

The Highgrader

CHAPTER XV—Continued

He knew now that his situation was a very serious one, for he had been flung alive into a grave that offered only a slight prospect of escape. He was without food, effectually cut off from the surface of the earth, and none but those who had assaulted him knew that he was buried.

The alternatives that lay before him were plain. He might climb the ladder again to the timber ledge and keep calling for help, or he might attempt to dig a way over the cave-in with his hands and his pocket-knife, trusting that the tunnel led to another shaft. The former was a chance pure and simple, and a slender one at that. It was not likely that anybody would pass the mouth of a deserted shaft far up in the hills at this season of the year. But it was quite within the probabilities that the tunnel led to some of the workings of a live property. Many miles of underground drifts were connected by intersecting slopes of adjoining mines. If he could force a way through the cave-in there might be safety beyond. To go moping into such a place without timbering would be a dangerous business, but the crisis was one that justified any risk.

He took stock of his assets. Fortunately he had bought at a lunch counter a ham sandwich to stay his appetite during the night trip. This was still in his pocket, badly mashed but still edible. Five cigars were in the case he carried and upon his person all told he found eleven matches. A little trickle of water ran through the tunnel and gave assurance that he would not die of thirst. His pocket-knife was a serviceable one and he had plenty of physical strength.

Jack decided that he would eat half of the sandwich that day and reserve the rest for the second one. His cigars were precious luxuries to be indulged in once every twenty-four hours after he had knocked off work.

He attacked the cave-in with the cool energy that characterized him. Out of a piece of board he fashioned a kind of shovel with his knife. Bits of broken timbering lay at the foot of the shaft. These he dragged into the tunnel for fuel to feed a small fire which he built to give light for the work. All through the night and till noon the following day he dug among the fallen rocks and dirt, cleaning this debris away after he had loosened it with his bare hands.

The impact of the fall when he had been thrown down the shaft had jarred him greatly. With the slightest movement of the body his back and shoulders ached, sending shoots of pain in protest to his brain. The sprained ankle he had bound tightly in a wet handkerchief, but every time his weight rested on that leg he had to grit his teeth. But it was not in him to quit. He stuck to his job till he had done the shift set himself.

At noon he crawled back to the foot of the shaft. He was fagged to exhaustion. For half an hour he lay stretched on his back with every muscle relaxed.

Presently he cut from his coat the pocket that contained the sandwich and divided the mash of ham and bread into two parts. One of these he ate. The other he returned to the coat.

Favoring his rickety ankle as best he could, Jack climbed the wall ladder to the ledge upon which he had found himself lying the previous night. Five minutes' examination of the walls showed him that there was no chance to reach the top of the shaft unaided. He tested the jammed timbers to make sure they were secure before he put his weight upon them. During the next six hours he called aloud every few minutes to attract the attention of anyone who might chance to be passing near.

Toward evening he treated himself to his first clear, making the most of the comfort that it gave him. When the stub grew short he held it on the small blade of his knife so as not to miss a puff. What was left he wrapped in a pocket handkerchief for later use.

As the stars began to come out in the little patch of blue sky he could see just above his prison Jack lowered himself again to the foot of the shaft. Here he lay down a second time and within five minutes had fallen into a deep sleep.

About midnight he awakened and was aware at once of a ravenous hunger. He was still resolute to win a way out, though the knowledge pressed on him that his chances were slender at the best. Till morning he worked without a moment's rest. The fever in his ankle and the pain of the sprain had increased, but he could not afford to pay any attention to them. Blood from his scarred, torn hands ran down his wrists. Every muscle in his abused body ached. Still he stabbed with his knife into the earth that filled the tunnel and still he pulled great rocks back with his shovel.

All his life he had fought for his own hand. He would not let himself believe fate had played so scurvy a trick as to lock him alive into a tomb closed so tightly that he could not pry a way out.

When his watch told him it was eight o'clock he staggered to the shaft again and lay down on his back to rest. Before climbing to the platform above he finished the sandwich. He was very hungry and could have eaten enough for two men had he been

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given the opportunity. Again for hours he called every few minutes at the top of his voice.

