FLASH put his hand to his brow to shut out the glare, and looked again—unaware of the fiend behind him.
Flash Lightning; the Mountain Mascot.

BY CHARLES MORRIS.

CHAPTER I.

AN OLD MAN REMORSEFUL.

Far within the mountain-girdled and silver-shining State of Colorado lay the village of Payrock, and on the broad, brown, kingly bosom of this lovely community there rested as a center of civilization, but with silver enough in the rocky heights around it to build a palace for every one of its tumble-down shackies.

The town was an old one for that region. Its first settlers held in its bosom, before, a length of time sufficient for the birth, growth and death of many a mining settlement. But the clutter of the stamp-mills showed that Payrock was full of life, and that its mines were still yielding their silver storey.

However, we are not at present interested in the town, with its whisky-shops, its gambling saloons, its whores and hucksters. Our interest lies in but one of its many mansions, a two-storied log building that stood in the left to the town's roughly-built dwelling, but with green vines twining over it just like any other house, except that it was from, the hills near by, flowing close beside it.

In front of this dwelling stood, on a fair morning in May, 1884, a broad-shouldered, stalwart man, his hair high on his forehead, and his beard gray and crisp as the autumnal maple leaves. He struck a keen, brown eye, which was kindly look, but wrinkled like a wrinkled eye, that would have made the most masterful of the blackest mountain men.

A perverted and careworn mark his face as he stood in front of the doorway of the cottage, rubbing his gun reflectively with his hand.

"Folks round yere dub me Old Dog-Out," he said, and mumble, they're 'bout compas mentic in that there. But ther' must be' a some other cod do out yore, the same time as me that tuk all the brains and leff me only the pulpy sack, the one, but me 'is a-lieve on in that's." He stretched out his bared and branny arm as he looked at it with a wistful eye, and over the kids so rugged and embrowned that it look d as if it might have stood the storms of a century. A long, wiry, gray beard drooped on his breast, and his thin hair lay in a mop on his uncovered one.

"That's all done good, anyhow: I've made a man out of Flash, and that I was better to do for I left the little 'un slip outer my fingers. They" can't nobody spit him now, many times. That kid's done, and it's 'bout time was takin' up Poth. The boy must be nigh on twenty-one, and he oughter know who he is and what he is." Old Dog-Out rank his chin in his hand, while his face scowled the thought.

"It's lineNumber if we'll ever know who the lad's parents was. I kin see 'em now as they laid with their heads smashed in by the bloody Injuns. The wagon was all afire, and I snatched back kid, and I got him time to save him, and him, roasted. Poor little cove! he looked at the black eyes of Flash Lightning! That's the reason I givem his name that way."

"His parents must be'een no common folks, for they had a silver-robbery; and he got somethin' as kin read sinner over them papers as come from them youngster. They was talkin' 'bout something Flash. He was a loss to the Rockies than to lose a gold-mine, for a lad like Flash is way - ten times his weight in solid gold hyder.)"
Flash Lightning, the Mountain Mascot

This must be the house of old Dug-Out. My trail may be a false one, but if the boy finds us, I do not know what may be the fortune of my mates.

At this moment Jacobs appeared on the second floor, looking out the window in the same manner, while water dripped from every throat of the rain, and the woman's face, and green slies lay in patches all over him.

He started back at a slight chirrup over head, and looked with alarmed eyes into the branches of the house.

"Oh, it's you, Mr. Squirrel! Your name's Flash, is it? Come down, you cautioning rascal! I've been trying to get a sight of you, and at last I've found you, and now I wish to work the neck of every Flash in these United States.

"Yes, it is. I have come to see you, looking for Jacobs closely.

"It cannot be,"

Jacobs leaped tenses back on hearing this voice. But in a moment he came forward again, with a look of recognition.

"Mr. Griscom, he said.

"It isn't possible! You here! In the Rockies! What was the risk in the world have you been doing?"

Griscom surveyed him from head to foot with a queer smile.

"Be a boy of earth," explained Jacobs, "had a little set-to with a chap they call Flash. You ought to see him, if you want somebody to laugh at.

"Come, now, none of your old lies, Jerry. So much for the fox, or the sable. What for!"

"I didn't want to kiss a girl."

"Oh! you're up to your old tricks again. Look out you don't get worse than the frog ought to be. Don't you come near them, in Point hitin' an ounce of ore. That's what your pizen's done for me, Jerry."

"I'm not at point, Jerry. I've got some young man about my neck, you know, and now I must go and see what you say on your help.

"Such a man in the States I'd sooner work with, Mr. Griscom, declared Jerry, with a look of admiration, dusting the front of his little hat in the look of this Flash. I wish I was on one condition.

"What is that?"

"Well, that I didn't want to get the girl.""You're soft-headed fool," retorted Griscom, looking at him contemptuously. "Feeling with girls is like picking up red-hot coal, I tell you that. I'd sooner work against ten men than one woman." 

"Ragged Bes is my provender, anyhow. I'll take her.

"Be it so, now go and get some dry clothes on, I'm staying at the Joly Kej Saloon. You can find me there.

"All right," and Jacobs salked away, the dirty water still dripping from his clothes.

"He's fool and coward at once," muttered Griscom, looking after him.

"Yet I couldn't find another. He's better. His own miserable hide is safe he is ready for any rasal or any one else."

"It's all right, and must be handled neatly and skillfully."

He walked up to the cottage, and looked slyly in an open window.

"Then he'd tell the chap to handle, if he he's struck against the grain," he decided. "But what will the eyes of the people in the window will.

"There are papers in his hand, Old and faded ones. Yet his face has the look of one who cannot read them. Can they have anything to do with my quest? I would like to break in on him before he can hide those papers. But that wouldn't be safe with a man like him."

As he spoke he gave a ringing rap on the door.

Several minutes passed without a response, and he knocked again louder than before.

"I didn't ax for nothin', and the worse I be bitten face of Old Dug-Out appeared in the door.

He looked his visitor from head to foot with an inquiring glance.

"I'm hungry," he said.

"I never twiggled yourphis afore.

"Well, I've been searching for some mining information, and I've been told that you're the man for me."

"Me? 'Bout minin' and prospectin'? Wal, I do know summat 'bout that. But, who sent you to know about me?"

"The landlord of the Joly Kej, where I'm sitting.

"That soon! Is he tryin' a lark on me? If he is, I'll bust his beer barrel. But, step in side. There ain't no harm having a chat, any how."
CHAPTER III.

The Mountain of Giantos.

One glance sufficed for Old Dag-Out to take in the situation. Wire was a ratcatcher, and if a half foot of his fierce haste he quite overran the chase—for Griscom had halted at the first sign of concealment, and lay flat against a stump with clamp and knife and savage face, watching his young pursuer go by, barking out a howl of fury.

"Better for him, maybe," he hissed. "When it comes to pistol and knife, pistol don’t always win the game. But if the boy’s alive and I’m glad he’s gone."

He half chuckled. Griscom halted, somewhat blown with his sudden pursuit, in a strange and peculiar station. He stood on the brink of an abrupt wall, facing a sheer, slanted slope, a portion of his body showing, his legs hanging from the rock descending vertically for some two hundred feet, while below them was a pool of clear and pristine mountain lake in miniature.

Behind him the hillocks was covered with thick bushes. Before him, across the water, rose another, but not so steep, hill. From where he stood a broad view of the town and the surrounding country could be obtained.

"He was bound, he has given me the slip! He’s cried, ‘I hardly thought a stranger could have disturbed me anywhere round Payrock. It’s as well, maybe. If I’d got hold of him, one of us might have been hurt."

He looked down and around him, with the hope of catching a glimpse of the missing man. As he did so, he was unaware of a stir in the bushes, and as he started, a figure of peculiar face that glared, hyena-like, upon him from the water’s cover.

"A dangerous spot this," mused Flash.

"One misstep and a fellow would drop out of the life like a child."

He thought of the fall they had just seen and protruded his lips.

Flash put his hand to his brow to shut out the glare, and looked again—utterly unaware of the fiend behind him, or of the steeling forward of an assassin.

"That’s it!" cried Flash, as his quick ear caught a faint sound behind him.

