

"I—I—I didn't mean a word o' harm, durned if I did. You're welcome to all you've got. I meant no harm to the chit, neither. But blast my boots! I say it's durned rough on a feller to clinch him like this."

"Take that then!"

Hepworth caught him by the collar, lifted his foot, and sent him spinning across the room; he struck, with a thud, the opposite wall, and lay limp as a rag. When, a half-hour later, Edwards came to his senses, he was lying, stretched at full length, upon the "cooling-board," outside in the night air. Foxy Jim had evidently left him to his fate. He had, doubtless, thought if the man died he would be decently laid out as a corpse, and if he revived, he could pick himself up when he chose. He did choose to pick himself up, though with considerable effort. He crept, cautiously, to the window, and seeing no one inside but the landlord, opened the door and went in. Foxy Jim threw him a sympathetic wink, and said, in a confidential undertone:

"Looky 'ere, Hedwards, you'd better git out o' this before mornin'. They'll make it 'otter 'n 'ell for you 'ereafter. Take a friend's badvice and git."

Edwards reflected a moment, and decided to take his advice. "Damn the whole crew of 'em! I'll get even with Hepworth yet, if length of rope's given me to accomplish it. Foxy, just empty the contents of my valise into my catenas, that is, all that's worth anything; the rest, burn," and he went out for his mule.

Foxy Jim proceeded, with alacrity, to comply with his request. He slipped the valuables into his own capacious pockets and filled the catenas with the rubbish; then securely strapped and buckled them, secretly chuckling to himself: "Hi'm hall right; e'll never dare come back 'ere."

As Edwards led his mule to the door, he carried out the catenas and slung them across the saddle. Edwards sprang to the mule's back. The stars were dimly shining, but there was no moon. Foxy Jim held out to him a handful of twenties, with a farewell wink.

"Blast your tin," said Edwards, in a low whisper. "I've got plenty o' that here," slapping the pockets of his catenas.

A moment after, with silent adieux on both sides, Edwards guided his ambling mule slowly and cautiously down the gulch, to a safe distance from camp; then he set his spurs deep into the animal's flanks, and disappeared in the darkness.

When Hepworth left the "Hell an' Brimstone," he walked rapidly toward his own cabin, which lay at the farthest side of the Horseshoe. As he entered, a young girl looked up from a book, over which she was intently poring by the light of a flickering candle. A young girl of perhaps fourteen years, with a pure, oval face, set in a mass of dusky hair; a tender, sensitive mouth, and glorious dark eyes, that smiled a bright welcome.

"Keith, my child, you shouldn't sit up so late. The roses in your cheeks will be pale in the morning."

"I will go at once; good night, Ben," she said, simply.

"Good night, Keith."

She crossed the room with willowy grace. He gazed after her and sighed deeply. The quick ear of the girl caught it, and she came swiftly back to his side.

"Ben," she said, "if you were in trouble, and I could help you, you would tell me, would you not?"

"Why, child? Was I up to my old tricks again? Don't look so grave. I assure you, I have no deep-seated trouble of any kind. I feel a little sad, some-