In his vest pocket were a pencil and a notebook used for keeping the accounts of the highgraders with whom he did business. To pass the time he set down the story of the crime which had brought him here and his efforts to free himself.

After darkness fell he let himself down to the foot of the shaft and slept. Either from hunger or from fever in his ankle he slept brokenly. He was conscious of a little delirium in his waking spells, but the coming of midnight found him master of himself, though a trifle light-headed.

It was impossible to work as steadily as he had done during the two previous nights. Hunger and pain and toil were doing their best to wear out his strength. His limbs moved laggardly. Once he fell asleep in the midst of his labor. He dreamed of Moya, and after he awakened—as he presently did with a start—he seemed so near that it would scarce have surprised him if in the darkness his hands had come in contact with the soft flesh of her vivid face. Nor did it strike him as at all odd that it was Moya and not Joyce who was visiting him when he was in prison. The face he saw was the mocking one of the young woman, in which gaiety overran the tender sadness of the big, dusky eyes beneath which tiny freckles had been sprinkled. More than once he clearly heard her whisper courage to him.

Next day the notes in his diary were more fragmentary.

"Broke my rule and smoked two cigars today. Just finished my fourth. Leaves one more. I drink a great deal. It helps me to forget I'm hungry. Find a cigar goes farther if I smoke it in sections. I chew the stubs while I'm working."

"Have tunneled in about seventeen feet. No sign that I'm near the end of the cave-in. There's a lot of hell in being buried alive."

"Think I'm losing my voice from shouting so much when I'm in the shaft. Gave it up today and let little Moya call for me. She's a trump. Wish she'd stay here all the time and not keep coming and going."

The jottings on the fourth day show the increase of the delirium. Sometimes his mind appears to be quite clear, then it wanders to queer fancies.

"Last cigar gone. Got sick from eating the stub. Violent retchings. Kept falling asleep while working. Twenty-nine feet done—surely reach the end tomorrow. . . . Another cave-in just after I crawled out from my tunnel. All my work wiped out. Moya, the little devil, laughed and said it served a highgrader right. . . ."

"Have telegraphed for help. Can't manage alone. Couldn't make it up the shaft and had to give up the climb. Ordered a big breakfast at the Silver Dollar—steak and mushrooms and hot cakes. The telegraph wires run through pipe along floor of tunnel. Why don't the operator stay on his job? I tap my signals and get no answer."

He began to talk to himself in a rambling sort of way. Sometimes he would try to justify himself for high-grading in jerky half-coherent phrases, sometimes he argued with Peale that he had better let him out. But even in his delirious condition he stuck to his work in the tunnel, though he was scarce able to drag himself about.

As the sickness grew on him, the light-headed intervals became more frequent. In one of these it occurred to him that he had struck high-grade ore and he filled his pockets with samples taken from the cave-in. There was no sequence to his thoughts. They came in flashes without logical connection. It became, for instance, a firm obsession that the pipe running through the tunnel was a telegraph wire by means of which he could communicate with the outside world if the operator would only stay on duty. But his interest in the matter was intermittent.

It is suggestive of his condition that when Moya's answer came to his seven taps he took it quite as a matter of course.

"The son of a Greaser is back on the job at last," he said aloud without the least excitement. "Now, I'll get that breakfast I ordered."

He crawled back to the foot of the shaft in a childish, absurd confidence that the food he craved would soon be sent down to him. While he waited, Jack fell into light sleep where he lost himself in fancies that voiced themselves in incoherent snatches of talk.

CHAPTER XVI

Captain Kilmeny Retires

A voice calling his name from the top of the shaft brought Jack Kilmeny back to consciousness. He answered.

A shout of joy boomed down to him in Colter's heavy bass. He could hear, too, the sweet troubled tones of a woman.

"Hurry, please, hurry. . . . Thank God, we're in time."

"Got that breakfast with you, little neighbor," Jack called up weakly. He did not need to be told that Moya Dwight was above, and, since she was there, of course she had brought him

the breakfast that he had ordered from the Silver Dollar.

"Get back into the tunnel, Jack," Colter presently shouted.

"What for?"

"We're lowering someone to you. The timberings are rotten and they might fall on you. Get back."

"All right."

Five minutes later the rescuer reached the foot of the shaft. He stood for a moment with a miner's lamp above his head and peered into the gloom.