Before he could turn, before he could think even, a pair of hands were laid on his shoulders, and a vigorous thrust given to his relaxed limbs.

"Pond for pond!" came the fierce words, as he yielded, propped, and fell like a log down the sheer abyss.

The next instant but one man stood there—first that of the man whose face had been so closely grown as white as the snow on the distant mountain peak.

There came a sickening crash; then a loud splash in the water, as if the falling form had been trapped by some kind of trap. Flash, swept from them, was plunged into the pool.

Griscom stood there for a minute or two trembling like a leaf, burning to look down the precipice, yet held back by dread of the horrible thing he might see. Then he turned and fled into the bushes, like one pursued by the Furies.

Silence lay on that quiet scene—the silence of death and crime.

CHAPTER IV.

A STERN CHASE.

One hour had passed since the first crime at the cliff. In the hollow in the foot-hills above Payrock at the two precious villages, Abel Griscom concentrated all his forces in the pursuit of the culprits.

At his command they had brought together on their retreat—Griscom from his lurking-place, and Jacobs from one of his treacherous den. They were earnestly considering.

"I should think the boy’s alive, saying, ‘that Flash Lightning won’t trouble you more. He’s gone off like a flash, and no thunder about it, either."

"I hope he has, for I hate the young bung," answered Griscom. "Only a couple of hours ago he robbed me of a fortune. But I will have those papers again or the young whelp’s life!"

And he glared as he spoke.

"His life you won’t get," said Jacobs.

"What! will you hinder me from taking it? Beware how you treat me with."
plaster to mend his "bean-ends after the kick-
ning I gave him." He added that when he found that a part of the scene, Jerry flaying and howling with pain and terror, was too much for the vigor of a young coot, lifting his victim from the ground at every kick.

"I'm a spirit! Then I'm a materialized one. See that if you don't," he roared. And he kicked Jacobs with a vim that sent him on hands and feet over a rock, reaching his chest, as if to make him swell.

Yelling, in wild terror than ever, Jacobs bolted directly to his feet and dash-
ed forward again, followed closely by his infuriated pursuer.

The coot, seeing no good now brought them near to Pay-
rock, and soon they were dashing through its primrose paths, suspended to the inhabitants, who flitted from house, store and saloon to see the unsought show.

Down the street Flash followed, kicking, both with a vim and a poise, as if to make the men laugh. He stood on the notice that a crowd of people were following them with shouts and laughter.

"Get it, buddy-bucko! Tally-ho!" cried one laughing townsmen.

"Fitch, Flash! Hi, hi, boy!" cried another.

"Five to one, Flash!"

"Flitch, Flitch, Spindle'll wind him."

"There was a royal kick. He lifted him five feet out of the air."

"Let you a pony it wasn't more than three!"

"They're heading toward the old quarry. The crows are going over."

"Hey, Flash, 'ware the quarry! 'Ware, lad, they're coming!

Such were some of the cries of the pursuing crowd when they neared the Flash, none with the terror-stricken wretch ahead. But safely to all, Jacobs dashed madly away from the supposed ghost behind him, and Flash kept furiously on his track, lifting him with his boot- toe at every ten paces.

And now, just between them, yawned the cavity of the town, a chasm of which the townsmen had given warning—a shear descent of thirty feet, near the road side. In a minute more they stood on the dangerous brink. Here one last kick from Flash's foot lifted Jacobs into the air, and he fell directly into the quarry.

Only the send-back from his kick prevented Flash from following him. He now stood on the brink, breathing heavily from his exertions, his face still hot with rage.

"Flitch, Flitch, Flash!" cried the foremost townsmen. "You have killed the fell

"If I have, it's a good job," he fiercely re-
p lied. "There's no such good luck, hang him! That's the boy's carcase!"

It was as he said. The dismembered quarry was a heap of bones. Doubtless the heads of which Jacobs had fallen, and among which he was now scrambling, still wild with terror, as it was to bury them. Blood trickled in a hundred rills.

"Leave him alone!" retorted Flash. "He has not half what he deserved."

"I never saw such a ruck-
buck, or, may be, only the going!" rejoined Flash, with an admiring look. "Is your father in, Miss Linda? I wanted to take a choice.

"No. He is down at the mine."

"Then he's in no state to judge."

"Don't be in a hurry. Your business can't be so urgent. Sit down here for a while. I want a choice."

They sat together on the steps of the porch, and looking over the edge at the surrounding vines. There was something neither of them had perceived. A lurking form had followed Flash as he approached, like a shadow from tree to tree, and from bush to bush, on reaching the garden.

It was a small figure, which now lay hidden behind a clustering rose-bush, too far away from the speakers to hear more than an occasional word of their conversation. But had their eyes been more acute or their leave told, they would have seen a pair of burning and flashing eyes fixed upon them, jet-black eyes with glowing tips of angry and revengeful fire in their depths.

"I love you!" answered the speaker. The conversation of the two continued.

They were a handsome pair as they sat there together, Linda in her light summer dress, and her face rosy with health; Flash with his rough pants through which peeped, his gray miner's shirt and belt, that revealed the lines of his fine figure, and his handsome young counte-
tenance, filled with spirit.

"You will have your way," he answered, with a laugh. "You can have your way in it. You never let any one say no when you say yes.

No one has a right to say no, when I say yes, the gander said. "Do you put a

"Lynch him! Lynch him!" shouted others.

"Let him be," cried Flash, sternly. "He didn't harm me. And he'll have a square yard of

chasing; but it wouldn't work with all us West-
erners. I gave him a feeling of fear, for he came out all dough the first time.

Linda, with a merry laugh, "I cried Lind-
a, with a merry laugh. "He complaints bitter-
ye of your treatment. He says you call him a scoundrel and thief, but I don't know what you mean, for his feet are not a bit ten-

"I'll tread on them the next time, and see," and can see why his collar and neck-tie
gives you such rage kinks in it, which you have.

"Poor little dear! I try to let him alone, but he's too full of blood and green and ten-
der that I go for him like young paper-gapers."

"If he's a young man, he must put

"Come, lads," said Flash, somewhat recov-
ered from his anger, "let us go to head-quar-
ters and I'll tell you all about it."

He led the way back to the town, followed by a curious and fascinated throng, many of them laughing still at thought of the peculiar chase.

CHAPTER V.

WHAT CAME OF AN AMBUSH.

In the green meadow land about half a mile to the left of the town of Payrock stood a dwell-
ing of much more pretension than the most of those in that locality. It was of frame, but

"That is really safe? How nice it is of him!"

He intends to chastise you."

Flash broke into a jovial laugh.

"I see I'll have to carry a shaved with around

"What for?"

To show up what's left of him when he's been

done chastising me."

While this chat was going on, the form be-
tween the bush was seeking to creep to one nearer the speakers.

Quite unconscious of the presence, the two continued their gay talk.

"Don't hurt him," pleaded Linda. "He really is a good fellow, for being born a fool. It wasn't his fault. And we are not going to let you hang him on me that I have a sort of tenderness for him."

So! Is the wind in that quarter? Poor Tim, he must carry for the two.

"Well, that's certainly polite."

"It doesn't make any difference to do."

"You are improving. When did I ever flirt with you and yet, she continued, with a gay laugh, "that would be desirable!

"That is Spruce jealous! We must play the lover and not be coquettish with you together."

"Why, if I knew how—"

"I'll teach you," she declared, still laughing. "Harold will declare, if he is not coming more sneaking on us, too. There's no better time for nowadays.

As she spoke, the young gentleman alluded to, Mr. Timmy Spruce, polished and brushed to the highest level of art, had made his appearance on the porch. On perceiving the couple, who sat on the steps, he suddenly stayed his progress and stood peering at Flash with a look, half-rage, half-fear. For, as we have seen, Flash had made him the butt of his jesting humor.

The gliding on tip-toe he managed to reach the cover of the luxuriant vines that grew up to the front of the porch, where he placed himself in a attitude to look and listen.

At the same moment the creeping figure in the rose-bush, as it sprang out of the door, and now was within easy hearing distance of the unconscious pair.

The most well aware of Tim's movements, but saw nothing of those glowering eyes that barely missed Tim's ear, and that prayed against Tim's presence.

