

Current Literature.

A HANDFUL OF EARTH.

Here is a problem, a wonder for all to see; Look at this marvelous thing I hold in my hand! This is a magic surprising, a mystery Strange as a miracle, harder to understand.

The Cow Widow of Colorado.

JOAQUIN MILLER IN NEW YORK SUN. Rare Colorado! You'll see her rest, her head of gold pillowed on the Rocky Mountains, her breast a shield of silver, her feet in the brown grass.

strange or well-arranged gentleman who chanced to approach the presence of the cow-widow.

On this memorable night, as we waited for her to descend to where we all gathered to receive her in what served as bar room, parlor and hall, the moon hung high and bright, and horses were champing their bits as the rack outside as if somebody was contemplating a long, hard drive.

But as the cow widow was expected to descend from the stairs, no one was looking in the direction of the door, and the tall, well-dressed but pale and anxious young man stood there timidly soliloquizing.

"Go. We and grow up with the country. I've come West, and instead of growing up, if I don't get a job or strike something soon I'll starve; grow down with the country. But I won't be bad. No! Why, before I'd like like a Colorado miner I'd die. In New York I had no money, but I had pride, the real old Livingston pride; landed in Colorado last week, and have been hungry ever since.

The Doctor looked over his shoulder, and winked to the boys, merely said: "A tenderfoot." The Colonel at the first glimpse was furiously jealous, but, concealing his displeasure, said: "So it is. I'll sell him a mine!" Then approaching, he continued to the stranger: "Want to buy a mine, stranger?"

The tall, pale gentleman was nearly knocked out of his boots this time, and as he turned away he muttered: "Ah! these vulgar fellows, with their nicknames and rude familiarity. But I won't have it. I'm going to hold my own in Colorado."

"I say, Dick, can you ride?" gaily cried the Colonel, following him up. "Bully! Yes. All gentlemen can ride." "Bully! Now I sort of suspect he'll ask you to go up to her ranch. She's powerful kind. And since she's been to Paris she kind o' takes a shree to clothes, ye know. And now if she does ask you to go you go. And if you do go for to take that twenty-mile ride you keep up with her."

"I thank you, sir; I thank you with all my heart. You are a little rough, but you seem a good fellow, and I hope one will hold his friends. I am a stranger, and don't quite fit in in Colorado yet. And, to tell you the truth, I don't intend to fit in altogether. No, sir; I don't like nicknames, and I don't intend to have one. I am going to hold my own in Colorado."

The Doctor had put the cork in the big bottle and put the big bottle in the saddlebags, and with his glasses low down on his nose, was now slowly forward from behind with a big ladle full to the brim.

"Well, no harm done, I hope. You offer to sell a mine. I offer my terms. You decline. No harm, sir." "Not a bit, stranger, and there's my hand. I'm Colonel Bill Williams, the stranger's friend, and here he raised a hand to the side of his mouth, and said aside: "If I can sell him a mine. This is Mr. Ginger, the friend of the Indian Agent, the Hon. Mr. Snagley, this is Dr. Baggs, my pard, and the friend of the wilder, the richest woman in Colorado. He'll doctor you, or get you a job to herd sheep. He's got a powerful influence with the widder."

Doctor tugs at the sleeve of the hated rival. "All ready!" roars a rough voice through the half-opened door, through which three splendid and restless horses are seen champing their bits and stamping fretfully as the man at the door holds stoutly to the reins.

A moment more and the shrewdly mounted, lean horses' heads are turned to the Rocky Mountains, and they bound away like the wind. The air is sweet and strong, full of life, like wine. The moon has sown the road with silver. Not a wisp of smoke for the first five miles. Oh, the glory of a ride like that! Speech at such a time is profanity.

At last, after nearly ten miles, the horses began to slacken pace from exhaustion. Col. Bill had just set the rowels of his great Spanish spurs in the broad cinch in order to push his horse, and his fortunes too, with the widow, when a low, deep rumbling sound was heard directly ahead, and the Colonel stood up in his stirrups. The plain was black before—a moving, billowing, bellowing mass that was rolling directly upon the doomed riders. He alone saw and understood the terrible doom that was theirs. To the right? To the left? Fly before this billowy sea of fly before the Atlantic? He laid his hand on the widow's rein, checked her horse, and pointed to the peril ahead. There was at first a pang of bitterness, then a sense of grandeur as he reined Livingston's horse at her side. As the living sea rolled down to engulf them he bade them stand close and still together. Then drawing a pistol he spurred on in front, and springing to the hilt, he bade them to follow him. The earth trembled. A moaning sound came with the surging mass. He could hear them breathe. An unpracticed hand would have said he could see their black eyes shine as they rolled down upon him. But that which glistened in the vast tranquil moon was the bright, crooked little horns of the hairy monsters; their eyes were closed utterly; else they had been blinded by the dust. The horses stood for a while, paralyzed with terror at the awful sight and sense of death. The man dropped to his knee and brought his heavy pistol to rest on his right arm as he felt their breath in his face. A flash! another! and another! and then horse, man, monster, the three rolled in the dust together, an indistinguishable mass.

The herd divided as against a rock and rolled away to right and left, not even touching the two that still sat their trembling horses. The officers and soldiers in chase came upon them after, and compelling the widow and her companion to dash ahead at once to the ranch, lest a calamity might overtake them, drew the bleeding and broken and senseless man from out the dust, where he lay wedged in between the two dead animals. They bore him to the military camp on the plain below.

How things whirl around in Colorado! It is a windy land. Livingston, too, became a great miner of Colorado. He borrowed two I've shot, and ascending to the summit of a mountain, located a mine. Before he had been three months in Colorado he was heard boasting in a bar room that he had discovered that mine by seeing the solid silver flashing in the morning sun, or knocking his silver helmet against the morning star, as he tended the cow widow's cattle ten thousand feet below!

me deep in my silver mine, "The Jerusha." An running a cross tunnel to tap the silver level, where we hope to find the silver in a liquid state flowing through all its dips and spurs and angles. At present we are in solid silver, and find it hard to work. My dear, dear Jerusha, how constant I have been to you heaven and the shining stars of Colorado only know.

"Take that, boy. Take it and fly! Stop! I must add a postscript." And again he wrote: "MY DEAR, DEAR JERUSAH: Telegraph me \$500 to the City Bank of Denver. This solid silver is so hard to cut off that I may be delayed an hour or two, and I would not spare one sweet moment from you. "Go! I pay at the other end. I follow with the next soldiers for Denver."

The Doctor came forth from the barracks, polishing his specs on a corner of his coat-tail, and cordially welcomed the widow. "But Colonel Bill! how is he?" "Better, better. All the time better. But broken up. Why he's got more joints in his legs than a lobster."

"And does he—tell me—does he ever speak of me?" "Speak of you? Why, when we first brought him in here—we didn't speak of anything else. But he was out of his head then; didn't know what he was about, you see."

"But now? Don't he speak of me now?" "Not now, widder. You see, when he got up on his crutches and got a good look at himself and saw how he was smashed up—well, after that he didn't never speak of you any more."

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