"Where away, Jack?"

The man was Ned Kilmeny. The captain had insisted—all the more because there was some danger in it—that he should be the man lowered to the aid of his cousin.

"Bring that breakfast?" Jack snapped, testily.

"Yes, old man. It's waiting up above. Brought some soup down with me."

"I ordered two hours ago. What's been keeping you? I'm going to complain of the service."

The captain saw at once that Jack was light-headed and he humored him.

"Yes, I would. Now drink this soup."

The imprisoned man drained the bucket to the last drop.

Ned loosened the rope from his own body and fastened it about that of his cousin. He gave the signal and Jack was hauled very carefully to the surface in such a way as not to collide with the jammed timbers near the top. Colter and Bleyer lifted the highgrader over the edge of the well, where he collapsed at once into the arms of his friends.

Moya, a flask in her hand, stooped over the sick man where he lay on the grass. Her fine face was full of poignant sympathy.

Kilmeny's mind was quite clear now. The man was gaunt as a famished wolf. Bitten deep into his face were the lines that showed how closely he had shaved death. But in his eye was the gay inextinguishable gleam of the thoroughbred.

"Ain't I the quitter, Miss Dwight? Keeling over just like a sick baby?"

The young woman choked over her answer. "You mustn't talk yet. Drink this, please."

He drank, and later he ate sparingly of the food she had hastily gathered from the dinner table and brought with her. In jerky little sentences he sketched his adventure, mingling fiction with fact as the fever grew on him again.

Bleyer, himself a game man, could not withhold his admiration after he had heard Captain Kilmeny's story of what he had found below. The two, with Moya, were riding behind the wagon in which the rescued man lay.

"Think of the luck of the fellow—boring away at that cave-in when my minute a million tons of rock and dirt might tumble down and crush the life out of him. That's a big enough thing. But add to it his game leg and his wound and starvation on top of that. I'll give it to him for the gamest fellow that ever went down into a mine."

"That's not all," the captain added quietly. "He must have tunneled in about twenty-five feet when the roof caved again. Clean bowled out as he was, Jack tackled the job a second time."

Moya could not think of what had taken place without a film coming over her eyes and a sob choking her throat. A vagabond and worse he



But Even in His Delirious Condition He Stuck to His Work in the Tunnel.

might be, but Jack Kilmeny held her love beyond recall. It was useless to remind herself that he was unworthy. None the less, she gloried in the splendid courage of the man. Whatever else he might be, Jack Kilmeny was every inch a man.

There was a little discussion between Colter and Captain Kilmeny as to which of them should take care of the invalid. The captain urged that he would get better care at the hotel, where Lady Farquhar and India could look after him. Colter referred the matter to Jack.

"I'm not going to burden Lady Farquhar or India. Colter can look out for me," the sick man said.

"It's no trouble. India won't be sat-

isfed unless you come to the hotel," Moya said in a low voice.

He looked at her, was about to decline, and changed his mind. The appeal in her eyes was too potent.

"I'm in the hands of my friends. Settle it any way you like, Miss Dwight. Do whatever you want with me, except put me back in that hell."

After a doctor had seen Jack and taken care of his ankle, after the trained nurse had arrived and been put in charge of the sick room, Captain Kilmeny made a report to Moya and his sister.

"He's gone to sleep already. The doctor says he'll probably be as well as ever in a week, thanks to you, Moya."

"Thanks to you, Ned," she amended. "He sent you this record of how he spent his time down there—said it might amuse you."

The captain looked straight at her as he spoke.

"I'll read it."

"Do. You'll find something on the last page that will interest you. Now, I'm going to say good-night. It's time little girls were in bed."

He kissed his sister and Moya, rather to the surprise of the latter, for Captain Kilmeny never insisted upon the rights of a lover. There was something on his face she did not quite understand. It was as if he were saying good-by instead of good-night.

She understood it presently. Ned had written a note and pinned it to the last page of the little book. She read it twice, and then again in tears. It told her that the soldier had read truly the secret her anxiety had haunted in the face of all her friends.

"It's no go, dear girl. You've done your best, but you don't love me. You never will. Afraid there's no way left but for me to release you. So you're free again, little sweetheart."