Linda's form sunk downward, until it rested confidentially against Flash's strong shoulder. Her body fell in a carcase of sheeting and lace. He was not long in closing his fingers over it.

"Love in a cottage; it's a sweet dream," she murmured, bending her eyes on him with seem-
ing tenderness, but with a roughish look which the cavedrovers could not see. "What is money without love? What is not love without money?"

"Money has no charms for me," he replied.

"But this soft hand, and a heart like yours, dear; you are playing me false. You love another. That jack-rabbit, Tim Spruce!"

"I love you!" answered the speaker. The despair of the desperate. A peramitement of spite."

"That is, yes!" answered the speaker. The despair of the desperate. A peramitement of spite."

"If I thought you did I'd know the fellow's merito under his ear, and bash him up as a rea-

"That is, yes!" answered the speaker. The despair of the desperate. A peramitement of spite."

"I love you!" answered the speaker. The despair of the desperate. A peramitement of spite."

"That is, yes! The best answer—when you are not about. She's a jovial little thing. But, of course, I don't stand on love of—"

"I finished the sentence with a look that set Tim frantic. He was then among the bushes, and the bushman was a sight to the earth.
After some more of this artful conversation, the pair rose and walked away, hand in hand, representing their stationer until out of hearing of the group.

When Tim emerged from his concealment he faced the pair as if to suppress another explosion.

"Base ingratitude!" he ejaculated. "I tailored her advertisement! In specimen of shoe-polish! In which you are so keenly interested, and New York society, and I am a scion of one of the best families! I will have none of it!"

They shall see what a Spruce can do when his blood is up.

And shaking his fist threateningly, Tim hastened across the lawn and out at the gate, blundering in the darkness.

Meanwhile the lurking form behind the bush had risen and crept away. But the echoes of the shots, the sound of the pair had flown further than they dreamed of, and bitterly hurt one whom both of them would have done anything to have hurt.

But the mischief was done, and Besse lay motionless on the grass, her head thrown back, her eyes filled with wide, full-forwards. She had not known before how deeply she loved Flash. A few, weedless words had taught her of a passion of her own.

CHAPTER VI.

A SCENE OF EXCITMENT.

Our scene now shifts to another locality near the same residence. The same range of mountains, a mile or two from the village, a rocky and broken, with a stream running down the face of the mountain-side, and falling in a cascade into the plain. Near the base of the fallen frame house that looks as if it might at any moment tumble into ruins.

This dwelling occupies a hollow near the hill-side. The ground rises in a gentle slope since another cavity, from which the house is quite concealed. This is a bushy repe
tation. If such an approach there is a group of men in this second hollow. Two of them are persons whom we have already met, Miss Grier and Enery Jacobs. The third is a stranger, who stand more in the background, and is the character of the group without whom the story would be lost.

"Don't forget that I have to go the hill for my share of the profits.

"And I the boy, whom you didn't kill, for all your boasting."

"No, but he nearly killed me. He kicked me into a hole."

As they spoke the group of ruffians concealed behind the bushes, followed by Grier and Jacobs, also disappeared into covering-places.

The faces that had been heard now grew louder. One of them was raised to a scurril, scolding tone; the other was much slower and lower.

"It's a liar now!" cried the first, in the voice of the writer of the Osman, and perambulant'mainly's if you owned all Rasty, and leaving me to work, my fingers ends off to be.

"Why, Aunty," answered the voice of Besse, "I don't want anything, but you know I am not going to do that.

"When you ain't runnin' round the corner, he's got his picture, "he's a knot-o' ya, gal," or anything. You're always pickin' at him, Aunty, and you know that he isn't got his right by your house, without skirring, larnin the words, "I don't know it. Jist you go with that work, and

quit thinkin' bout him, or you'll hear from me mighty sudden."

A shah of a nod accorded these words. The next instant Besse appeared over the edge of the hill, looking very red and indignant.

"That's all a lie!" said Besse. "You're always pickin' at Flash! She knows it hurts her and she always does it. I don't know what to do, I won't tell you! I got a right to know what I want."

She clinched her small fist and shook it toward the etagere. "If you want to see a little old woman, eh?"

It was the forcible voice of Flash. He came up and put his arm familiarly around her waist.

She shook his arm off hastily and sprung to one side.

"Don't do that! I won't let you do that!"

"Don't do what? What's stung you, Besse? I don't hear borsetts burning round here!"

"I've found you out, that's all," she cried, defiantly. "I've been followin' you all over you cared for, and you don't one bit!"

"Who told you that, Besse? Whoever did told you lie as bad as you sit here!"

She looked at him through the screen of hair that fell over her face, and then she went away quietly.

"What did you do to the chap that done it?"

"I kick him into the middle of the next week!"

"I declared, a tone of anger.

"Then you had better go. For it was you that lied," she passionately replied, "you're all down on me, you, and Aunty, and that red-bearded fellow," and she turned away, "you care whether I live or not. I've meet a mind to go and drown myself, for a woman is she here, and I'm in everybody's way.

"Why, bless your eyes, Besse, what is this? I thought this was brave little Betty Martin. You ain't going to play the grown-up baby, are you?"

"Don't you," she declared, defiantly. "You're, like a grown-up baby, and you shan't have another chance."

There now! She jumped over the hand with which she would have detained her, and ran impulsive
dly away, looking back in angry reproach as she did so.

Flash stood in surprise that was almost com

"Where?" he whistled. "Here's a breech! What under the sun? I've seen good many of her tantrums, but she never thought she'd go off quite so short as that before; and without anything."

"Blame it all, it kind of upsets me. Some
ting's put me in a meeting finger."

"It's Leap," she called, softly, "Where are you, Flash? Oh, he's gone, and I've driven him away! He'll never come back again! I could tear out my eyes for him."

She flung herself passionately on the ground and buried her face in the moss, and then, looking up at me,

"I wish I was dead!" she exclaimed. "There's nothin' to live for now. I've driven away Flash. He'll never come back again!"

"Both of them! She's gone, and there's no

body else in this world I care for, or that cares for me.

After a moment of this self-reproof she sprang to her feet with her eyes flashing with a new light.

"There! I am playin' the little fool again! He's gone, and I don't care. He's gone, and I don't care."

And then, with a sigh, "Flash, I don't care about anything."

She flung herself passionately on the ground, and buried her face in the moss. "I wish I was dead!"

"That was Besse's voice," he said. "And, she don't scream that way without it means some
ting."

Forbes turned to me, looking wistful, and then, seeming quite in her sound senses to-day, I hope they will never bring her back to life."

He advanced into the bushes, as he did so the

whistle again sounded, and four strong men appeared before he fairly knew what had happened.

But he was not the kind of lad to submit quietly. He struggled forcibly with his captors, dragging them backward and forward over the grass, and making herculean efforts to escape.

"Scoundrels!" he hissed. "What is this for?"

"They kept silent. It needed all their strength to hold their vigorous captive, and they had no

voice for sound of the whistle three men leaped from the shelter of the bushes.

Two of them grasped her arms, the third, a man in a muslin handkerchief, performed the operation of shaving her over.

He was not quick enough to prevent her giving one loud cry of alarm. Before she could re
pet it her mouth was muffled so closely that she looked like a room in a black whale.

"Away with the jade!" Quick! cried Jacobs. "Two of you, and one of you.

Besse struggled with her captors, but she was as nothing in their hands. In a moment they had the captive in the bushes, performing the operation of shaving her away.

The others returned to their place of ambush, and deep silence fell again upon the scene.

But the door of the cottage was heard to open, and it was closed, and the sounds of the shrewish old woman appeared above the noise.

"You, Besse?" she cried loudly. "What are you yellin' about now? Have I done anything that won't you see? I have the gal, she's gone again, and never tetchit it! Won't I go for her when she comes back, the boy!"

After thus giving vent to her feelings the old virago withdrew, but, she had not fairly done so before a form appeared in another direction, and the nimble figure of Flash came bounding out of the bushes.

He looked on the apparently deserted scene in some

"That was Besse's voice," he said. "And, she don't scream that way without it means some
ting."

took a shot, and fell in the next, and his hair was like a trip-horse into the face of his strongest assailant, telling him to the ground.

Ere he could repeat the blow his arm was seized again, and at that moment a heavy stroke fell on his cheek, fell on the back of his head, knocking him forward like a dead log.

