

beautiful eyes that she, too, retained some remembrance of our first meeting.

"That was the beginning. What the ending was, three months later, you can conjecture when I tell you that I telegraphed the Boston firm, one morning in May, to send out a man to take my place in the store for an indefinite period, and, as the sun arose above the low-lying eastern hills, I mounted a horse and galloped out of Leavenworth, in so hopeless and desperate a frame of mind that I cared not what became of me. My horse's head was turned to the west, and after three days of merciless driving I came up with a party of emigrants encamped on the banks of the Neosho river. They were bound for the far-off land of the setting sun, and I joined them with the wild hope of being able to leave memory behind me somewhere on the rugged trail.

"I had yet to learn that though a man may leave hope, courage and ambition behind—may chill the warm veins of love and sully the fair face of honor—he can not put memory behind him, nor erase a single burning line from her tablets.

"In those days the first transcontinental railroad was yet in embryo, and the journey through the wilds, by means of the old-time 'prairie schooner,' and the slow motive force of oxen or mules, was necessarily tedious and long drawn out. We were five months on the road. No need, however, to dwell upon the incidents of the journey. Suffice it to say I spent the winter of 1869-70 in Boise City, Idaho, and early the following spring set out with a party of miners on my first prospecting tour.

"But, though my first, it was not my last. I soon developed the disease known as 'gold fever,' in its most malignant type, and prospected with a vigor and bad judgment that was often amusing to more experienced knights of the pick and pan.

"For three years I wandered restlessly about from place to place until it seemed to me that there was scarcely a mountain peak in Idaho that my adventurous feet had not pressed. During all that time but one letter reached me from the east. It came from a Boston business friend anxious to know what had become of me and whether I intended ever to return. I answered it in a dispatch of ten words—

Alive and well. Look for me when you see me.

"After that I was troubled with no more letters. If any were sent they never reached me. As time passed on I grew morose and solitary in my habits. Where at first I had sought the company of fellow miners and prospectors, I now desired only to be alone, and no mountain fastness was too wild or dense for me to venture into, with no other companionship than that of my tough little mustang and my rifle. More

than one old frontiersman shook his head and sagely admonished me that, sooner or later, if I were not more careful, my scalp lock would adorn the saddle bow of some Snake, Shoshone or Piute brave. But I only thought, bitterly: 'Ah, well, who will care when it does?' and went on my way.

"Finally, in the autumn of 1873, I strayed beyond the boundary lines of Idaho and found myself in Wyoming Territory, in the Wind river country, which, for more than a decade past, had been the Mecca of many an adventurous prospector's hopes, and, perchance, a bleaching place for his bones as well.

"One afternoon, late in November, I struck a tributary of Wind river, at that time new and strange to me, and exceedingly wild and rugged in its surroundings. I at once resolved to follow it upward toward its source, for it was a mountain stream, and to my imaginative ear the dash and murmur of its waters were voices calling to me to 'come on, come on,' and lay bare the golden veins that were hidden in its rock-ribbed sides.

"Leading my horse and carrying my rifle, I followed the stream for hours, pausing at intervals to turn over a boulder, examine a gravel bed or pry into clefts between the huge rocky crags that formed the precipitous and ever deepening banks on either side. So engrossed did I become in my researches and my thoughts that I took no note of the passage of time, and failed to reckon distance, until, at last, a peal of thunder rumbled over the mountains and down the gorges, waking the slumbering echoes and recalling me abruptly to a sense of time and surroundings.

"Glancing about me, I was surprised to find that the afternoon was drawing to its close, the sun being low in the west, and already 'waist deep' in a bank of murky clouds that portended a coming storm.

"'Ah, Pedro, my boy,' I said to my patient and sagacious little horse, 'if I mistake not we are in for a wetting. We may as well strike camp for the night right here.'

"But even as I spoke a sense of the wild loneliness of the spot came upon me with a little chill of depression. Far below I could hear the stream rumbling and tumbling along on its turbulent course, but could only see it by going close to the edge of the almost perpendicular banks, which, at this point, seemed to be drawn toward each other by the law of mutual attraction, and to commune together by means of the fringe of willows that nodded and touched at intervals across the gorge. These willows were especially rank and dense in growth at the spot where I had halted, and I looked to them for partial protection from the storm that was close at hand.

"Removing the pack from Pedro's back, I fastened a lariat at the head-stall, and then glanced about for