

FICTION

Kirk Munroe

The Copper Princess

A PUBLIC DOMAIN BOOK

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FICTION

THE COPPER PRINCESS

A Story of Lake Superior Mines

By KIRK MUNROE.

Author of "The Painted Desert"

"Rick Dale" The "Mates" Series, etc.

Illustrated by W. A. ROGERS



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ON THE FACE OF THE CLIFFS TOOD A GIRLISH FIGURE

BY KIRK MUNROE

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THE COPPER PRINCESS

CHAPTER I

STARTLING INTRODUCTION OF TOM TREFETHEN

"Look out, there!"

"My God, he is under the wheels!"

The narrow-gauge train for Red Jacket had just started from the Hancock station, and was gathering quick headway for its first steep grade, when a youth ran from the waiting-room and attempted to leap aboard the "smoker." Missing the step, he fell between two cars, though still clutching a hand-rail of the one he had attempted to board.

With cries of horror, several of those who witnessed the incident from the station platform averted their faces, unwilling to view the ghastly tragedy that they believed must occur in another instant.

At sound of their cries, a neatly dressed young fellow, broad-shouldered and of splendid physique, who was in the act of mounting the car-steps, turned, and instantly comprehended the situation. Without a moment of hesitation he dropped the bag he was carrying and flung his body over the guard-rail, catching at its supporting stanchions with his knees. In this position, with his arms stretched to their utmost, he managed to grasp the coat-collar of the unfortunate youth who was being dragged to his death. In another moment he had, by a supreme effort, lifted the latter bodily to the platform.

Those who witnessed this superb exhibition of promptly applied strength from the station platform gave a cheer as the train swept by, but their voices were drowned in its clatter, and the two actors in their thrilling drama were unaware that it had been noticed. The rescued youth sat limp and motionless on the swaying platform where he had been placed, dazed by the suddenness and intensity of his recent terror; while the other leaned against the guard-rail, recovering from his tremendous effort. After a few minutes of quick breathing he pulled himself together and helped his companion into the car, where they found a vacant seat.

A few of the passengers noted the entrance of two young men, one of whom seemed to be in need of the other's assistance, and glanced at them with meaning smiles. There had been races at Hancock that day, and they evidently believed that these two had attended them. No one spoke to them, however, and it quickly became apparent that the supremest moment in the life of one of the two, which would also have been his last on earth but for the other, had passed unnoticed by any of the scores of human beings in closest proximity to them at the time.

It was hard to realize this, and for a few minutes the young men sat in silence, dreading but expecting to be overwhelmed with a clamor of questions. It was a relief to find that they were to be unmolested, and when the conductor had passed on after punching their tickets, the one who had rescued the other turned to him with a smile, saying:

"No one knows anything about it, for which let us be grateful."

"You can bet I'm grateful, Mister, in more ways than one," answered the other, his eyes filling with the tears of a deep emotion as he spoke. "I won't forget in a hurry that you've saved my life, and from this time on, if ever you can make any use of so poor a chap as me, I'm your man. My name's Tom Trefethen, and I live in Red Jacket, where I run a compressor for No. 3 shaft of the White Pine Mine. That's all there is to me, for I 'ain't never done anything else, don't know anything else, and expect I'm no good *for* anything else. So, you see, I hain't got much to offer in exchange for what you've just give me; same time, I'm your friend all right, from this minute, and I wouldn't do a thing for you only just what you say; but that goes, every time."

"That's all right, Tom, and don't you worry about trying to make any return for the service I have been able to render you. I won't call it a slight service, because to do so would be to undervalue the life I was permitted to save. Besides, you have already repaid me by giving me a friend, which was the thing of which I stood in greatest need, and had almost despaired of gaining."

"Why, Mister--"

"Peveril," interrupted the other. "Richard Peveril is my name, though the friends I used to have generally called me 'Dick Peril.'"

"Used to have, Mr. Peril? Do you mean by that that you hain't got any friends now?"

"I mean that five minutes ago it did not seem as though I had a friend in the world; but now I have one, who, I hope,

will prove a very valuable one as well, and his name is Tom Trefethen."

"It's good of you to say so, Mr. Peril, though how a poor, ignorant chap like me can prove a valuable friend to a swell like you is more than I can make out."

At this the other smiled. "I don't know just what you mean by a swell," he said. "But I suppose you mean a gentleman of wealth and leisure. If so, I certainly am no more of a swell than you, nor so much, for I have just expended my last dollar for this railroad ticket, and have no idea where I shall get another. In fact, I do not know where I shall obtain a supper or find a sleeping-place for to-night, and think it extremely probable that I shall go without either. I hope very much, though, to find a job of work to-morrow that will provide me with both food and shelter for the immediate future."

"Work! Are you looking for work?" asked Tom, gazing at Peveril's natty travelling-suit, and speaking with a tone of incredulity.

"That is what I have come to this country to look for," was the smiling answer. "I came here because I was told that this was the one section of the United States unaffected by hard times, and because I had a letter of introduction to a gentleman in Hancock whom I thought would assist me in getting a position. To my great disappointment, he had left town, to be gone for several months, and, as I could not afford to await his return, I applied for work at the Quincy and other mines, only to be refused."

"Is it work in the mines you are looking for?" asked Tom Trefethen, evidently doubting if he had heard aright.

"Yes, that or any other by which I can make an honest living."

"Well, sir, I wouldn't have believed it if any one but yourself had told me."

"But you must believe it, for it is true, and I am now on my way to Red Jacket because I have been told there is more work to be had there than at any other place in the whole copper region, or in the State, for that matter."

"And more people to do it, too," muttered Tom Trefethen, as he sank into a brown-study.

By this time the train had climbed from the muddy level of Portage Lake, which with its recently cut ship-canals bisects Keweenaw Point, making of its upper end an island, and was speeding northward over a rough upland. Its way led through a naked country of rocks and low-growing scrub, for the primitive growth of timber had been stripped for use in the mines. Every now and then it passed tall shaft-houses and chimneys, belching forth thick volumes of smoke, which, with their clustering villages, marked the sites of copper-mines. Finally, as darkness began to shroud the uninteresting landscape, the train entered the environs of a wide-spread and populous community, where huge mine buildings reared themselves from surrounding acres of the small but comfortable dwellings of North-country miners. Everywhere shone electric lights, and everywhere was a swarming population.

Peveril gazed from his car window in astonishment. "What place is this?" he asked.

"Red Jacket," answered his companion. "That is, it is Red Jacket, Blue Jacket, Yellow Jacket, Stone Pipe, Osceola, White Pine, and several other mining villages bunched together and holding in all about twenty-five thousand people."

"Whew! and I expected to find a place of not over one thousand inhabitants."

"You don't know much about the copper country, that's a fact," said Tom Trefethen, with the slight air of superiority that residents of a place are so apt to assume towards strangers. "Why, a single company here employs as many as three thousand men."

"I am willing to admit my ignorance," rejoined Peveril, "but I am also very anxious to learn things, and hope in course of time to rank as a first-class miner. Therefore, any information you can give me will be gratefully received. To begin with, I wish you would tell me the name of some hotel where my grip will serve as security for a few days' board and lodging."

"A hotel, Mr. Peril! You can't be feeling so very poor if you are thinking of going to a hotel. Or perhaps you don't know how expensive our Red Jacket hotels are. You see, there is always such a rush of business here that prices are way up. Why, they don't think anything of charging two dollars a day; and they get it, too--don't give you anything extra in the way of grub, either. I can do lots better than that for you, though. There's a-plenty of boarding-houses here that'll fix you up in great shape for five a week. You just wait here at the station a few minutes while I go and look up one that I know of."

Without waiting for a reply Tom Trefethen hurried from the train, which was just coming to a stop at the bustling Red Jacket station, and disappeared in the crowd of spectators who had gathered to witness its arrival. Peveril followed

more slowly, and, depositing the handsome dress-suit case that he had learned to call a "grip" in a vacant corner of the platform, prepared to await the return of his only acquaintance in all that community, "or in the whole State of Michigan, so far as I know," reflected the young man.

"As for friends, I wonder if I have any anywhere. This Tom Trefethen claims to have a friendly feeling towards me, and, if he comes back, I will try to believe in him. It is more than likely though that his leaving me here is only a way of escaping an irksome obligation, and I shouldn't be one bit surprised never to see him again. It seems to be the way of the world, that if you place a fellow under an obligation he begins to dislike you from that moment. My! if all the fellows whom I have helped would only pay what they owe me, how well fixed I should be at this minute. I could even put up with a clear conscience at one of Tom Trefethen's two-dollar-a-day hotels. What an unsophisticated chap he is, anyway. Wonder what he would say to the Waldorf charges? And yet only a short time ago I thought them very moderate. It's a queer old world, and a fellow has to see all sides of it before he can form an idea of what it is really like. I must confess, however, that I am not particularly enjoying my present point of view. Must be because I am so infernally hungry. Odd sensation, and so decidedly unpleasant that if my friend with the Cornish name doesn't return inside of two minutes more I shall abandon our tryst and set forth in search of a supper."

At this point in his dismal reflections Peveril became aware of a short, solidly built man, having a grizzled beard, and wearing a rough suit of ill-fitting clothing, who was standing squarely before him and regarding him intently. As their eyes met, the new-comer asked, abruptly:

"Be thy name Richard, lad?"

"Yes."

"What's t'other part of it?"

"Peveril. And may I inquire why you ask?"

"Because, lad, in all t'world thee has not a truer friend, nor one more ready to serve thee, than old Mark Trefethen. So come along of me, and gi' me a chance to prove my words."



CHAPTER II

PEVERIL TIES "BLACKY'S" RECORD

"Are you the father of Tom Trefethen?" asked Peveril of the man who had so abruptly introduced himself.

"Certain I be, lad, feyther to the young fool who, but for thee, would never have come home to us no more. His mother was that upset by thought of his danger that she couldn't let him leave her, and so bade me come to fetch you mysel'. Not that I needed a bidding, for I'm doubly proud of a chance to serve the man who's gied us back our Tom. So come along, lad, to where there's a hearty welcome waiting, together with a bite and a bed."

"But, Mr. Trefethen, I can't allow you to--"

"Man, you must allow me, for I'm no in the habit o' being crossed. Besides, I'd never dare go back to mother without you. This thy grip?"

With this the brawny miner swung Peveril's bag to his shoulder, and started briskly down the station platform, followed closely by the young man, who but a moment before had believed himself to be without a friend.

They had not gone more than a block from the station, and Peveril was wondering at the crowds of comfortable-looking folk who thronged the wooden sidewalks, as well as at the rows of brilliantly lighted shops, when his guide turned abruptly into the door of a saloon.

Following curiously, the young man also entered, and, passing behind a latticed screen, found himself in a long room having a sanded floor, and furnished with a glittering bar, tables, chairs, and several queer-looking machines, the nature of which he did not understand. Several men were leaning against the counter of the bar; but without noticing them other than by a general nod of recognition, Mark Trefethen walked to the far end of the room, where he deposited Peveril's bag on the floor beside one of the machines already mentioned.

It was a narrow, upright frame, placed close to the wall, and holding a stout wooden panel. In the centre of this, at the height of a man's chest, was a stuffed leathern pad, on which was painted a grotesque face, evidently intended for that of a negro, and above it was a dial bearing numbers that ranged from 1 to 300. The single pointer on this dial indicated the number 173, a figure at which Mark Trefethen sniffed contemptuously.

"Let's see thee take a lick at 'Blacky,' lad, just for luck," he said.

Although he had never before seen or even heard of such a machine as now confronted him, Peveril was sufficiently quick-witted to realize that his companion desired him to strike a blow with his fist at the grinning face painted on the leathern pad, and he did so without hesitation. At the same time, as he had no idea of what resistance he should encounter, he struck out rather gingerly, and the dial-pointer sprang back to 156.

Mark Trefethen looked at once incredulous and disappointed. "Surely that's not thy best lick, lad," he said, in an aggrieved tone; "why, old as I am, I could better it mysel'." Thus saying, the miner drew back a fist like a sledge-hammer, and let drive a blow at "Blacky" that sent the pointer up to 180.

"Now, lad, try again," he remarked, with a self-satisfied air; "and remember, what I should have telled thee afore, that the man who lets pointer slip back owes beer to the crowd."

Wondering how he should cancel the indebtedness thus innocently incurred, and also at the strangeness of such proceedings on the part of one who had just invited him to a much-longed-for supper, Peveril again stepped up and delivered a nervous blow against the unresisting leathern pad, driving the pointer to 184.

The miner's shout of "Well done, lad! That's spunky," attracted the idlers at the bar and brought them to the scene of contest. They arrived just in time to see Trefethen deliver his second blow, the force of which drove the sensitive needle sixpoints farther on, or until it registered 190.

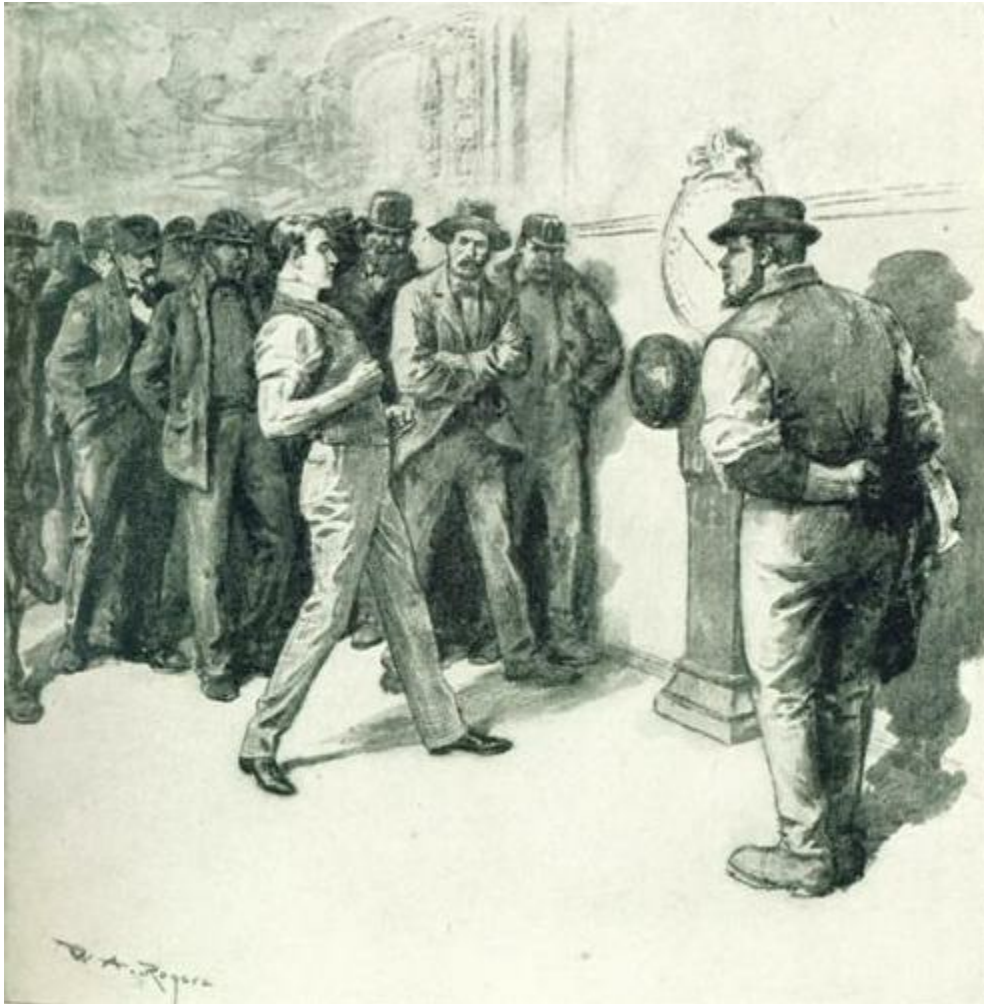
With a flush of pride on his strongly marked face, the old Cornishman exclaimed, "There's a mark for thee lad, but doan't 'ee strike 'less thee can better it, for I'd like it to stand for a while."

Peveril only smiled in answer, and, taking a quick forward step, planted so vigorous a blow upon the painted leather that the pointer gained a single interval. So small were the spaces that at first it was thought not to have moved; but when a closer examination showed it to indicate 191, a murmur of approbation went up from the spectators. Mark Trefethen said not a word, but, throwing off his coat and baring his corded arm for a mighty effort, he again took place before the machine. Carefully measuring his distance, he drew back and delivered a blow into which he threw the whole

weight of his body. As though galvanized into action, the needle leaped up four points and registered 195.

"A record! A record!" shouted the spectators, while the miner turned a face beaming with triumph towards his athletic young antagonist. On many an occasion had he played at solitaire fisticuffs with that leathern dummy, but never before had he struck it such a mighty blow, and now he did not believe that another in all Red Jacket could equal the feat he had just performed.

"Lat it stand, lad! Lat it stand!" he said, good-humoredly, but in a tone unmistakably patronizing. "You've done enough to take front rank, for not more than three men in all the Jackets have ever beat your figure. Besides, the beer is on the house now for a record, but 'twill be on any man who lowers you--so best lat well enough alone."



"IN BREATHLESS SILENCE THE GROUP WATCHED PEVERIL'S MOVEMENTS"

This advice was tendered in all sincerity, and was doubtless very good, but Peveril was now too deeply interested in the novel contest to accept defeat without a further effort. Besides, the stroke-oar of a winning crew in the great Oxford-Cambridge boat-race, which is what Dick Peveril had been only two months earlier, was not accustomed to be beaten in athletic games.

So he, too, threw off his coat and bared the glorious right arm that had at once been the pride of his college and the envy of every other in the 'varsity. In breathless silence the little group of spectators watched his movements, and when, with sharply exhaled breath, he planted a crashing "facer" straight from the shoulder squarely upon the leathern disk they sprang eagerly forward to note the result. For an instant they gazed at each other blankly, for the needle, though trembling violently, remained fixedly pointing at the figure 195.

Then they realized what had happened. Mark Trefethen's score had been neither raised nor lowered, but had been duplicated. A double record had been established, and that in a single contest. Such a thing had never before happened in Red Jacket, where trials of strength and skill similar to the one they had just witnessed were of frequent occurrence. As the amazing truth broke upon them, they raised a great shout of applause, and every man present pressed eagerly about the two champions with cordially extended hands.

But Peveril and the old miner were already shaking hands with each other, for Mark Trefethen had been the first to appreciate the result of his opponent's blow, and had whirled around from his examination of the dial to seize the young man's hand in both of his.

"Now I believe it, lad!" he cried. "Now I believe the story boy Tom told this night. I couldn't make it seem possible that you had lifted him as he said, and so I wanted proof. Now I'm got it, and now I know you for best man that's come to mines for many a year. Pray God, lad, that you and me'll never have a quarrel to settle wi' bare fists, for I'm free to say I'd rayther meet any ither two men in the Jackets than the one behind the fist that struck yon blow."

"You will never meet him in a quarrel if I can help it, Mr. Trefethen," replied Peveril, flushing with gratified pride, "for I can't imagine anything that would throw me into a greater funk than to face as an enemy the man who established the existing record on that machine. But, now, don't you think we might adjourn to the supper of which you spoke awhile since? I was never quite so famished in my life, and am nearly ready to drop with the exhaustion of hunger."

"Oh, Jimmy!" groaned one of the listening spectators. "If'e done wot 'e did hon a hempty stummick, hit's 'eaven 'elp the man or the machine 'e 'its when 'e's full."

"Step up for your beers, gentlemen," cried the bartender at this moment. "The house owes two rounds for the double record, and is proud to pay a debt so handsomely thrust upon it."

This invitation was promptly accepted by the spectators of the recent contest, all of whom immediately lined up at the bar. Mark Trefethen stood with them, and when he noticed that Peveril held back, he called out, heartily, "Step up, lad, and doan't be bashful. We're waiting to take a mug wi' thee."

"I thank you all," rejoined Peveril, politely, "but I believe I don't care to drink anything just now."

"What! Not teetotal?"

"Not wholly," replied the other, with a laugh, "but I long ago made it a rule not to take liquor in any form on an empty stomach."

"Oh, it won't hurt you. And this time needn't count, anyway," said one of the men, whose features proclaimed him to be of Irish birth.

"I think it would hurt me," replied Peveril, "and if my rule could be broken at this time, of course it could at any other. So I believe I won't drink anything, thank you."

"You mane you're a snob, and don't care to associate with working-men," retorted the other.

"I mean nothing of the kind, but exactly what I said, that I don't propose to injure my health to gratify you or any other man. As for associating with working-men, I am a working-man myself, and have come to this place with the hope of finding a job in one of the mines. If I hadn't wanted to associate with working-men I shouldn't be here at this minute."

"Well, you can't associate with them in one thing if not in all, Mr. Workingman," rejoined the Irishman, sneeringly, "and so, if you won't drink with us, you can't become one of us."

"That's right," murmured several voices.

"Moreover," continued the speaker, "you don't look, talk, or act like a working-man, and I'm willing to bet the price of these beers that you never earned a dollar by honest labor in your life."

"If I didn't, that's no reason why I shouldn't."

"But did you?"

"No, I never did."

"I knew it from the first," exclaimed the other, triumphantly, "you're nothing but a d--d--"

"Shut up, Mike Connell! don't ye dare say it!" shouted Mark Trefethen, shaking a knotted fist in close proximity to the Irishman's face. "How dare you insult the friend I've brought to this place? Lad's right about the liquor, too, and

damned if I'll drink a drop of it myself. Same time, working-man or no, he's worth any two of you wi' his fists, and, I'll bate, has more brains than the rest of us put together. So keep a civil tongue in your head in the presence of your betters, Mike Connell. Come, lad, time we were getting home. Mother 'll be fretting for us."

Thus saying, the sturdy miner laid his toil-hardened hand on Peveril's shoulder and led him from the place.

CHAPTER III

A 'VARSITY STROKE STRIKES ADVERSE FORTUNE

Richard Peveril, student at Christ Church, was not only one of the most popular men in his own college, but, as stroke of the 'varsity eight, was becoming one of the best known of Oxford undergraduates when the blow was struck that compelled him to leave England and return to the land of his birth without even waiting to try for his degree. He had been an orphan from early boyhood, and, under the nominal care of a guardian who saw as little of his charge as possible, had passed most of his time in American boarding-schools, until sent abroad to finish his education. While his guardian had never been unkind to him, he had not tried to understand the boy or to win his affection, but had placed him at the best schools, supplied him liberally with pocket-money, and then let him alone.

Although the lad had thus been denied the softening influence of a home, the tender care of a mother, and a father's counsel, his school-life had trained him to self-reliance, prompt obedience to lawful authority, a strict sense of honor, and to a physical condition so perfect that in all his life he had never known a day's sickness. Having always had plenty of money, he had never learned its value, though in his school-days his allowance had been limited by the same wise rules that also checked undue extravagance. Thus, while brought up to live and spend money like a gentleman, he had not been permitted to acquire vicious habits.

Even at college his allowance had always been in excess of his needs, and so, though ever ready to help a friend in trouble, he had never run into debt on his own account.

Another influence for good was the lad's inherited love for all out-of-door sports, and he could not remember the time when he was not in training for a team, a crew, or an athletic event of some kind. Thus the keeping of regular hours, together with a studied temperance in both eating and drinking, had been grafted into his very nature.

Life had thus been made very pleasant for our hero, and, believing himself to be heir to a fortune, he had never been disturbed by anxieties concerning the future. Of course, while he had hosts of acquaintances, most of whom called themselves his friends, he was well aware that some of them were envious of his position and would rejoice at his downfall, should such an event ever take place. It was partly this knowledge, partly his own sense of absolute security in life, and partly a habit acquired during a long career of leadership among his school companions that rendered him brusque with those for whom he did not particularly care and contemptuous to the verge of rudeness towards such persons as he disliked. Thus it will be seen that our young man possessed a facility for the making of enemies as well as friends.

Of his secret enemies the most bitter was a fellow-student, also an American, named Owen, who, possessed of barely means enough to carry him through college, and with no prospects, had, by relinquishing everything else, taken much the same stand in scholarship that Peveril had in athletics. As a consequence, each was envious of the other, for the stroke of the 'varsity eight was so little of a student that he had never more than barely scraped through with an examination in his life, and was always overwhelmed with conditions. This jealousy would not, however, have led to enmity without a further cause, which had been furnished within a year.

Owen had crossed on a steamer with Mrs. Maturin Bonnifay, of New York, and her only daughter, Rose. They did London together, and never had the young American found that smoke-begrimed city so delightful. At his solicitation the Bonnifays consented to visit Oxford, and permitted him to act as their escort. In contemplating the pleasure of such a visit, Owen had lost sight of its dangers; but, alas for his happiness! they became only too quickly apparent.

The ladies must be taken to the river, of course, and there the one thing above all others to see was the 'varsity eight at practice. Of the entire crew none attracted such instant attention as the stroke-oar, and when they learned that he was an American their interest in him was doubled.

Of course he and Mr. Owen, being compatriots in a strange land, and both having done so splendidly at the dear old university, must be friends.

Oh, certainly.

Then wouldn't Mr. Owen present his friend? It was always so pleasant to meet the right kind of Americans when abroad. "Why! There he comes now! I am sure that must be he; isn't it, Mr. Owen? Though one does look so different in a boat and out of it."

It was indeed Peveril, who had purposely sauntered in that direction for a closer view of the pretty girl whom "Dig" Owen, of all men, had picked up; and, in another minute, Owen, with an extremely bad grace, had introduced him.

From that moment, as is always the case when athletes and scholars compete for feminine favor, the scholar was almost ignored, while his muscular rival was petted to a degree that Owen declared simply scandalous. Although the latter was still allowed to act as second-best escort to the ladies, and form a fourth in their various excursions, it was always Peveril who walked, sat, strolled, and talked with Miss Rose, while Owen was monopolized by her mother.

The Bonnifays had only intended to spend a day or two in Oxford, but the place proved so charmingly attractive that they remained a month, and when they finally took their departure for the Continent Miss Rose wore a superb diamond ring on the third finger of her left hand, that had very recently been placed there by Peveril.

Before they separated it had been arranged that he and they should travel through Norway together during the following summer. Owen had also been invited to join the party, but had declined on the ground that immediately upon taking his degree he would be obliged to return to America.

So that winter the scholar, filled with envy and bitterness, ground away gloomily but persistently at his books; while the athlete, radiant with happiness, steadily cheerful and good-natured, labored with his crew. Finally, he stroked them to a win on the Thames, and then, at the height of his glory, began to consider his chances for a degree. At this moment the blow was struck, and it came in the shape of a cablegram from a New York law firm.

"Return at earliest convenience. Carson dead. Affairs badly involved."

Boise Carson was the guardian whom Peveril had so seldom seen, but who had always controlled his affairs and provided so liberally for all his wants. Upon coming of age, a few months before, Peveril had sent over a power of attorney, and his ex-guardian had continued to act for him as before. They were to have had a settlement when the young man took his degree, for which purpose he had planned to run over to New York, spend a few days there, and return in time for his Norway trip with the Bonnifays. In the autumn he and they would sail for New York together, and the wedding would take place as soon thereafter as was practicable.

