

nished the means to carry on the search. He would work night and day at his mine for a few weeks, then be off for as many months. He came and went like a flitting shadow. He kept skilled detectives employed, regardless of cost, till, wearied with fruitless endeavor, they declined to serve any longer at any price. They stoutly affirmed that the girl was either dead or had emigrated to foreign parts.

Hepworth had answered: "Gentlemen, my mine, which you all know is a rich one, is consecrated to this work; but if you will not aid me further, then I shall continue the search alone. The girl is *not* dead, and I shall yet find her. My life and my gold are set apart for that purpose."

And now for almost a year, he had been following the search, with only the aid of a faithful Chinese coolie. Though difficulties, seemingly insurmountable, beset him on every side, he was never dismayed. When the chances were ninety-nine in a hundred against him, he never, for one moment, lost his grip on hope—that intuitive mental conviction, which, from the first, had set his heart at rest, so far as the final result was concerned. By the merest chance, he stumbled upon the clue, which had baffled him so long. It was mid-summer. A faint rumor had led him to the dense pine forests of Shasta county, in the north. But he had followed it seemingly to as little purpose as he had done many another. Yet he would leave no stone unturned; and now, at the close of another day of fruitless toil, dusk was settling down upon the mountains; long, black shadows were creeping down the valley. They had halted under the shelter of a huge pine, where the old stage road wound around a bold spur. Eastward, others rose higher, and still higher, like an immense stairway. In the west, beyond a seemingly narrow valley,

rose from its pedestal of dark green, the lofty white dome of Shasta—lovely as a dream. At its very foot, a slender coil of blue smoke curled against the darkening back-ground of pale pink sky. Later, a light gleamed from the dark green foliage, like a lone star. When they had picketed their mules and rolled themselves in their blankets for the night, Hepworth was wakeful, and lay watching the moon rise over the tops of the pines. Suddenly, a figure emerged from the western edge of the pines, looked cautiously about, then crept out, stealthily, toward the mules. In passing the, presumably, sleeping men, it stooped and looked into Hepworth's wide-open eyes, which had been watching it from the first.

"Stir, and I'll shoot you!" he cried, springing to his feet and seizing the figure by the collar. It proved to be a "heathen Chinese."

"What are you prowling around here for? Out with it, I say!"

"Melican man heap damnee foolsee—whip me like hellee—me no likee," with the tone and look of murderous hate. "Me ridee mulee way off hellee camp—bringe Melican man, Ben."

A strange, eager light leaped to Hepworth's face—a tremulous eagerness shook his voice. "Tell this countryman of yours the whole truth; without any lies, mind you, or I'll send a bullet through your heart." The Mongolian peered into the muzzle, with a reckless indifference, then said—

"Me no damnee care—damnee foolsee Melican man cut off eue," showing his badge of disgrace. "No more go China—me no damnee care."

Hepworth tightened his grip, lifted him off his feet and shook him as a cat shakes a mouse. "Now will you tell the truth, you moon-eyed devil?" he thundered.

The Chinaman's yellow face grew a