It was Jerry Jacobs to whom he owed this blow.

"To him now, while his sense is gone. He's a strong fellow, but he'll stand nothing of Besse's!

They dragged their prisoner away, having first bound his wrists. He staggered and fell, with the blow that was delivered, but fairly in his teeth, it seemed.

They almost had to carry him back. Flash lightening of the Rockies!" declared Jacobs, scornfully. "I could fetch him when the Bill Jacobs blood.
CHAPTER VII

At a Rope’s End

We introduce the reader to the interior of a strongly-built log-dwelling at a considerable distance from Payrock, and so cunningly concealed in a tree-lined cleft of the mountainside as to render it very difficult to discover. It was a small, two-story house with several rooms on each floor. The only room which gives signs of being occupied is a large, vaulted, and scented parlor with a ceiling crossed by a strong, broad-beamed ridge, thus forming a small roof.

The group consisted of one woman, her husband, and several children. The mother was a tall, imposing figure, with a slight air of authority about her. She was the only one who seemed to be in control of the situation. The children, on the other hand, seemed rather shy and timid.

The man was a tall, slender figure, with a serious expression on his face. He was dressed in a simple, workman-like manner, with a high-collared shirt and a wide-brimmed hat. His appearance was that of a man who had spent most of his life in the outdoors, and who was quite at home in such a setting.

The woman was a middle-aged lady, with a kind expression and a warm smile. She was dressed in a simple, no-nonsense manner, with a high-collared dress and a plain, white hat. She seemed to be the one in charge, and the children followed her lead.

As they listened to the woman’s stories, the children seemed to absorb every word. They listened intently, their eyes wide with wonder and curiosity.

The man watched them with a benevolent expression, his eyes filled with pride and affection. He seemed to be proud of his children, and was happy to see them engaging with the world around them.

The woman finished her story, and the children burst into applause. They were clearly impressed by the tales she had told, and were excited to continue exploring the world.

The man smiled, his eyes sparkling with joy. He was proud of his children, and was happy to see them engaged in such meaningful activities.

The woman turned to the children, and spoke in a gentle voice. "Let’s continue our exploration, shall we? There’s so much to learn and discover in this vast, beautiful world.

The children nodded eagerly, their eyes sparkling with excitement. They were ready to continue their journey, eager to learn more about the world around them.

The man watched them, his eyes filled with pride and affection. He knew that they were in good hands, and was happy to see them engaged in such meaningful activities.

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Flash Lightning, the Mountain Mascot.

A fierce oath broke from Griscom’s lips. He had been utterly cooled, and swept off the floor by the compact. "Let me hear you! You are all old scouts. You can run him down. After him! Don’t delay or hesitate! And when we capture him, we’ll hang him on the spot. He shall see if he can play this game!"

Then sprung to the door and rushed through it. The others followed with equal haste. When we reached the room all was gone, and no one remained in the room but the silent figure of Flash.

Flash had protruded his head, and was looking after them with laughing eyes and a gesture of contempt.

CHAPTER VIII.

TAKEN BY SURPRISE.

FLASH remained in his covert until the sound of voices outside had died away in the distance. Then he half-rose on the beam, and was on the point of letting himself down by the aid of the rope to the floor, when sounds in the other part of the house made him pause.

Footsteps were evidently coming on the floor. He dropped down on the beam again and waited. In a moment more these steps entered the room. He had crouched down so closely that he could be seen nothing, and had no trust to his hearing.

But his right truthful nose, or keenest of feet, gave him a start. He was only too glad that step before. He received a greater start from the first words that met his ears.

"What did you bring me here for, you mean, low-living lout of a man?"

This was the voice of Bess Martin, raised to tones of fiery indignation.

"Oh, see, here, gal, you go and get me worked up. I’m a terror when I’m worked up."

It was Jerry Jacobs that spoke.

"A terror to mice, maybe; but not to men. Your voice is a gang of bloodhounds to carry off one poor girl! You ought to call yourself a man, oughtn’t you, now?"

"I wouldn’t like to carry you off alone," retorted Jacobs, with a provoking laugh, "it would be too much for my constitution.

"I’d scratch your eyes out, you sneak, if you tried it!" exclaimed Bess, in a white heat of rage.

Flash now had his face over the beam, looking down on the two with the indignation that beam with admiration. When they fell on Bess this look changed to an ominous intent. Flash caught hold of the hanging rope, and began cautiously to draw it up.

"Go on, my little beauty!" said Jacobs, approvingly. "I like a girl who are never so pretty when they are mad.

"I wish Flash was only here!" cried Bess. "If he had seen that fellow, he’d have ripped your leaf, you coward!"

"Oh, he’s a rock-hopper! That blowing baby! Why, gal, the last time I saw him I knocked him out cold, and he never lifted a finger.

"And he snapped his fingers defiantly. If he had seen the look that beam on him from above he would not have been so brave.

"You know him?" she ejaculated, contemptuously. "You have done it with a club from behind?"

Jacobs winced at this. She had stumbled too near the truth for his liking.

"Your Flash," he continued, with a look of assumed scorn. "Why doesn’t he come to help you if he is so brave? He is a good deal nearer you now than you think. Why, gal, he could almost touch you.

"That’s a lie. If he were near, he’d be on you like a catamount. Where is he?"

"Flash doesn’t know! Las me go! I’m not afraid of he being discovered."

Bess rushed down the steps as if she were a boy at that. Flash tucked his fingers away, and with such dexterity he got him up from above he would not have seen him.

"You know him?" she ejaculated, contemptuously. "You have done it with a club from behind?"

"Now we’ve got to glide, Bess, before that other gang comes back."

Bess was dancing with something of her old wild humor round the swinging captive and wagging her fingers in his face."

"So, Mr. Girl-stealer, you want a kiss from Bess Martin?"

"Yes, sir, for one hit for Flash Lightning! How do you like it now? Don’t you find it splendid taking a swing?"

"Yes, sir, for one hit for Flash Lightning! How do you like it now? Don’t you find it splendid taking a swing?"

"Why, it doesn’t seem to make any difference to you, does it?"

"For anything you rob of you; it’s ever so much nicer than kissing."

"Gracious! There they come now!" exclaimed Bess, looking from the window.

"By Heaven, you’re right! But Flash is playing stupid to her. It’s too late to run We’ve got to fight."

He sprang to the door, closed it and shot the bolt into its socket. Meanwhile, Bess, who was a ready hand in an emergency, was searching the pockets of her frock.

"Here’s a lot of guns!" she cried, throwing open a closet. "A half-dozen of them! Good!

"Good for you, Bess. You’re worth your weight in gold. Hand them out—Here come the men."

Some one without tried to open the door, jerking at the handle with furious exertion, but failed to yield.

"Who the deuce is there?" came an angry voice.

"Your prisoners?" yelled back Flash. " Ain’t you glad you’ve got ’em?"

"Then I’ll fasten the shutter, and if you don’t open the door I’ll put Flash in, in alarm."

"They might shoot through it."

"I’ll climb into the window and Bess, ‘tis got to be shut."

"We’ll have it. We’ll close up the window and give them a target.

He loosed the rope and lowered Jacobs to the floor.

"I’ve ever so much obliged, Mr. Flash. You’re going to let me go, ain’t you? asked the halff

strung captive.

"Oh, yes! Through the window. Here; climb up—"

"But you’ve got the rope on yet. I can’t."

"Bess, I aim at him. If he doesn’t climb, you shoot."

"Won’t I, though! cried Bess, with a reckless laugh.

"No! no! Oh, don’t shoot! I’ll climb. I don’t want anything if you’ll let me go."

The window was narrow, and Jacobs’s form fit tightly into it. When he was half through the window Bess and Flash fastened the end of the rope.

"Hang it all, you. If your friends outside want something to shoot at, you’ll make a good target. I lay they’ll break their rifle for you."

Bess hung there, and Flash. While this was going on there was silence outside. The villains were in consultation.

Soon there came another thundering knock. "Oh, oh, or we’ll break the window in."

"Break, and be hanged!" yelled back Flash. "We’ll shoot you through the window."

"If you do, you’ll hurt one of your own scarecrows."