Now this wretched cablegram promised to upset everything, and he must look forward to spending the summer in trying to disentangle an involved business, instead of spending it with the girl of his heart. Perhaps, though, "badly involved" did not mean so *very* badly, and possibly he might get through with the hated business in time for the Norway trip after all, if he only set to work at once. Of course that would necessitate the giving up of his degree, but what difference did that make? Other things were of infinitely more importance.

So Peveril bade farewell to Oxford, wrote a long letter, full of love and hopeful promises, to Rose Bonnifay, at Rome, sent her a reassuring telegram from Southampton, and sailed for New York. Having been so long absent, he found very few friends in that city, and it seemed to him that some even of those few greeted him with a constraint bordering on coldness.

As Boise Carson, who had lived and died a bachelor, had roomed at the Waldorf, Peveril also established himself in that palatial caravansary, and was then ready to plunge into the business that had brought him to America.

His first shock came from the lawyer who had summoned him, and who at once told him that he feared everything was lost.

"I don't exactly understand what you mean," said Peveril.

"In plain terms, then, I am afraid that your late guardian not only squandered his own fortune in unwise speculation, but yours as well. Perhaps this note, left for you, will explain the situation."

Thus saying, the lawyer handed Peveril a sealed envelope addressed to him in the well-known handwriting of Boise Carson. Tearing it open, the young man read as follows:

"MY DEAR RICHARD:

"Having lost everything, including your fortune and my own honor, I have no longer an object in living. I therefore conclude that it will be best to efface myself as speedily as possible. I have made a will, leaving you my sole heir and executor. You are welcome to whatever you can save from the wreck. All papers belonging to your father and left in my charge will be handed you by Mr. Ketchum. Good-bye.

"Yours, for the last time,

"BOISE CARSON."

"He didn't commit suicide?" exclaimed Peveril, incredulously.

"It is to be feared that he did," replied the lawyer, "and the state of his affairs bears out the supposition."

After this Peveril spent a month in New York, trying to recover something from the wreck of his fortune. At the end of that time he found himself with less than one hundred dollars over and above his obligations. Realizing at length that he must for the future depend entirely upon his own efforts, he made several applications for vacant positions in the city, only to find in every case that they were also sought by men more competent to fill them than he.

One day, when, for want of something better to do, he was mechanically looking over a package of old papers that had belonged to his father, he came across a contract of partnership between his parent and a certain Ralph Darrell. It was for the opening and development of a mine, to be known as the "Copper Princess," and located in the upper peninsula of Michigan. By the terms of the contract the partnership was to exist for twenty years, and, if either party died during that time, his heir or heirs were to accept the liabilities and receive all benefits accruing to an original partner. It was, however, provided that the claims of such heirs must be made before expiration of the contract, otherwise the entire property would fall into possession of the longest-surviving partner or his heirs. The document bore a date nineteen years old.

"Well," said Peveril, reflectively, as he finished reading this paper, "although everything else is lost, it would seem that as my father's sole heir I am still half-owner in a copper mine. I wonder if it is worth looking up?"



CHAPTER IV

STARTING IN SEARCH OF THE COPPER PRINCESS

Viewed through the sanguine eyes of youth, the possession of a half-interest in a copper mine seemed to offer a ready solution of Peveril's recent difficulties. He vaguely recalled stories of great fortunes made in copper, and speculated concerning the market value of his newly discovered property. "There must be plenty of people ready to buy such things, if they are only offered cheaply enough," he said to himself; "and Heaven knows I wouldn't hold out for any fancy price. Ten thousand dollars, or even five, would be sufficient for the Norway trip, and after that something would be certain to turn up."

Of all his trials none had seemed so hard to bear as the giving up of that journey to Norway, and now it might be accomplished, after all. He had written several letters to Rose since reaching New York, and at first they had been filled with hopes of a speedy reunion. Then, as he began to realize the condition of his fortunes, they became less frequent and less hopeful, until for some weeks, not knowing what to write, he had not written at all.

Now filled with a new courage, he wrote a long and cheerful letter, in which he stated a belief that his business troubles were so nearly ended that he would speedily be able to join his friends in Norway. This letter, finished and mailed, the young mine-owner visited his lawyer, to inform him of his discovery and learn its probable value.

Mr. Ketchum smiled grimly as he glanced at the contract on which Peveril was building such high hopes, and then, handing it back, said, pityingly:

"My dear boy, I hate to dash your hopes, but I doubt if this thing is worth anything more than the paper on which it is written. Boise Carson brought it to us years ago, and we looked into it at that time. We discovered that a property located somewhere in Northern Michigan, and supposed to be rich in copper, had been purchased at a stiff price by your father and this Ralph Darrell, who was a banker in one of the New England cities--Boston, I believe. They christened it the 'Copper Princess,' invested nearly a million dollars in a complete mining-plant, and sank a shaft into barren rock. Not one cent did the mine ever yield, and the deeper they went the poorer became their prospects. Finally, Darrell, completely ruined financially, became crazed by his troubles and disappeared; nor has he ever been heard from since. Your father, having put half of his fortune into the venture, brooded over its loss until his death, which, I am convinced, was largely caused by the failure of the Copper Princess."

"What became of the property after that?" asked Peveril, who had listened with a sinking heart to this recital.

"I believe it stands to-day, as it was abandoned years ago, one of the many monuments of ruined hopes in that country of squandered fortunes."

"But there is copper in that region, is there not?"

"Certainly there is, and in fabulous quantity, but apparently not in the immediate vicinity of the Copper Princess."

"Did you visit the place yourself?"

"No. We conducted our inquiries through a mine-owner of Hancock, which was at that time the nearest town of importance to the property."

"Does your correspondent still live there?"

"I believe so. At any rate, he did within a year."

"Will you give me a note of introduction to him, and also a paper of identification, by which I may substantiate my claim to a half-ownership in the Copper Princess?"

"Certainly I will; but may I ask how you propose to use such documents? You surely do not intend to visit the property with the hope that anything can be realized from it?"

"I don't think I have much hope of any kind just now," replied Peveril, bitterly. "But I suppose there is as much work to be done in the copper country as anywhere else, while my chances of obtaining employment there will at least be as good as they are here. Besides, it will be a sort of satisfaction to gaze upon the only existing evidence that there ever was a fortune in the family. You said that buildings of some sort had been erected on the property, did you not?"

"Yes, according to my recollection there was quite a village of miners' houses, besides all the other necessary structures."

"Then I may at least discover a roof under which I can dwell, rent free, while the sensation of finding myself lord of a manor will be decidedly novel."

Having thus decided upon a course of action, our young mine-owner lost no time in carrying out his newly formed plans. That very afternoon he purchased a ticket for Buffalo, from which point he proposed to economize his slender resources by taking a lake steamer to his point of destination. His last duty before leaving New York, and the one from which he shrank most, was the writing of a second letter to Rose, telling her that the trip to Norway was no longer a possibility, so far as he was concerned. He wrote:

"I am suddenly confronted with the necessity of taking rather a long Western journey, to investigate the condition of a mine in which I own a half-interest. I hate to go, because every mile will lengthen the distance between us, and am more bitterly disappointed than I can express at being compelled to give up our Norwegian trip. But my call to the West is imperative, and must be obeyed. So, dear, let us bear our disappointment as best we can, for I hope it is one to you as well as to me, and look forward to a joyful reunion in this city next autumn."

The epistle, of which the above is but a fragment, not only caused Miss Bonnifay to utter an impatient exclamation as she read it, but also led to complications.

Feeling that, with Peveril safely across the Atlantic, there might be some hope for him, Owen had reconsidered his determination not to go to Norway, and had written from Oxford, offering to escort the ladies on that trip. His letter reached them in company with that from Peveril announcing that he too would shortly be with them. Thereupon Mrs. Bonnifay replied to Owen that, while they should be delighted to have him join their party, he must not inconvenience himself to do so, as Mr. Peveril's business was in such shape that he would be able to carry out his original intention of accompanying them.

Then came Peveril's second letter, stating that he could not leave America, after all, and the elder lady hurriedly penned the following note:

"MY DEAR MR. OWEN:

"We are so glad that you can accompany us to Norway, the more so that Mr. Peveril will, after all, be prevented from so doing. He has just written that business of the utmost importance, connected with an immensely valuable mine that he owns somewhere in the West, will prevent his leaving America this summer. Of course he is in despair, and all that, while we are awfully sorry for him, but we shall not allow our grief to interfere in the least with the pleasure we are anticipating from a trip to Norway under your escort. Hoping, then, to see you here very soon,

"I remain," etc., etc.

Quickly as this letter followed its immediate predecessor, it arrived too late to accomplish its purpose; for, on the very day that he received it, Owen had cabled his acceptance of a position offered him in the United States and procured his ticket for New York.

"Was ever a man so cursed by fate!" he cried, as he finished reading Mrs. Bonnifay's note; "or, rather, by the stupidity of a blundering idiot! I don't believe Dick Peveril cares a rap for the girl; if he did, he would not desert her on any such flimsy pretext. The idea of his having business with a mine! He never did have any business, and never will. How I hate the fellow!"

With this, Mr. Owen composed a letter to Mrs. Bonnifay, in which his regrets at the miscarriage of their plans were skilfully interwoven with insinuations that possibly Peveril had found America to hold even greater attractions than Norway. He also promised to keep them informed concerning the latest New York news.

This promise he redeemed two weeks later by forwarding whatever of gossip he could gather regarding Peveril. It included the information that the latter had not only lost his fortune, but had sought so unsuccessfully for employment in the city that he had finally been obliged to leave it, and no one knew whither he had gone. Having accomplished this piece of work, Mr. Owen also departed from New York, and turned his face westward.

In the mean time, Peveril, happily unconscious of these several epistles, was finding his own path beset by trials such as he had never encountered on any previous journey, for they were those caused by a scarcity of funds with which to meet his every-day expenses.

His determination to economize failed because of his ignorance of the first principles of economy. Besides that, his appearance, his manner, his dress, and his personal belongings were all so many protests against economy. Thus, when he inquired concerning a hotel in Buffalo, no one thought of naming any save the most expensive, and he drove to it in a carriage, because he did not know how else to reach it. Then it happened that the first boat leaving for the

Superior country was the *Northland*, one of the most luxurious and extravagant of lake craft. To be sure, she was also the swiftest, and would carry him through without loss of time; but when he left her at the Sault, as he found he must in order to reach the copper country, his scanty stock of money was depleted beyond anything he had deemed possible on so short a trip. From the Sault he travelled by rail, and finally reached Hancock with but five dollars in his pocket.

Then, failing to find the only person to whom he had a note of introduction, and also being unable to obtain work, he finally expended his last dollar for transportation to Red Jacket, where he knew he must either find employment or starve. And thus was our hero led to the point at which we first made his acquaintance.



CHAPTER V

THE TREFETHENS

As Peveril walked with his newly made acquaintance through the brisk mining-town, of whose very name he had been ignorant until that day, Mark Trefethen directed his attention to its various places and objects of interest. Of one small but handsome stone building, surrounded by grass and shade-trees, he said:

"There's where the swells get's their beer."

Peveril instantly knew it for a club-house, and, with a pang of regret for the lost comforts of such an establishment, glanced enviously at its cosy interior, disclosed through open windows.

At length they reached the modest cottage, built on the plan of a hundred others, that Mark Trefethen rented from the company and called his home. The room into which Peveril was ushered was scrupulously clean and neat, but seemed to him painfully bare and cheerless. It was lighted by a single, unshaded lamp, that stood in the middle of an oilcloth-covered table laid for supper. Half a dozen cheap wooden chairs and a sewing-machine of inferior grade completed its furnishing. The new-comer had only time for a single glance at these things as he entered the door, before his recent acquaintance of the train, who now seemed almost like an old friend, sprang forward with outstretched hand, exclaiming:

"I'm so glad you've come, for I was afraid father might not find you, or you might get tired of waiting, or that something might have happened to take you some other place. I would have gone back myself, only father wouldn't have it that way, and claimed 'twas his place to fetch you."

"Surely, son; and why not? Could I do less than give the first welcome to one who has done for us what Mr. Peril has? Mother, take a step and shake hands wi' him who saved our boy to us this day. I couldn't believe it till I seen him hit 'Blacky' such a blow as but one other in all Red Jacket has ever struck. What do you think of one ninety-five for a record?"

"Oh, father! you surely didn't take him--"

But Tom's words were lost in the heartfelt though somewhat trying greeting that Peveril was at that moment receiving from Mrs. Trefethen. She was a large woman, whose ample form was unconfined by stay or lace, and with whom to "take a step" was evidently an exertion. That she was also of an emotional nature was shown by the tears that rolled in little well-defined channels down her cheeks as she made an elephantine courtesy before her guest.

"Mister Peril, sir," she said, in a voice that seemed to bubble up through an overflow of tears, "may you never hexperience the feelinks of a mother, more especial the mother of a honly son, which 'arrowing is no name for them. As I were saying to Miss Penny this very day--a true lady, sir, if there is one in hall Red Jacket, and wife of No. 2, timber boss, my Mark being the same in No. 3--Miss Penny, sez I--but, laws! what's the use of telling sich things to a mere man? as I frequent sez to my Mark and my Tom, which he hain't no more'n a boy when all's said and done, if he does claim to vote, and halways on the side of 'is father, when, if wimmen had the privilege--as Miss Penny, who is a geniwine lady, and by no means a woman-sufferer, has frequent said to me, that it's a burning shame they shouldn't--things would be more naturally equalled up. Same time, young sir, seeing has 'ow you've come--"

"And is also nearly starved," interrupted Mark Trefethen. "Let's have supper. You've done yourself proud, mother, and give Mr. Peril a master-welcome; but eating before talking, say I, and so let us fall to."

Faint with hunger as he was, the guest needed no second invitation to seat himself at the homely but hospitable table, on which was placed a great dish of corned beef and cabbage, another of potatoes, a wheaten loaf, and a pot of tea. Cups, plates, and saucers were of thickest stone-ware, knives and forks were of iron, and spoons were of pewter, but Peveril managed to make successful use of them all, and though betraying a woful ignorance of the proper functions of a knife, ate his first working-man's meal with all of a working-man's appetite and hearty appreciation.

Mrs. Trefethen occupied a great rocking-chair at one end of the table, surrounded by a group of clamorous little ones, into whose open mouths she dropped bits of food as though they were so many young birds in a nest, and kept up an unceasing flow of conversation regarding her friend Mrs. Penny, to which Peveril strove to pay polite attention.

From the opposite end her husband expatiated between mouthfuls upon the fate that had overtaken 'Blacky' that evening, but Peveril was too hungry to talk, and so apparently was Tom. These four were waited on by a slim, rosy-cheeked lass, with demure expression but laughing eyes, to whom the guest had not been introduced, but who, from

her likeness to Tom, he rightly concluded must be his sister. She was addressed as "Nelly."

After supper the three men adjourned to a little front porch, where Mark Trefethen lighted a pipe and questioned Peveril concerning his plans for the future. After listening attentively to all that his guest chose to tell of himself, he said:

"It's plain, lad, thee's not been brought up to work, and knows nought of mining; but thee's got head to learn and muscle to work with. So if 'ee wants job thee shall have it, or Mark Trefethen 'll know why. Now I tell 'ee what. Bide along of us, and be certain of welcome. Take to-morrow to look about, and by night I'll have news for you."

Gratefully accepting this invitation, the Oxford undergraduate slept that night in a tiny chamber of the Trefethen cottage, from which he shrewdly suspected Miss Nelly had been turned out to make room for him.

The next day he went with his new-found friends to the mine, where, in the "Dry," he saw the underground laborers change into their red-stained working-suits. Then he watched them clamber, a dozen at a time, into the great ore-cages and disappear with startling suddenness down the black shaft into unknown depths of darkness. After all were gone he spent some time in the "compressor-room" of the engine-house with Tom, who was there on duty. The remainder of the day he passed in wandering among shaft-houses, rock-crushers, ore-cars, and shops, making close observations, asking questions, and gaining a deal of information concerning the mining of copper.

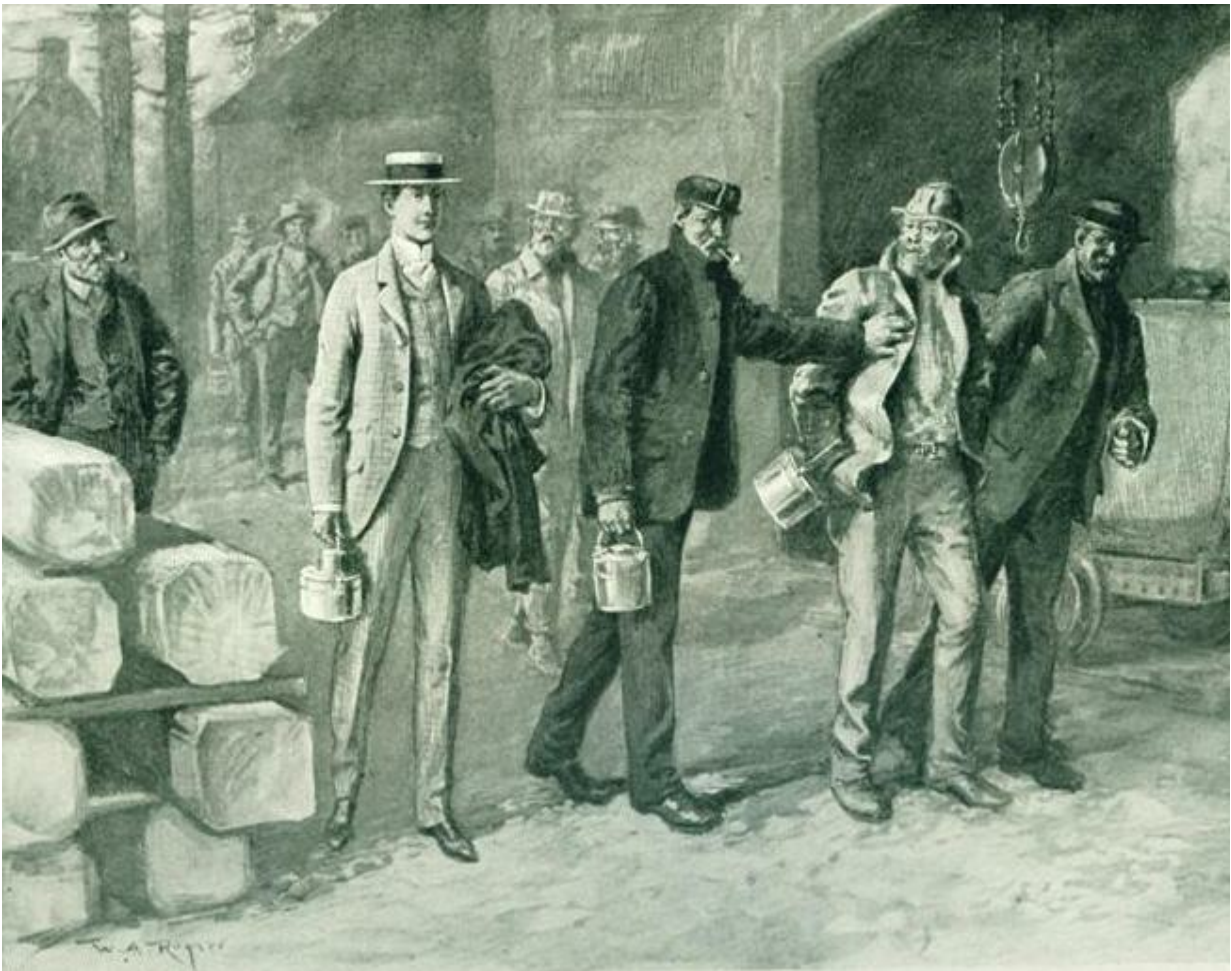
That evening Mark Trefethen told him that he had made arrangements by which he could, if he chose, go to work in the mine the following morning. "Job's wi' timber gang, lad," he said, "in bottom level. It's hard work and little pay at first--only one twenty-five the day--but if 'ee's game for it, job's thine."

"I am game to try it, at any rate," replied the young man, gratefully, "and will also try my best to prevent you from being ashamed of me."

"No fear, lad. Only fear is I'll be proud of thee, and lat others see it, which would be very bad indeed. Now, I'll bate 'ee hasn't rag of clothing fit for mine work."

"I have only what I am wearing," answered Peveril, who had left his trunks in Hancock, "but I guess they will do until I can earn the money to buy others more suitable."





PEVERIL GOES TO WORK

"Do, lad! They'd be ruined forever in first five minutes. Besides, thee'd be laughing-stock of whole mine, if 'ee went down dressed like Jim Dandy. No, no; come along of me and I'll rig 'ee out proper."

So Peveril was taken to the company store, where, with Mark Trefethen to vouch for him, he was allowed to purchase, on credit, two blue-flannel shirts, a suit of brown canvas, a pair of heavy hobnailed shoes, two pairs of woollen socks, a hard, round-topped hat, a dinner-pail, and a miner's lamp. As these things were, by order of the timber boss, charged to "Dick Peril," that was the name under which our young Oxonian began his new life and became known in the strange community to which erratic fortune had led him.

On the following morning he sallied forth from the Trefethen cottage with a tin dinner-pail on one arm, his working-suit under the other, and uncomfortably conscious that he was curiously regarded by every person whom he met on his way to the mine. As the "Dry" was already overcrowded, he shared Tom's locker, and was grateful for the opportunity of changing his clothing in the comparative seclusion of the compressor-room rather than in company with the two hundred men who thronged the steam-heated building devoted especially to that purpose.

Having assumed his new garments, and feeling very awkward in them, Peveril made his way to the shaft-mouth. There he was joined by Mark Trefethen, who regarded the change made in his protege's appearance with approving eyes. Together, and in company with a stream of men talking in a bewildering Babel of tongues, they climbed flight after flight of wooden stairs to the uppermost floor of the tall shaft-house.

An empty cage that had just deposited its load of copper conglomerate was again ready to descend into the black depths, and, hurrying Peveril forward, Mark Trefethen, with half a dozen other miners, entered it. An iron gate closed behind them and a gong clanged in the engine-house.

"Hold fast, lad, and remember there's no danger," was all that the timber boss had time to say. Then the bottom seemed to drop out of everything, and Peveril, experiencing the sickening sensation of having left his stomach at the top of the

shaft, found himself rushing downward with horrible velocity through utter blackness. Instinctively reaching out for something by which to hold on, he clutched a rough-coated arm, but his grasp was rudely shaken off, and a gruff voice bade him keep his hands to himself.

He could not frame an answer, for his brain was in a whirl, his ears were filled with a dull roaring, and a whistling rush of air caught away his breath. The motion of the cage was so smooth and noiseless that after a while he could not tell whether it were going up or down, though it seemed to be doing both, as though poised on a gigantic spring. At length faint glimmers of light began to flash past as it shot by the mouths of working levels, and finally it stopped with a jerk that threw its passengers into a confused huddle.

A gate was flung open, and as Peveril stumbled out of the cage he was only conscious of dancing lights, a crashing rumble of iron against iron, and a medley of shouting voices. At the same time all these sounds seemed far away and unreal.



CHAPTER VI

A MILE BENEATH THE SURFACE

"Swallow, lad!"

Mark Trefethen uttered the words, and Peveril, dimly comprehending him, instinctively obeyed. The effect of that simple muscular action was marvellous. His brain was instantly cleared of its weight, the ringing in his ears ceased, and his hearing was restored to its normal keenness. At the same time he was happily conscious that his stomach had been restored to its proper position.

"This is plat of bottom level, and we're a mile underground," continued Mark. "They put us down in one-thirty this time, but often they do it ten seconds better."

"I wonder how much longer it would take to drop from a balloon one mile above the earth?" reflected Peveril, at the same time gazing about him with a lively interest.

The place in which he stood was a spacious room, hewn from solid rock. Lighted by several lanterns and little, flaring mine-lamps, it was also smoothly floored with iron plates, and from it a narrow-gauge railway led away into the blackness. Articles of clothing and dinner-pails were hung about the walls, and on the side opposite the shaft was a bench of rude workmanship.

Every few minutes an iron car holding several tons of copper rock was run into the plat with a tremendous clatter from the little railway that penetrated to every "drift" and "stope" of the level. Each of these cars was pushed by a team of three wild-looking men, who were stripped naked to the waist. Their haggard faces and naked bodies were begrimed with powder-smoke, stained red with ore-dust, and gleamed in the fitful lamp-light with trickling rivulets of perspiration. The car-pushers were all foreigners--Italians, Bohemians, Hungarians, or Poles--and the uncouth jargon of their shouts intensified the wildness of their appearance. There was the very lowest form of mine drudgery, and but few of them were possessed of intelligence or ambition sufficient to raise them above it.

One, who was accounted somewhat brighter than his fellows, by whom he was regarded as a leader, had indeed been promoted on trial by the timber boss to a position in his own gang. He was a perfect brute for strength, but so densely ignorant and of such sullen disposition that when a better man was offered, in the person of Dick Peveril, the boss was only too glad to return him to his hated task of car-pushing and accept the new-comer in his place. His sentence of degradation, pronounced only the day before, had been received as a personal affront by every wild-eyed car-pusher of the mine. All knew that some one must fill the place from which their leader had been ousted, and all were prepared to hate him the moment his identity should be disclosed.

Thus, as Peveril stumbled awkwardly out of the cage in which he had just made that breathless, mile-deep descent, he was instantly spotted as being a new man, and a team of car-pushers, slaking their thirst at a water-barrel in one corner of the plat, gazed at him with scowling intentness, that they might minutely describe his appearance to their fellows. As he knew nothing of the circumstances through which a place had been made for him, he paid no attention to these men, other than to note their savage appearance as a feature of his novel surroundings.

In fact, he had barely time to take a single comprehensive glance around the plat before a man who had been one of his fellow-passengers in the cage remarked, sneeringly:

"Pretty well scared, wasn't you, young feller?"

"Yes, I was," replied Peveril, turning and facing his questioner. "But how did you know it?"

"By the way you grabbed my arm. If you'd done it again I'd have punched your head; for I don't 'low no man to catch holt on me that way."

Peveril had already recognized the speaker's face; but, without deigning a further reply, he turned to Mark Trefethen and said:

"Will you kindly give me the name of this unpleasant person, as I wish to file it away in my memory for future reference?"

"Person be blowed!" exclaimed the man, stepping forward with a menacing gesture. "What do you mean by calling me names, you damned--"

"Shut up, Mike Connell, and go about your business," commanded the timber boss. "Come, lad, he's not worth

noticing," and, thus saying, Mark Trefethen led Peveril away.

Although the car-pushers had not caught the words of this brief conversation, they had readily understood Mike Connell's threatening gesture towards the new-comer, and several times during that day one or more of them might have been seen in low-voiced consultation with the scowling-faced Irishman.

"Here, lad, fill lamp wi' sunlight," said the timber boss, as he and his protege were leaving the plat. "First rule of mine is always have lamp in trim, and carry candle, besides plenty of matches in pocket."

With this Mark scooped up in his hand a small quantity of a stiff, whitish substance from an open box beside them, and stuffed it into his lamp. The box was indeed marked "Sunlight," but when Peveril followed his companion's example he found its contents to be merely solidified paraffine.

