

concerned me to a very vital extent, often catching words and looks from the two of no uncertain import. But the girl always remained silently by, taking no part, and seemingly indifferent. Once I caught sight of a small lump of silver ore, rich with the metal, doubtless left laying by accident on the table ; but the man snatched it away quickly when he observed that I was looking at it.

"At length I was able to walk again in some measure, and, sick with my vigilant watching, I resolved to quit the place with a most hearty good will the very next day. That afternoon the Mexican having gone out, fancying everything secure, I sat just outside the door-way, sunning myself and cogitating on the direction I should take on the morrow. Suddenly I became aware of strains of music. Softly and voluptuously they rose and fell, and I heard the air that we just listened to, played in the most exquisite manner. My weariness yielded to the soothing sounds, and I fell gently asleep. I awoke with a start and the presentiment of danger. There directly in front of me, with his small bead-like eyes fixed full on mine, was the Mexican crawling cat-like upon me, with a knife within his hand. I tried to move, to leap, to defend myself in some manner, but it was impossible, the magnetism of that glance had bound me hand and foot. I realized that I was helpless, and doomed to die without resistance. I tried to shut my eyes, but I could not. All at once I became aware of another danger. The underbrush in front of me quivered violently, and without other warning a huge panther leaped forward towards me, his eyes gleaming on me fiercely and his tail lashing to and fro. The man was in a sort of natural depression or declivity and neither observed the other. All this had happened within a second or two from the time I awoke, and in an instant a peculiar and inexplicable apprehension took possession of me as to which would cause my death first. Death

was surely and terribly coming upon me in one or two forms, which would be the prior? The Mexican arose, dagger poised, in the act of making his intended lunge, when, crash, the panther in making his spring, had unavoidably landed squarely on the man's head and shouldiers, and both fell together ; at almost the same time, the deafening crack of a rifle sounded in my ears, and I beheld the panther roll over dead. Turning I saw the beautiful Spaniard at my side with a smoking rifle in her hands. The shock of the whole occurrence was too much for me in my weak state, and I fainted dead away.

"The next day the Mexican died. He had shot himself while out hunting, the woman said. I almost immediately fell into a frightful brain fever. It is entirely due to the beautiful Spaniard that I am with you to-day, old man," and my friend here, for the first time since the beginning of his recital, turned towards me, a most dangerous look gratitude shining in his eyes, "but her careful nursing," he continued, "and kind offices and gentle solicitude pulled me through. When I recovered I wanted to take them with me away from the mountains to some civilized place fit for abode. But they would not accompany me. I offered them money, but no, with scrupulous firmness they would not accept even that, and so I was obliged to come away and leave them in that wild, deserted spot with their mystery still unsolved.

"But the greatest and most mysterious question of all," he concluded with an appealing glance to me, "is, to whom do I owe the preservation of my life? That the man had murder in his heart, there can be no doubt, that he would also have killed me had he not risen in the path of the panther's spring is likewise beyond all question. On the other hand that the panther's massive chops were thirsting for my flesh and would have unavoidably been appeased, if any inter-