churchill's flight from civilized regions, and concluded by kindly promising to let Miss Churchill know immediately on the receipt of her answer, where she could

send the money.

Jack Newenham, in common with most people in their own set in New York, knew that Redfern Churchill had made his exit from society in very discreditable circumstances; but he did not know the rights of the case. Even the scape grace's own sisters did not know all, and it was whispered that other people, whose position was unassailable, were also implicated, and that as much for their sake as his own Redfern Churchill had been allowed to escape, to prevent the risk of certain facts being made public in the course of a prosecution. As all who knew of Redfern Churchill's whereabouts had good reasons for keeping the secret, there was every chance of the

young man's being left in peace. That same afternoon, the Hon. Jack Newenham started for Deadman's Flat. It was about a week's journey from New York, and he felt considerably depressed at the thought of leaving his poer little love alone in her anxiety and trouble. The only thing that cheered him was the immediate prospect of taking Mr. Thomas Cairnes by the throat and shaking out of him the power to compose any more of those classical epistles.

CHAPTER IV.

The crowd of men who has assembled to see the last rites performed over the body of their late townsman turned away from his grave on the edge of the pine forest, discussing on their way back to Deadman's Flat the reason of the murder and the probability of the discovery of the murderer. Go-fer-him Tom must have been dead some days when he was found-so his fellow townsmen surmised, for he was recognizable only by the clothes he wore. His death was a mystery. Though two or three of his acquaintances in the town were known to hate him, his murder could not be brought home to any of them. Most of his fellow townsmen felt that he quite deserved his fate; but the lawless acts of crime and violence which had become so alarmingly frequent among them made them all decide that the murderer in this case should be found and made an example of.

A committee was formed to discuss the matter, and, after leaving the grave, these men repaired to the "Red Unicorn."

where, taking possession in solemn sta of a spare room set apart for their private use, they proceeded to talk over the affair. The less privileged public hung about the bar or the open space in front of the grog shop, discussing the matter too, growing more decided in their opinions in proportion to the consumption of

spirits. fullo, mister, what's your opinion? asked one, a tawny haired miner, with a picturesque, but extremely dirty red shirt, with trousers patched with pieces of cloth of various colors.

He addressed a gentleman who represented the higher civilization of town life by a shabby, greasy frock coat, mi-nus most of the buttons, a frayed and crumpled pair of cuffs attached to the shirt that was yet scrupulously clean, having only just left the wash tub. His tronsers were baggy at the knees, but they were as yet of one color and piece, and had quite a fashionable cut among the varied and eurious garments that prevailed among the male population of Deadman' Flat. This gentle had been very tipsy when he started for the funeral; so very tipsy indeed that, when he had insisted upon going close to the grave to have one more look, he had only been saved from tumbling in by a stalwart miner who caught him by the ample tails of the frock coat, remarking that he had never known before what was the use of all that stuff in a cost. The gentleman was drunk then, but he was considerably worse now. When thus suddenly appealed to, as he stood propped up against the fence, he could only recall that one little incident.

"You shouldn't have done it," he said mournfully, shaking his head, and try-ing to point an impressive finger at the friendly miner, but nearly losing his balance in the attempt. "It wash all peashful down there. It looked she cool and peaceful—wantsch to be at peace with him too!"

A roar of irreverent laughter greeted

this desire for peace. He looked at them reproachfully; but his hat, which had fallen over one eye, rather spoilt the effect by giving him a decidedly rakish appearance, and as he lurched from side to side his attempt at solemn dignity was a failure.

"You'll be shorry some day! Perhaps you'll die, too, an' be laid in the peashful grave. Where's pump? Oh, take me to the pump, young man-takshe me to the pump! Ishn't far-not so far as the grave.

With a lurch forward, he seized the arm of a young man standing near him, who, with a look of disgust, tried to shake him off, though perhaps at another time he too might have joined in the chorus of rough laughter and jeers. He had, bowever, been at that funeral, and it had awakened old feelings and influences. Mr. James Snaresbrook was not

to be shaken off so easily.

"Don't deshert a fellow being, young man! Pump isn't difficult find. Let me shleep in peash under itsh shade! Fine

thing-pump!"
"Thinks he's under a four poster when he's there," said one of the men; "he's seldom long away from it. Quaker Joe ought to charge for his lodging." "He wouldn't do anything so ungentle-

knowsh where to fin' me. Come 'long!'
The young man yielded, seeing that it
was the only way to get rid of the swaying bemuddled specimen of humanity clinging to his arm. He took him to the back of the "Red Unicorn," where a clearing had been made and planted with vegetables. Here stood the pump, by a low stone trough, and the young man, reaching it, shook him off. Mr. James Snaresbrook dropped heavily on the edge

of the trough, by a lucky lurch recover-ing his balance before he tumbled into it. "Queersh-very!" he said, looking up in a wondering solemn way at the pund handle over his head. "Pumpsh always found when two looksh for it-always there's a moral 'n that! If I could find -prapsh he knowsh who's sleeping in

peashful way over there!" He tried to point solemnly over his shoulder in the direction of the grave on the outskirt of the forest, but the effort cost him his balance, and he tumbled backwards with a splash into the water,

of which the stone trough was full. Mr. John Smith dragged him out, and haking him violently to get rid of a little of the superfluous moisture, drop-ped him on to a less damp resting place, Then he fished out the floating hat, and giving it a shake, too, hung it on to the pump handle to dry; and then, feeling that he had done all that could be reasonably expected by one fellow creature from another in the circumstances, returned to the front of the shanty, where he found a new excitement agitating the crowd. The murdered man was forgot-

ten, for the coach was coming in. The long low building, dignified by the name of grog shop, hotel or bottle works, according to the humor or pretensions of the speakers, stood on the high road; the stores, gambling saloons and other shanties straggled behind it in one irregular street, which had a few lesser ones branching off from it. The "Red Unicorn," owned by Quaker Joe, formed the advance guard of the town. The coach always pulled up before its hospitable doors, and the open space in front of them, ambitiously called "The Square," was generally full of the miners and townspeople who assembled to get a good view or the arriving coach, which drove through Deadman's Flat once a week. It could now be seen in the distance. There was a good piece of straight road between Deadman's Flat and the forest, and directly the coach left the pines behind it could be seen and watched

till it dashed up into the square itself. This was the one link between that lonely far off spot and the outer world, to which at one time most of the inhabitants of Deadman's Flat had once belonged, but to which, owing to strong and not always reputable reasons, they could never return.

John Smith did not expect either let-

ters or friends by the coach; but he took up a position in the square, and stood looking at it with the others. It came along in tine style, the red dust whirling up in clouds behind it, and making nater Joe, who was watching it from the door of his hotel, think of plentiful orders for drinks when it should finally pull up. With a dash and a ringing of harness it at last arrived in the square, and then the smoking team was pulled up with a grace and dexterity which elicited a murmur of approval and admiration from all the bystanders. Then followed all the usual bustle and confusion of such an arrival, driver, horses, packages, passengers, all being attended

Today there was only one passenger, and the driver showed such interest and anxiety for her comfort and her luggage that the eyes of all the men were turned towards her as she alighted. The result was a general desire to devote themselves to her service, and a quick movement was made in her direction. One young man, however, was quicker than the rest. Mr. John Smith was at ber side holding out his hand before he had even recovered from the shock and de light of seeing her. It was his friend of

Continued next Saturday.