With their lamps well filled and flaring brightly, the two walked for half a mile through a dry and well-ventilated gallery, which had been driven by drill and blast through solid rock, and from which thousands of tons of copper had been taken. Now Peveril learned for the first time what "timbering" a mine meant, and realized the necessity for the huge piles of great logs that he had seen above ground in close proximity to the shaft. Not only had it been incased on all four sides by logs mortised together and laid up like the walls of a house, but the drift through which he now walked was timbered from end to end. Its roof was upheld by huge tree-trunks standing from ten to twenty feet apart, and occasionally in groups of three or four together. Supported by them, and pressing against the roof or "hanging," were other great timbers known as "wall plates," and behind these was a compactly laid sheathing of split timber spoken of as "lagging."

As the two men advanced deeper into the drift, an occasional ore-car, pushed by its panting human team, rumbled heavily past, while every now and then came dull, tremulous shocks like those of an earthquake. These were blasts on other levels, or in other parts of the one on which they were.

At sound of a confused shouting from somewhere ahead of them, they stood still until, with a crashing roar that bellowed and echoed through the galleries like a peal of loudest thunder, one of these blasts was fired close at hand. A minute later they were enveloped in a pungent smoke, through which twinkled dimly a score of lights. Brawny, half-naked forms were already wielding pick and shovel amid the masses of rock just loosened, a powerful air-drill was being placed in position for another attack upon the wall of tough rock, and a small timber gang was struggling to hoist a huge log that they called a "stull" into position.

"Here's the place, lad. Take hold and give a lift. Now, boys, altogether"! shouted Mark Trefethen, and in another moment Dick Peveril found himself hard at work.

Within a few minutes the new hand was as begrimed and dripping with perspiration as any member of the gang, all of whom exchanged significant glances as they noted the willingness with which he exerted his great strength. Never had the heavy timbers been set in place so quickly, and never in their remembrance had a green hand "caught on" so readily.

"He won't last long, though, at that pace," remarked one of the older men to Trefethen, as he paused to wipe the sweat-drops from his eyes, "he's too fresh."

"Perhaps not," replied the timber boss. "We'll give him a bit of a try, though, before dropping him," and then he walked away to inspect the operations of another gang in a distant part of the mine.

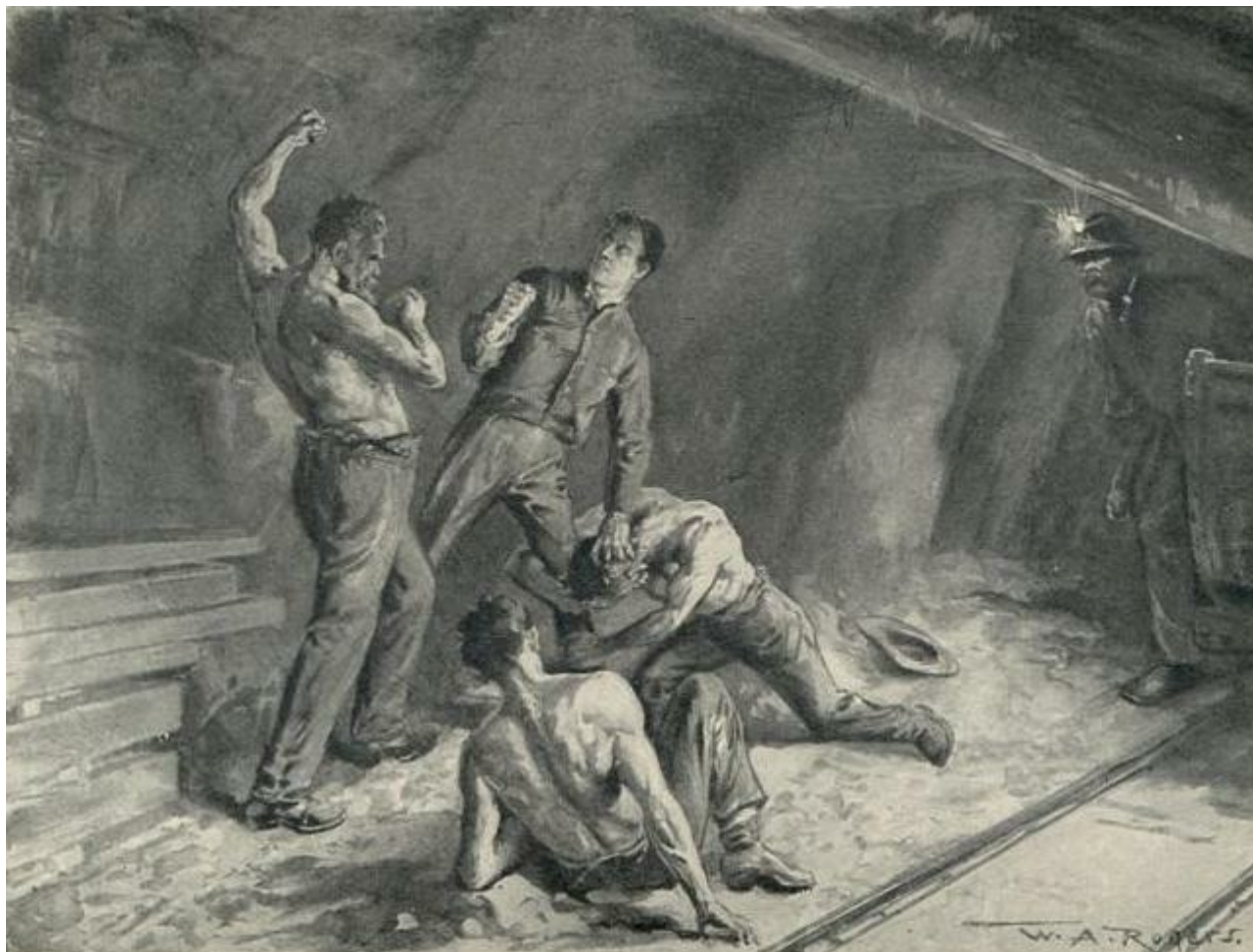
Late that day, as Peveril's first shift of work drew towards its close, he ached in every part of his body, but was learning his new trade so rapidly that his fellows were already beginning to regard him as one of the best men in their gang. He had made several trips to and from the foot of the timber-shaft in company with others, and so, when, shortly before quitting time, the foreman of his gang sang out:

"Oh, Peril! Just run back to the stack and bring us one of them small sprags. Hurry, now!" the new man started without a moment's hesitation.

He found his way without difficulty to the timber pile, and began a search for such a piece as he had been told to fetch. The better to see what he was doing, he removed the lamp from his hat and held it low in front of him, in which position his own face was clearly revealed by its light. While he was thus engaged, a miner, who, with his day's work finished, was walking towards the plat, paused to regard him. The man's face bore a malicious expression, and he seemed to meditate some mischief towards the unsuspecting youth, for he clinched his fists and took a step in Peveril's direction. Just then the rumble of an approaching car caused him to pause and wait until it should pass. As it came abreast of him he recognized one of its pushers, and drew him aside, while the car, still propelled by two members of its team, moved on out of sight.

Without a word the miner directed his companion's attention to the figure still bending over the log pile, and made several significant gestures. The brutish face of the pusher lighted with an ugly leer, expressive of understanding, and he began to move cautiously towards the man who had that day displaced him from the timber gang. As he had left his light on the car, there was nothing to warn Peveril of his approach until he was close at hand and about to deliver a cowardly blow.

At that instant the mysterious premonition that always gives warning of human presence caused the young man to turn his head. Although he was too late to avoid the impending blow, it was deflected by his movement, and instead of stunning him it merely caused him to stagger and drop his lamp. He also partially warded off a closely following second blow, and then his own terrible fist was planted with crashing force full on his assailant's jaw.



THE CAR-PUSHERS MADE A FURIOUS ATTACK ON PEVERIL

The man uttered a scream of agony, covered his face with his hands, and started to run. At this moment the other two car-pushers appeared on the scene, and with fierce cries began a furious attack upon the young man whom they had sworn either to kill or drive from the mine. At this time the battleground was only dimly illumined by the flickering light of the miner who was thus far sole spectator of the contest. Peveril fought in dogged silence, but his assailants uttered shrill cries in an unknown tongue. Attracted by these, other lights began to appear from both directions, and all at once Mark Trefethen's gruff tones were heard demanding to know what was going on.

At this sound Peveril uttered a joyful shout, while at the same moment the light in Mike Connell's hat was extinguished.

Recognizing his protege's voice, the timber boss sprang to his side, and within another minute the two car-pushers would have been annihilated had not the coming of a second car given them a reinforcement of three more half-naked savages.

Thus beset and outnumbered by more than two to one, Trefethen thought it no shame to call for aid, and, uplifting his mighty voice, he sent rolling and echoing through the rock-bound galleries the rallying cry of the Cornishmen:

"One and all for Cornwall! One and all!"

CHAPTER VII

CORNWALL TO THE RESCUE

"One and all!" The rallying-cry of the most clannish county in England. The one in which, from Land's End to Plymouth Sound, every family claims some degree of cousinship with every other, until, at home and abroad, "Cousin Richard" is the name proudly borne by all Cornishmen.

"One and all!" As the startling cry rang through the black underground depths it was heard and answered, caught up and repeated, until it penetrated the remotest corners of the far-reaching level. At its sound the men of Cornwall, working in stope or drift, breast or cross-cut, dropped their tools and sprang to obey its summons. By twos and threes they ran, shouting the magic words that Cornish tongues have carried around the world. They met in eager groups, each demanding to know who had first given the alarm and its cause. As none could answer, and the shouts still came from far away, they swept on, in ever-increasing numbers and with growing anxiety, for the call of Cornwall is never given save in an emergency.

In the meantime the fight between two and five rages with unabated fury; the two, with their backs to a wall, putting up the splendid defence of trained boxers against the fierce but untaught rush of mere brutes. Science, however, labored under the disadvantage of fighting in a gloom that was almost darkness, for Mark Trefethen's lamp had been extinguished at the outset, and the only one still burning was on a car standing at a distance from them.

Of a sudden the timber boss heard a groan at his side, and found himself fighting alone. His comrade had sunk limply to the ground, and an exultant yell from the others proclaimed their knowledge that they had no longer to fear his telling blows. As they were about to rush in and complete their victory, the battle-cry of Cornwall, accompanied by the flash of many lights, came rolling down the gallery.

Help was close at hand. If Mark Trefethen could hold out for another minute he would be surrounded by friends. With an answering shout of "One and all!" he sprang to meet his assailants, and, realizing their danger, they fled before him. At the same instant the lamp on their car disappeared, and in the utter darkness that followed Trefethen could only grope his way back to Peveril's side.

A moment later the flaring lights of the Cornish miners disclosed the old man, with face battered and bleeding, standing grimly undaunted beside the motionless form of the newest comer to the mine. The latter lay unconscious, with an ugly wound on the side of his head, from which blood was flowing freely. It had been made by a fragment of copper rock, evidently taken from the loaded car close at hand, and flung from that direction. Several other similar pieces were picked up near where the two men had defended themselves, and, now that Trefethen had time for reflection, he recalled having heard these crash against the wall behind him.

Who had flung them was a mystery, as was the cause of the attack on Peveril. Even the identity of his assailants seemed likely to remain unrevealed, for these had slipped away in the darkness, and though the rescuing party searched the level like a swarm of angry hornets, they could not discover a man bearing on his person any signs of the recent fray.

In the gloom shrouding the scene of conflict, Mark Trefethen had not been able to recognize those with whom he fought, but only knew them to be foreigners and car-pushers. It afterwards transpired that a number of these had, on that evening, made their way to a shaft a mile distant, and so gained the surface. One of them was reported to have had his head tied up as the result of an accident, but no one had recognized him.

While certain of the Cornishmen searched the mine, Trefethen and others bore the still unconscious form of Richard Peveril to the plat, and sounded the alarm signal of five bells. Nothing so startles a mining community as to have this signal come from underground. It may mean death and disaster. It surely means that there are injured men to be brought up to the surface, and the time elapsing before their arrival is always filled with deepest anxiety.

It was so in the present case, and when the cage containing the two battered miners, one of whom had also every appearance of being dead, emerged from the shaft, a throng of spectators was waiting to greet it.

These learned with a great sigh of relief that there had been no accident, but merely a fight, in which the men just brought up were supposed to be the only ones injured. Their revulsion of feeling led many of the spectators to treat the whole affair as a joke, especially as the only person seriously hurt was a stranger.

"It's always new-comers as stirs up shindies," growled a miner who, having reached the surface a few minutes earlier, formed one of the expectant group. "They ought not to be let underground, I say."

"How about Trefethen?" asked a voice. "He's no new-comer."

"Oh, Mark's a quarrelsome old cuss, who's always meddling where he has no call."

"You lie, Mike Connell, and you know it. My father never fights without good cause," cried Tom Trefethen, who had arrived just in time to resent the slurring remark.

"I'll teach you, you young whelp!" shouted the miner, springing furiously forward; but Tom leaped aside, leaving the other to be confronted by several burly Cornishmen, in whose ears was still ringing the cry of "One and all!"

"Lad's right, Maister Connell," said one of these. "If 'ee doan't believe it, come along and get proof."

But the Irishman, muttering something about not caring to fight all Cornwall, turned abruptly and walked away.

Tom Trefethen, not yet knowing that Peveril had been hurt, also hurried away to find his father, who, having left his young friend in the hands of the mine surgeon, had gone to change his clothing. At the same time poor Peveril lay in a small room of the shaft-house, having the gash in his head sewn up. Several spectators regarded the operation curiously, and among them was a gentleman, addressed by the doctor as Mr. Owen, whom none of the others remembered to have seen before, but who seemed to take a great interest in the still unconscious sufferer.

"Do you consider it a serious case, doctor?" he asked.

"No. Not at all serious. These miners are a tough lot, and not easily done for, as you'll find out before you have seen as much of them as I have. This one will probably be out and at work again in a day or two. I'm always having such little jobs on my hands, the results of accident, mostly, though this, I believe, is a case of fighting, something very uncommon in our mine, I can assure you. Splendid physique, hasn't he? Savage-looking face, though. Hate to trust myself alone with him. I understand old Mark Trefethen had a hard tussle before he brought him to terms."

"What was the trouble?"

"I don't know, exactly. Insubordination, I suppose; but old Mark don't put up with any nonsense."

"Do you know this fellow's name, or anything about him?"

"Um--yes. I have learned something, but not much. His name is Peril--Richard Peril. Odd name, isn't it? He's a new-comer, and, like yourself, has just entered the company's employ. Rather a contrast in your positions, though. Illustrates the difference between one brought up and educated as a gentleman, and one destined from the first for the other thing, eh? It is all poppycock to say that education can make a gentleman; don't you think so? In the present case, for instance, I doubt if even Oxford could make a gentleman of this fellow. His whole expression is a protest against such a supposition. But now he's coming to all right, and I'm glad of it, for I have an engagement at the club, and don't want to spend much more time with him."

Poor Peveril, whose begrimed and blood-streaked face was not calculated to prepossess one in his favor, began just then to have a realizing sense that he was still alive, and the doctor, bending over him, said:

"There now, my man, you are doing nicely, and by taking care of yourself you will be about again in a day or two. You had a close call, though, and it's a warning to behave yourself in the future; for I can assure you that one given to fighting or disobedience of orders is not allowed to linger in these parts. I must leave you now, but will call again this evening to see how you are getting along. What is your address?"

"He lives along of us, sir," answered Tom Trefethen, who had just entered the room; "and if you think it's safe to move him, we'll take him right home."

"Certainly you can move him; in fact, he could walk if there was no other way; but it will be as well to take him in a carriage. Let me see, your name is Trefethen, is it not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well; put your boarder to bed as soon as you get him home, keep him quiet, give him only cooling drinks, and I'll call round after a while. Now I must hurry along."

The stranger, who walked away with the self-important young doctor, was none other than Peveril's Oxford classmate--"Dig" Owen--who, having obtained a position in the Eastern office of the White Pine Mining Company, had been advised to visit the mine and learn something of its practical working before assuming his new duties. He had just arrived when the rumor of an accident caused him to hurry to the shaft-mouth. There he was thunderstruck at recognizing in one of the two men brought up from the depths his recent college-mate and rival. In the excitement of the

moment he had very nearly betrayed the fact of their acquaintance, but managed to restrain himself, and was afterwards careful to keep out of Peveril's sight, foreseeing a great advantage to himself by so doing.

That same evening he sat in the comfortable writing-room of the club-house--at which poor Peveril had gazed with envious eyes--and composed a long epistle to Rose Bonifay, in which he mentioned that he had just run across their mutual friend, Dick Peveril, working as a day-laborer in a copper-mine.

"This" [he continued] "is doubtless the mine in which he claimed to be *interested*, and under the circumstances one can hardly blame the poor fellow for putting it in that way. At the same time, I consider it only fair that *you* should know the real facts in the case.

"His misfortunes seem also to have affected his disposition, for on the very day of my arrival he was engaged in a most disgraceful fight with some of his low associates, by whom he was severely and justly punished. Of course I could not afford to recognize him, and so took pains to have him kept in ignorance of my presence. Is it not sad that a fellow of such promise should in so short a time have fallen so low?

"Within a few days I shall return to the East, where my own prospects are of the brightest," etc.

"There," said Mr. Owen to himself, as he sealed and addressed this letter. "If that don't effectually squelch Mr. Richard Peveril's aspirations in a certain direction, then I'm no judge of human nature."



CHAPTER VIII

IN THE NEW SHAFT

When the mine-surgeon visited his patient that evening he found only Mrs. Trefethen, sitting on the porch and awaiting him, "her men-folk," as she informed him, "being on the trail of they murderers."

"Which, if they ain't so many Cainses this night, hit bain't their fault, as I sez to Miss Penny the moment I sees that pore lamb brought into the 'ouse just like 'e was struck down the same as a flower of the field that bloweth where hit listeth; and she sez to me--for me and Miss Penny was wishing at that blessed minute, like hit were providential--she sez--"

"It is certainly very kind of you to take such an interest in a stranger," ruthlessly interrupted the doctor; "but may I inquire how my patient is getting along?"

"You may indeed, sir, and may the good Lord preserve you from a like harm, which hit make my blood boil to think of my pore Mark's hescape, him being what you might call owdacious to that degree. He were telling me has'ow 'One and hall' was everythink that saved 'im, and they rocks pattering same has 'ailstones hall the time. Law, sir!"

"Doubtless, madam, the episode must have been most exciting; but now, if you will allow me to interview the cause of all this trouble, I shall be much obliged."

"Trouble, doctor, dear! Don't mention the word when hit's 'im 'eld the life of my Tom in 'is two 'ands, and but for they cruel rocks that battered 'is fore'ead would ha' throttled them rascal pushers same as rattan in tarrier's grip; for my man 'olds there was ne'er a fisticuffer like 'im in hall the Jackets. But, doctor! doctor! Oh, drat the man! now 'e'll go hand wake Maister Peril, which I were a-settin' 'ere a pu'pos' to tell 'im lad's asleep."

Impatient of longer delay, and despairing of obtaining a direct answer to his questions, the doctor had indeed slipped into the house and instinctively made his way up-stairs towards the only room in which a light was burning. He was met outside the door by a warning "Sh!" from Nelly Trefethen, who had been left on guard by her mother, and together they entered the room where the wounded man lay tossing in restless slumber.

The doctor started at close sight of him, and for a moment refused to believe that the handsome, high-bred face, from which every trace of grime and blood had been carefully removed, was that of the young fellow who, he had declared, could never become a gentleman. Only the evidence of his own handiwork, in shape of the bandages still swathing Peveril's head, served to convince him that this was indeed his patient of the shaft-house.

After a few minutes of observation he left the room, without awakening the sleeper, and gave his directions for the night down-stairs. He also questioned Nelly closely concerning the young man who had so aroused his curiosity, but she could only tell him that the stranger's name was "Peril," that he had come to Red Jacket in search of work, had saved her brother's Tom's life, and had in consequence been given a job in the mine.

"But he is evidently a gentleman?" said the doctor.

"Claims to be working-man," put in Mrs. Trefethen.

"He can be both, can't he, mother?" asked Nelly, somewhat sharply. "Surely you think father is a gentleman."

"Not same as him yonder," replied the older woman, stoutly.

"Well, I don't care what he is or isn't," answered the girl, with a toss of her pretty head, "he hasn't shown any sign yet of holding himself above us, and Tom thinks he is just splendid. If he was here he wouldn't hear a word said against him, I know that much."

"Save us, lass! Who's said aught 'gainst thy young man?"

"He's not my young man, mother, and you know it. Can't a girl stand up for a stranger who saved her brother's life, and who has just been knocked senseless while fighting beside her own father, without being twitted about him?"

"Certainly she can," replied the doctor, with an admiring glance at the girl's spirited pose and flushed face. "But have a care, Miss Nelly. There's nothing so dangerous to a girl's peace of mind as an interesting invalid of the opposite sex."

"Thank you, for nothing, doctor, and you needn't fret one little bit about me. We Red Jacket girls can take care of ourselves without going to any man for advice."

"Save us, lass, but thee's getting a pert hussy!" cried Mrs. Trefethen; but the doctor only laughed, and took his departure, promising to call again the next day.

He had hardly gone before Mark Trefethen returned, filled with excitement over certain discoveries he had just made. One was that the car-pushers of the mine had sworn either to force Peveril from it or to kill him. He had also learned that Rothsky, the Bohemian, who had been found wanting when tried in the timber gang, had led the attack of that evening, and had received a broken jaw in consequence. The identity of the two car-pushers who were with him at the time having also been discovered, the captain of the mine had promptly discharged all three. Moreover, the Cornish miners had sworn that if either their own leader or his protegee were again molested while underground they would drive every foreign car-pusher from the workings.

When Tom came home he confided to his father a belief that Mike Connell had been at the bottom of all the recent deviltry, but, as he confessed that he could not verify his suspicions, Mark Trefethen bade him keep them to himself.

"We'll not take away any man's character, lad," he said, "without proof that he deserves to lose it. But if ever I know for certain that Mike Connell had hand in this, lat him have a care o' me. As for yon Dick Peril, there's no fear but what he can look out for hissel', now that we can warn him of his enemies."

For two days Peveril kept his bed, assiduously waited on by Mrs. Trefethen and her daughter, watched over at night by Tom, and an object of anxious solicitude to the entire family. Then he was allowed to venture down-stairs, while the children were driven from the house, that they might not disturb him. Before the week ended he was taking short walks, escorted by Miss Nelly, who was only too proud to show off this new cavalier before the other girls of her acquaintance. Several times as the doctor saw them thus together he shook his head doubtfully.

During one of these walks Peveril made the joyful discovery of a public library, and thereafter much of his convalescence was passed within its walls. There he read with avidity all that he could find concerning the Lake Superior copper region, and mining in general. Particularly was he interested in everything pertaining to the prehistoric mining of copper by a people, presumably Aztecs or their close kin, who possessed the art, long since lost, of tempering that metal.

All this time he never for a moment forgot the object of his coming to that country, nor neglected a possible opportunity for gaining news of the mine in which he believed himself to be a half-owner. Thus, in all his reading, as well as in his conversations with Mark Trefethen and other miners, he always sought for information concerning the Copper Princess, but could find none. His books had nothing to say on the subject, and, while the men knew by report of many abandoned mining properties, they had not heard of one bearing the name in question.

Finally, chafing under this enforced idleness, as well as under the poverty that compelled him to be a pensioner on those who could ill afford to support him, Peveril announced his complete restoration to health, and declared his intention of again going to work.

Mark Trefethen tried to persuade him to wait a while longer before thus testing his strength, but without avail, and at length, finding the young man set in his determination, used his influence to procure for him a temporary situation in which the work would be much lighter than with the timber gang. This job was in a shaft then being sunk by the White Pine Company, and included a certain supervision of the explosives used in blasting.

The new shaft was already down several hundred feet, and was being driven through solid rock by drill and blast, at the rate of twenty feet per week. Of course there was no regular running of cages up and down as yet, but the loosened material was hoisted to the surface in a big iron bucket, or "skip," and in this the miners engaged in the work also travelled back and forth.

The great opening was a rectangle twenty-two by six and a half feet, and to sink it a series of holes was drilled around its sides. Then all the men but one were sent to the surface, while Peveril descended with a load of dynamite and a fuse. The man left at the bottom was always an experienced miner, and it was his duty to charge the holes, place and light the fuses, which were timed to burn for several minutes, jump into the skip and give the signal for hoisting. In all of this work he was of course assisted by Peveril, and when their task was completed the two men were lifted to the surface as quickly as possible.

After our young friend had been engaged in this delicate business some two weeks, and had become thoroughly familiar with its details, he was disagreeably surprised one day, upon descending with his freight of explosives, to find Mike Connell awaiting him at the bottom of the shaft. The Irishman seemed equally annoyed at seeing him, but the purpose for which they were there must be accomplished, and so, glad as each would have been for a more congenial companion, they set doggedly to work.

When Connell, in a spirit of bravado, handled the sticks of dynamite with criminal recklessness, and finally managed to drop one of them close beside Peveril, the latter sharply commanded him to be more careful.

"Afraid, are you?" sneered the other.

"Yes, I am afraid to work with a man who knows so little of his business as you appear to," answered Peveril.

"Go to the top then, and lave me to finish the job alone. Lord knows, I don't want no dealings with a coward."

"It makes no difference what you want or do not want," answered the younger man steadily, though with a hot flush mounting to his cheeks. "I was sent here for a certain duty, and intend to stay until I have performed it."

"And I've a great mind to do what I ought to have done the first day you struck Red Jacket, and that is to punch your head."

"You shall have a chance to try it when we get to the surface."

"Where you think you'll find friends to protect you. No, by ---, I'll do it now!"

With this the Irishman sprang forward with clinched fists, but the other, being on guard, caught him so deft a blow under the chin that he dropped like a log. Then, with the full exercise of his strength, the young Oxonian picked his enemy up and dropped him into the skip. After doing which he proceeded to complete arrangements for the blast.

He worked with nervous haste, and did not see that his enemy had so far recovered as to be watching him with an expression of deadly hate over the side of the great iron bucket. But it was so, and, just as Peveril had lighted the several fuses, Connell gave the signal to hoist.

The movement of the skip disclosed his devilish purpose in time for Peveril to spring and catch with outstretched arms one of its supporting bars. With a mighty effort he drew himself up, and, in spite of Connell's furious attempts to prevent him, gained its interior.

At that moment something went wrong with the hoisting machinery, the upward movement was arrested, and the bucket hung motionless not more than ten feet above the deadly mine. In the awfulness of their common danger, the men forgot their enmity and gazed at each other with horror-stricken eyes. Then, with a groan of despair, Mike Connell sank limply to the bottom of the skip.



CHAPTER IX

WINNING A FRIEND BY SHEER PLUCK

Peveiril's lamp had been extinguished during his struggle to force an entrance into the skip, while that in Mike Connell's hat went out as he sank helpless from terror and crouched at the other's feet. So the blackness that shrouded them as with a pall was only faintly illumined by the fitful flashing of the fuses that hissed like so many fiery serpents beneath them. Their red eyes gleamed spitefully through the gloom, and for an instant Peveiril, leaning over the side of the skip, gazed at them in fascinated helplessness.

Then he leaped down among them and began to tear them from their connection with the devilish forces that only awaited a signal to burst forth and destroy him. The fiery serpents bit at him as he flung them, to writhe in impotent rage, where they could do no harm; but he heeded not the pain, and after a little they expired, one by one, hissing spitefully to the last.