"I know you won't misunderstand. Never in my life have I cared for you so much as I do tonight. But caring isn't enough. I've had my chance and couldn't win out. May you have good hunting wherever you go."

The note was signed "Ned."

Her betrothed had played the game like the gentleman he was to a losing finish. She knew he would not whimper or complain, that he would meet her tomorrow cheerfully and easily, hiding even from her the wound in his heart. He was a better man than his cousin. She could not deny to herself that his gallantry had a finer edge. His sense of right was better developed and his courage quite as steady. Ned Kilmeny had won his V. C. before he was twenty-five. He had carried to a successful issue one of the most delicate diplomatic missions of recent years. Everybody conceded that he had a future. If Jack had never appeared on her horizon she would have married Ned and been to him a loving wife. But the harum-scarum cousin had made this impossible.

Why? Why had her roving heart gone out to this attractive scamp who did not want her love or care for it? She did not know. The thing was as unexplainable as it was inescapable. All the training of her life had shaped her to other ends. Lady Farquhar would explain it as a glamor cast by a foolish girl's fancy. But Moya knew the tide of feeling which raced through her was born not of fancy but of the true romance.

CHAPTER XVII

Two in a Bucket

Jack heard the story of his rescue from India. He surprised her alone in the breakfast-room by hobbling in one morning after the rest had gone. She popped a question directly at him. "Did the doctor say you could get up?"

"Didn't ask him," he answered with a laugh, and dropped into a seat across the table.

Shaven, and dressed in a clean freshly pressed suit, he looked a different man from the haggard grimy vagabond Captain Kilmeny had brought back with him three days earlier. The eyes were still rather sunken and the face a bit drawn, but otherwise he was his very competent and debonair self. His "Good mornin', India," was as cheery and matter of fact as if those five days of horror had never existed.

"Don't believe it will hurt you," her bright eyes were warm in their approval of him. "You look a lot fitter than you did even yesterday. It's awfully jolly to see you around again, Cousin Jack."

"I'm enjoying it myself," he conceded. "Anything of importance in that covered dish over there?"

"Tell me all about it," she ordered, handing him the bacon. Then, with a shudder, she added: "Must have been rather awful down there."

"Bad enough," he admitted lightly. "Tell me." She leaned forward, chin in hand.

"What's the use? Those fellows put me down. Your brother took me up. That's all."

"It isn't all. Ned says it is perfectly marvelous the way you dug that tunnel and escaped from being crushed, and then dug it again after it had caved."

"Couldn't lie down and quit, could I? A man in the hole I was can't pick and choose." He smiled lazily at her and took a muffin from a plate handed him by the waiter. "My turn to ask questions. I want the full story of how you guessed I was in the west shaft of the Golden Nugget."

"Haven't you heard? It was Moya guessed it—from the tapping on the pipe, you know."

"So I've been told. Now let's have the particulars." His eyes went straight into hers and rested there.

India told him. She knew that Ned

would make a safer husband for Moya than this forceful adventurer. It was quite likely to be on the cards that he cared nothing for her friend. Indeed, his desperate flirtation with Joyce indicated as much. Moreover, Moya would not marry a man whom she could not respect, one who made his living by dishonest practices. But in spite of all these objections Miss Kilmeny told her cousin how Moya had fought for his life against ridicule and unbelief, regardless of what any of them might think of her.

He made one comment when she had finished. "So I have to thank Moya Dwight for my life."

"Moya alone. They laughed at her, but she wouldn't give up. I never saw anybody so stubborn. There's something splendid in her. She didn't care what any of us thought. The one thing in her mind was that she was going to save you. So Mr. Bleyer had to get up from dinner and find out from the maps where the pipe went. He traced it to the old west shaft of the Golden Nugget."

"And what did you think?" he asked, watching her steadily.

"I admired her pluck tremendously." "Did Verinder—and Bleyer—and Lady Farquhar?"

"How do I know what they thought?" flamed the girl. "If Mr. Verinder is cad



"He's a Better Man Than You Are, Jack."

enough—" She stopped, recalling certain obligations she was under to that gentleman.

"Why did she do it?"

