

spirits the antidote for her own inherent seriousness. To "Charley," morality was a thing of slight moment, the possession of money had gratified many desires at the expense of a conscience, which, but gossamer at its best shredded away under the repeated attacks upon it to the consistency of an almost vanished mist.

The party had landed, and Charley and Mary found themselves alone under a bower of Oregon grape. To Charley the time was opportune and he made an irredeemable blunder. Even after many months had passed, the manner of his turning down was not a pleasant thing to remember; while to Mary the passage of the same time softened to a dull ache the keen shock of the encounter.

Lila Forbes, whose infatuation for Charley thrilled every fibre of her passionate nature, passed a miserable afternoon. She had maneuvered unsuccessfully for Charley's society for some time past, and defeat had filled her with savage jealousy. Big Dave Brandon, with whom she found herself paired, was more amused than hurt by her spiteful cuts. Dave came from Alaska and knew the ways of the she mountain lion, even when disguised with a soft white skin. The party were thrown together again upon returning, and something in Mary's manner appealed to Dave, awaking in him an interest, which grew later to a worship destined to affect her life importantly. After that afternoon Lila had Charley all to herself at last. They walked, drove, and attended the theatre and dances together, and Mary, who roomed with Lila, noted the course of events with misgiving. One night when Lila had gone out somewhere with Charley, Mary had lain awake, a prey to nameless doubts and was still awake when Lila returned. It required no very discerning eye to observe that Lila bore upon her the signs of an hilarious evening. A curtain lecture followed and before long the anger of Lila flared up in a burst of passion, the fury and intensity of which appalled Mary.

"Preach to me, will you, you white-faced hypocrite," she screamed. "I never trusted you, and now I hate you. You'll know it, too, before long."

The rumor which exerted such an important influence on the course of events was born the next day; born of a conference between Lila and Charley; child of Lila's vindictive anger and a recollection of Charley's that stung.

It was in springtime when by a sad irony of fate Mary found herself riding through the blossoming fragrance of the timber to her home among the pines, where, ever, the murmur of the breakers