Some of them had already burned so low that he could not pluck them forth, and was forced to stamp out their venomous lives with the constant knowledge that, should a single spark escape this imperfect method of extinguishment, he would still be lost. So fiercely did he labor that in less than one minute the last visible spark from a score of fuses had glimmered out, and he stood in absolute darkness. But he must wait for a full minute more before he could be certain that none had escaped him, to creep viciously down through the loose tamping and still reach the hidden dynamite. It was a period of the same helpless anxiety that immediately precedes the hearing of a sentence that may be either one of death or acquittal. While it lasted Peveiril was bathed in a cold perspiration, his brain reeled, and his limbs trembled until he was obliged to lean against the side of the shaft for support.

As second after second dragged itself away, until it was finally certain that sixty of them had passed, and that sentence had been pronounced in his favor, the young miner sank to his knees and framed, as best he could, a prayer of gratitude. How long he thus remained in grateful contemplation of his narrow escape from death he never knew, but he was at length aroused by a shout from above, and, looking up, saw an approaching light twinkling like a star of good promise through the blackness. The call that came to him was one of anxious uncertainty; but, as his answering shout sped upward, it was changed to an exultant cry of joy. Then came cheer after cheer as the skip slowly descended until it finally reached the bottom, and a solitary figure sprang from it.





PEVERIL LEAPED DOWN AMONG THE SPUTTERING FUSES

This person acted like a crazy man, first flinging his arms about Peveril, and then falling on his knees at the young man's feet, with a torrent of words in which praise and gratitude were mingled with pleas for forgiveness. He was Peveril's recent companion and avowed enemy, who, after the former had leaped from the skip, had leaned weakly over its side and watched with fascinated gaze the struggle for life going on below him. Ere it was ended, the hoisting-machinery began again to work, and the skip was suddenly impelled upward with breathless speed.

Those who witnessed its safe arrival at the surface had their congratulations changed to exclamations of dismay by the discovery that it contained but a single occupant. Though the time-limit for the explosion was already passed, and though Mike Connell begged them to send him down again at once, they refused to do so until another full minute should elapse. During its slow passage they crowded about the shaft-mouth in breathless silence, listening with strained ears for the awful sound they so dreaded to hear.

Even with the minute of safety passed, it was not certain that the explosion might not yet occur; but the young Irishman demanded so fiercely to be instantly lowered to the very bottom that they finally consented to do as he desired. Several were even willing to accompany him, but he waved these back and insisted upon going alone.

He had to meet the man to whom he owed his life, as well as a shameful confession of cowardly acts, and he preferred to meet him alone. Two minutes later he was at the bottom of the shaft, kneeling in semi-darkness on its rocky floor, acknowledging his obligation, confessing his guilt, and imploring forgiveness.

"You are the bravest man I've ever known, Mister Peril, though I've met them as was counted brave before; but none of them would dare do what you have this day. You have given me my life, and yet I tried twice to take yours, for 'twas me flung that rock in the mine. And--I'm choked with the shame of the black deed--but I gave the signal to hoist the skip a few minutes since, and tried to leave you here to die. I'm a coward and a murderer at heart, Mister Peril, and the dirtiest blackguard that ever was let live. I'm not worthy of your contempt, and yet, sir, I'm going to dare ask a favor of you."

"My dear fellow," interrupted Peveril, who was greatly moved by the man's attitude and words of self-condemnation. "Believe me--"

"Wait, Mister Peril. Please wait, sir, till you've heard me through. You have the right to hate me, to despise me, or even to kill me, and I'd not lift a finger to prevent you; but I'm going to ask you to forgive me. If you don't, I can never hold up my head or look an honest man in the face again. If you can't forgive me I shall never dare ask the forgiveness of God in heaven."

"I do forgive you, with all my heart," exclaimed Peveril, "and there is my hand on it." With this he grasped the young Irishman's hand and almost lifted him to his feet. "You have done a brave deed in coming down here after me," he added, "while there was still danger of an explosion, and one much braver even than that, in confessing your faults. These two things prove that you are not a coward, and from this time on I shall claim you as a friend."

"Thank you, Mister Peril, and may God bless you for them words," cried Connell, in a voice choked with feeling. "As for being your friend, sir, I'd be proud to be counted your slave."

"I would much rather have a friend than a slave," returned the other, smiling. "And so, if you don't mind, we'll stick to the first proposition. But, Connell, I want to ask you a question. What made you hate me, as you seemed to do from the very first?"

"Jealousy, Mister Peril. Just black, bitter jealousy, and nothing at all else."

"How could that be, when you didn't even know me?"

"Because, sir, I'm near crazy with love for a girl who only laughs at me, and whose folks treat me with contempt. When I first saw you, so strong and handsome and gentleman-like, with her father, and knew he was going to take you to live in the very house along of her, I couldn't help but hate you."

"You surely can't mean Miss Trefethen?"

"Yes, sir, no other; and when I seen you and her walking together, and she looking up so smiling into your face, I swore I'd kill you if ever I had the chance, and this day the devil gave it to me. But now, Mister Peril, you've proved yourself the best man of us two, and if you want her I'll never again stand in your way."

"But I don't want her!" cried Peveril. "Nothing was ever farther from my thoughts; and even if I did, I couldn't have her, because I am engaged to another young lady."

"You are, sir? Bless you for them words! And may I tell her that you are already bespoke?"

"Certainly; or, better still, I will tell her myself at the very first opportunity I have for speaking with her on such a subject. But, now that everything is settled between us, don't you think we'd better prepare the blast again before we go up? There is fuse enough left in the skip."

"Well, you are a game one!" exclaimed Connell, admiringly. "Of course, if you are willing to do it after what you've just gone through, I'm the man to stand by you. Only I do hope as there won't be no hitch in the hoisting this time."

The signal, "All's well," having already been sent to the surface, Connell now notified the engineer to be ready to hoist for a blast, and the two set to work. In a few minutes the charge, that had so nearly proved fatal to both of them, was again ready for firing, and the hissing fuses were lighted. Then both men sprang into the skip, the signal to hoist was hurriedly sounded, and away they sped up the black shaft towards the distant sunlight.

As they reached the surface and clambered from the skip, aided by a dozen eager hands, there came from the depths

below a dull roar and the tremor of a heavy explosion. At this a throng of persons which, to Peveril's surprise, was gathered at the shaft-mouth raised a mighty cheer. Then they crowded tumultuously forward to shake hands with, or even to gaze on, the hero of the hour; for, on his previous visit to surface, Mike Connell had told of Peveril's brave deed, and news of it had already spread far and wide. So the night-shift had paused to see him before entering the mine, and the day-shift had waited to greet him before going to their homes, while others had come from all directions.

Waving them all back, and grasping Peveril's hand, Mike Connell shouted:

"Wait a minute, mates! Only one minute, and then you shall have a chance at him. First, though, I want you all to know that Mister Peril here has just stepped from the very jaws of hell, where he went of his own free will to save my life. It's proud I am to call him my friend, and for the deed he has done this day I name him the bravest lad in all Red Jacket. If any man denies that, he'll have to settle with Mike Connell, that's all. And now, boys, you may treat him as a brave man deserves to be treated."

Poor Peveril, covered with confusion, tried to explain that whatever he had done was for his own salvation as well as for that of his friend, Mr. Connell; but no one would listen. All were too busy with cheering and in crowding forward for a look at him.

In another minute he was hoisted on the shoulders of half a dozen sturdy miners, the foremost of whom was proud old Mark Trefethen, and was being borne in triumphal procession through the principal streets of the town.

It was a spontaneous tribute of working-men to a fellow-workman; and, gladly as Peveril would have modified the form of the ovation, he was more proud of it than of any ever tendered him for having stroked the Oxford 'varsity eight to a win.



CHAPTER X

HEROISM REWARDED

As the story of Peveril's brave act preceded him, it gained so remarkably in passing from mouth to mouth that, by the time it reached Mrs. Trefethen, she received a confused impression that by some unheard-of bravery the young man had saved all in the mine, including her Mark and her Tom, from instant destruction. Her information having come direct from her dearest friend, Mrs. Penny, she could not doubt its truth, nor had she time to do so before the triumphal procession of miners appeared and halted at her very door.

Calling upon Nelly to support her, the worthy woman started forth to greet her heroes, and welcome them with all the warmth of her overflowing heart. As she gained the roadway, she was so blinded by thankful tears that she could not distinguish one person from another, but impulsively flung her arms about the neck of the first man she encountered, who happened to be Mike Connell, and treated him to a hearty embrace.

"Gie mun a kiss, lass!" she called to Nelly, as she loosed her arms and made towards another victim. "Nought's too good for they brave lads this day. Oh, Mark, man! but I be proud o' being thy earthly wife, 'stead o' seeing thee in 'eaven this blessed minute."

This last was addressed to a bewildered stranger whom Mrs. Trefethen had mistaken for her husband, and who was vainly striving to escape from her encircling arms.

"Art crazy, mother, to be hustling men in public street thickey way? I be 'shamed of 'ee!" cried Mark Trefethen, catching hold of his wife at this moment. "Come along in house, or if 'ee must have man to hug take me or Tom here, or Maister Peril, who deserves it best of all for this day's work."

Nothing loath to do as she was bid, Mrs. Trefethen made a third effort to express her feelings towards Peveril, in her own peculiar fashion; but he laughingly evaded her, and she fell instead upon the neck of another astonished stranger who happened in her way, and upon whose head she tearfully called down the choicest blessings of Heaven.

"Thee's saved me from widow's grave, lad, which the same, I frequent saz to Miss Penny, I did 'ope never to live to see; but our 'Eveanly Feyther knows best, and if hits 'Is will--But there, I'm that over-set--Nelly, gie Maister Peril a kiss, lass, in token of thy forgiveness for what 'e's done this day."

So saying, the well-meaning blunderer released her victim, with the view of allowing Nelly a chance to express her gratitude, and, for the first time, caught sight of his face.

"Thee's not Dick Peril!" she cried. "W'at's thee mean by scandalizing honest woman thickey way? Isn't thee 'shamed on thysel', thou great lump?"

The poor man tried in vain to explain his innocence of act or intention, but his voice was drowned in the boisterous laughter of his mates, amid which the crowd gradually dispersed, while Mrs. Trefethen, still exclaiming against the duplicity of men in general, was led into the house by her husband and son.

In the meantime Miss Nelly had demurely shaken hands with Mike Connell, who was still gasping in astonishment at the warmth of Mrs. Trefethen's reception. Then she kissed her father and Tom, stole one look at Peveril's face, and, murmuring something about seeing after supper, ran into the house.

Although Peveril had not forgotten the promise to his newly made friend to inform Nelly of his own engagement as soon as possible, he had no chance to do so that evening; for supper had hardly been eaten when he began to receive visitors eager to congratulate him upon his recent act of heroism. Among these was Major Arkell, general manager of the mine, whom the young man had never before met.

The Trefethens were thrown into a flutter of hospitable pride by the coming to their cottage of so distinguished a visitor, but, after a courteous greeting to them, he devoted his entire attention to him whom he had come purposely to see. After the latter had been introduced to him as "Mr. Peril," he asked so many questions concerning the recent incident as to finally draw out the whole story of that day's experience. He was a good listener, though a man of few words, and during Peveril's narrative gained a very fair idea of our young miner's education and capabilities. When the latter had finished, the major asked him if he proposed to continue his career as a miner.

"I expect I shall have to," answered Peveril, "seeing that I am entirely dependent upon my own exertions for a livelihood, and have no knowledge of any other business."

"Do you mind telling me what led you to choose this line of work from all others?"

"Because," replied Peveril, flushing, "finding myself in Red Jacket without a dollar, I was glad to accept the first job that offered."

"And we was only too glad to have him for one of us, major," broke in Mark Trefethen, "seeing as how he introduced himself by saving our Tom's life."

"Indeed! I hadn't heard of that. How did it happen?"

Glad of an opportunity for singing his young friend's praises, the timber boss eagerly related the incident; and when it was told the manager said, with a smile:

"Well, sir, you seem to have such a happy faculty for life-saving that I don't know but what we ought to appoint you inspector of accidents. Seriously, though, I am very glad to have a man of your evident ability and steady nerve with us, and if you are inclined to remain in our employ I shall make it my business to see that your interests do not suffer. So, if you will call at my office about eight o'clock to-morrow morning I shall be pleased to have a further talk with you."

"Thank you, sir," rejoined Peveril; "I will not fail to be there."

After the great man had departed, the Trefethens indulged in many speculations as to what he intended to do for their guest; nor was Peveril himself devoid of a hopeful curiosity in the same direction.

"Mayhap he'll make 'ee store-keeper," suggested Mrs. Trefethen; "hand if 'e only will, Maister Peril, me and Miss Penny 'll take all our trade to thy shop, though they do say has 'ow company gingham woan't wash, while has for white goods, they've poorest stock in hall Red Jacket. Same time, there's many other little things can be 'ad reasonable, and Miss Penny's a lady as isn't above buying 'er own groceries, which hit's a treat to see 'er taking, a taste of this or a nibble at that, and always giving shopkeeper the benefit of 'er hexperience."

"Store-keeper be danged!" growled Mark Trefethen. "'Tisn't likely they'll try to make a counter-jumper outen a lad of Maister Peril's size and weight o' fist, to say nothing of his 'armin'. No, no. More like he'll get a good berth underground--foreman of gang, or plat boss, or summut like that."

Tom thought it might be a job connected with the railroad, which was his own ambition; while Nelly, usually so ready with her tongue, for a wonder kept silent and made no suggestions.

On the following morning, when, promptly at eight o'clock, Peveril presented himself at the manager's office, his patience was tried by being compelled to wait in an anteroom for more than an hour while the great man despatched an immense amount of business with many subordinates. Richard could not help overhearing many of the conversations carried on in the private office, and, as he listened, was filled with admiration at the decisive readiness with which the manager disposed of one difficult problem after another.

Finally, when all the others had been dismissed, Peveril was summoned to the inner room, where, after a word of regret at having kept him so long in waiting, the manager bade him be seated, and said:

"Mr. Peril, it is so evident that you have been accustomed to a position far removed from that of a common laborer, that I am desirous of knowing something more of your life before intrusting you with a responsibility. Do you mind telling me what brought you to this section of country?"

"No, sir; I don't know that I do. I came out here ruined in fortune, through no fault of my own, to seek information concerning an old, and, I believe, a long-ago-abandoned mine, known as the Copper Princess."

"Um! I remember hearing the name; and, if I am not mistaken, it applied to a worthless property on which a large sum of money was squandered many years since."

"Yes, sir."

"How are you interested in it?"

"My father was an owner, and I am his heir."

"I am glad you have told me this, and relieved to find that no worse folly has caused a gentleman to seek employment as a common miner, though I cannot hold out the slightest hope that you will ever recover a dollar from your property. Still, I will make inquiries, and let you know anything I may learn."

"Thank you, sir."

"Do you know anything about boats?" asked the manager, abruptly changing the subject.

"Yes, sir; I have handled boats more or less all my life."

"Good! Then I want you to take charge of a gang of men whom you will find awaiting you on the company's tug down at the landing. They are going some distance up the coast, to recover whatever may be found of a valuable timber raft belonging to us, and wrecked near Laughing Fish Cove during the gale of two days ago. All our logs are marked 'W. P.' If you find any such in possession of other parties, you will lay claim to them, and even take them by force if necessary. The tug will leave you at the cove, where you will establish a camp, and to which you will raft the recovered logs, holding them against her return, which will be in about a week. Here is a note of introduction to her captain. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir; I think I do."

"Then you may start at once."

"Very well, sir;" and the young man, realizing his employer's love of promptness, rose to leave.

"By the way," said the other, as he reached the door, "is your name Peril?"

"No, sir; it is Peveril."

"Richard?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then this letter is probably for you. It has lain here several days, awaiting a claimant."

With this Major Arkell handed the young man a dainty-looking missive that he acknowledged to be for him, and which, as he thrust it into his pocket, he saw with a thrill of joy was addressed in the handwriting of Rose Bonnifay.



CHAPTER XI

NELLY TREFETHEN FINDS A LETTER

Having donned his best suit for the interview with Major Arkell, and realizing that his mine clothing would be more in keeping with the job now on hand, Peveril first hastened home to make the change. He found only Mrs. Trefethen in the house, and at sight of him she expressed an eager curiosity to learn the result of his recent interview.

"It's all right," he laughed, as he bounded up the narrow stairway leading to his room. "I'm to turn sailor, and be captain of a craft somewhere up the coast."

"Whatever can lad mean?" exclaimed the perplexed woman. "Im a sailor! Did iver any one 'ear the like o' that? Oh, Maister Peril! be iver coming back?"

"Of course I am!" shouted Peveril from the little upper room, in which he was hastily changing his clothing. "I shall be back whenever my ship comes in, which will probably be in a week, or it may take a few days longer. There's a wreck, you know, and I am going to save the pieces. But I'll be down directly."

"A wrack!" gasped Mrs. Trefethen, "and 'im in hit! Save us! but 'twill be worse than down shaft. Shaft be dry land, anyway, but they awful sea that rageth like a lion seeking whom it may devour. Oh, Maister Peril!"

"Yes, coming!"

The young man was just then making a hasty transfer of the contents of his pockets, besides cramming into those of his working-suit several articles that he imagined might prove useful. At that moment an impatient whistle from the timber train that would take him to the landing warned him that he had no more time to spare, and, snatching his hat, he sprang down the stairway.

"Good-bye, Mrs. Trefethen!" he cried. "Tell Miss Nelly she sha'n't be turned out of her own room any longer, and tell her--But never mind; only tell her that I will have something important to say to her when I come back. Give her my love, and--" Here his words were cut short by another shrill whistle from the waiting train; and Peveril ran from the house, shouting back "Good-bye!" as he went, and leaving the good woman gasping with the breathless flurry of his departure.

When Nelly Trefethen reached home a half-hour later she received such a confused account of what had just happened as caused her rosy cheeks to take on a deeper color and filled her with a strange agitation. Mr. Peril had gone to be a sailor, and would come back very shortly as captain of a ship. Perhaps it would be a splendid, great steamer, such as she had seen lying at the Marquette ore docks. He had left his love for her; he would have something of the greatest importance to say the next time he saw her; and she was not to be turned out of her room again. What could he mean by that, and what a very strange thing it was for a young man to say? Since he had said it to her mother, though, it must have meant--Oh dear! how she wished she had not gone out that morning, and what an endless time a whole week seemed!

At length, anxious to escape from her mother's torrent of words, and to be alone with her own thoughts, the blushing girl fled up-stairs on the pretence of putting Mr. Peril's room in order.

The very first thing she spied on entering the room, about which his belongings were scattered in every direction, was a letter lying on the floor, and almost hidden beneath the bed. Picking it up, she was surprised to find it sealed, and still more so to note that it was addressed to Mr. Richard *Peveril*. How could that be? Was their guest living among them under an assumed name? No, of course he wouldn't do such a thing; and this letter must have been handed to him by mistake. That was the reason why he had not opened it. The names were very much alike in sound, though so differently spelled. Besides, this letter was addressed in a lady's handwriting, and evidently came from some foreign country. She knew Mr. Peril was an American, because he had said so. He had also told them that he was, so far as he knew, without a relative in the world, so there were no sisters or young lady cousins to write to him.

She did not think he could be engaged, because he had never mentioned the fact, while all the other young men of her acquaintance were in the habit of talking very freely about their "best girls," if they were so fortunate as to have such. Besides, had not Mr. Peril just left his love for *her*, and a message to the effect that he had something very important to tell *her*? She would keep this hateful letter, though, and confront him with it the moment she saw him again. Then his manner would convey the information she wanted. How she did long to open it and just glance at its contents! The impulse to do this was so strong that only by thrusting the letter into her pocket could she resist it.

Now the innocent cause of her perplexity seemed to burn like a coal of fire until she again drew it forth. A dozen times that day did she do this, with the temptation to set her doubts at rest by tearing open the sealed envelope always assailing her with increased force. Finally, to her great relief, an honorable way of escaping this temptation presented itself. She would return the horrid letter to the post-office. From there, if it were indeed for Mr. Peril, he would in due course of time receive it, as he had before; while, if it were intended for some one else, it would be delivered to its rightful owner. This plan was no sooner conceived than executed; and, as the troublesome missive disappeared through the narrow slit of the post-office letter-box, the girl heaved a sigh of relief.

When, the very next day, that identical letter was advertised on the post-office bulletin, and Nelly Trefethen saw the notice, she was assured that she had done the right thing. For ten days that advertisement stared her in the face whenever she visited the office, and then, to her great satisfaction, it disappeared. Rose Bonnifay's message from across the sea had gone to the place of "dead" letters, but Nelly believed that it had at last found its rightful owner.

On the very evening of Peveril's departure Miss Nelly's old sweetheart, Mike Connell, joined her for a walk, and, after much preliminary conversation, finally plucked up courage to ask if Mr. Peril had told her anything of importance before going away.

"What should he have to tell me?" asked the girl, evasively.

"He might have told you that he liked you better than any other girl in the world," was the diplomatic answer.

"You know he'd never say a thing like that, Mr. Connell," cried Nelly, blushing furiously.

"Well, then, he might have said he was already bespoke."

"I don't believe it."

"It's true, all the same."

"What right have you to say so?" asked Nelly, whose face was now quite pale.

"The right of his own words, for he told me so himself."

"Who is she?"

"He didn't say."

"Where does she live, then?"

"Divil a bit do I know."

"I don't believe you know anything at all about it. You are just making up a story to tease me."

"T'asing you is the last thing I'd be thinking of, Nelly darlin', except it was t'asing ye to marry me. No, alanna, it's the truth I'm telling you, and if you can't believe me just ax him. At the same time, I'm sore hurted that ye should be caring whether he's bespoke or no."

"I will ask him," answered the girl, "and until I do I'll thank you, Mr. Connell, never to mention Mr. Peril's name again."

"Not even to tell you what a brave, bowld lad he is, and how handsome?"

"You'd not be telling me anything I don't know."

"But, darlin', when he tells you with his own mouth that he's already bespoke and not to be had at all, you'll not refuse a bit of hope to one who loves the very ground trod by your two little feet."

"Good-night, Mr. Connell. Here's the door, and I'm going in."

In the meantime Peveril, after bidding good-bye to Mrs. Trefethen, had been whirled away by the little timber train to a landing on the lake shore, where he found the tug *Broncho* awaiting him. Towing behind it was a light double-ended skiff, and on its narrow deck he saw three men, dressed very much as he was himself, whom he knew must be those chosen to assist him in his forthcoming labors. One of them was a bright-looking French Canadian, while the others were evidently foreigners of the same class as the car-pushers in the mine. The captain of the tug was a Yankee named Spillins.

The latter glanced over the note from Major Arkell that the new-comer handed him, and said, "All right, Mr. Peril; if you're ready for a start, I am."

"Yes," replied Peveril, "I'm ready," and in another minute they were off. As they got under way the young leader of the expedition walked aft to make the acquaintance of his men. He was annoyed to find that, while two of them were brawny fellows who looked well fit for work, they could not muster a dozen words of English between them. Noting his efforts to converse with them, the third man, who introduced himself as Joe Pintaud, came to his assistance.

"No goot you talk to dem Dago feller, Mist Pearl," he said; "zey can spik ze Anglais no more as woodchuck. You tell 'em, 'dam lazy scoundrel,' zey onstan pret goot; but, by gar, you talk lak white man you got kick it in hees head."

Realizing the truth of Joe Pintaud's words, Peveril left the others to a stolid smoking of their long-stemmed pipes, and sought whatever information their more intelligent companion had to give concerning their present undertaking. He quickly discovered that, while Joe was as ignorant as himself of that coast, he was an expert raftsman and logger. He also found that the tug carried a good supply of rope, axes, pike-poles, and other things necessary for the work in hand.

After having satisfied himself on these points, Peveril gazed for a while at the bleak, rock-bound coast along which they were running, and then, suddenly bethinking himself of a pleasure that he had reserved for a leisure moment, he entered the pilot-house, and, sitting down on a cushioned locker behind Captain Spillins, who stood at the wheel, began to feel in his pockets.

As he did this his movements grew more and more impatient, until finally, with a muttered exclamation, he turned the entire contents of his pockets out on the cushion.

"Lost something?" asked the captain, looking around.

"Yes."

"Not your money, I hope."

"No, but a letter that was worth more to me than all the money in the world."

"Whew!" whistled the captain. "Must have been important."

CHAPTER XII

A VISION OF THE CLIFFS

Rose Bonrifay had acted more from impulse than from real feeling when she consented to become engaged to Richard Peveril. As a popular Oxford man and stroke of the 'varsity eight he was a hero to attract almost any girl. His wealth was by no means to be despised, and it would certainly be a fine thing to have him in devoted attendance during her proposed trip to Norway. She was greatly disappointed at his failure to rejoin them, and wondered what he could mean by announcing the loss of his fortune when he was still the owner of a gold-mine.

Miss Rose said "gold"-mine to herself, because, while Peveril had not specified the character of his property, she imagined all Western mines to be gold-bearing. Of course, too, their owners must be wealthy. So she hoped for the best; and, while realizing that she was not at all in love, determined to let her engagement hold good for the present.

Under the circumstances she felt that this decision was very creditable to her loyalty, which, however, was sadly shaken by Owen's first gossipy letter from New York. With its disquieting news still fresh in her mind, she received a second that completely dispelled her illusions, and caused her to wonder how she could ever have been so foolish as to engage herself to a man of whom she knew so little.

This second letter, which contained the cruel distortion of facts penned by Mr. Owen in Red Jacket, followed the Bonrifays to Norway, where it was received. Acting on the impulse acquired by reading it, Rose immediately sat down and wrote to Peveril the letter that reached him in due course of time, but which he lost without even having broken its seal.

He had joyfully recognized the handwriting of its address, but was at the same time puzzled to know how Rose could have learned his present abiding-place. Now he was filled with consternation at his carelessness. Of course, though, he must have dropped the letter while transferring the contents of his pockets, and he would surely find it again upon his return to the Trefethen cottage.

At Laughing Fish Cove the log-wrecking party was landed, shortly after noon, near a fishing settlement of half a dozen forlorn-appearing huts that stood in an irregular row on the beach. A few slatternly women, and twice their number of wild-eyed children, were the sole occupants of the place, for its men were away on the lake tending their nets.

Again was Peveril disappointed to learn, from the appearance and conversation of these people, that they also were foreigners, speaking a language unintelligible to him, though evidently comprehended by two of his men.

Captain Spillins explained that, uninviting as the place looked, it was one of the very few harbors on that rugged coast in which the logs of which Peveril was in search could be rafted and held in safety until called for. So the stores and supplies were landed, and, after the tug had steamed away, Peveril set his men at work building a camp and collecting firewood, while he took the skiff for an exploration of the adjacent coast.

On the south side of Laughing Fish Cove he found logs bearing the letters "W. P." strewn for miles along the shore, and piled in every conceivable position among the rocks, on which they had been hurled by furious seas. As he studied the situation, our young wreck-master foresaw an immense amount of labor in dislodging these and getting them once more afloat. Besides those on the rocks he discovered a number on the beach of the cove that could easily be got into the water. But all that he thus saw formed only about one-half of what had been contained in the great raft.

