

"Well, I don't know as to ever having passed through that remarkable experience," I replied.

"Draw your chair up here and I will tell you a strange story," he continued.

It had now become dusk, and lighting fresh cigars, we drew our chairs up around the grate of the open fire-place, stretched out our legs in a comfortable position, and with the flickering light from the coals casting weird shadows here and there and all about us, I bade him "fire ahead."

"You know," he began, "that after going West I did some preliminary hunting in Kansas and Eastern Colorado, and then struck directly for the Rockies, my main objective point. I found the shooting there very fine from the very first, and filled with all a huntsman's ardor pursued the game to my heart's content for about a month, following the mountains in a general course down towards New Mexico, where they merge into the Sierra Madres. Finally my guide was taken sick and showing no tendency toward a speedy recovery, and being unable to at once procure another one, I was obliged to leave him at a mining camp, and foolishly struck off into the mountains on a lone pilgrimage, trusting to my rifle and to luck for food and shelter, and intending to eventually come around in a circuit and again find my guide recovered. On the third day after leaving I had the good fortune to shoot a doe, but in trying to reach the carcass in leaping over a small cleft, fell and sprained my ankle badly. I bandaged it up as best I could, but for two days I wandered over the mountain, little more than crawling, with scarcely any sustenance and no shelter from the elements. At last when all but famished I descried a small cabin in the distance, and making my weary way up to it, knocked for admission. A man with a countenance made up of a mixture of Spanish and Mexican, opened it, to whom I made known my wants. "Si, Senor, you are

welcome to the little we have," he replied; and all too gladly I accepted the proffered hospitality. For days I was unable to stir from the house by reason of my swollen and bruised foot, and meanwhile busied myself in studying the character of my opportune hosts.

"The man, who, as I said, first admitted me, was evidently a Mexican half-breed and possessed one of the most depraved, hardened countenances, I ever saw. His small oblong-shaped head was set on a pair of square, sturdy shoulders, surmounting a short, chunky body, and his thin, cruel mouth, stunted nose and small, black, eyes continually glancing in my direction with the inmost meanings of wickedness, did not in any wise relieve his general villainous aspect. His wife was evidently a Mexican, and the visible effects of depravity and vice did not altogether efface the traces of former great beauty. But strangest of all was a beautiful Spanish girl, who from her graceful, well-poised head, adorned with its wealth of flowing dark hair, rich liquid eyes, and soft brown complexion, to her tiny, well-shaped foot, offered the strongest possible contrast to the appearance of the other two. Hour after hour did I sit wondering how this strange incogruity came to exist. Kinship she could have none. Whence came she then, and as if seeking an answer to my question I would glance up into her face, catching her eyes fixed upon me and causing the rich blood to mantle her cheeks, and in confusion I would turn towards the man finding his piercing little eyes furtively watching me, and causing me instinctively to shudder and to feel that my revolver was in a handy position.

"Things went on then from day to day. I was loth to remain, yet what else could I do in my helpless state. I did not dare sleep by night, but kept strict watch and ward, and managed to secure some little rest by dozing in the day-time. The man had frequent disputes with his wife, which I have no doubt