This threat brought a yell of fear from Jacobs. He tried to draw back, but Bess prodded him with the muzzle of a rifle, and he hastily jerked out again.

The voices ceased outside for a minute. Some of the villains had evidently been investigating.

They were pounding on the door was reduced, and pistol-shots were heard, as if they were seeing to fire through the window. Then came the sound of a scolding, "Strong, Bess. You are not afraid of a rifle!"

"You’re a much too pretty a girl, that’s what," she replied, bringing the piece to her shoulder.

"You’ll be rueful that you did it."

"We can bring down two, and then go for the guns behind them."

"You’ll be rueful that you did it," declared the girl, bravely. "I can fight, if I have to."

Further words were interrupted by a crashing sound at the door. Something had given way, and the door flew open.

In rushed the villains, to be checked by the vision of the brace of rifles that stared them in the face.

"Down with them! Fire!" yelled Griscom. Crack! Crack! went the spitfire revolvers, but their sound was lost in the leader crash of the rifles.

But before they could turn their sights on the villains. Flash and Bess, who were unhurt by the pistol-shots, dropped their empty rifles and ran headlong through two of those that were still wall behind them.

But before they could turn their sights on the villains. Flash and Bess, who were unhurt by the pistol-shots, dropped their empty rifles and ran headlong through two of those that were still wall behind them.

Meanwhile Bess had fired again, and somewhat helplessly. The rest of the villains had caught him, and held him fast by the arms, despite her vigorous effort to escape.

Bess had broken his fall, and flash lay dead by his side.

A severe struggle began, which was speedily ended by two of the ruffians coming to Griscom’s aid.

In a minute more Flash was a bound captive
Flash Lightning, the Mountain Mascot.

At this hint Jacobs eased her hold and her finely trained horse, though she struggled desperately in his grasp. He ventured a mirthless laugh. "That's myFlash. "This hound has the whip hand now, but he's got Old Dug-Out to deal with yet."

"That's my Flash," she retorted contemptuously with angry sarcasm. "It will kill me! It will kill me!"

"You don't have to mind that baby of a girl. We'll see what Old Dug-Out will do."

As a sound at the door drew all eyes in that direction, they saw a large, well-muscled, full of fierce resolution, and the protruding muzzle of a rifle. The men forgot to aestheticize Old Dug-Out can do. Here's what, "came the harsh voice, and simultaneously the rifle cracked with a sharp report.

The men at the rope hastily loosened their bonds, as the singing bullet whizzed between their hands.

"As all the villains could recover from their astonishment, Dug-Out was through the window and on the floor. At the same moment the door of the room flew open, and Mrs. Martin rushed in, followed by a group of armed and stalwart men. They had not seen their white eyes. There was her niece struggling in the grasp of a mounted Indian, and a yelp of pain had been the first thing caught by the air, and began to pull him up; but the look which she would hardly have been thought capable of. Meanwhile Dug-Out had rushed forward to the thud that bound his hands.

"I cried Flash, because I wanted to bet him odds that he wouldn't hang me. Where is he? Hilo?"

He had just caught sight of Griscom climbing through the window.

"How to stop him, but we were too late. The villain had escaped. One of the miners sprang there with his rifle, but could see nothing at first. The Fugitive had dodged inside cover. The miner sprung through the window and was soon out of reach."

Meanwhile Beez had again clasped Flash in her arms like a recovered treasure, and was weeping tears of joy over him. Mrs. Martin was still pummeling her helpless foe, and the road-agent, who had been the chief officer of several of the rich mines. The tables had been decisively turned.

CHAPTER X

LOVE AND H瓜LOY

We must go forward several days from the period of our last scene. A few words will suffice to give an outline of the events since our last appearance. As the miners captured two of them, who were recognized as notorious desponders, had been held by the miners on their neck. This she was prevented from doing by the man who stood beside him.

"Oh! let him go! I'm startled. It's so young and strong and handsome! and he is the only one in the world that cares for me!"

Take her off!" commanded Griscom, unmoved by her appeal.

Two of the miners seized her and tore her loose from the prisoner.

"This was the end she was not desired to fury at Griscom's feet.

"Oh, don't hang him! don't hang him!" she pleaded. "He's all I have in the world; the only one I love in the world! Oh, for my sake don't hang him, Griscom!"

"I never have nothing to do with me again," she sadly answered. "A little ragged
nobody like me. Look at me! How’d I look coming on thus?

She burst into a reckless laugh, and flung her-

“Come back yere, gal!” cried Dug-Out, com-
mandingly, “What’s all this about? Ye’ve no

got no business to be drunk and dazed like ye!”

“Tain’t no matter. He’s too big for me. I
don’t want nothin’ more to do with him, and
I won’t look at him again.”

“Linda! Linda!” begged the girl. The boy can’t help havin’ a rich daddy. If he only keeps his head, that daper, thin, young chap. If he goes back on you, I’ll—”

“What?” she asked, anxiously.

Linda held her breath, and let him whittle for the fortune.

“No, he ain’t. And if he goes back on you, you’ll hear somethin’ from Old Dug-Out. Tell you what, gal—if I tell you a great secret, you won’t say nothing about it?”

“No,” she replied.

“Nobody shall hear it from me!”

“Is that so? Then everybody knows how I’ve been diggin’ in the rocks for twelve years and ain’t struck pay-yet ye.”

“Laugh at me fur a crook. Moble’ they’ll find out that the old man knows a thing or two. I struck for sunshine, too. But I ain’t got no principles. If I ain’t mighty mistaken, I’m nigh on gold.”

She was sprung up and clapped her hands joy-

fully.

“Oh, that’s so good. I’ve been praisin’ you to the skies all this mornin’, to bring you good luck.”

“Which dater yet, gal. If I strike it I won’t tomor-keer as much as Flasch, an’ dress up pretty an’ go an’ eat an’ drink. That’s all the fortune. FLash is a young neck and he don’t do it.” She cried, starting away impetuously. “I won’t rob you. If he ever does a’ work as I am, I won’t have him! I can be proud, too.”

“Lord, what a queer thing a gal is!” exclaimed
ed Linda, pursing her lips. “She’s got all the
time she wants him—thout money; but all the time she wants him somehow. It’s lucky as Flash’s pure grit. There isn’t no danger of him goin’ back on ye, Bess. I didn’t fitchum on him.”

“She’s in love with that ugly, proud Linda?”
cried Bess, knitting herself away ca-

ily. “I’ve seen him. ‘Cause I wear old clothes and don’t put on airs he’s dropped me and pick-

ed up that lilt. He’s just amusin’ fun of me, and I won’t speak to him again, there!”

“Hi!” he called to the ground, and tossed her head defiantly.

Rhythmically, tightly, gal. What’s this about?

“Gonna get married,” she said casually.

“There they come now. I won’t stay, I know they would all be fun stand- ing it. Just watch ’em and you’ll see.”

She ran hastily away. Dug-Out looked round him. He knew the house was close, he was curious to see what would take place.

She met him at the window of her cottage. She owned a view of the scene, walking slowly and engaged in emi-

nous conversation.

“You say he is furious?” remarked Flash.

“Willy. He would eat you without mustard. He vows deep vengeance.”

“Good! We must work him worse yet. Now he Oregon round. He’s after us now. I just caught a glimpse of him behind the bushes yonder.”

“Following us?” she cried, with a flash of

anger. “Then he wants punishment. I feel like givin’ him some.”

“And I too,” laughed Flash. “There, he has bid behind that big tree near the corner of the house. Meanin’ to make a run for it, the lees be like he queried, with a look of remorse.

He had seen Tim sneak in and hide himself be-

hind the willow. He had failed to perceive Black Diamond back as a visible chain. She crouched behind a corner of the house, between the potato pair with eyes that burned with indignation. And he was equally ignorant that Dug-Out was lurking near the cottage. Dug-Out had been told that this had been his fun-loving pair would doubtless have acted very dif-

ferently. As it was they walked up toward the trees and talked of the recent death with a great show of mutual sympathy.

“Then you don’t love that spindly-shanked, cur-dried, cross-eyed snip of a tenderfoot?” queried Flash.

“Love him?” she rejoined, with a regal look. “How can I love him, after all I’ve seen and known, too.”