The remainder must, then, be found somewhere to the northward of Laughing Fish, and, accordingly, late in the afternoon he headed his skiff in that direction. The coast that he now skirted was very wild but grandly beautiful, with precipitous cliffs brilliant in the reds and greens of mineral stains, and surmounted by a dense growth of sharp-pointed firs, among which were set groups of white birches. At the base of the cliffs, and amid the detached masses fallen from them, the crystal-blue waters plashed softly, and an occasional wood-duck in iridescent plumage swam hurriedly from his course with anxious backward glances. In the upper air, nesting gulls in spotless white darted to and fro, noting his movements with keen, red eyes.

He found some logs near the cove; but the farther he went from it the scarcer they became, until finally he passed a mile or more of coast without seeing one.

"Strange!" muttered the young man. "What can have become of them? There are hundreds still missing, and they should be somewhere in this vicinity."

He was paddling almost without a sound, and skirting a ledge of black rocks that jutted well out into the lake, as he

spoke. At that same moment something impelled him to glance upward and encounter a vision startling in its unexpectedness.

On the very face of the cliff, some twenty feet above the water, and leaning slightly forward, stood a girlish figure gazing directly at him with great, wondering eyes. For an instant she seemed to read his very soul. Then a vivid flush sprang to her cheeks, and with a quick movement she disappeared as though the solid rock had opened to receive her.

Peveril rubbed his eyes and looked again. She certainly was not there, nor could he discover the slightest indication of an opening through which she could have vanished. Yet, even as he looked, a pebble leaped, apparently from the unbroken face of the cliff, and dropped with a clatter to the ledge close beside him.

He paddled farther out into the lake, but still failed to discover any aperture. He moved for short distances both up and down the coast without any better success. To be sure, a stunted cedar growing out from the rocky face near where the girl had disappeared showed the existence of either a crevice or ledge, and she might have concealed herself behind it, though Peveril did not believe she had. Even if she were thus hidden, how had she gained that perilous position?--how would she escape from it?--who was she?--and where had she come from?

She was not one of the fisher-women from the cove; of that he was certain. Neither was she an Indian girl, for the face, indelibly pictured in his memory, was fair and refined. It had not struck him as being beautiful, except for the glorious eyes that had looked so fully into his.

He called several times: "Are you in trouble? Can I help you?" But only mocking echoes, and the harsh screams of a flock of gulls circling about the very place where he had seen her, came to him in answer. He sought for some means of scaling the cliff, but found none. Everywhere it was smooth and sheer. Never in his life had the young man been so baffled and never so loath to own himself beaten; but he was at length warned by the setting of the sun to give over his quest and row vigorously back the way he had come.

Twilight was merging into darkness when he again entered Laughing Fish Cove, but a bright fire on the beach served at once as a beacon and a promise of good cheer.

A comfortable cabin of poles and bark had been built by the men during his absence. In it were all the stores, as well as a quantity of spruce boughs and hemlock tips for bedding. The chill evening air was filled with a delicious fragrance of burning cedar, mingled with the pleasant odor of boiling coffee. Several white-fish nailed to oak planks were browning before a bed of glowing coals, while slices of a lake-trout were sizzling together with bits of bacon in the frying-pan.

Supper was ready, as Joe, who superintended the culinary operations, announced with a shout the moment Peveril's skiff grated on the beach. Several of the fisher-huts were lighted, others had bright fires blazing outside their doors. The boats had returned, and there was a pleasant bustle about the little settlement.

Peveril did not mention the perplexing vision he had seen that afternoon, though it continually haunted him, and a decided zest was given to his work of the coming week by the thought of this mystery. As he lay on his couch of fragrant boughs that evening planning how to solve it, he almost forgot his unhappiness of the morning, and a little later a new face had found its way into his dreams.

CHAPTER XIII

LOG-WRECKERS AND SMUGGLERS

There were no laggards in the camp on the following morning, for, with the stars still shining, Peveril routed out his men from their fragrant couches. Leaving Joe Pintaud to prepare breakfast, he and the two Bohemians began to form their raft by rolling to the water's edge, setting afloat, and securing such logs as lay nearest at hand.

While the wreckers were thus engaged, the fishermen appeared from their huts and made ready for another day on the lake. They were an ill-favored set, and Peveril was not pleased to note that they seemed to make sneering remarks concerning the task on which he was engaged. Beneath their jeers his own men grew so surly and restless that he was relieved when Joe called them to breakfast.

After that all hands set forth in the skiff to work at the logs stranded along the coast to the southward. As they pulled out of the cove Peveril noticed that a small schooner, which he had believed belonged to the fishermen, was still at anchor, and that the crew lounging about her deck were of a different class from those who had already gone out. He was about to call Joe's attention to this, when that individual hailed the schooner, and began to carry on a lively conversation with her men.

When they had passed beyond hearing, Peveril questioned the Canadian concerning the strange craft, and was told that she was not a fishing-boat, but a trader.

"What does she trade in?"

"Plenty t'ing. Cognac, seelk, dope, everyt'ing. Plenty trade, plenty mun. Much better as mining. Mais, parbleu! I am a fool, me."

"Why?"

"Zat I, too, vill not trade and make ze mun."

"Why don't you, if you prefer that business?"

"Ah! It is because I am what you call too mooch a cow--a hard cow. I like not ze jail, me."

"You mean a coward?"

"Oui, oui. Cowhard. I am one cowhard for ze jail."

"Oh!" cried Peveril, suddenly enlightened. "Your friends of the schooner are smugglers."

"Oui, zat it. Smoogler, an' bimeby, some time, maybe, soldat catch it. Take all ze mun, put it in jail. Bim! No good!"

"That is the first time I ever heard of any smugglers on this coast," remarked Peveril, reflectively. "I wonder if they can have taken our logs?"

"Log, no," replied Joe, contemptuously. "Canada, he gat plenty log--too plenty. Tradair tak' ze drapeau, ze viskey, ze tick-tick, but not ze log."

Here the conversation was ended by the arrival at the scene of labor, and the work of dislodging stranded logs was begun. All day long they toiled at the difficult task, straining, lifting, stumbling, rolling, and slipping on the wet rocks, receiving many a bump and bruise, pausing only for a bite of lunch and a whiff of pipe-smoke at noon, and finally returning to Laughing Fish at dusk, slowly towing into the cove a small raft of the recovered wreckage.

For several days longer, sometimes in clear weather, but often in cheerless rain and fog, was the task of collecting such logs as had stranded on the south side of the cove continued. At length the last one was gathered from that direction, and our wreckers were ready to explore the coast lying to the northward.

Not since the day of his coming had Peveril found leisure to revisit the place where he had seen the mysterious figure of the cliffs. He had thought often of her, and had so longed to return to that part of the coast that only a strict sense of duty had prevented him. Now that he was free to unravel the mystery if he could, he was as excited as a boy off for a holiday.

He purposed gathering the few logs already seen on that side of the cove, and then to continue his exploration indefinitely in search of others; but, to his amazement, as they skirted the rugged coast, not a log was to be found. In

vain did the young leader stand up in his boat, the better to scan every inch of the shore. In vain did he land on the rocks and scramble over their broken surface. There were no logs, and yet he knew they had been there five days earlier. Nor had there been any storm during that time to dislodge them.

"Joe, your smuggling friends must have taken them."

"Non. He gat plenty log in Canada, him."

"What, then, has become of them?"

"Dunno. Maybe dev catch him."

"It is a human devil of some kind, then, and he must have carried them still farther up the coast, for we should have seen them if they had been carried the other way."

"Oui, m'sieu."

"Give way, men! I'm going to find those logs if they are anywhere on Keweenaw Point."

So the light skiff shot ahead, with the two Bohemians rowing, and the others in bow and stern, watching the coast sharply as they slipped past its rocky front. They were already beyond any point at which Peveril had previously discovered logs, and were rapidly approaching the place of his mystery. He could see the jutting ledge, and was eagerly scanning the cliffs above it, when suddenly Joe held up his hand with a warning "Hist!"

Without a word Peveril gave the signal to stop rowing, which was instantly obeyed. In the silence that followed they heard a sound of singing. It was a plaintive melody, sung in a girlish voice, untrained, but full and sweet. To his amazement Peveril recognized it as one of the very latest songs of a popular composer, whose music he had supposed almost unknown in America. The voice also seemed to be close at hand.

At first the men gazed about them with an idle curiosity, but, not seeing anyone, they began to grow uneasy, and to cast frightened glances on every side.

"By gar!" exclaimed Joe Pintaud, and on the instant the singing ceased.

The sudden silence was almost as disquieting as the voice of an invisible singer, and again Joe uttered his favorite exclamation.

"Where did that voice come from?"

"Dunno, Mist Pearl. One tam I t'ink from rock, one tam from water. Fust he come from ze hair, zen he gat under ze bateau. Bimeby he come every somewhere. One tam I t'ink angele, me; one tam dev. Mostly I t'ink dev."

"It seemed to me to come from the cliff," said Peveril.

"Oui; so I t'ink."

"Though I could also have sworn that it rose from the water."

"Oui, m'sieu. You say dev, I say dev."

By this time Peveril had again got his craft under way, and they were skirting a wooded islet that lay off the coast just beyond the black ledge. This island appeared to be nearly cut in two by a narrow bay; but as those in the boat seemed to see every part of this, and were convinced that it contained no logs, they did not enter it.

The young leader was not giving much thought to either logs or his immediate surroundings just then, for his ears were still filled with the music that had come to him as mysteriously as had the vision of a few days earlier.

So lost was he in reflection that he started abruptly when the rowing again ceased, and one of the men whispered, hoarsely:

"Mist Pearl, look!"

He was pointing back from where they had come; and, turning, Peveril saw, apparently gliding from the very shore of the island they had just passed, a small schooner. She must have sailed from the bay into which they had gazed, and yet they believed they had scrutinized every inch of its surface.

"By gar!" cried Joe Pintaud. "Some more dev, hein?"

"It looks to me like the boat of your friends the smugglers," suggested Peveril, studying the vessel closely.

"Oui, certainment! It ees ze sheep of ze tradair."

"Then we will go and see where she came from, for so snug a hiding-place is worth discovering."

So the skiff was put about and rowed back to the little bay bisecting the island. Then it was found that there were two small islands, and that the supposed bay was really an inlet from the lake, which made a sharp angle at a point invisible from outside. This channel led to a narrow sound, from which another inlet cut directly into the rock-bound coast. It was quite short, and quickly widened into an exquisite basin, completely land-locked and very nearly circular.

Peveril had followed this devious course with all the eagerness of an explorer; but his men had cast many nervous glances over their shoulders, and even Joe Pintaud had expressed a muttered hope that they were not being led into some trap.

As the skiff emerged from the high-walled inlet and shot into the smiling basin, an exclamation burst from all four men at once.

"Ze log!" cried Joe.

"Our logs!" echoed Peveril.

The others probably used words meaning the same thing. At any rate, they talked excitedly, and pointed to the opposite side of the basin, where was moored a raft of logs.

Two men with a yoke of oxen were in the act of hauling one of these from the water, and a deeply marked trail, leading up the bank to a point of disappearance, showed where a number of its predecessors had gone.

"Give way!" cried Peveril, and the skiff sped across the basin.

As it ranged alongside the moored raft, the young leader recognized the deep-cut mark of the White Pine Mine on one floating stick after another.

"Hold on!" he shouted. "Where are you going with that log?"

"None of your business!" answered one of the two men, who was old and white-headed. "What are you doing here, anyway?"

"I've come after these logs."

"Well, you can't have them, and you want to get out of here quicker than you came in!" With this the man spoke a few words to his assistant, who immediately ran up the trail and disappeared, while Peveril, with a hot flush mounting to his forehead, ordered his crew to pull for the shore.



CHAPTER XIV

A VAIN EFFORT TO RECOVER STOLEN PROPERTY

Leaping ashore the moment his skiff grated on the beach, Peveril stepped directly up to the old man and said:

"I do not know who you are, sir, nor what claim you make to ownership in those logs. I do know, however, that they bear the private mark of the White Pine Mining Company, and formed part of a raft recently wrecked on this coast. Having been sent here expressly to secure this property, I am determined to use every endeavor to carry out my instructions. Such being the case, I trust that you will not interfere with the performance of my duty."

"I shall, though," answered the old man, gruffly. "I have need of this timber, and consider that I have a just claim to it, seeing that it was cast up by the sea on my land. I have also expended a great amount of labor in bringing it to this place; so that if I had no other claim I have one for salvage."

"Which will doubtless be allowed when presented in proper form," replied Peveril. "In the meantime I am ordered to take possession of all logs that I may find bearing the W. P. mark."

"Supposing I forbid you to do so?"

"I am also authorized to use force, if necessary, to carry out my instructions."

"That sounds very much like a threat, my young friend; but I decline to be frightened by it, and still forbid you to touch those logs."

Joe Pintaud had followed his young leader ashore, and stood close beside him during the foregoing interview, while the Bohemians still remained in the skiff. Now, without deigning any further reply to the old man, Peveril, in a low tone, ordered the Canadian to provide himself and the others with poles, and, if possible, shove the raft off from shore, adding that he would join in their efforts the moment he had cast loose its moorings.

As Joe started to obey these instructions, Peveril ran to the farther of two ropes holding the raft and unfastened it. While he did this the old man stood without remonstrance, but with a cynical smile on his thin lips.

Finding himself uninterrupted, Peveril fancied that no resistance was to be offered, after all, and, with the carelessness of confidence, stooped to cast off the remaining line. The next instant a nervous shove from behind sent him headforemost into the lake. Just then there came a rush of feet, and as Peveril, half-choked by his sudden bath in the icy water, rose to the surface and attempted to regain the bank he was seized by half a dozen pair of brawny hands belonging to as many wild-looking men who had been summoned from beyond the ridge.

In another minute the young wrecker was lying in the bottom of his own skiff, and it was being towed out to sea by a second boat manned by two lusty foreigners. In its stern-sheets sat the old man holding a cocked revolver, from which he threatened to put a bullet through Peveril's head if he lifted it above the gunwale.

Under the circumstances the latter, though raging at his sudden discomfiture, deemed it best to lie still and await, with what patience he might, the result of his misadventure.

So he was towed for a long distance, and when his skiff finally seemed to have lost motion and be drifting, he ventured to lift his head. Before he could see over the side there came the sharp report of a pistol, a bullet whistled close above him, and he was ordered to remain quiet until he received permission to sit up.

Peveril obeyed, and for nearly half an hour longer lay motionless. Then his craft struck bottom, and he sprang up in alarm. He was alone, and his skiff was bumping against a black ledge that he recognized as the one lying at the foot of the mysterious cliff. Not a boat was to be seen, but on the rocks close at hand lay the oars that had been taken from his skiff when he was thrown into it. They were not lying together, but at some distance apart, as though flung there, but whether from a boat or from some other direction he could not tell. At any rate, he was thankful to have them, and at once began to plan how he should use them in connection with his regained liberty.

At first his indignation at his recent treatment suggested that he row back and attempt, at least, to recover his men; but a moment's reflection showed the folly of such a scheme. Not only would he again be confronted by an overpowering number of opponents, but it was probable that his men were even then on their way overland to Laughing Fish, for he did not believe the old man would dare hold them prisoners. At any rate, it would be best to rejoin them before planning to gain possession of the logs in the basin, upon which he was still determined.

Although the young man did not know it, he was keenly watched during these moments of indecision by a pair of

bright eyes that peered down from the cliff above him. When he shiveringly re-entered his skiff the eyes were hastily withdrawn lest he should look up. A little later a young girl of slight figure, clad in a dark gown, stepped out from the cliff, as from behind a curtain, and, half concealed by the stunted cedar, watched him curiously until he was lost to view.

"He is ever so different from an ordinary miner," she soliloquized, "and looks as though he might be interesting. I wonder if I shall ever see him again? I am glad I thought of getting these oars and throwing them down, even if he has used them to go away with. What will papa think when he finds them gone? Anyhow, the monotony of this stupid place has been broken at last, and now, perhaps, something else will happen. I believe something must be going to happen very soon, anyhow, from the way papa talks. Dear papa! how queerly he acts, and how I wish I could see him happy just once! Now I must go and tell him that the schooner is coming."

With this the girl apparently performed a miracle, for she seemed to push aside a portion of the red-stained cliff and disappear behind it without leaving a trace of an opening.

As Peveril rowed steadily down the coast he saw in the distance a schooner that he believed to be the one belonging to Joe Pintaud's friends beating up from the southward. For a moment he thought of trying to board her, but, quickly dismissing the idea, doggedly pursued his way.

Arrived at the cove, he was disappointed to find his camp vacant and without a sign that his coming companions had returned to it. Building a fire, he made a pot of coffee, and prepared to await their coming with what patience he could command. Some of the fisher-children came and watched him shyly, but when he attempted to draw them into conversation they only laughed and ran away.

Feeling very lonely, and undecided as to what he should do, he had just begun to eat a lunch of cold food prepared by Joe that morning when a plan occurred to him. It was to set forth on foot to meet his men, failing to do which he could at least spy out the enemy's strength. "I can discover, too, what lies behind that ridge, and where they are carrying those logs," he said, half aloud.





THE MEN HASTILY THREW PEVERIL HEAD-FIRST INTO THE BUSHES

So impatient was he to put this plan into execution that he would not wait to finish his lunch, but, swallowing a mug of coffee and stuffing a few hard biscuit into the ample pockets of his now nearly dry coat, he set forth. Coming across a well-trodden though narrow trail, leading in what he believed to be the right direction, he turned into it, and followed it briskly for several miles.

It was by this time late afternoon, and long shadows were creeping over the rugged upland country that he traversed. No house was to be seen, nor evidence of human occupation. All the large timber having been long since cut off, the region was now covered with a ragged second growth and thick underbrush. Extensive tracts had been burned over, and thousands of small trees, standing in the melancholy attitudes of death, added to the desolation of the scene. Every now and then he passed yawning prospect-holes, offering mute evidence of disappointed hopes.

At length he caught a whiff of smoke, a dull clang of machinery came to his ears; and, with curiosity keenly aroused, he pursued his way more cautiously. A few minutes later he reached a point where he caught glimpses of buildings, evidently belonging to a mine. A tall shaft-house was surrounded by various shops and a cluster of dwellings, most of them very humble in appearance, though one was large and pretentious.

Although smoke was curling lazily from a lofty stack, that he imagined belonged to an engine-house, and though there was a certain amount of noise, as of machinery in motion, there were no other signs of activity about the place. In fact, it was pervaded by an aspect of desolation and desertion. There were no hurrying men nor teams. Most of the buildings appeared to be permanently closed; doors were boarded up, windows were broken, and the smaller dwellings were almost hidden by the rank growth of weeds and bushes that closely surrounded them.

As Peveril stared in perplexity at this melancholy picture his attention was attracted by a sound of voices near at hand. He gazed eagerly, and even took a few steps forward, hoping to meet his own party, but was grievously disappointed to see instead a group of three burly strangers clad in mining costume. As they drew near he recognized them to be Bohemians, and was particularly struck by the hideous expression of him who seemed to act as leader of the party.

Although the new-comers started at sight of the young man, and regarded him with scowling faces as they drew near, they did not speak nor offer to molest him, but passed by in silence.

Disappointed that they were not his own men, but relieved to be so easily rid of them, Peveril again turned his attention to the semi-deserted mining village that had so aroused his curiosity. So deeply interested did he at once become in watching a team of oxen that had just appeared, hauling a log over a rise of ground, that he did not hear the approach of stealthy footsteps nor note the crouching forms creeping up behind him. Closer and closer they came, until they were within reach of their unconscious victim. Then they sprang upon him all at once, and he was hurled to the ground.

In another moment his arms were bound, and he recognized in one distorted face, leering close above his own, that of the man who had led the attack on him in the mine, and whom he had sent reeling away with a broken jaw.

Now the cruel face was rendered doubly hideous by a grin of triumph, and Peveril's heart sank within him as he gazed into the pitiless eyes that lighted its brutish features.



CHAPTER XV

PEVERIL IN THE HANDS OF HIS ENEMIES

Having been driven from Red Jacket by the Cornishmen under Mark Trefethen, the Bohemian, Rothsky, and his fellow car-pushers of the White Pine Mine who had assaulted Peveril on his first day of work, had taken to the woods like wild beasts. Although restrained of their evil intentions for the time being, they were more bitter than ever against the innocent cause of their trouble, and swore, with strange, foreign oaths, to kill him if the chance should ever offer.

In the meantime they must find some way of gaining a livelihood, and this finally came to them at a queer, semi-abandoned mine across which they stumbled in the course of their wanderings. Its proprietor was an old man who seemed half crazed; and the mine that he was working in a small way, with a pitifully inadequate force, was absolutely barren of copper; but, as he paid their wages promptly, the car-pushers were willing to do his bidding without asking questions.

One of the scarcest things about this mine was timber with which to support the roof of the only drift that was being opened. The proprietor tried to force his men to continue their work, and open the drift far beyond a point of safety without the protection of this most necessary adjunct, and when they refused he became furiously angry. Their job seemed to have come to an end, and all hands were about to leave, when, by an opportune gale, a supply of the desired material was cast up on the adjacent coast.

Every able-bodied man was immediately set to work collecting this, and in towing raft after raft of the Heaven-sent logs to a land-locked basin that lay but a short distance from the mine. In this way, even before the arrival of Peveril and his wreckers, a large amount of the needed timber had been secured.

Although the miners were well aware that their employer carried on some other business besides the development of his barren property, they neither knew nor cared to know what it was. They discovered that it was in some way connected with the coming and going of certain vessels, but beyond this they were kept in ignorance.

When one of these vessels reported a party at Laughing Fish also engaged in a search for wrecked logs, the exertions of the white-haired mine-owner were so redoubled that before Peveril found time to work the coast to the northward of his camp, it had been stripped of every log. Having obtained possession of his coveted timber, the old man was now making every effort to have it transported to the mouth of his shaft, believing that, if he could once get it underground, his right to the logs would remain unquestioned. He had, however, only partially succeeded in effecting this removal, when, to his chagrin, Peveril appeared on the scene of activity.

After the defeat of the young man's attempt to capture the raft, his two Bohemians were easily induced to join the enemy by promises of better pay than they were getting. As for Joe Pintaud, he was indeed taken prisoner, but was purposely so loosely guarded that he found no difficulty in escaping to the schooner of his friends, which came into port that afternoon, and on which he was carried off to Canada.

Thus was the White Pine wrecking expedition completely broken up, and only its leader was left to carry out, if he could, its objects. Even he had been set adrift in an oarless skiff, with the hope that he would be so long delayed in reporting to his employers as to allow time for the captured logs to be put underground before another demand for them could be made.

This disposition of the captive was only known to the old man, who had, unobserved, removed the oars from Peveril's skiff; and so it was generally supposed that he would return directly to his camp at Laughing Fish.

Rothsky, the Bohemian, who was one of those working near the log raft, had instantly recognized Peveril, and at sight of him his hatred blazed up with redoubled fury. To be sure, his broken jaw had healed, but so awry as to disfigure his face and render it more hideous than ever. Now to find the man who had done him this injury again interfering with his plans filled him with rage.

Although he had no opportunity for venting it at the moment, he easily learned from Peveril's late followers the location of their camp, and, believing that the young man would be found there, he planned an attack upon it for that very night. He had no difficulty in inducing the two other car-pushers who had been driven from the White Pine to join him, and as soon as they quit work that evening they set forth on foot.

They had not settled on any plan of action, and, though Rothsky was determined to kill the man he hated, his associates imagined that the young fellow was only to be punished in such a way as would cause him a considerable degree of suffering and at the same time afford them great amusement. They did not anticipate any interference with

their plans, even should they be discovered, for the fishermen of the cove were their fellow-countrymen, bound to them by the ties of a common hatred against all native-born Americans.

Now it so happened that the only daughter of the erratic old mine-owner had set forth that afternoon, accompanied only by her ever-present body-guard, a great, lean stag-hound, on a long gallop over the wild uplands surrounding her home. For that desolate little mining village was the only home Mary Darrell had known since the death of her mother, five years before, or when she was but twelve years of age.

Until then she had lived in New England, and had only seen her father upon the rare occasions of his visits from the mysterious West in which his life was spent. To others he was a man of morose silence, suspicious of his fellows, secretive and unapproachable, but to his only child, the one light of his darkened life, and the sole hope of his old age, he was ever the loving father, tender and indulgent.

Bringing her to the only home he had to offer, he had made all possible provision for her comfort and happiness. The most recent books were sent to her, and the latest music found its way into the wilderness for her amusement. Himself a well-educated man, Ralph Darrell devoted his abundant leisure to her instruction, and to the study of her tastes. Only two of the girl's expressed wishes were left ungratified, and both of these he had promised to grant when she should be eighteen years of age.

One of them was that they might return to the home of her childhood. To this her father's unvarying answer was that business and a regard for her future welfare compelled him to remain where they were until the expiration of a certain time. When it should be elapsed, he promised that she should lead him to any part of the world she chose. Cheered by this promise, she planned many an imaginary journey to foreign lands, and many a long hour did Mary and her father beguile in arranging the details of these delightful wanderings.

Her other wish was for a companion of her own age; but this was so decidedly denied that she knew it would be useless to express it again after the first time.

"It would mean ruin, absolute ruin and beggary for us both," said Mr. Darrell, "if I were to allow a single stranger, young or old, of even ordinary intelligence, to visit this place. From the time you are eighteen years of age you shall have plenty of friends of your own choosing; but until that date, dear, you must be content with only the society of your old dad."

So Mary Darrell studied, sang, read, rode, and thought the fanciful thoughts of girlhood alone, but always with impatient longings for the coming of the magic hour that should set her free. And yet she was not wholly alone, for her father would at any time neglect everything else to give her pleasure, while she also had both "Sandy," her stag-hound, and "Fuzz," her pony, for devoted companions.

She was allowed to ride when and where she pleased, with only these attendants, on two conditions. One was that she should never visit, nor even go near, a human residence; and the other that, when on such excursions, she should, for greater safety, dress as a boy. When she was thus costumed her father was very apt to call her by her middle name, which was Heaton; and so it was generally supposed by the few miners who caught glimpses of her that the old man had two children—a girl, and a boy who was not only younger than she, but devoted to horseback riding.

Only one duty devolved upon the girl thus strangely reared, and that was the keeping watch for certain vessels that came in from the great lake and sailed away again at regular intervals.

So Mary Darrell was out riding on the evening that witnessed the capture of Richard Peveril by his bitterest enemies, and as twilight deepened into dusk she was urging her way homeward with all speed.

In the meantime the three rascal car-pushers, who had come so unexpectedly upon him whom they sought, and had so easily effected his capture, led Peveril directly away from the trail he had been following to a place in the woods known only to Rothsky. Close to where they finally halted and began preparations for the punishment of the prisoner, who was also expected to afford them infinite amusement by his sufferings, yawned a great black hole. It was of unknown depth, and was nearly concealed by a tangle of vines and bushes. Rothsky had stumbled upon it by accident only a few days before, and now conceived that it would be a good place in which to dispose of a body, in case they should happen to have one on their hands.

Trusting to the wildness of their surroundings and the absence of human beings from that region to shield them from observation, they ventured to build a fire, by the light of which they proposed to carry out their devilish plans.

Besides binding Peveril's arms, they had, on reaching this place, taken the further precaution of tying his ankles, so that he now lay on the ground utterly helpless, a prey to bitter thoughts, but nerving himself to bear bravely whatever torture might await him.

