

THE HERMIT OF THE SISKIYOU.

THERE stood, a quarter of a century ago, in the heart of the Siskiyou mountains, a rude cabin of poles and brush, thatched with closely-packed branches of young firs. The exact location matters little, for the iron finger of Time has effaced all traces of its existence, and demonstrated the mutability of all things terrestrial, even in those mountain solitudes. Many years ago the poles and brush were swept by a landslide into the noisy, dashing stream flowing through the gulch at the base of the hill, far up on whose side stood the cabin, while a giant fir, whose grasp upon the earth was thus loosened till it succumbed to the power of the west wind and toppled to the earth, now lies prostrate and broken across the site of this once humble habitation. Even the rude trail that wound tortuously through the dense forest and along the bank of the rapid stream, is now so completely obliterated by the rains and snows, so blocked by fallen trees and masses of earth and rock, brought down the mountains' steep sides by the melting snows and copious rains of each vernal season, that he would indeed be well skilled in woodcraft who could successfully trace it from the old mining camp whence it started, some four miles down-stream, to the site of the vanished hut. Time was when this desolate spot was the center of an absorbing interest for scores of human beings; but now few know that it ever existed, and fewer its exact location, while the incident I am about to relate has already been relegated to the domain of fiction or legendary romance, save by the few survivors of those whom

the shifting kaleidoscope of life brought for a brief period in contact with the peculiar and mysterious being who built and occupied this rude habitation.

The Siskiyou mountains lie on the border line of California and Oregon, stretching westward from the Cascades to the Coast range. They form the dividing ridge between two great rivers, both of which have cleft deep passages through the obstructing Coast range, and pour their annual floods in deep, rapid and turgid streams between the lofty walls of rugged rock which confine them to their narrow channels. The Klamath, in California, and the Rogue, in Oregon, are alike in all their essential features, turbulent, impetuous and unnavigable. From the dividing ridge of the Siskiyous, each receives a multitude of affluents, both small and great, which pour down in noisy haste from their birthplace amid the springs and melting snows of the mountain summits. On many of these streams gold was discovered early in the "fifties," and for a number of years every bend and flat was the scene of mining operations of the primitive rocker or long-slucce character. In some of these localities, where the extent of mining ground was comparatively large, or which were so located as to be a convenient central point for several outlying districts, quite extensive "camps" sprang up and flourished for several years. Some of these have still a sort of *post mortem* existence, though the great majority of them have lost all material being, and are rapidly falling into the obscurity of things forgotten.