“I don’t know. But you are so queer. Why, he hangs on to you like a burro to a sheep’s wool.”

“I should think you had a fancy for him—”

“Let me do that just for fun. It’s so wonder-

fully fruitful, I assure you, and so amusingly.

Then you had this idea that I never forgive myself if I did that! Never mind me, I ain’t no account. I’m only a Rage and Patches. Flash is too good for me every way.

“No, he ain’t. And if he goes back on you, you’ll hear somethin’ from Old Dug-Out. Tell you what, gal—if I tell you a great secret, you won’t say nothing about it?”

“Mercy on us! How’s what’s he?” she cried, with a show of consternation.

Thus discovered Tim made his appearance, brieflig a chestnut-burr with rage.

“Peace with you, gal? He’s curious furious.”

“Scourless ingrates! I shall be revenged! I shall—”

“Place, Timmy!” cried Flash, facing him with an air of surprise. “Where did you sprout up from? A thing like that is the difficulter. I’ve been wanting that don’t agree with you.”

“I ain’t chaste!” she exclaimed. “She screamed Tim, rushing forward with clenched fists and glaring eyes.

“Don’t it? I might hurt, was Flash’s mocking rejoiner.

But the dude was worked up to lightning pitch. He made a desperate blow at his rival. It did not reach him. Flash caught him around his wrist, and twisted his arm till he brought him down to his knees.

“Hit me, I ain’t been hurt yet,” cried Flash, grinding his teeth with a great show of rage. “Now what have you got from me?”

He had struck the dude a solid blow. He turned away from his battered face, and every stroke of the pick told. About midday he had fired and freed a blast, and retired to await the explosion.

A roar like a muted thunder run through the hills and rocks and the stranded men. Waiting until all danger was past, Dug-Out re-
turned, eager and hopeful. This blast had been laid in the most promising part of the rock. Should he find the vein laid bare on his re-

turn?

The explanations above given are necessary as a description of what the old miner discovered.

Entering the mine, he found the stranger the indubitable proof of the existence of the famous hole in the rocks, which opens into a cave, like-

nagemates. In that, the lad set down his pick and talked, while he still held in his hand the pick that’s come o’ff the next.

“But what is it?” I don’t understand.

“Eggs, you must be hungry, I thought this was a good sign of gold, cried Bess excitely. “There was gold taken out of that. You’re not a fool.”

“You dunno what you’re talkin’ bout, gal. That settles it for good.” He pointed to the cave.

“Not does anything of the sort,” cried
Bees positively, "Give me the pick. You've been trying a man's luck long enough. Let's try to mine a vein to see if it strikes the vein?" she demanded, seizing a light pick that lay at her feet.

"And I've heard it," rejoined Dag-Out, with a grim laugh. "I reckon that's a safe offer, too." "Don't be too sure," exclaimed Bees. "I'm a sort of mascot, you know."

She walked off, not near the entrance to the shaft where the blast had laid bare an area of the rock.

"His mighty good exercise for a gal's arm," he said. "I reckon that's 'bout all it is.

Bees laughed back as she struck again. Instead of the soft thrust of her previous blows this yielded a metallic ring. She gave a wrench with the instrument, and a heavy stone rolled out.

"Guess you're 'bout done, gal," he remarked.

"You're inter hard stuff now." He carefully picked up the stone as he spoke, and cast his eyes upon it. Instantly a light flashed through his face, a trashtaker came to life in his hands.

Suddenly he raised it, raised his heavy pick over his shoulder, and swung out in a voice of thunder:

"Rock, gal! Leave me that!"

He pushed Bees away with a force that sent her flying back; then he began to dig into the cavity with frantic energy. A few feet and a much larger stone was loosened. He repeated the process several times, and then, satisfied, dropped the pick, and rolled out at its feet.

Dag-Out had been working like one beside himself. He had dropped the pick and began to examine this stone with eager eyes.

A moment, then, he sprang to his feet, gazing into the cavity, as if to make up his thoughts.

"I won't have it," he said, "you can hear another word. I won't have it any way with Miss Melton. Good-by, forever!"

She hurried away, leaving Flash in an agony of surprise and despair.

While this went on, none of them observed the figure that had come near the rock, looking on with eyes of satisfied triumph.

It was Tim Spruce, who had followed Flash into the mine. He was one of the old Golden Foley gang, and may lay a claim, I'll tell everybody. I'll spread it all over Payrock. And see if I don't let Linda know how this down has been making love to a rag-patch. I'll let him see that one can insult me with impunity.

He withdrew cautiously, leaving the old miner and Flash in conversation. In his sly disurban position, he failed to see the meaning of his rival's action.

He had dwelt outside the mines before he met a person whose face was as strange to him. It was Abe Griscom, who was prowling around there, revolving in his evil mind schemes to make him even with Flash. He was not one to forgive the trick that had been played on him.

Tim Spruce found a more interested cautor upon the thought of the uttermost attention to the story of the finding of the vein. He disturbed them both.

"It's all clear," he remarked. "They want it kept secret, because it's in the old Golden Foley claim. They've known about them. I'll have it—You don't like people like me?"

"I hate them all," answered Abe.

"Then come with me. We'll see what can be done. I know you're too smart."

He led Tim away, reviving in his mind schemes of vengeance. The information which Griscom had sought was worth much to Abe as sherpa and unavailing as he. The old miner and his protege were in far greater danger than they dreamed of.

CHAPTER XII
THE CLIMAX OF THE PLOT.
We must go to the second day after the scene of the disaster and the preceding day. Dag-Out had worked diligently at the vein, and uncovered a scene that it was no mistake, that there was gold in abundance.

But it lay on the very edge of the Golden Foley claim. The old mining property might be bought, but it was cheaper to try and secure this before the news of his find got abroad. It would not be comfortable to find a brushwood man in possession of the product of his twelve years' labor.

That mining operation was happening in the town. Three of the road-agents imprisoned in the lock-up had broken out and made their escape. Their designs were to destroy the company.

How it is known done no one knew, but there was reason to believe that they had help from without. The escape was not agreeable to the townsmen, for they had given up their minds to hang the whole party but pursuit proved useless the fugitives were not to be found.

Near nightfall of the day in question a group of men were collected in a mining ravine not far away from Payrock. Two of these, rifles in hand, were on guard while the others, ten in all, entered the ravine. They were two of the old Golden Foley gang.

Two other men stood in an open space in the center. These were Abe Griscom and Jerry Jacobs, who were engaged in earnest conversation.

Money and gold—these are two things worth working for," remarked Griscom, waving a gold nugget that he held in his palm.

"And what do you think of your comrades, Joshua?" replied Jerry, with a great show of courage. 'But what could one man do against a dozen? I must have knocked down ten of them, and if these fellows had only come to my help. But a man can't make buildings out of cowards.

"That's true," rejoined Griscom, smiling grimly, "ex-ex by the help of his tongue, but only had one good man to help me," declared Jacobs. "But what can one do against twenty?"

"Dry up, Jerry; you're wasting your powder. Save that for green goslings. There's nothing left but satisfaction for your sore back."

"No how," cried Jerry, viciously. "I'm open for anything."

You know about the find in the mine. I have my plans to lay hold of the miner and make him work for the vein."

"You'll only have the man to help me," declared Jacobs. "But what can one do against twenty?"

"It's like wholesale murder."

You know what that would do to get rid of that sneak, Flash?"

"I'd murder a dozen," cried Jerry, viciously.

"That's one thing. Another is, I've laid my plans to buy the Golden Foley claim. The vein will be cut.

"Are you ready to say halver?"

"Yes?"

Then here's my hand on it."

"Good," he shook Jerry's hand as cordially as he could, and gave him a broad and just one against a bargain. "I have one of our men at work now clearing out a cavity behind the rock. He is working under cover of darkness and by day he will have a hole ten feet deep, between the rock and the vein."

"Then he will be able to push the cartridge, fix everything for the explosion and all will be ready."

Then will it be done?"

"To-morrow. My man will lie hidden waiting. The first light of dawn, he will shoot a white handkerchief. Then off goes the cartridge and down comes the rock. My plans are laid to get everybody who fears in the mine."

"How?"

"Through the help of that New York dude. Can you trust him?"