All at once the deep baying of a hound and a crash of galloping hoofs, coming directly towards the fire-light, sounded through the wood.

With a fierce imprecation Rothsby gave a hasty order, at which all three men sprang to where Peveril was lying in deepest shadow. Hurriedly picking him up, they carried him a short distance, gave a mighty swing, and flung him from them. There was a crash of parted bushes and rending vines, a stifled cry, and all was still.

A minute later, when a boyish figure on horseback swept past the fire, the three men seated by it only aroused a fleeting curiosity in Mary Darrell's mind as to what they could be doing in such a place at such a time.



CHAPTER XVI

LOST IN A PREHISTORIC MINE

After the disappearance of the young rider, whose coming had so materially changed the plan of Rothsky and his associate scoundrels, they gazed at each other for a full minute in sullen silence. In the minds of two of them the anger of their disappointment was mingled with a cowardly terror at the awful deed they had committed, and they began fiercely to denounce their leader for having implicated them in it.

Rothsky answered with equal bitterness that he was no more to blame than they, and the quarrel grew so furious that for a time it seemed as though only the shedding of blood could settle it. At length they were quieted by a realizing sense of the common danger that might only be averted by mutual support. So they finally swore with strange oaths never to betray each other, or breathe a word to a living soul of what had just taken place.

Of course they did not for a moment anticipate that their crime would ever come to light, though each was secretly determined that if it did he would promptly secure his own safety by denouncing his comrades.

With the patching up of this truce and the forming of their worthless compact the three wretches prepared to depart from the scene of their villany. First, however, they advanced cautiously as close as they dared to the edge of the pit into which they had flung their victim, and, peering into its blackness, listened fearfully. No sound broke the awful silence, and of a sudden the three men, moved by a common impulse, turned and fled through the darkness, stumbling and falling, clutched at by invisible fingers as they ran, and uttering inarticulate cries of terror.

At that same moment their victim was lying on a ledge of rock deep down in the ground beneath them, still alive, but numbed almost into unconsciousness by the hopeless horror of his situation. In the first agony of falling he had instinctively exerted a strength of which he would have been incapable under other circumstances, and burst asunder the bonds confining his arms.

He believed that in a moment he would be dashed into eternity, and yet a medley of incongruous and commonplace thoughts darted through his mind with inconceivable rapidity. Innumerable scenes of his past life glanced before him, but more distinct than any, sharp and clear as though revealed by a flash of lightning, shone the wonderful eyes that had appeared to him from the red-stained cliffs overlooking the great lake. And, strangest of all, the face seemed to smile at him with a promise of hope.

In another instant all the pictures were blotted out, and his whole world was gulfed by a rush of water in which he sank to fathomless depths.

After an endless space of time he began slowly to rise, until at length, to his infinite amazement, he found himself still alive and gasping for a breath of the blessed air into which he had once more emerged.

Although his ankles were still bound, his arms were free, and, with the instinct of self-preservation strong within him, he began, awkwardly and feebly, to swim. Dazed, fettered, and weighted by clothing as he was, his utmost efforts would not have carried him more than a few feet, and then he must have sunk forever in that black flood. But the strength given him was sufficient, and ere it was exhausted his hands struck a shelf of rock upon which he finally managed to drag himself.

On the flinty platform that he thus gained he lay weakly motionless, chilled to the bone, dimly conscious that he had for a time been granted a respite from death, but without a hope that it would be much longer extended.

After a while the sense that he still lived became stronger, and with it grew the desire for life. Animated by it he sat up and made an effort to loosen the cord that still bound his ankles. It was tightly knotted, and the knot was so hardened with the water that for a long time his trembling fingers could make no impression on it. Still he persevered, and his exertions infused him with a slight warmth. Finally the knot yielded and his limbs were free, though so numbed that it was several minutes before he could stand up.

Knowing nothing of his surroundings he dared not move more than a step or two in any direction for fear of again plunging into that deadly water. Nor could he with outstretched arms touch a wall on any side.

"Oh, for a light!" he groaned, "that I might at least see what my tomb looks like!"

Then he remembered that he actually did possess both matches and a candle, it having been impressed upon him by old Mark Trefethen that a miner should never be without those necessities. So he had always carried them in a pocket of his canvas mining-suit. But were they not rendered useless by the double wetting he had received that day?

With trembling eagerness he drew forth the silver match-safe that Tom Trefethen had insisted on presenting to him in token of his gratitude. It had been called water-tight. Would it prove so in this time of his greatest need? A match was withdrawn, and he struck it against a roughened side of the safe. There was a splutter of sparks, but no flame. That, however, was more than he had dared hope for, and, sitting down, that he might not run the chance of dropping his precious box, he rubbed it briskly in his hands until it was thoroughly dry before making another attempt.

This time there was no result, the head of the match having evidently flown off. With breathless anxiety he tried a third, and was thrilled with joy by having it burst into flame. Tom Trefethen's gift had redeemed its promise.

By the fitful flare of that match, whose cheery gleam filled him with a new hope, Peveril saw that he was sitting on the rocky floor of a cave or chamber that extended back beyond his narrow circle of light. On the other side, and but a few inches below him, was outspread a gleaming surface of water, smooth as a mirror and black as ink. These things he saw, and then his match burned out.

The darkness that followed was so absolute as to be suffocating; but before striking another of the priceless "fire-sticks" he drew forth the candle that had lain quietly in his pocket for several weeks awaiting just such an emergency as the present. After many reluctant sputterings, it, too, yielded to his efforts, and finally burned with a steady flame. With it he was enabled to make a much more careful and extended survey of his surroundings. To his great delight he discovered, lodged here and there on the rocks about him, a considerable quantity of dry wood in small pieces.

Whittling some shavings from one of these, he soon had a brisk blaze that not only drove the black shadows to a respectful distance, but imparted a delicious warmth to his chilled body.

"I'll live to get out of this place yet and confront the wretches who tried to murder me--see if I don't!" he cried, filled with a new courage inspired by the magic of light and warmth. "They probably think me safely dead long ere this; but they'll find out that I am very much alive, and I'll know them when I see them again, too. What could have been their object, and what can they have against me? I wonder if the old fellow who claimed the logs could have set them on to me? I hate to believe it; but the whole business looks awfully suspicious.

"There's a deep game going on somewhere, but I may live to fathom it yet. What made them start up in such a hurry and fling me down this hole? I remember: they were scared by the barking of a dog and the approach of some one on horseback. Whoever that chap was, I'll owe him a debt of gratitude if ever I get out of here; and if I don't--Well, perhaps he did me a good turn anyhow, for they would probably have killed me in the end. Hello! I had forgotten these hardtack."

Mechanically thrusting his hands into the pockets of his coat during this soliloquy, Peveril found the hard biscuit that he had slipped into them on leaving camp. Now, though these were soggy with water, they were still in a condition to be handled, and, carefully withdrawing them, he ate one hungrily, but laid the other near the fire to dry. Then he removed his clothing, wrung what water he could from each article, rubbed his body into a glow, re-dressed, and again sat beside his fire for a further consideration of his strange situation.

As he could arrive at no conclusion regarding an attempt to escape until the coming of daylight, which he hoped would reach him with sufficient clearness to disclose the nature of his prison, his thoughts finally drifted to other matters. He recalled his lost letter, and wondered if Rose would grow very impatient at his long delay in answering it.

"If she does, she must," he remarked, philosophically, "for I am not in a position to hurry the mails just now. How distressed the dear girl would be, though, if she could see me at this minute! That is, if she didn't find it a situation for laughter, and, by Jove! I believe she would, for she laughs at most everything. I only hope we will have the chance to laugh over it together some time."

In some way thoughts of Rose led to a recollection of that other girl, whom he had only seen for an instant; and when, a little later, in spite of his desperate situation, he actually fell asleep on his bed of cold flint, it was the face of the unknown that again haunted his dreams.



CHAPTER XVII

UNDERGROUND WANDERINGS

When Peveril next awoke he was racked with pain, and so stiff in every joint that an attempt to move caused him to groan aloud. A faint light dimly revealed his surroundings; but these were so strange and weird that for several minutes he could not imagine where he was nor what had happened. Slowly the truth dawned upon him, and one by one the awful incidents of the past night began to shape themselves in his mind.

"I have been murdered and drowned," he said to himself. "Now I am entombed alive, beyond reach of hope or human knowledge. Never again shall I see the sunlight, never revisit the surface of the earth, never look upon my fellows nor hear the voice of man. I may live for several days, but I must live them alone—alone must I bear my sufferings, and finally I must die alone. What have I done to deserve such a fate? Is there no escape from it? I shall go mad, and I hope I may. Better oblivion than a knowledge of such agony as is in store for me.

"And yet why should I lose faith in the Power that has thus far miraculously preserved me? I am alive, and in possession of all my faculties. I shall not suffer from thirst. I even have a certain amount of food, together with the means for procuring fire. I am not left in utter darkness, and, above all, I have not yet proved by a single trial that escape is impossible. How much better off I am in every respect than thousands of others, who, finding themselves in desperate straits, have yet had the strength and courage to work out their own salvation! What an ingrate I have been! What a coward! But, with God's help, I will no longer be either!"

Having thus brought himself to a happier and more courageous frame of mind, Peveril stiffly gained his feet, moved his limbs, and rubbed them until a certain degree of suppleness was restored. He was about to build a fire, but refrained from so doing upon reflection that his stock of fuel must be limited, and that a fire might be of infinitely greater value at some other time.

Now the prisoner began a careful survey of his surroundings by the feeble light finding its way down the shaft into which he had been flung. As it did not materially increase, he concluded that full day had already reached the upper world. It was also brightest in the middle of the black pool, which showed that the opening through which it came must be directly above that point, and that the shaft must be perpendicular.

Peveril called the hole a shaft, because, while he could neither see to the top nor clearly make out the outlines of the portions nearest at hand, it still impressed him as being of artificial construction, while the opening at one side, in which he stood, also seemed very much like a drift or gallery hewn from the solid rock by human hands.

The impossibility of scaling the sheer, smooth walls of the shaft was evident at a single glance, and Peveril turned from it with a heavy heart. At the same moment his attention was attracted by a sharp squeaking, and, to his dismay, he made out a confused mass of something in active motion about the precious biscuit that he had left beside his fireplace. With a loud cry he sprang in that direction, only to stumble and fall over a small pile of what he took to be rocks that lay in his path.

Without waiting to regain his feet, he flung several of these at the animals that had discovered and were devouring his hardtack. A louder squeak than before showed that at least one of his missiles had taken effect, and then there was a scampering away of tiny feet. When he reached the scene of destruction his only biscuit was half eaten, while beside it lay a huge rat that had been killed by one of his shots.

"With plenty of rats and plenty of rocks I need not starve, at any rate," he remarked, grimly. "The idea of eating rats is horrid, of course, but I don't know why it should be. Certainly many persons have eaten them, and in an emergency I don't know why I should be any more squeamish than others.

"What heavy rocks those were, though, and what sharp edges they had! I expect it will be a good idea to collect a few, and have them ready for my next rat-hunt."

With this Peveril returned to the pile over which he had stumbled, and to his amazement found it to be composed of hammers and hatchets, chisels, knives, and other tools that he was unable to name, all of quaint shape, and all made of tempered copper. In an instant the nature of his prison became clear. He was in a prehistoric copper-mine, opened and worked thousands of years ago by a people so ancient that even tradition has nought to say concerning them.

The knowledge thus thrust upon him filled the young man with awe, and he glanced nervously about him, as though expecting to see the ghosts of long-ago delvers advancing from the inner gloom. The thought that he was probably the first human being to set foot on that rocky platform since the prehistoric workmen had flung down their tools on it for

the last time was overpowering.

At the same time, if this were indeed a mine, it must also be a tomb, for it was not likely to have any exit save the unscalable shaft glimmering hopelessly above him. Here, then, was the end of all his hopes, for of what use were strength and courage in a place where neither could be made available?

But hold! Where had the rats come from? Certainly not from the water, nor was it probable that they had come down the shaft, for its rocky sides appeared as straight and smooth as those of a well. Why should they have come at all to a place that could not contain a crumb of food, except the scanty supply that he had brought? If that alone had attracted them, why had they not found it hours before, while he was asleep? Might it not be possible that they had come from a distance in search of water after a night of feasting elsewhere? They had, at any rate, run back into the gallery; and by following the lead thus presented he might find some place of exit from that terrible subterranean prison. Even if it were only a rat-hole, he might be able to enlarge it, now that he had tools with which to work.

At this moment how he blessed the dear old friend at whose insistence he had provided himself with the matches and candle that now rendered it possible for him to explore the dark depths of that prehistoric drift! Before starting on the trip that he was now determined to make, he ate the portion of biscuit left by the rats. He also so far overcame his repugnance as to skin and clean the dead rat, which he placed on a ledge of rock for future use in case he should be driven to it. Then he lighted his candle and set forth.

For a considerable distance the gallery was open and fairly spacious, while everywhere the young explorer found scattered on its floor the ancient and quaintly shaped tools that told of the great number of workmen employed in its excavation. After a while his way began to be encumbered by piles of loose rock that seemed to have been collected for the purpose of removal.

Now his way grew narrower and rougher, until in several places it was nearly blocked by masses of material that had fallen from the roof or caved in from the sides. Over some of these he was forced to creep on hands and knees, flattening himself into the smallest possible compass.

At length the gallery came to an end, though from it a small "winze," or passage, barely wide enough to crawl through, led upward at a sharp angle. At the bottom of this Peveril hesitated. His precious candle was half burned out, and would not much more than serve to carry him back to the place from which he had started. Besides this, the passage before him was so small that a person entering it could by no possibility turn around if he should desire to retrace his course. It was even doubtful if he could back out after having penetrated a short distance into the winze.

"I don't know why I should care, though," said Peveril, bitterly, "for, even if I should get stuck in there, it would only be exchanging a tomb for a grave. At the same time, one does like to have room even to die in, and I don't believe the risk is worth taking. There isn't the slightest chance of a hole like that leading anywhere, and, so long as I can draw a breath at all, I am going to draw it in the open."

So, with the last spark of hope extinguished, and with a heart like lead, the poor fellow turned to retrace his steps to the place in which he proposed to spend his few remaining hours of life, and then to yield it up as bravely as might be. As he did so a little gusty draught of air blew the flame from his candle and plunged him into absolute darkness.



PEVERIL SAT BESIDE THE FIRE IN FORLORN MEDITATION

Peveril was so startled by this occurrence that for some time he plunged blindly with outstretched hands back over the way he had come, forgetting in his bewilderment that he still had matches with which to relight his candle. Ere this was suggested to him he had retraced about half the distance, guided solely by the sense of feeling, though not without innumerable bruises and abrasions.

When he at length reached the end of the gallery and stood once more beside the black pool into which he had been flung, what little of daylight found its way into those dim depths was rapidly fading. It only served while he gathered every stick of drift that some former high stage of water had deposited on the rocky platform, and then another night of almost arctic length was begun.

To escape the awful gloom, Peveril lighted a fire and sat beside it in forlorn meditation, carefully feeding it one stick at a time, and longing for some sound to break the oppressive silence. Finally, faint with hunger, he recalled the bit of game that he had stored away ready for cooking. Fetching this, he quickly had it spitted on a sliver of wood and broiling with appetizing odor over a tiny bed of coals. It smelled so good as it sizzled and browned that all his repugnance vanished, and he was only impatient for it to be cooked. The moment it was so he began to devour it ravenously, regretting at the same time that he had not half a dozen rats to eat instead of one.

He felt better after his meal, and a new courage crept into his heavy heart as he again sat in meditation beside his flickering blaze. Why he should feel more hopeful he could not imagine, for no glimmer of a plan for escape had presented itself.

It was not until he had once more stretched himself on his flinty bed, with a block of wood for a pillow, and was trying to forget his wretchedness in sleep, that he knew. Then he sprang up with a shout.

"What an idiot I am! What an absolute idiot! Where did the draught that blew out my light come from? From up that

sloping passage, of course, and a draught can only be caused by an opening of some kind to the outer air. If I can only find it, I believe I shall also find a way out of here. So, old man, cheer up and never say die! You'll live to stand on top of the world again, yet--see if you don't!"



CHAPTER XVIII

FROM ONE TRAP INTO ANOTHER

The light of another day was dimly penetrating those underground depths before our prisoner was prepared to make his last effort for liberty. For all the aid he would receive from the pitiful amount allotted to him he might as well have started hours earlier; but while he longed to make the trial he also dreaded it. The thought of that box-like passage, through which he would be obliged to force his way without a chance of retreat, was so terrible that he shrank from it as we all shrink from anything dangerous or painful. Then, too, if he should escape, he would want daylight by which to guide his future movements. So, after tossing for hours on his hard bed and considering every aspect of his situation, he finally fell into a troubled sleep that lasted until morning.

For breakfast he had only water, but of this he drank as much as he could, for he knew not when he would find another supply. Then he selected such of the copper tools as he thought might prove useful. Into one of them, which was a sort of a pick, he fitted a rude wooden handle, while the others, which had cutting edges and were in the nature of knives, he thrust into his pockets. Having thus completed his simple preparations, he took a long look, that he well knew might be his last, on the daylight that was now so doubly precious, and then resolutely faced the inner gloom of the ancient mine.

Determined to save his candle for use in the unknown winze, he slowly groped his way through utter darkness, and finally reached what he believed to be the end of the drift. Now he lighted his candle, and for a moment his unaccustomed eyes ached from the glare of its flame. He was, as he had thought, at the lower opening of the narrow passage, and, as he noted its steep upward slope, he was agitated by conflicting hopes and fears. It might lead to liberty, but there was an equal chance that in it he should miserably perish.

At the very outset he was confronted by a condition that was not only disappointing, but exerted a most depressing influence. There was no draught, such as he had believed would issue from the winze. In vain did he hold up a wetted finger, in vain watch for the slightest flicker in the flame of his candle. The air was as stagnant as that of a dungeon. And yet there certainly had been a decided current at that very place only a few hours before. Puzzled and disheartened, he was still determined to press forward, and, stooping low, he entered the passage.

It almost immediately became so contracted that he was compelled to creep on hands and knees, by which method he slowly and painfully overcame foot after foot of the ascent. A little later he was forcing his way with infinite labor, an inch at a time, through a space so narrow that he was squeezed almost to breathlessness. He was also bathed in perspiration, and was obliged to recruit his strength by frequent halts.

At length his candle, which had burned low, was about to expire. With despairing eyes he watched its last flickering flame, feeling only the terror of impending darkness, and heedless of the fact that it was burning his hand. With the quenching of its final spark he resigned himself to his fate. He had fought his best, but the odds against him were too heavy, and now his strength was exhausted. Closing his eyes, and resting his head wearily on his folded arms, he prepared for the oblivion that he prayed might come speedily.

Lying thus, and careless of the passage of time, he was visited by pleasant dreams, in which were mingled happy voices, laughter, and singing. He rested on a couch of roses, and cool breezes fanned his fevered brow. He was free as air itself and surrounded by illimitable space.

All at once he became conscious that he was not dreaming, but was wide awake and staring with incredulous eyes at a glimmer of light, so wellnigh imperceptible that only by passing a hand before his face and so shutting it out for an instant could he be certain of its existence. At the same time an unmistakable draught of air was finding its way to him, and a voice as of an angel came to his ears faintly but distinctly with the snatch of a gay song.

With hot blood surging to his brain, the poor fellow tried to call out, but the words died in his parched throat, and he could only emit a husky whisper. Then he struggled forward, and found himself in a larger space that widened rapidly until he was able to sit up and move his arms with freedom.

He had reached the end of the passage; for, above his head, he could feel only a smooth surface of rock. The singing had ceased, the ray of light had faded into darkness, and the draught of air was no longer felt. But Peveril had noted the aperture by which it had come, and could now thrust his hand through this into a vacant space beyond.

It seemed to him that the rock above his head was but a slab of no great thickness, and he tried to lift it. For some minutes he could not succeed, but finally he secured a purchase, got his shoulders directly beneath it, and, with a mighty upward heave, moved it slightly from the bed in which it had lain for centuries.

With another powerful effort it was lifted the fraction of an inch, and, though it immediately settled back in place, the prisoner knew that the time of his deliverance had come. He could not raise the great slab bodily, but with wedges he could hold the gain of each upward lift. His first aids of this kind were the copper knives that he had brought with him. Then, by a dim light that came through the crevice thus opened, he used his pick to break off fragments of rock, which were slipped under the slab.

It was thus raised and supported an inch at a time, until at length an opening nearly two feet in width was presented. The moment this was effected Peveril drew himself through it, and, with a great sigh of thankfulness for his marvellous escape, lay for some minutes recovering breath after his tremendous exertions and studying his new surroundings.

Although the small amount of light greeting his eyes as he lifted the rock had shown him that he was not to emerge into the open air, he could not help a feeling of disappointment at finding himself still underground. To be sure, he was in a spacious chamber or cavern, he could not yet tell which, illumined by a faintly diffused light that gave promise of some connection with the outer world; but he feared this might prove to be another unscalable shaft, in which case he would be no better off than before--in fact, he might find himself worse off, for he was desperately thirsty and could see no sign of water.

"It would be pretty hard lines if I should be compelled to return to my old well for a drink," he said to himself.

As soon as he had recovered breath, Peveril rose to his feet and began to walk slowly towards that part of the cavern where the light seemed brightest. As he went he looked eagerly on all sides for some trace of the singer whose voice had inspired him with a new hope at the moment of his blackest despair, but no person was to be seen or heard.

At the same time he found abundant proof that human beings had recently visited that place, and would doubtless soon do so again. This was in the shape of boxes, bales, and casks piled against the walls on both sides of the passage. For a moment Peveril was greatly puzzled by these; then, as he recalled Joe Pintaud's conversation regarding smugglers, he concluded that he had stumbled across a depot of goods belonging to those free-traders of the great lake.

"In which case," he said to himself, "I shall surely be out of here within a few minutes; for an entrance for smugglers must mean an exit for prisoners."

This was a sound theory, but, like a great many other theories, one that proved faulty upon practical application, as our young friend discovered a few minutes later.

Directly beyond the packages of goods he came upon a small derrick, set firmly into the solid rock at both top and bottom. It had a substantial block-and-fall attachment, and was swung inward. At this point also a heavy tarpaulin, reaching from floor to ceiling, was hung completely across the cavern.

Cautiously raising one corner of this, Peveril was blinded by such a flood of light that for a moment he was completely dazzled. As his vision was gradually restored he found himself on the brink of a precipice and gazing out over a boundless expanse of water--in fact, over the great lake itself. A narrow ledge projected a little beyond the curtain that he had lifted, and as he hesitatingly stepped out upon it he also instinctively grasped a small cedar that grew from it to steady himself while he looked down.

The descent was sheer for twenty feet, and so smooth as not to afford a single foothold along its entire face. From the rippling water at its base rose a jagged ledge of black rocks, which Peveril recognized the moment his eyes fell upon them.

"Of all mysteries this is the most inexplicable!" he cried; "and yet it surely is the very place."

As he spoke he turned to look at the curtain which he had let fall behind him, and very nearly tumbled from the ledge in amazement at what he saw. Instead of the sheet of dingy canvas that he expected, he was confronted by a sheer wall of cliff, stained the same rusty red as that extending for miles on either side, and apparently not differing from it in any particular. He was compelled to reach out his hand and touch it before he could dispel the illusion and convince himself that only a sheet of painted canvas separated him from the cavern he had just left.

"It is one of the very cleverest things in the way of a hiding-place I ever heard of," he said, half aloud; "and now I understand the disappearance of that girl. But where on earth did she come from? How did she get here? and where did she go to? Could it have been she whom I heard singing a little while ago? If so, where is she now? Not in the cavern. That I'll swear to."

Peveril might have speculated at much greater length concerning this mystery had not the sight of water that he could not reach so aggravated his thirst that for the moment he could think of little else. All at once he hit upon a plan, and

two minutes later had drawn aside the curtain, swung out the little derrick, and was letting himself down towards the ledge by means of its tackle.

Lying flat on the rough rocks, he drank and drank of the delicious water, lifting his head for breath or to gaze ecstatically about him, and then thrusting it again into the cool flood for the pleasure of feeling the water on his hot cheeks.

At length a slight sound caused him to turn quickly and look upward. To his dismay and astonishment the tackle by which he had lowered himself had disappeared. Unless he could make up his mind to swim for miles through water of icy coldness, he was as truly a prisoner on that ledge of rock as ever he had been in the underground depths from which he had so recently escaped.



CHAPTER XIX

"DARRELL'S FOLLY" AND ITS OWNER

Ralph Darrell was possessed by a passion for accumulating wealth, and, not satisfied with the certain but slow gains of his legitimate business of banking, was always on the lookout for extraordinary investments, in which he was willing to take great risks on the chance of receiving proportionate returns. During an excitement caused by marvellous finds of copper in the upper peninsula of Michigan, he, too, caught the fever, and became convinced that here was his opportunity for acquiring a fortune.

From experts in whom he placed confidence he received such good accounts of a certain mineral tract located on Keweenaw Point, where mines of fabulous richness were already opened, that he purchased it, and persuaded Richard Peveril's father to become associated with him in a scheme for its development.

When the crash came, and their golden dreams were dispelled by a rude awakening, he had sunk his own modest fortune, together with half of Peveril's, in a barren mine, and the blow was so heavy as to partially deprive him of his reason. He imagined himself to be the object of a conspiracy, headed by his partner, to obtain entire control of the mine, which he also imagined to be immensely valuable.

For the purpose of protecting the interests that he fancied to be thus endangered, Ralph Darrell disappeared from his home, made his way to the scene of his wrecked hopes, and took up a solitary abode in the deserted mining village. Although he was now a desperate man, and also one so crazed by misfortune that he believed every rock taken from the Copper Princess to be rich in metal, he retained much of the business shrewdness gained by years of experience. At the same time, he had become sly, suspicious of his fellows, and absolutely non-communicative. He had conceived the idea of holding on to the mine, and at the same time spreading reports of its worthlessness until the term of contract had expired, when he hoped that, in default of other claims, the entire property would fall into his hands. Then he would proclaim its true value and reap his long-delayed reward.

So he lived alone in the comfortable house that had been built for the manager of the mine, held no intercourse with his widely scattered neighbors, discouraged all attempts on the part of outsiders to learn anything concerning him, rejoiced when he heard his mine spoken of as "Darrell's Folly," and devoted himself to keeping its valuable plant in repair, against the time when he should be free to use it for his own sole benefit.

In looking about for some method of acquiring means with which to reopen and work the mine when it should be wholly his, he ran across a crew of Canadian fishermen, who were also smugglers in a small way, and, joining them, soon developed their unlawful trade into a flourishing business.

Having discovered a deep cavern opening on the lake and extending close to the cellar of the very house in which he dwelt, he decided to use it as a receptacle and hiding-place for smuggled goods. To enhance its value for this purpose, he connected it with his own residence by an underground passage. On this he expended a vast amount of labor, digging it with his own hands, and holding it a secret from every human being. Even the smugglers, who implicitly obeyed his orders, since he had made it so profitable for them to do so, knew nothing of it, nor what became of their goods after they were delivered at night on a certain rocky ledge, and hoisted up the face of the cliff to some place that they never saw. Nor were the peddlers, by whom these same goods were carried far and wide, any wiser, for they always transacted their business with "old man" Darrell, and received their merchandise after dark, in a certain room of his house, the only one they were ever allowed to enter.