She flashed a look of feminine scorn at him. "You'll have to ask Moya that—if you want to know."

He nodded his head slowly. "That's just what I'm going to do."

"You'll have more time to talk with her—now that Joyce is engaged and doesn't flirt with you," his cousin suggested maliciously.

Though he tried to carry this off with a laugh, the color mounted to his face. "I've been several kinds of an idiot in my time."

"Don't you dare try any nonsense with Moya," her friend cried, a little fiercely.

"No," he agreed.

"She's not Joyce."

He had an answer for that. "I'd marry her tomorrow if she'd take me."

"You mean you . . . ?"

"Yes. From the first day I met her again. And I didn't know it till I was down in that hell hole. Shall I tell you something?" He put his arms on the table and leaned toward her with shining eyes. "She was with me down there most of the time. Any time I stopped to listen I could hear her whisper courage in that low, sweet voice of hers."

"You know about her and Ned?"

"Yes."

"He's a better man than you are, Jack."

"Yes."

"But you won't let him have her."

"No, by G—d, not unless she loves him."

"She would have loved him if it hadn't been for you."

"You mean she loves me?"

"She won't marry you. She can't."

"Why not? Because I don't belong to her social set?"

"No. That would be reason enough for Joyce or me, but I don't think it would stop Moya."

"You mean—high-grading?"

"Yes."

Joyce interrupted further confidences by making her usual late appearance for breakfast. At sight of Kilmeny her eyes brightened. Life always became more interesting for her when a possible man was present. Instantly she came forward with a touch of reluctant eagerness that was very effective.

"I'm glad to see you up again—so glad, Mr. Kilmeny."

In the pretty breakfast gown which displayed her soft curves and the ripe roundness of throat and arm she made a picture wholly charming. If Jack was overpowered he gave no sign of it.

"Glad to meet you, Miss Seldon."

Her eyes rained sweet pity on him, a tenderness potent enough to disturb the serenity of any young man not in armor.

"We—we've been so worried about you."

He laughed genially and without resentment. "Awfully good of you. Shall I ring for the waiter?"

India rose. "I'm going riding with Ned and Moya," she explained.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

When women realize that they are better than men they spend a lot of time regretting the fact.

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Traveler Tells of Odd Desert

The great traveler, who has just returned from a discovery through Africa, spent weeks under the stars, the members of the expedition, the Touaregs, in order to study the ways and customs, and the News. The Touaregs were other nomad tribes, living in a desert. She relates a slave of his tribe was some one in authority, but the tent of the man whom he serve and cuts through the sews of his camel so that he can substitute to the owner, a substitute to take him.

The women are the most of this tribe, it appears, themselves with sand and women eat first, the man having what is left over. Beauty for women among is to be very fat. Lady stuffed in the cruellest their eighth year. They daily with oil and then sand to close up the pores. are so fat they are unable without the help of their

A Slip
Gentle little four-year-old child as a rule, she "slips up," hidden to take a s of the sugar bowl. Children are apt to do this. A mother's back is turned around her.

Why, Jane, what's that, honey, I didn't get to turn round, ever—Indianapolis

Derivation of
Derivation of the name of the new to Con the name of Yankee Yankow Indians Connecticut. That

to put an Having cleared your skin by making Cuticura soap to let preparations. The skin is healed, the Talcum to prevent chafe, have you yet the drops of Yankow in the July Y

CARD ROOM NO. 10
TO SPEND VACATION

When Mr. Mann of Agnew with the Mrs. and young vacation resort there. A sortment of fat gentlemen and pinocchio and uncomfortable women playing bridge or

"What the dickens do you vacation for?" Mr. Mann Mrs. Mann.

And yet the pinocchio may be found at country school of resorts. Grown men go on vacations and do not play cards or similar years older; boredom, says the Clinician. When you hear

These people could well be opportunity to let loose their no such tressions of the year and. That's just shouting and playing. Exchange.

Of course, every fat-p can't play Indian or tar, learn the lesson of little get into healthful paths. Being away from the hotel and along tree-covered trails, the younger sweet-smelling country

There are a thousand do that would reduce his do put him in far better the vacation ends—that is

is an invalid.

Fruit of life is not success; perience; and too much apples of Sodom—dust.

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