"I'll shoot him! Yes, to play the fool, Dag-Out and Flash will be there, working at the mine. And the dude, then we have all that know the secret."

"The dude is that the way you are going to pay him for his help?"

Griscom laughed unfeeling.

"Of course. I'll be said to be in the gold business."

"But the girl, Bees. She's so confounded pretty, and I've got such a banker after her."

"That's come of your hankering! First, a lady in a duck-pond; next, a roping on the bare hands. Now it's a pretty woman."

"You want another dose of the same sort, don't you?"

"No," cried Jerry, gritting his teeth viciously. "Go on, I'm with you through the whole thing, Jerry."

Some further conversation ensued between the two men in the center of their villainous plot. It had been skillfully
Flash Lightning, the Mountain Mascot.

Flash was in the midst of his usual display, but something was different. The dynamite charge did its work, but the expected outcome was not forthcoming. Tim observed the reactions of those around him, and something in his intuitive nature told him that something was amiss.

"What's happening?" Tim asked, his voice carrying through the night air.

"I don't know," Jerry replied. "But something's about to happen.

As they stood there, a loud explosion echoed through the night, sending debris flying and smoke billowing into the air. Tim and Jerry exchanged a look, both knowing that this was no ordinary occurrence.

The two friends emerged from the cloud of dust and debris, both missing a few pieces of clothing and displaying a few minor cuts and bruises. They looked around, trying to make sense of what had just happened.

"What was that?" Jerry asked, his voice filled with concern.

"I don't know," Tim replied, his mind racing with questions. "But it's not good."
At this moment a new figure appeared on the scene. It was that of Muffy Melon, who was rushed in bonelessly and with her hair flying loosely.

"What is it?" she ejaculated. "'Tain't an earthquake, nor nothin'sh, hey? It shook all the bones out of my shoes, Mollie!"

"You can see what it is," rejoined Flash, not taking his eyes an instant from his prisoners. "'seems to be a couple of things goin' on here. Tell them there's half-a-dozen souls buried alive in Dug-Out's mine and help's wanted the worst way from there."

The old woman needed no further words. One step she told her the whole story of what had occurred.

She turned and 'darted away with the speed of a hunted deer, her heart burning up with hope that her old man would live. At an instant she was strung up with rage. The next minute she was off on a run through the woods.

Old Flash's prisoners were yet dazed with the shock of the earth tremors. They could not think. They could not speak. They could only hang their heads and moan.

"That old Golden Folly shaft," he replied, "I had forgotten it."

"Yes. Dug-Out blasted through into it three days ago. He has a hole now big enough to drive an ox through and there's an up and down way for air and light, and for rescue, too. A windlass was put in at the mouth of the shaft as soon as the men caught on to the fact that the mouth of the old shaft, far up the rugged hillsides, was a safe exit for the prisoners."

"Alert as some of them were Flash soon led them all in the rear, borne up by love and hope, as he worked with all his heart and soul.

"We were almost up to Dug-Out's mine by the time the miners woke. It would be a short time before they would be able to use the windlass."

"We must rig up a windlass and get a rope and basket," cried one. "Does anybody know how to do it?"

"About six hundred feet," rejoined another, "and I'm reporting that there's half enough rope in all Payrock. A rope's a thing that ain't much call for here, kept to hang road-agents and gold-dust parties."

"The rope must and shall be had!" cried Flash, declaring that he would be done with that's half the battle. Let's work at once and see what the chances are.

The men got to work and the buckets and windlasses were hoisted and dispensed. Their late gloom had vanished, and the utmost hope and activity now pervaded the scene.

By the time they reached the town the whole region had been stirred up by the distressing news. A thousand or more people were there by the time that Linda Melon was among the imprisoned party added to the excitement. The tidings soon reached her father, who was distracted with grief and fear on learning his daughter's peril.

The search for rope was diligently prosecuted; every scrap of cord was found in the town collected and measured; the result was disappointing. There was still a hundred feet wanting.

"There's not another scrap to be had nearer than New York, mile after mile, and the road blasted rough," declared one of the townsmen.

"If there wasn't any nearer than New York we'd have it," exclaimed Flash. "There's not another town round about but this one, and this one I've got a whole'n town with.

"You shall have the best horses in my stable; and I've got good ones," exclaimed Mr. Melton; "and money to buy all the rope in the State. And if you only rescue my daughter, you shall have my blessing to boot.

"There are those inside whom I would give my head to save," answered Flash. "Rig up to the windlass while I am gone. That will take time. Make it good and strong, for there are many a man able to live in that shaft who has not the slightest lives depending on it."

"Leave that to me," answered Mr. Melton, "I will see that it is done."

In less than an hour afterward Flash galloped out of the town, and struck into the unknown mountain tracks. The honest man rode a strong and steady steed, his breast was a vigorous gray, that stretched out with long strides which took him rapidly over the rough roads.

He led a spare horse for a remount, for he well knew that those rough mountain roads were terribly exhausting to horses.

All hearts followed him with hope as the thud of his horse's hooves was heard at the distance, and the distance seemed shortened in proportion. They knew that Flash would be back on time if he was alive to return.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN A MOUNTAIN PRISON.

INSIDE the old Golden Folly mine, Flash, the undisputed prince of the rough, rode his horse at a fast gait. He could not live long in that service of his.

Flash listened silently to this serious declarator of the facts, as the faces present. Then with a sudden movement of joy he struck his knee with his palm, and exclaimed:

"'Tain't nothing. Why, I'd be declared, 'what made me forget it? They'll have all the fresh air they want of! They all go well, we'll have them out before night."

"What do you mean?" cried the miners, looking at him in surprise. "That rock can't be stirred!"

"The old Golden Folly shaft," he replied, "I had forgotten it."

"'The Golden Folly shaft!"

"Yes. Dug-Out blasted through into it three days ago. He has a hole now big enough to drive an ox through and there's an up and down way for air and light, and for rescue, too. A windlass was put in at the mouth of the shaft as soon as the miners caught on to the fact that the mouth of the old shaft, far up the rugged hillsides, was a safe exit for the prisoners."

A shout of joy rose from all within hearing distance, the story of the rescue quickly spread from mouth to mouth, and a rush of hope shot through the miners into the hope of the mouth of the shaft, far up the rugged hillsides.

Alert as some of them were Flash soon led them all in the rear, borne up by love and hope, as he worked with all his heart and soul.

"We were almost up to Dug-Out's mine by the time the miners woke. It would be a short time before they would be able to use the windlass."

"We must rig up a windlass and get a rope and basket," cried one. "Does anybody know how to do it?"

"About six hundred feet," rejoined another, "and I'm reporting that there's half enough rope in all Payrock. A rope's a thing that ain't much call for here, kept to hang road-agents and gold-dust parties."

"The rope must and shall be had!" cried Flash, declaring that he would be done with that's half the battle. Let's work at once and see what the chances are.

The miners got to work and the buckets and windlasses were hoisted and dispensed. Their late gloom had vanished, and the utmost hope and activity now pervaded the scene.

By the time they reached the town the whole region had been stirred up by the distressing news. A thousand or more people were there by the time that Linda Melon was among the imprisoned party added to the excitement. The tidings soon reached her father, who was distracted with grief and fear on learning his daughter's peril.

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All hearts followed him with hope as the thud of his horse's hooves was heard at the distance, and the distance seemed shortened in proportion. They knew that Flash would be back on time if he was alive to return.
own trap, and have got to stand the consequences.

"Oh, you'd best git out of my sight, or I mayn't be so good to you as I ain't been to myself in.

"His eyes flamed with such fury that Jacobs shrank. "I'll blow your overalls, you cur, as far as you've followed him, scared, despite himself, by the old man's eyes and the way the gun opened. Out stood for a moment as if half-inclined to follow and draw then and there. But a sound came into that pit of hell and swung the leg and staggered back to the heap of boiling sand. Here he sat alone and buried his face in his hands, overcome with grief at the thought of what had happened.

"In his mingled anger and consideration he had wanted the others, but at last he also took them as all the fellows in the mine.

"At first there was gloom and despair and hid the face. Then, chill and stillness, a feeling of panic, the feel of the ragged edges of his own clothes, his overalls, his jacket, his face. His face, his face, his face, his face.