Not only had Darrell retained to himself the secret of the cavern, but he had also conceived the idea of hiding it from the observation of passing vessels by means of a canvas screen drawn over its entrance, and cleverly painted to resemble the adjacent cliffs.

Surrounded by these safeguards, and further protected by its locality in that desolate region, the unlawful business flourished amazingly. It not only yielded its chief promoter a sufficient income to support his family comfortably in their distant Eastern home and enable him to keep his mining-plant in good repair, but each year saw a very tidy surplus stored away for the future development of the Copper Princess.

Darrell had learned of his partner's death, and waited anxiously for years to hear from the Peveril heirs. As they remained silent, and made no claim against the property in which his own life was so completely bound up, he cherished the belief that they considered it too worthless even to investigate, and that he would be left in undisturbed possession to the end. He became so emboldened by this belief that, when the term of contract had so nearly expired that it had but a few months more to run, he even began in a small way to resume work in the mine. Thus he had it

pumped out and partially retimbered. He also started work on a new level, and in every way possible, without attracting too much attention, got his property ready for the great scheme of development upon which he was determined the moment he should be freed from his contract.

In the meantime his wife had died, and his only child, who had been born since he entered upon this strange existence, had come to share his lonely home. As she was but twelve years old when this great change in her life took place, she of course knew nothing of business, and had never heard of such a thing as smuggled goods. In her eyes everything that her dear papa did was right, and she was too happy at being permitted to become in any degree his assistant to think of questioning his methods.

So the secret of the cavern and its underground connection was finally confided to her. She was also intrusted with the duty of watching for the little vessels that brought the goods in which her father dealt, and of hanging out the signal-lights by which their movements were guided. As these lights were always displayed from the stunted cedar at the mouth of the cavern, and as this place also served her for a post of observation, she passed much of her time within the limits of the great cave.

Her father had won her promise never to mention the existence of the cavern, and had also warned her not to allow herself to be seen in it. There was, however, no necessity of such a warning, for Mary Darrell was too proud of her great secret to share it. Even Aunty Nimmo, the old black nurse who had come West with her, and had remained to care for her ever since, was not told of the cavern, though she shrewdly suspected its existence.

If to the foregoing explanation it is added that the little trading-vessels, which were also to all appearance fisher-boats, never took on their return cargoes from the cavern, but always at either Laughing Fish Cove or the land-locked basin, the situation as it existed at the time of Peveril's appearance on the scene will be understood.

As the sister schooner of the one that had carried off Joe Pintaud was due to arrive at about this date, Mary Darrell was keeping a sharp watch for it, and paying frequent visits to her post of observation at the mouth of the cavern for that purpose. On each of these she of course drew aside the painted curtain, thereby letting in a rush of air that penetrated to the innermost recesses of the great cavity behind her.

It was a little breath from one of these that, finding its way through the aperture beside the slab of rock, and so on down the narrow passage that led to the prehistoric mine, had blown out Peveril's candle. Of course the girl, who was the innocent cause of that bit of mischief, had no idea of what the breeze was doing, for neither she nor her father, or any one else for that matter, knew of the existence of the old workings so close at hand.

On the following morning Mary again entered the cavern, singing light-heartedly as she did so. This time she remained but a few minutes, for she had something to attend to in the house; but she held aside the canvas curtain long enough to look out, assure herself that no vessel was in sight, and to allow another inrush of air. From it a second little breeze found its way beneath the great slab and into the darkness of the underground passage, where it restored poor, despairing Peveril to life and hope by cooling his fevered brow and carrying the sound of singing to his ears.

The very next time the girl entered the cavern she was at first bewildered to find the canvas screen drawn aside from its opening and the place flooded with light. Next she was frightened to note that the derrick was swung outward, and that its attached tackle was hanging down out of sight.

Her first impulse was to run and call her father. Then she remembered that, as he was down in the mine, it would be a long time before he could come. Also, being a brave young woman and not easily frightened, she determined to find out for herself if there was any real cause for alarm. So she crept softly to the mouth of the cavern and peered cautiously out.

At sight of a man lying on the rocks at the foot of the cliff, with his head in the water, her heart almost stopped its beating and she almost screamed. He lay so still that for a moment she imagined him to be dead, though the next instant she knew he was not, for he lifted his head to catch a breath. Then he again plunged it into the water, and quick as thought the girl drew up the tackle by which he had lowered himself.

"There," she said to herself; "I guess you will stay where you are, Mister Man, until I can bring papa; and he'll know what to do with you!"

She had drawn in the tackle very cautiously, without noticing the little scraping noise that its lower block made in crossing the rocky ledge, and she turned to go as she spoke.

But she must take one more look, just to see if that horrid man was still there, and what he was doing.

So she very carefully leaned forward and gazed straight down into the upturned face of Richard Peveril.

CHAPTER XX

PEVERIL IS TAKEN FOR A GHOST

The situation in which the two principal characters of this story were left at the close of the preceding chapter was so embarrassing to both that for several seconds they continued to stare at each other in silent amazement. Mary Darrell, her face alternately flushing and paling with confusion, seemed fascinated and incapable of motion. In spite of Peveril's astonishingly disreputable appearance, she at once recognized him as being the young stranger whom she had seen twice before, and had even helped out of an awkward predicament. She also knew that he had in some way aroused her father's enmity. But he had taken his departure from that vicinity several days earlier, and, though she had wondered if he would ever come back, she had not really expected to see him again.

Now to come upon him so suddenly, looking so dreadful, and to realize that, incredible as it seemed, he must have learned the secret of the cavern, was all so bewildering and startling as to very nearly take away her breath. So she simply stared.

It must be confessed that Peveril's present appearance was not so prepossessing as it had been at other times, and might be again. He had lost his hat, his hair was uncombed, his hands were bruised and soiled, while his clothing was torn and covered with dirt from the underground passages through which he had so recently struggled. But his face was quite clean, for he had just given it a thorough scrubbing, and to it the girl's gaze was principally directed.

It was Peveril who first broke the embarrassing silence.

"I am very glad to see you again," he said, "and to find that you are a real flesh-and-blood girl, instead of only a vision, or a sort of a rock-nymph, as I imagined you might be from the way you disappeared that other time."

"What makes you think I am a girl?" asked Mary Darrell, whose face was the only part of her that Peveril could see.

"Why, because," he began, hesitatingly--"because you are too good-looking to be anything but a girl, and because-- Oh, well, because I am certain that you are. What else could you be, anyway?"

Mary Darrell's face was crimson, but still she answered, stoutly, "I might be a boy, you know."

"No, indeed. No boy could blush as you are doing at this moment."

In reply, the girl rose to her feet and stepped out on the ledge in full view of the young man. She was clad in a golf suit, neat-fitting and becoming, but masculine in every detail. She had become so accustomed to dressing in that way that she was perfectly at her ease in the costume, and even preferred it to her own proper garments.

"I beg your pardon," stammered poor Peveril, as he gazed in bewilderment at the apparition thus presented. "I'm awfully ashamed to have made such a stupid mistake, but really, you know--"

"Oh, it's all right," replied the other, "and you needn't apologize. I have so often been taken for a girl that I am quite used to it. And now may I ask who you are? why you are here? what you are doing down there? how you propose to get away? and--"

"Hold on, my dear fellow!" interrupted Peveril. "Don't you think your list of questions is already long enough without adding any more?"

"I suppose it is," laughed the other, assuming a seat in an expectant attitude at the base of the stunted cedar.

The novelty of the situation, combined with its absolute safety, so far as she was concerned, was fascinating to the lonely girl. "Now you may begin," she added, "and tell me everything you know about yourself."

"That would be altogether too long a story," replied Peveril, a little nettled at what he mentally termed the cheek of the youth. "Besides," he continued, "I am too nearly starved to do much talking, seeing that, for more days than I can remember, I have had nothing to eat but a rat, and--"

"A rat!" cried the other, in a tone of horror. "You didn't really eat a rat?"

"Indeed I did, and I would gladly eat another at this very minute, I am so hungry. Don't you think you could get me one? Or if you had any cold victuals that you could spare--"

At that moment Mary Darrell, without waiting to hear another word, jumped up and disappeared, leaving Peveril to wonder what had struck the young fellow, and hoping that he had gone for something in the shape of food.

"I wish I'd got him to let down that rope again first," he said to himself, as he paced back and forth across the ledge; "then I could have pulled myself up and gone with him, thereby saving both time and trouble. I would have sworn, though, that he was a girl. Never was so deceived in my life. He must have a sister, and perhaps they are twins, for it surely was a girl that I saw here the other time. All the same, I'm rather glad she isn't on hand just now, for I should hate to have any girl see me in my present disguise. My appearance must be decidedly tough and tramp-like. Wonder if I can't do something to improve it? That chap might be just idiot enough to bring his sister back with him."

Thus thinking, the young man attempted to get a look at himself in the water-mirror of the lake, and was trying to comb his hair with his fingers, when a merry laugh from above put an end to his toilet and caused him to start up in confusion.

His young friend of the golf suit had returned, and was letting down a small basket attached to a stout cord.

"Why don't you drop the tackle and let me come up there to you?" suggested Peveril, who was not only very tired of the ledge, but curious to make a closer acquaintance with his new friend.

"Oh no," said the other, hurriedly, "I can't do that. But look out! catch the basket. I am sorry not to have brought you a better lunch, but you seemed in such a hurry that I thought you might not be particular."

"It's fine," rejoined Peveril, who was already making a ravenous attack on the bread and cold meat contained in the basket. "You couldn't have brought me anything that I should have liked better, or that would have done me more good, and I am a thousand times obliged."

A few minutes of silence ensued after this, while the one in the golf suit eagerly watched the other satisfy his hunger.

When the last crumb of food had disappeared, Peveril heaved a sigh of content. "I feel like a new man now," he said, "and if you will only be so kind as to throw down that tackle--"

"But you haven't answered a single one of my questions," interrupted the other.

"Can't I do that up there as well as here?"

"No, I want them answered right off, now."

"Well, you are a queer sort of a chap," retorted Peveril; "but, seeing that you were so kind about the lunch, I don't mind humoring you a bit. Let me see: What were they? Oh! First--who am I? Well, I am Richard Peveril; but beyond that I hardly know how to answer. Second--why am I here? Because I can't get away. Third--what am I doing? Answering questions. Fourth--how do I propose to get away? By climbing the rope that you will let down to me, of course, and then have you show me the same way out of the cavern that you take."





SEEING PEVERIL, THE MEN UTTERED A CRY OF TERROR

"Oh, but I can't do that!"

"Why not?"

"Because I have promised never to show it to any one. But, if you don't know the way, how did you get into the cavern?"

"If you'll show me your way out, I'll show you mine," replied Peveril, who was growing impatient.

"I tell you I can't. It is simply impossible."

"Oh, well! I won't urge you, then. Only let down the rope, so that I can get up to where you are, and I'll manage to find my own way out."

"But I don't dare even to do that," answered the other, in genuine distress.

"You don't mean to leave me down here forever, do you?"

"No, of course not; but--Oh, I know! I'll send a boat for you. So, just wait patiently a little while longer and you shall be taken off."

"I say! hold on!" cried Richard; but his words were unheeded, for, acting on the impulse of the moment, the other had disappeared, and he was talking to empty space.

"Confound the boy!" he exclaimed, impatiently. "I never heard of anything so utterly absurd. Why, in the name of common-sense, should he object to showing me the way out of his old cave? One would think that ordinary humanity-- But boys are such heartless young beggars that there's no such thing as appealing to their sympathies. If it had only been his sister now!"

In the meantime Mary Darrell had hastened from the cavern full of her new plan for rescuing the prisoner without

betraying the secret of the underground passage.

She at first thought of appealing to her father for aid, but, remembering his bitterness against the young man, decided to act without him. So she called two miners who were at work about the mouth of the shaft and bade them follow her. As they did so she led the way to the basin, and, entering a boat, ordered the men to row her out into the lake.

They obeyed without hesitation, and, as Mary steered, she soon had the satisfaction of seeing her prisoner just where she had left him.

He was at the same time relieved of a growing anxiety by the approach of the boat, in which he finally recognized the young fellow who, although acting so curiously, had, on the whole, proved himself a friend.

The boat approached so close to the ledge that Mary had given the order to cease rowing before the oarsmen turned their heads to see where they were. As they did so, they uttered a simultaneous cry of terror, again seized their oars, whirled their light craft around, and, in spite of Mary Darrell's angry protestations, began to row with frantic haste back in the direction from which they had come.

Although Peveril was not so much surprised at this proceeding as he might have been had he not recognized the villain Rothsky in the bow-oarsman, he was bitterly disappointed, and paced up and down his narrow prison with restless impatience.

"Oh! If I ever get out of this scrape!" he cried.

Less than an hour afterwards, when Mary Darrell again entered the cavern, but this time in company with her father, to whom she had confided the whole story, Peveril had disappeared. There was no boat to be seen, and they were confident that none had been on the coast that day. The derrick, with its tackle, was just as Mary had left it, yet neither in the cavern nor on the ledge was a trace of the young man to be seen.



CHAPTER XXI

MIKE CONNELL TO THE RESCUE

On the very day that the White Pine logging expedition had been so completely disbanded, the tug *Broncho* had been sent up the coast in a hurry after a supply of timber. She reached Laughing Fish Cove in the evening after Peveril's departure from his camp, and spent the night there awaiting him. Her captain was greatly perplexed by the failure of any of the party to put in an appearance, and the more so when he learned from the fishermen that Peveril had returned alone only to depart again on foot soon afterwards.

By morning he dared not wait longer, for his instructions were to start back immediately with such logs as had been collected. He also imagined that, having picked up all the timber they could find, and becoming tired of waiting for him, the wreckers might have set out for Red Jacket on foot. So, taking in tow the raft that he found in the cove, he started down the coast, arriving at his destination that same evening.

Mike Connell, who had been anxiously awaiting Peveril's coming, was at the landing to meet his friend, and was much disappointed at his non-appearance. After gaining all the news concerning the missing party that Captain Spillins could give him, he hastened back to Red Jacket, and went at once to the Trefethen cottage with a faint hope that Peveril might be there.

The inmates of the little house had also pleasantly anticipated the return of the young man in whom they were so interested, and had made such simple preparations as came within their means for welcoming him. Now their disappointment at Connell's report was mingled with a certain anxiety that increased as they discussed the situation.

"I'm feared lad's got into some trouble along of they furriners," reflected Mark Trefethen, as he puffed thoughtfully at his short pipe. "Not but he'll find way outen it, though, for he's finely strong and handy wi' his fists. Still, there's always the knives and devilry of they furriners to be reckoned with."

"They do tell as hit's a cruel country up yon, full o' thieves and murderers, to say naught o' smuggling pirates," put in his wife; "which, as I were saying to Miss Penny no longer ago than yesterday, when me and 'er was looking in at company store, the same as Maister Peril should be running this blessed minute if 'e 'ad 'is rights, 'Miss Penny,' sez I, 'that pore young man'll never get it in this world, now 'e's gone for a sailor, mark my words,' little thinking they'd so soon come true."

"If I was a man," said Nelly Trefethen, at the same time casting a meaning glance at her sweetheart, "I'd not be sitting here wondering how he's to be got out of trouble, especially if he'd done for me what he has for some."

"No more will I," spoke up Mike Connell, "for I'm going to find him, which is what I came to say along with telling the news."

"And I'll go with you!" exclaimed Tom Trefethen, springing to his feet, as though for an immediate start.

"No, Tom; glad as I'd be of your company, it's best I should go alone, seeing as I know that country well, and one man can get along in it when two couldn't. Besides, you are needed here, while I'm not."

In spite of young Trefethen's protests, the Irishman remained firm in his decision to set forth alone in search of his friend; and as he left the house Nelly, who with the others accompanied him to the door, managed to give his hand an approving squeeze.

Although Major Arkell gave orders for the tug to return to Laughing Fish in search of the missing loggers the moment her services could be spared, it was not until twenty-four hours after bringing in the raft that it was possible for her to do so.

In the meantime Mike Connell, starting at the break of day, and walking briskly northward, reached the cove that still held Peveril's deserted camp that same afternoon.

Through an intimacy with several of his countrymen who were successful peddlers of Ralph Darrell's smuggled goods, Connell had learned much concerning that section of country, and the various operations conducted within its limits. He had at one time seriously contemplated going into the peddling business himself, and had made so many inquiries in regard to its details that he was even familiar with "Darrell's Folly," though it was a place he had never visited.

Knowing it to be a headquarters for smugglers, and believing that, if Peveril had really got himself into trouble, it would be in connection with some of those people, he felt that it was a likely locality in which to search for information.

Accordingly he headed directly for it, only going a short distance out of his way to visit Laughing Fish Cove. Having heard that the fisher-folk were in league with the smugglers, he did not care to betray his presence to them, and so did not show himself in the little settlement, but only skirted it, until certain that his friends were not there. Then he proceeded towards his destination by the same trail that Peveril had followed only two nights before.

As he walked slowly along the narrow pathway, trying to invent some plausible excuse for presenting himself before the irascible old man who, he had heard, excluded all strangers from "Darrell's Folly," his steps were arrested by the sound of voices approaching from the opposite direction. In another moment he saw three men hurrying towards him, gesticulating wildly and talking loudly in an unknown tongue.

As they drew near he recognized in them the three car-pushers recently driven from the White Pine Mine. It also flashed into his mind that these were the men whom he had urged to make a cowardly attack on the young fellow he had then considered an enemy, but for whom he was now searching as for a dear friend.

The new-comers also recognized him, and, regarding him as of one purpose with themselves in all that concerned Peveril, did not hesitate to advance and speak to him. After an exchange of greetings, Connell broached the business in hand by asking if they had seen anything in those parts of the chap who had driven them from White Pine.

The men glanced at each other hesitatingly for a moment, and then Rothsky answered:

"Yes, my friend, indeed we have seen him, and to our sorrow, since it is but now that he has driven us from another job, better even than that."

"How so?" inquired Connell, pricking up his ears.

"It is this way: We are working, at good wages, for the old fool over yonder, when that devil of a Per'l comes and tries to steal our timbers. Then the boss compels us to seize him and put him in his boat, which we tow far out in the lake. Then, as he makes a try to escape, the boss, who is like a man crazy, shoots him with a pistol through the head, and we all see him fall without life in the bottom of his boat. He is so very dead that he does not even move, and so is let go to drift, him and his boat, while we return to shore."

"A fine way of treating trespassers, bedad!" exclaimed Connell; "but all the same, there is folks who would call it murder."

"Yes, was it not? But wait. All that was three days ago; and yet, but one hour since, two of us have seen the ghost of this beast Per'l standing on the black rocks, with the white face of death, the wet hair of the drowned, and his clothing torn by the teeth of fishes. He said not one word, but waited for us, and would have dragged us to the bottom if we had not fled in time. Now, with such things allowed, we can no longer work in this place, and so, for the second time, has he driven us from our good job."

"It's a cruel shame and an outrage on decency, nothing less!" cried Connell, in pretended indignation. "At the same time, Rothsky, man, I'd like to have been with you, for do you know I've never laid eyes on a ghost at all, but would like mightily to have the experience. Would ye mind tellin' me now where could I find this one, just for the pleasure of the sensation?"

"No, no, Mist Connell! Don't go near it, for you'll be going to your death if you do."

"But, if I'm willing to risk it why not?"

So the Irishman insisted that they should permit him to share with them the glory of having seen a ghost, and finally won from them full directions how to discover the place from which they had fled in terror. The sly fellow even made pretence of wishing them to go back with him, and, when they declined to consider his invitation, declared them to be a set of cowards, and set forth alone.

"It's my belief," he said to himself, as he made his way towards the place where they had told him he would find a boat, "that them divils of Dagos have played some dirty trick on Mister Peril. If there'd been but two of them I'd found some way of extorting a confession from their lying mouths, but odds of three to one is too big to risk. So I had to blarney them; but maybe I'll be able to help the lad some way; and, anyhow, here's for the trying."

It was dusk when Connell, having found the boat, pulled unobserved out of the land-locked basin, and by the time he reached the ledge, where he had been told he would find Peveril's ghost, darkness had so closed in that he could not tell whether it was occupied or not until he had left his craft and explored its limited area.

"Mister Peril!" he called, softly; "come out, if you're hiding, for it's only me, Mike Connell, come to take you away from this—Oh, bad cess to it, he's not here at all, and it's a great song-and-dance them Dagos give me! Now I'll have to go

and beg a night's lodging of the old man, and maybe he'll give me a job in place of them as has just left him. In that case I'll find out something, or me name's not--Holy smoke! where's me boat? Bad luck to the slippery craft! It's gone entirely, and here I am left to spend the cruel night alone on a bit of a rock in the sea. If I was in jail I'd be better off."

It was only too true. The light skiff, carelessly left to its own devices, had been caught by a gentle breeze and borne without a sound beyond sight or hearing.

As the second prisoner claimed by the black ledge that day stood dismally bemoaning his hard fate, a light flashed out above him, and, glancing upward, he saw what he took to be a man in the act of hanging two lanterns to a bit of a tree. It was a danger-signal warning the smugglers to keep away, and Mary Darrell was placing it by order of her father, who feared Peveril might still be lingering in that vicinity.

"Hey, lad," cried Connell, noting her slight figure, "will you help a fellow-creature in distress by tossing down the end of a rope?"

"Are you really still there?" exclaimed the girl, in a tone of dismay, and striving to peer down through the darkness.

"I am that, but most anxious to get away."

"And if I do let down the rope, will you promise to depart at once the same way you came?"

"I'll promise anything if you'll only let me up."

"Well, then, there it is. I know I am doing wrong, but I can't leave you down there all night, for you would be dead by morning."

"True for ye," answered Connell, as he began briskly to climb the rope, hand over hand.

As his face appeared within the circle of lantern-light, the poor girl, who was waiting with trembling anxiety, uttered a cry of terror and fled into the gloom of the cavern.

"Well, if that don't bate my time!" exclaimed the new-comer, as he gained a foothold on the ledge. "Whatever could the lad be frightened of?"



CHAPTER XXII

THE SIGNAL IS CHANGED

Peveril had been amazed and disgusted at the sudden turning about and departure of the boat that had so nearly effected his rescue. Of course, on recognizing the oarsmen, he understood why they declined to help him, though it did not enter his mind that they regarded him as a supernatural being.

"What cowards they are!" he reflected, bitterly. "They are determined to kill me though, that is evident, and I don't believe they will be content with simply leaving me here to die of exposure. It's more than likely they will roll rocks down on me from the cliffs during the night. There's a cheerful prospect to contemplate, with darkness already coming on, too!

"That young fellow seemed willing enough to help me, only he was bound to do it in his own way; but now I suppose those wretches will prevent him from making any more efforts in my behalf. What is he doing with that gang of murderers, I wonder? Apparently he is about as far removed from that class as a person can be. Well, that's neither here nor there. The one thing to be considered just now is, how am I to get out of this fix? I wonder if there is any possibility of that cord bearing my weight."

The cord thus referred to was the one by which the basket of food had been lowered. As it still hung close at hand, Peveril gave it a sharp pull. Although it yielded slightly, it did not break, and, encouraged by this, he threw his whole weight on it as a conclusive test of its strength. The result was sudden, surprising, and wellnigh disastrous. The cord gave way so readily that Peveril sprawled at full length on the rocks, while, at the same time, something heavy fell with a rush down the face of the cliff and struck with great force close beside his head.

Springing to his feet in alarm at this most unexpected happening, the prisoner found to his amazement and also to his delight that he had pulled down the derrick-tackle by which he had descended. To be sure, the block at its lower end had very nearly dashed out his brains, but what did he care for that so long as he had been given the benefit of the miss? For a moment he was puzzled to know how his pull on the cord could have effected so desirable a result, but, upon an examination of the tackle, he laughed aloud at the simplicity of the proposition. For want of something better to hold her end of the cord, Mary Darrell had tied it to the block of the derrick-tackle, intending, of course, to draw up the basket again as soon as her starving guest had emptied it. Then, absorbed in a suddenly evolved plan for releasing him from his predicament and at the same time preserving her father's secret, she had gone away and neglected to do so.

Peveril was not slow to avail himself of the means of escape thus provided, and a few minutes later stood once more within the portal of the great cavern. His first care was to haul up the tackle and dispose it as he imagined it to have been left, with the attached cord hanging down the face of the cliff.

"There!" he said, when this was done to his satisfaction. "The young fellow is almost certain to come back for another look at me, and, though I fancy he'll be somewhat surprised to find me gone, it will never enter his head that I am up here. Then when he leaves I will simply follow his lead, and so find the way out of this mysterious place. Perhaps, though, I can discover it for myself."

Thus thinking, Peveril made as careful an examination of the cavern walls as the fading light would permit, but could find no sign of an opening. Finally, deciding to carry out his original plan, he selected a hiding-place, and, settling himself in it as comfortably as possible, began to await with what patience he might the return of his young friend.

By this time the cavern was quite dark, save for a dim twilight at its opening; and, having nothing to distract his attention, he began to realize how very weary he was after the exertions and nervous strain of the past three days. He had also just eaten a hearty meal. It is little wonder then that, within five minutes, and in spite of his strenuous exertions to keep awake, he fell fast asleep. Fortunately he did not snore, nor make any sound to betray his presence, but unfortunately, also, his slumber was so profound that when, a little later, Mary Darrell and her father softly entered the gallery and cautiously proceeded to its mouth for a look at the prisoner, whom they supposed still to be on the black ledge, he did not waken.

Puzzled as they were at his disappearance, they were also greatly relieved to have him gone. They never for a moment imagined that he could have regained the cavern, and so, after drawing up the basket, they retired as they had come, leaving Peveril undisturbed to his nap.

While it was not certain that the expected smuggling schooner would reach the coast that evening, she might do so, and, with the cautiousness marking all of his operations, Ralph Darrell decided that it would not do for her cargo to be

landed while there was a chance of a stranger, who was at the same time an enemy, being in the neighborhood. He felt assured that the young man who had so mysteriously appeared and disappeared that day must be an enemy; for, though Mary had not mentioned his name, she had described him as being the one who had recently attempted to steal his logs from the land-locked basin. Now he had no doubt that the chap was a revenue-officer who had come to spy out his smuggling operations, and only pretended to be in search of wrecked timber as a cloak for his real designs. Else why should he still hang around, and especially in the vicinity of the cavern, where there were no logs?

Mary even declared a belief that he had been in their carefully concealed hiding-place, but, of course, she must be mistaken. Still, no more cargo must be landed until the spy was located and driven from that region.

"I sha'n't need to carry on the business much longer," said the old man to himself; "but so long as I choose to remain in it I don't propose to be interfered with."

So Mary was directed to go and display two lanterns at the mouth of the cavern as a signal that no goods were to be landed that night, while her father went out for the final look at his precious mining property that he took every evening just after the men had quit work.

Ralph Darrell's heart was bound up in the new work he had recently began, and so anxious was he to push it that he was engaging all laborers who came that way. As yet his force was very small, but he was in hopes of speedily increasing it. Thus, to discover that three of his strongest men had suddenly thrown up their jobs and left him without warning filled him with anger. So furious was he, even after he entered the house, that poor Mary, who had just returned badly frightened from the cavern, dared not confess to him that, through her own carelessness, another stranger had been admitted to the hidden storehouse of the cliffs.

