

Renfrew was desperately hungry. He had breakfasted along with the birds, and frugally, at that. All his dreams of future glory collapsed like a leaky balloon. His ambition was humbly merged into a couple of good sized sandwiches and a cup of cold, mountain water. Then he could lie down anywhere and sleep like a baby.

He pushed back the jaunty Turkish cap which he wore, disclosing a broad, white brow, and ran his shapely, artist hand through the closely-cropped curls of dark chestnut in perplexing indecision. His eyes matched the curls, and usually held in their brown depths only laughing defiance at fate's caprices. The short upper lip could take a scornful curve, a derisive twist, or smile sweetly as a cherub, as dextrously as his ready brush by a line here, a touch there, could change the face of his canvas.

He wore a short jacket and trowsers of brown corduroy, and was, altogether, as handsome a specimen of a Bohemian as one would see in many a day. But lost in a labyrinthian tangle, with the gnawings of hunger added, the situation had become a critical one. The like had never happened to him before. Both eyes and face were grave enough now for the strictest Presbyterian deacon.

"Where there's a will there's a way," he muttered, and dashed off at a tangent, whistling snatches of an old rollicking ballad.

After traversing, it seemed to him, miles, in every direction, he was forced, at last, to admit the cruel fact that he was only the more completely bewildered—the more hopelessly lost.

The light was fast fading out of the sky. Grotesque, shadowy shapes were prowling about the mountain sides. On a projecting spur the slim, gray figure of a coyote paused for a second, outlined as in granite against the darkening heavens, gave its peculiar, half-barking, half-wailing cry, then leisurely trotted out of sight.

He noted all this in an indifferent sort of way. The artist had utterly succumbed to the man. He was so weak from exhaustion and want of food as to be scarcely able to stand. He had spells of a distressing nausea, and a strange, whirling sensation in his head.

"If I must die, I'll die hard," he cried, staggering on. That was the last he remembered.

When he recovered consciousness he was lying in the upper bunk of a log cabin. The structure was rude and of a most primitive pattern; all its belongings betokened the utmost simplicity of living. His eyes noted the order and neatness of the place with real pleasure, and there was an air of comfort and warmth pervading it that was restful in the extreme. Some savory mess was brewing in the wide fireplace.

Its delicious odor tantalized his olfactories and resuscitated his appetite. Through the open doorway he saw the sun climbing the blue stairway, and the snowy summits hung with purple and blue and gold draperies, woven at invisible looms.

Soft, cool breezes stole in and stirred the moist hair on his temples.

"What a royal day for the artist!" he thought, his eyes kindling with eager interest.

He lifted himself on his elbow as if to make the effort to rise, when suddenly an apparition confronted him. Whence it came, or how, he could not divine, but there it stood, as if evolved by some device of magic—the most powerful in size and muscular development, the shaggiest, the ugliest and most ferocious-visaged specimen of the canine species he had ever beheld. The huge creature seemed to belong to no particular type, but to combine the most prominent characteristics of several remarkable breeds.

His long, silky coat was mottled gray and black, and his lopping ears and massive chest of a dark tan color. The short, square, heavy jaws had a frightful scar on the left side, where the muscles were drawn away, which gave to them a singularly savage look. But the majestic carriage of the body, the broad paws and muscular legs, the dignity of the upper head, and the fine, large, lustrous eyes, in which, from under shaggy, overhanging brows, gleamed an almost more than human intelligence, amply redeemed the grotesque deformity of the lower face. There he stood glowering up at Paul, and at every attempt on his part to rise, uttered a low, significant growl.

It was plain that he was a prisoner and could not hope to elude the watchful eyes of that shaggy sentinel. It was just as plain, too, that he was completely at the animal's mercy, for he recognized the small derringer, which he carried, lying on a table across the room. Even it would probably have availed him little, for the unerring brute instinct would have rightly interpreted the deadly menace, and one grip of those mighty jaws on his throat would have ended his career before he could have pulled the trigger or made an outcry. He felt as helpless as though, taken utterly unawares in a lonely, isolated spot, he had been accosted with "hands up!" and looked into the cocked revolver of some daring highwayman. Like a prudent man, he quietly succumbed to the inevitable, and assumed a recumbent position. The dog straightway stretched himself out at full length, with his nose between his fore paws, and made a pretense of sleep. But Renfrew knew, by the occasional flutter of an eyelash, that a close watch was being kept upon his movements. He in turn kept a close surveillance on the dog, and, in a measure, the clamor of returning vitality was merged into that absorbing occupation.