

"The Home Again Ledge." Here was a dilemma. Instead of a ledge, a placer claim had been located; but a compromise was effected, and with all due formalities the claim was entitled and recorded "The Home Again Claim." The brief summer of the mountains was over. Snow had already fallen, and it was thought best to devote a few days to putting the claim in shape to withstand the rough usage of the coming winter, to assist in doing which, Garland decided to remain a short while. A brief letter, bearing the good tidings, was sent home, and after a long talk over the pleasant prospects before them, the three associates lay down to pleasant dreams.

By some strange chance, the letter just spoken of never reached its destination. A week later, as ill luck would have it, a falling limb struck Garland in such a manner as to deprive him of his sensibility and give rise to the gravest fears as to the possibility of his recovery. It is needless to say that all such skill and attention as was attainable in that remote region, was lavished upon the unfortunate man by his friends and associates. His partner, animated, doubtless, by the kindest motives, failed to apprise Garland's family of the accident which had befallen its head. Here, then, do we find the devoted wife and mother, and the expectant children, doomed to the long agony of hope deferred. Mrs. Betty was not slow in learning from the prattle of the children, that there was a failure in the receipt of letters from the absent husband and father. She chuckled accordingly. She fed Wintermute's sick fancy on the devil's broth of her foul suspicions. As will be seen further on, she even ventured to broach the subject to the tortured wife. Be sure, she made the best of her evil opportunity. Happily, as we shall see, she had her reward.

In the meantime, for five weary weeks, Garland lay helpless and unconscious. Winter had come in earnest. His friends were beginning to discuss the propriety of endeavoring to bear him, by relays of strong hands, across the intervening snows, to the nearest point on the railroad, and thence to his afflicted family. To the surprise, and, we may add, the joy, of the whole camp, one bright Sabbath morning, Garland awoke, clothed in his right mind, but weak as an infant. He found it difficult to realize that for weeks he had been even as a dead man. His first thoughts were of his family. When he learned that they had not been made acquainted with his misfortunes, he attempted to rise from his rough couch, declaring that he would not rest night or day until he had re-

joined them. The poor fellow soon realized that he had not strength enough to walk across the room, much less across the mountains. But, if, in a mining camp, one sees much of the rough, uncouth, selfish and disagreeable side of human nature, among the men who make up the camp, he will also see charity, courage, unselfishness and devotion to a fellow man, in their most attractive aspects. Garland's story had by this time become pretty well known throughout the Cœur d'Alene region. The good news of his partial recovery was quickly on every lip. And it soon became known that Gracie wanted Santa Claus to bring her own dear papa for a Christmas gift, and nothing else. It was hardly more than the work of a moment for these red-shirted wielders of the pick and shovel and crow-bar to resolve that Gracie should have her Christmas gift. A comfortable stretcher was made ready, thirty men volunteered to form a relay corps, and, on the fifteenth of December, 1885, the procession started for the nearest point on the railroad. Garland's partner went along as nurse and general director, and, in five days, the singular procession brought up in front of the station house. The sturdy mountaineers bade a cheery good-bye to their comrade, and Garland, instructing his partner to write certain directions to Jabez Long, the nature of which will be made apparent in the next, and concluding chapter, curled himself up for a long sleep by a warm fire until the train, which would bear him to all he held dear in life, should arrive.

I have intimated, in a previous chapter, that Mrs. Becky made a mistake when she suggested Jabez Long and wife as keepers of the sequestered homestead and fixtures, if she thought that, directly or indirectly, she would be able to use them in her plot against the "Garland crowd." This action, on her part, was one of those blind moves made by the malicious, in which they take counsel of their desires, instead of judgment. Mrs. Scrimgeour was not long in finding this to be a fact. In less than a month after Garland had ridden away, arrayed in her "best bib and tucker," and looking as demure as a quaker, she made a ceremonious call on good Mrs. Long. To her surprise and chagrin, she was ushered into the sitting room, instead of the parlor. Mrs. Long was the soul of charitable kindness, but, at the same time, the personification of that worldly wisdom which is learned in the school of adversity. She and Jabez had buried all their children in their childhood, and for thirty years had lived a toil-