"Oh, Tim, for mercy's sake, not so bad as that?

"Then you tell me what to do, and I'll do it. Anything for you. You say you don't love me any more. Do you love him any more, too?"

"Yes, I'm quiles as much," she rejoined, "with a reason.

"Then, I don't care whether the rock tumbled or not," she said, "I'll hold away my shoe-blacking. I'll quit using tooth-powder. I'll do anything you say,"

"He caught her hands and squeezed them in his joy till she-winced and fairly cried out with pain.

"Mercy on us! I don't want to be eaten alive. I'll go back and make love to Flash again. If you two don't let me alone,

"Oh, well! Can she demand Linda, with hope in her heart.

"And so she knew him. He'd moved the mountain to get us out. He's so strong, and so kind, and . . . oh, Flash! To think of it! To think of it!

"She buried her face in her hands, and buried herself in a sudden realization of feeling came over her.

"You don't want him to get me out? I'd sooner die than have him get me out," cried Tim, starting up. Her eyes fell on him, opened wide, then closed, and looked at him.

"He has robbed me of my love!"

"Ah, and broke my heart!" exclaimed Bess, lacing her arms, and clenching her angry grip. "You and he— you and he together! What do I care for that false rock? He has hurt me worse than if he had fallen on me and crushed out my life."

"They exclaimed in chorus.

"Yes, it was all done as a joke. I didn't mean to hurt anybody's feelings. I'll never forget it again."

"You love him, then?" demanded Tim, with a new meaning in his voice.

"No more than I love you?" queried Bess.

"No more than I love him," said Linda, coolly.

"But I saw you making love to each other on the porch. Oh, I can't believe you! You wouldn't do that for a joke!

"You don't know what I'd do for a joke," retorted Linda, angrily. "You had no business to break the engagement, and you'd better look after such a one as I like you. All we wanted to do was to make you jealous, Tim!

"That's so," cried Old Dog-Ug, who had been listening. "I heard him confounding go-getters, and I ain't no fool, you know."

"Forgod's sake, Tim, do n't make me jealous!" cried Tim.

"It was all done for that, sir!"

"I assure you that you are sure that he and am in love?" demanded Bess, her eyes full of hope.

"This is the final story of it! It was all in fun, Bess. He loves nobody but you, you crazy girl!"

"Oh, Tim, do n't! I assure you that you are sure that he and am in love?" demanded Bess, her eyes full of hope.

"We didn't want to hurt your feelings, mother."

"But you don't mind hurting mine," Tim plaintively interrupted.

"We didn't help. You did make such a fool of yourself with your bragging and your dandling, Tim!"

"I never will again. If you'll only forgive me and love me a little, I'll forget New York, and wear only the clothes you bought me, and eat the things you gave me, and drink the things you gave me, and drive the things you gave me."

"Oh, Tim, for mercy's sake, not so bad as that?

"Then you tell me what to do, and I'll do it. Anything for you. You say you don't love me any more. Do you love him any more, too?"

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"We didn't help. You did make such a
Flash Lightning, the Mountain Mascot.

Flash Lightning was a Mine Mascot.

The world that I've got the stuff of a man in me.

"And I've been a little rag-patch," cried Bess, "and I've been a little rag-patch for as much of a lady as any of them, so I will."

"You've got half a gold-miner to do it on, Bess, and I've got half a gold-miner to do it on."

"Oh, Lord, dear," said Bess, "it's so much darker."

"He looked up the shaft. "There's something in that.

"It's Flash! it's Flash!" shouted Bess, clapping her hands and dancing in her joy.

"Yes, it's Flash!" said the miner, "and now things will be different." Then there was no more minutes passed. Then there came a loud shout from above.

"Hello, below! Is all in trim!"

"Ay, ay!" yelled Dog-Out. "All's right, and the damnable drift is done!"

"You bet it is!" came in Flash's cheery voice.

"Stand from under!"

The bottom of a miner's bucket became visible, and, the next instant, Flash was followed by the propped up sides of the bucket, and clinging to the rope.

"Hello, everybody!" he shouted, as he sprang back to his place.

The old man took him into his arms, and tears stood in his eyes as he bent his head as if in a simple and humble way.

Flash next shook hands warmly with Linda, and took the proffered hand of Tim.

"You won't find anything about me now?"

"I thank you for showing me what a fool I've been," said Dog-Out, pointing to Flash.

"I've been a fool, and everybody's forgiven, Flash. These men are sensible, what they've done. God, yer 'eavens, boys!"

Flash looked keenly into their faces, and then turned to Linda, and said, with an exultant joy, of his hostile feeling.

"I reckon if I get you out of this hole, that will be enough, without shaking hands on it."

"Yes," said Linda, "I'm glad you have come to see us, and to sober us up, Flash."

"I have been taught this night the terrible evil of my ways, and hope to be an honest man in future. And I am your uncle, Linda, your own father's half-brother."

"If that's the case, I won't mind touching hands," answered Flash, "though some things are not easily forgiven."

They shook hands with Flash, but passed coldly by Jacob's extended hand.

"I only came down to see if you were alive," he said. "They are preparing a basket to bring you up in."

"Oh, we must see you again!"

He stepped on the bucket, gave a signal, and quickly rope began to descend. In a minute he had disappeared from sight.

But those left behind had not waited to watch. The others were crowded down, and in an hour or two all were standing on solid ground at the mouth of the Golden Forty shaft. Linda and Tim were first to arrive, followed by Flash.

"You are my real uncle, Linda."

"Yes," said Linda, "I've been shown the error of my ways."

"And you are my real brother, Tim."

Another who had taken place some two years later, was conducted with such show and display as to prove quite an event in Payrock society.

The precious box had gone to town, and to the aspect of a triumph, and there was a greater jollification in Payrock than that night had been known there since its first house was built. Every man, woman, and child was overflowing with joy in the happy rescue, and had been their own dear ones who had been saved from that dreadful fate none could have been happy.

Dog-Out's fortune was made. He succeeded in having himself rescued, and thereby claim, and in blowing away the giant rock that sealed up the entrance to his own property. The vein of gold shone rich beyond his expecations, and he was soon amply repaid for his many years of hard labor and deferred honors.

He kept strictly to his word, however, that Bess should have half of the vein, and that he would be half of the owner of the mine. Half of its proceeds he put religiously aside for her, nor would he listen to any suggestion of her part in the, in the other fortune.

"It's Flash's some day, anyhow," he declared, "and what Flash's is as good as youn', fair that young dog ain't sploce you now for any of his own again.

At her own urgent wish Bess was sent to a good school in the East, where her progress in study and manners was perfectly surprising, though she had so improved her school she became almost a lady of the day, as well as of the mine.

Before long Flash, too, took a journey East, accompanied by Griscom, and also by Dog Out, who had no doubt of being able to purchase with such an uncertain character.

They brought back with them several papers found in the burning wagon, with the exception of that which Flash had destroyed. Despite the loss of this, the most important of the lot, there was no difficulty in proving his claim to his father's estate, the documents, and Dog Out's testimony, convincing the court that he was the righting possessor of the land.

The estate, therefore, a highly valuable one, was passed over to him by the court.

And an eastern city proved too narrow to hold the brave and strong-armed, gold-trimmed youths, and he soon made his way West again, leaving a settled, landed estate, and firmly under the management of his uncle, Abel Griscom, whose reform seemed deep and lasting.

Fay cannot say as much for his associate in villainy, Jerry Jacobs. He was a rogue in grain, and he was disposed too deep to be cured by a temporary fright; so no time passed before his career came to a violent termination, at the hands of a sharp and skillful man who had caught him cheating at cards.

As for the old miner, a mine court decided that their room in the world was better than their company, and a few of their ways were set out to the world.

And the dude and Linda Melton!

"Well, they were on the happy list. Once convinced that he had been a fool, Tim soon proved that he had been wise. He threw off all his dudish slowness, went to work vigorously in a mining venture, and before long gained Mr. Welden's confidence, and was his personal boy.

Linda had had from the first a lurking fancy for him, and soon learned that he was every inch a man. This marriage was conducted with such show and display, and took place two years later, was conducted with such show and display as to prove quite an event in Payrock society.

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