Perhaps by morning this unwelcome visitor would have disappeared, as the other had done; and, at any rate, he could never find the secret passage, for it was too carefully concealed. By morning, too, her father would be restored to his ordinary frame of mind, and it would be easier to tell him what she had done, if, indeed, it should prove necessary to tell him at all.

In the meantime Mike Connell was much puzzled by the nature of the place in which he found himself after his climb, as well as by the abrupt disappearance of the lad upon whom he had counted for guidance. The darkness, with its accompanying profound silence, so affected him that, while he called several times, "Whist now! Where are you? Come out o' that, young feller, and have done with your foolin'!" he did so in an awed tone but little above a whisper.

"All right; stay where you are then!" he added, after listening vainly for a reply. "If it's a game of hide-and-peek ye want, I can soon accommodate you, seeing as how you've been so kind as to leave me a couple of glims, though it's only one of them I'll need."

Thus saying, the new-comer removed one of the two lanterns that had been hung out as a warning to the smugglers, and unwittingly changed the danger-signal into one of safety and invitation by so doing. With the lantern thus acquired to light his footsteps, he began a careful survey of the cavern, hoping to discover either an exit from it or his vanished guide.

With his previous knowledge of the principal industry of that region, it did not take him long to conjecture the meaning of the bales and boxes upon which he soon stumbled.

"Holy smoke!" he cried; "it's a cave of smugglers you've broke into, Mike Connell, no less, and a sorrowful time ye'll have of it if the folks comes home and catches you at the trespassing! Where the divil is the back door, I wonder, for the one in front is no good at all? Saints preserve us! What's that?"

With this last exclamation the frightened Irishman began to retreat slowly backward, holding his lantern so that, while it revealed his own terror-stricken face, its light also fell full on the form of Richard Peveril standing before him and staring in blankest amazement.

"Plaze, good Mister Spook--I mean yer Honor--Oh, Holy Fathers! what will I say?" stammered the poor fellow, in such faltering accents that Peveril broke into a roar of laughter.

"Mike Connell!" he cried; "wherever did you come from? and what has happened? You look as though you had seen a ghost!"

"And haven't I?" retorted the other, still staring dubiously. "Is it yourself, lad? But sure it must be, seeing you have a voice of your own, which is a thing never yet given to a spook. Glory be to goodness, Mister Peril, that I've found you just as I'd lost you entirely, and meself as well!"

"But how do you happen to be here?" asked the still bewildered Peveril.

"Sure I just came, thinking you might want me."

"Which way did you come?"

"Through the front door, the same as yourself."

"But I came in by a back entrance."

"Then we'd best be getting out that way, for I'm afraid there'll soon be others here as won't be pleased to see us."

"We can't, for that way is barred," answered Peveril; "but let us sit down and try to arrive at some understanding of this mysterious affair."

So, for nearly an hour, the two talked over the situation; and, though each frequently interrupted the other with questions or exclamations, they finally gained a pretty clear comprehension of their position. At the end of the conference Peveril exclaimed:

"Then, so far as I can see, we are shut up here like two rats in a trap."

"Yes," cried Connell, "and here comes the rat-catchers after us now!"

As he spoke he pointed to the outer entrance, where the head and shoulders of a man had just appeared above the rocky ledge.



CHAPTER XXIII

A BATTLE WITH SMUGGLERS

After supper that same evening the violence of Ralph Darrell's rage had so subsided that his daughter ventured to inquire concerning its cause. When he had informed her, she said:

"Why should you let a little thing like that worry you, papa? Surely you can engage plenty more miners if you want them. I don't see why you should bother with the old mine, though. It don't seem to be worth anything."

"Not worth anything!" cried the old man, standing up in his excitement. "Why, child, it is worth millions! It is one of the richest copper properties in the world, and in one week's time it will be all my own. Rather, it will be yours, since it is for you alone that I have lived in this wilderness all these years, thereby saving it from destruction, and warding off the conspiracy that would reduce you to beggary. For your sake only have I so guarded the secret of its wealth that no living soul suspects it. Even the men who delve in its depths know not the value of the material in which they toil, for I have not told them. Nor have I allowed an assay to be made of its smallest fragment; but I know its worth, its fabulous value, that will make the owner of the Copper Princess one of the richest heiresses in the world."

"Who is the Copper Princess, papa?" asked the girl, who, though bewildered by the old man's extravagant statements, could not help but be interested in them.

"You are, my darling, you are a copper princess; but the name also applies to your mine, and was given to it before you were born. 'Darrell's Folly' is what men, in their ignorance, call it now, but in one week's time it may assume its rightful title, and thereafter the fame of the Copper Princess will spread far and wide."

"But why not let people call the mine by its real name now, papa? What difference will one week make?"

"Because," replied Ralph Darrell, bending towards his daughter, and lowering his voice almost to a whisper, as though fearful of being overheard, "in one week's time--only one week from this very day--the contract will expire, and the heirs of Richard Peveril can make no claim."

"Richard Peveril!" cried the girl, with a sudden recollection; "why, papa, that is the name of the young man who was in the cavern to-day, for he told me so himself. He is the same, you know, who came for your logs."

For an instant the old man glared at his daughter with an expression so terrible that she shrank from him frightened. Then it cleared, and in his ordinary tone he said, gently:

"I wish, dear, you would go and change your dress. I don't like to have you wear this boy's costume in the evening."

With only a moment of hesitation the girl obeyed him and left the room.

She had no sooner disappeared than the strange expression that he had so successfully banished for a minute returned to the man's face, and, possessing himself of a revolver, he proceeded to load it. As he did so he muttered:

"I must do it for her sake, though she must never know. Richard Peveril shall not be given an opportunity for making his claim. If he is really in the cavern he must not be allowed to escape from it alive."

So saying, the old man left the room, while Mary Darrell, who had been anxiously watching his movements through a crack of the opposite doorway, followed swiftly after him.

In the cavern, at that moment, two groups of men were confronting each other suspiciously, but hesitating as to what attitude they should assume. The expected schooner had reached the coast that evening, and, assured of safety by the single light displayed from the cliffs, had run boldly in to her accustomed anchorage. As the operations of the smugglers were necessarily conducted with great promptness, a portion of her valuable cargo was immediately transferred to a small boat, and four men accompanied it to the usual landing-place on the black ledge. Here the goods were taken out, and two of the men returned to the schooner with the boat while the others remained on shore. These became so impatient at not receiving the usual intimation from above that all was in readiness for hoisting, nor any answer to their repeated signals, that they finally decided to avail themselves of the tackle hanging ready beside them to go up and investigate. The captain of the schooner, who was an Englishman, went first, and the other, who was a French Canadian, followed closely after him.



WILD-LOOKING MAN LEVELLED A PISTOL AT PEVERIL

To their amazement they found the cavern, which they had been told was never entered except by old man Darrell or his son, in possession of two strangers, who appeared equally surprised at seeing them.

"What are you chaps doing 'ere?" demanded the Englishman.

"Oui. By gar! vat you do in zis place?" added his follower.

"I was about to ask that same question," said Peveril. "What are *you* doing here?"

"Yes, be jabbers! That's what *we* want to know. What be *yous* doing here?" chimed in Mike Connell.

At that moment a wild-looking, white-headed figure suddenly appeared on the scene, and, with one searching glance at Peveril, who stood fully revealed in the light of Mike Connell's lantern, levelled a pistol full at him. As he did so, a cry of terror rang through the rock-hewn chamber, and a pair of soft arms were flung about the old man from behind. By this his aim was so disconcerted that, though the shot still rang out with startling effect in that confined space, its bullet flew wide of the intended mark, and Peveril stood unharmed.

In another second the schooner's captain had sprung upon the madman and wrenched the pistol from his hand, crying out:

"No, no, Mr. Darrell! There must be no murder connected with this business. It is bad enough, God knows, without having that added!"

"C'est vrai! Certainment! By gar!" shouted the Canadian.

"You bet your sweet life, old man! That sort of thing don't go down in the copper country, and it's mighty lucky for you

that the young feller was on hand to kape you from carrying out your murderous intentions," said Mike Connell, sternly.

Peveril, seeing that the man, whom he had already recognized, was rendered harmless by the loss of his pistol, remained coolly silent, waiting for some cue by which his own course of action might be determined.

"I see I have made a mistake, gentlemen," said Ralph Darrell, changing his tactics with all a madman's cunning and readiness. "And I beg Mister--a--"

"Peveril," said the young man--"Richard Peveril is my name, sir."

"Yes, of course; and, as I was saying, I beg Mr. Richard Peveril's pardon for being so hasty; but my daughter here, having informed me of his suspicious presence in the vicinity of this warehouse, I came to protect my property from possible depredation. Finding him in the very place that I was most anxious to guard, I very naturally took him for a burglar, and acted accordingly. I am sorry, of course, if I have made a mistake; but, if I remember rightly, I have already had occasion to accuse Mr. Peveril of trespassing, and to order him from my premises."

"You did, sir, and I refused to go until I had recovered certain property to which I have a claim."

"Do you refuse to go now, when I tell you that the property in question has been removed beyond your reach?"

"I do not."

"Will you promise never to return?"

"I will not."

"Will you go with these men on their schooner?"

"Certainly not, unless compelled by force, for I have no inclination to trust myself with a gang of smugglers."

By this time two more of the schooner's crew, who had reached the ledge with a second boat-load of goods in time to be attracted by the pistol-shot in the cavern, had made their appearance on the scene, and stood wonderingly behind their captain.

To this individual the old man whispered: "I will give you one thousand dollars to capture this spy, who threatens to break up our business. Carry him on board your schooner, and keep him there for one week--one whole week, remember. Five hundred down, and the remainder at the end of the week, if you have him still on board."

"Done!" said the captain, eagerly; and, turning to his men, he muttered a few words to them in a low tone.

Peveril and Connell watched this by-play with considerable anxiety, for they had no idea what action would be best to take. It would be folly to make an attack on so strong a force, especially as they had no direct provocation for so doing. Even should they succeed in driving them from the cavern, they had no clear idea of what would be gained. At the same time they did not relish the idea of waiting quietly while the others carried on their secret consultation.

"The divils mean mischief, Mister Peril," whispered Connell. "Kape your eye on them; and mind, if we get separated in the shindy, I'm not the lad to desert a friend. Look out! Here they come! Take that, you imps of Satan!"

With this final exclamation, the Irishman hurled his lighted lantern full into the faces of the group at that moment rushing towards them. It struck with a crash of glass, and then everything was enveloped in darkness.

The fight was fierce, but short-lived. Peveril found himself striking out wildly, was conscious of delivering several telling blows, and of receiving twice as many in return. Then he was overwhelmed by numbers, and, still fighting stoutly, was borne to the rocky floor.

When all was over and a lantern was brought, it revealed several bloody faces and blackened eyes. Peveril was lying flat on his back, with three men holding him down. Connell had disappeared, and so had Mary Darrell, who was still looked upon by all present, except her father, as being a boy. The old man held the lighted lantern, and the captain of the schooner, swearing savagely, was holding his hands to his face, which had been badly cut by the Irishman's missile.

A cord was brought, the very one that had lowered the lunch-basket, and with it Peveril was trussed like a fowl for roasting. Then he was swung down to the ledge at the base of the cliffs, tossed into a boat, and rowed away. A few minutes later he was handed aboard the schooner, taken below, and chucked into a small, evil-smelling state-room, the door of which was locked behind him.

It was a very unpleasant position to occupy, and yet his thoughts were not dwelling half so much upon it as they were upon the fact that the young person in golf costume who had saved his life that evening had been spoken of as a *daughter*.



CHAPTER XXIV

CONNELL MAKES GOOD HIS ESCAPE

From the very first Mike Connell had determined not to be captured, if he could possibly help it, wisely concluding that he would stand a better chance of serving his friend in freedom than as a prisoner. He realized that Ralph Darrell's enmity was especially directed towards Peveril, and believed that he, therefore, would be the principal object of attack. At the same time he knew that, no matter how desperately two might fight against six, there was little hope of success in face of such overwhelming odds. So, while he was prepared to throw himself heart and soul into the fray, he was also on the watch for a chance of escape.

The entrance of the Darrell's into the cavern had been so precipitate, and both of them had been so intent upon the object of their coming, that they had forgotten their usual precaution and neglected to close the door giving them admittance.

It was a slab of stone, carefully fitted to its place, swinging easily on iron pivots, and usually fastened by a stout spring. Being left open, it disclosed a patch of blackness a shade darker than the wall on either side, and this caught Connell's eye just as the rush was made.

Believing that here was offered a chance of escape that could be utilized better in darkness than in light, and knowing also that a battle against odds could be more successfully waged under the same conditions, he used his lantern as a weapon of offence, and thereby dashed out its flame at the very beginning of the fracas.

For a moment he entertained a vague hope that he would be able to draw Peveril with him into the place that he had discovered, and that thus they might effect an escape together. Quickly finding this impossible, he sprang to one side, after knocking down one of his enemies, groped along the wall until he found the desired opening, and entered it.

As he did so he came in contact with the slight figure of Mary Darrell, who had here taken refuge at the outbreak of the struggle, and was awaiting its termination in trembling anxiety. Now, thinking the new-comer to be her father, and desirous of saving him from harm, she gave the stone door a push that closed it. Then she said:

"I am so glad to have you safely away from those dreadful men, dear papa! Now you will go back with me to the house, won't you, for I am afraid to go alone?"

"Yes, only hurry!" whispered the Irishman, readily accepting the situation, but not daring to speak aloud for fear of betraying his identity. At the same time the thought, "What a coward the young fellow is, to be sneaking away from an elegant shindy like the one behind us! I've a mind to give him a taste of me fist for luck when we get out of this black hole! No, I will not, though. I'll lave him be, for wasn't it him saved Mr. Peril's life, after all?"

Resting one hand lightly on his guide's shoulder, he followed her closely, and had barely reached the foregoing conclusion when the girl flung open a door, and the two stepped into a lighted room. For a moment their eyes were completely dazzled by its brightness.

Mary was the first to become accustomed to the glare of light, and turned to speak to her supposed father. Upon seeing the face of a perfect stranger she uttered a cry of dismay, and started as though to fly, but the other clutched her arm.

"None of that, young feller!" he said, sternly. "Now that you've brought me so far you'll see me farther and show me the way out of here. You're a fine, bold chap, ain't you?" he added, in a tone of scorn. "Look like you was fitter to be a girl than a lad, any day, and, if it wasn't for the good turn you done me friend back yonder, I'd be tempted to give you a kindergarten lesson in the manly art of self-defence. As it is, I'll let you off this time, provided you'll show me the way out. But you want to get a move on."

Terribly frightened as she was, the girl still found strength to open a door on the opposite side of the room and motion for the man to pass through. As he did so she slammed it behind him and locked it. Then her overwrought feelings gave way, and she sank into a chair, sobbing hysterically.

Furious at finding himself thus tricked, the Irishman's first impulse was to turn and batter down the door, but a couple of heavy kicks delivered against it for this purpose brought forth a loud cry from some lower region.

"Hi! up dar. What you all a-doin'?"

At the same time it flashed into Connell's mind that his recent enemies of the cavern might appear at any moment and

open the door in such a way as to cause him to regret that it had not remained closed. Besides, was he not capable of finding his own way out of a house?

"Of course I am," he muttered, "and I'd best be doing it in a hurry, too. So good-bye, young feller, and here's hoping we'll meet again."

Then he made his way down-stairs, opened a door, and found himself in a kitchen, confronted by a resolute old colored woman, who, after one glance at his strange face, let fly at it a ladle of hot water. This assault was immediately followed by such a well-directed shower of plates, pans, and culinary utensils as caused the intruder to utter howls of pain and make a blind dash for an outer door.

Even outside the house his troubles were far from ended, for shouting men were running towards him through the darkness, while at the same time a dog leaped at him.

Throttling the animal and flinging him off after a vigorous struggle, Connell had next to knock down a man who was attacking him on the opposite side, receive a blow from a broom-handle wielded by Aunt Nimmo, dodge several other assailants, and finally to run for his life.

When the poor fellow at length found himself alone and safe from present pursuit, he sat breathlessly on a log, over which he had just pitched headlong, and began to consider his situation.

"You may talk about your dynamite and gunpowder," he said, "but being blown up with either of them isn't a patch to what I've gone through this night. What with being wracked on a rock in the sea, fighting smugglers, nagurs, and Polanders--to say nothing of dogs and other wild animals--beat and battered, torn and scalded, tripped up and lost in the wilderness, and all in the middle of a cruel blackness, is an experience that any man might be grateful to be done with. If I have a whole bone left inside of me skin, or a rag to me back, it's more than I'm hoping. Now what'll I do next?"

"Will I go back to the house? Indade I will not. Will I make another try for the cave? Not so long as I have me right mind. Will I go back to Red Jacket?--and meet them as would ax me what had I done with Mister Peril? Not on your life. Where is Mister Peril at this blessed minute, anyhow? At sea on board the smuggler, or I miss me guess. How will I get to him? By taking a boat, of course. Where will I find one? At Laughing Fish Cove, to be sure. That's the very place, bedad! and the sooner I'm getting there the better."

The tug *Broncho* had reached Laughing Fish about an hour before Mike Connell arrived at this decision. She had come in search of the party of log-wreckers that she had brought to that place more than a week earlier, and now those on board were greatly troubled at not finding a trace of the missing men save their deserted camp. Nor could they obtain any information concerning them from the fisher folk of the cove.

On board the tug was Major Arkell, who had been led by curiosity to take the trip. He was curious to know what had become of the young man whom he had sent into that region to pick up wrecked logs, and he was also curious to ascertain what had become of a large number of those same logs that still remained unaccounted for. At the same time he would like to investigate certain reports that had reached him of the reopening of some old mine-workings in that neighborhood. He had hoped that his researches might not take him beyond Laughing Fish, where he anticipated finding Richard Peveril prepared to answer all his questions. Failing to discover the young man, or any trace of him, the problems that he had set out to solve became more interesting than before, and he ordered Captain Spillins to start at daybreak on a cruise still farther up the coast.

Early on the following morning, therefore, everything was in readiness on board the tug, and its crew were getting up the anchor when their attention was arrested by the shouts and gesticulations of a man on the beach.

"Send a boat in and see what he wants," said the manager; and ten minutes later Mike Connell was on board, telling his story to a highly interested group of listeners.

Within an hour after receiving her new passenger, the *Broncho*, under full head of steam, was several miles to the northward of Laughing Fish, and well out to sea, in hot pursuit of a small schooner. The latter was slipping easily along before the fresh morning breeze that had recently set in after a night of calm. The water rippled merrily past her flashing sides, and she was making some six miles an hour. At the same time the *Broncho*, pouring forth great clouds of soft-coal smoke and heaping the smooth water into double white-crested billows as she rushed through it, was doing two miles to her one, and would soon overtake her.

"Whatever can that bloomin' teakettle want of us?" growled the captain of the schooner as he blinked with half-closed eyes at his pursuer. "She ain't no revenue boat, as I can see. Tom, h'ist our ensign as a hint for 'em to keep away."

The sailor obeyed, and a minute later ran the crimson flag of Great Britain to the main peak, where it streamed out

bravely in the freshening breeze.

"Got a flag aboard this boat, Captain Spillins?" asked Major Arkell as he watched the schooner from the *Broncho's* pilot-house.

"Yes, sir, two of 'em."

"Good. We'll see that fellow and go him one better. Set 'em both."

In consequence of this order the Stars and Stripes were quickly snapping defiantly from both the forward and after jack-staffs of the on-rushing tug.

"Sheer off, blast you, or you'll run us down!" bellowed the captain of the schooner as the tug ranged close abreast.

"Is that your man?" asked the manager, of Mike Connell.

"He is. Sure I'd know him from a thousand by me own frescos on his purty face."

"Have you a man named Richard Peveril aboard your craft?" demanded Captain Spillins.

"None of your d----d business."

"Run him down!" ordered Major Arkell, sternly, and the words had hardly left his mouth before the two vessels came together with a crash.



CHAPTER XXV

A SEA-FIGHT ON LAKE SUPERIOR

As no other schooner was in sight, and as this one was standing off the coast when discovered, the *Broncho* people had from the very first believed her to be the one they wanted. Her hoisting of British colors strengthened this belief, and it was finally confirmed by Connell's recognition of her captain. Until that moment, however, they had entertained serious doubts as to whether they should find Peveril on board; for it did not seem credible that even a smuggler, accustomed to running great risks, would dare abduct and forcibly carry off an American citizen. They did not know of the tempting reward promised to the schooner's captain for doing that very thing, nor of his determination to make this his last voyage on the great lake. So they anxiously awaited his answer to the question:

"Have you a man named Richard Peveril aboard your craft?"

When it came, although it was neither yes nor no, it so thoroughly confirmed their suspicions that they had no hesitation in attempting to rescue their friend by force, and the *Broncho's* men gave a yell of delight as the two vessels crashed together.

On board the tug this moment had been foreseen and prepared for. Two small anchors had been got ready to serve as grappling-irons, and each man had been told off for special duty. The regular crew of four men had been materially strengthened by the addition of the two passengers; but, as the engineer must be left on board under all circumstances, the available fighting force was reduced to five. As it happened, this was the exact number on board the schooner. So, as the *Bronchos* scrambled to her deck, each singled out an individual and went for him.

The vessel had been thrown into the wind by the collision, her sails were thrashing to and fro with a tremendous clatter, which, combined with a roar of escaping steam from the tug, created such dire confusion among the smugglers as rendered them almost incapable of resistance. In fact, their captain was the only one who made a show of fighting; and, springing at him with a howl of delight, Mike Connell sent him sprawling to the deck with a single blow. Then the Irishman dove down the companionway, cast a hasty glance about the little cabin, and made for the only door in sight. A couple of vigorous kicks burst it open, and in another minute Richard Peveril was again a free man.

As the two friends reached the deck, Connell uttered a wild Irish yell of triumph, while the released captive, who now gained his first inkling of what had taken place, stared about him in bewilderment.

Then he burst into a shout of laughter at the spectacle of four men, one of whom was the dignified manager of the great White Pine Mining Company, calmly sitting on the prostrate bodies of four others, while a fifth, who had just struggled to his feet with a very rueful countenance, suddenly dropped to the deck again as he caught sight of Connell.

Greeting Peveril with a hearty cheer, and carrying him with them, the *Bronchos* regained their ship and cast off the lines that held her to the schooner. As these were loosed her jingle-bell rang merrily, her screw churned the dimpled waters into a yeasty foam, and, with a derisive farewell yell from her exultant crew, she dashed away, leaving her recent antagonist enveloped in a cloud of sulphurous smoke. The whole affair had occupied just five minutes.

There was no lack of entertainment on board the good tug *Broncho* as she again headed southward and ploughed her way briskly towards Laughing Fish, for every one had thrilling stories to tell or to hear.

"It seems to me," remarked Major Arkell to Peveril, after listening attentively to the young man's narration, "that you have managed to compress a greater number of desperate adventures and hair-breadth escapes into a short space of time than any other man in the Copper Country. I, for instance, have been here for ten years, and haven't yet had an adventure worth the telling."

"Not even the one of this morning?"

"Oh, that was only an incident compared with what has happened to you. How do you manage it? Do you always find such stirring times wherever you go?"

"No, indeed," laughed Peveril; "until very recently I have led a most quiet and uneventful life. Even now I would gladly exchange all my adventures, as you are pleased to call them, for the smallest scrap of information regarding the mine that I came out here to find."

"Haven't you learned anything concerning your Copper Princess yet?"

"Not one word."

"That's strange! I wonder if it can be located in the Ontonagon region?"

"I had just about made up my mind to visit that section and find out," replied Peveril. "That is, if I have earned enough money while working for you to pay my travelling expenses."

"I guess you have," laughed the major; "but I can't let you go yet a while, for I shall want you to help me settle accounts with that old fellow who stole our logs. Besides, you have so aroused my curiosity regarding those prehistoric workings of yours that I should like very much to visit them. Do you think you could find the entrance again?"

"Which entrance--the hole down which I was thrown, or the one through which I crawled out?"

"The one by which you were introduced to them, of course. From your own account, the other is altogether too small for comfort, and the chances of being shot for trespass are altogether too great in its vicinity."

"I expect I could find the locality, but I hate the idea of ever going near it again. I don't think you can imagine what I suffered while down there. I am sure the place will haunt my worst dreams during the remainder of my life."

"By going down again with plenty of light, company, and an assured means at leaving at any moment, the place will present a very different and much more cheerful aspect. Besides, the ancient tools that you mention as existing in such numbers down there are becoming so scarce as to be very valuable and well worth collecting. So, on the whole, I think we had better go and take a look at your prehistoric diggings this very day."

"Very well, sir. Since you insist upon it, I will act as your guide; but I must confess that I shall be heartily glad to leave this part of the country and return to the civilization of Red Jacket."

"Civilization of Red Jacket is good!" laughed the other. "How long since you considered it as civilized?"

"Ever since I left there and found out how much worse other places could be."

As a result of this conversation, four men left Laughing Fish soon after the tug again dropped anchor in its cove, and took to the trail that two of them had followed before. These two were Peveril and Connell. The others were the White Pine manager and Captain Spillins. Arrived at the point from which "Darrell's Folly" could be seen, they turned abruptly to the right and plunged into the woods.

Only too well did Peveril remember the path over which he had been dragged a helpless captive only three days before. But the way seemed shorter now than then, and he was surprised to discover the dreaded shaft within a few hundred feet of the trail they had just left.

They had brought ropes with them, as well as an axe, and candles in abundance. Now, after cutting away the bushes from the shaft-mouth, and measuring its depth by letting down a lighted candle until it was extinguished in the water at the bottom, they prepared for the descent. The major was to go first, and Peveril, whose dread of the undertaking had been partially overcome, was to follow. The others were to remain on the surface to pull their companions up, when their explorations should be finished.

So Major Arkell seated himself in a loop of the rope, swung over the edge of the old shaft, and was slowly lowered until the measured length had run out. Then the others, peering anxiously down from above, saw his twinkling light swing back and forth until it suddenly disappeared. A moment later the rope was relieved of its strain, and they knew that its burden had been safely deposited on the rocky platform described by Peveril. He went next, and was quickly landed in safety beside his companion.

"It is an old working, sure as you live!" exclaimed the major, who was examining the walls of the gallery with a professional eye. "And here are the tools you spoke of. Beautiful specimens, by Jove! Finest I ever saw. We must have them all up--every one. But let us go back a piece and examine the drift. First time I ever knew of those old fellows drifting, though. They generally only worked in open pits until they struck water, and then quit. Didn't seem to have any idea of pumps."

Still filled with his recent horror of the place, Peveril tried to dissuade the other from penetrating any farther into the workings, but in vain; and so, each bearing a lighted candle, they set forth. At the several piles of material, previously noted as barring the way, the major uttered exclamations of delight and astonishment.

"It is copper!" he cried. "Mass copper, almost pure! The very richest specimens I have ever seen! Why, man, the old mine must have been a bonanza, if it all panned out stuff like this! These piles were evidently ready for removal when something interfered to prevent. Wonder what it could have been? Didn't find any bones, did you, or evidences of a catastrophe?"

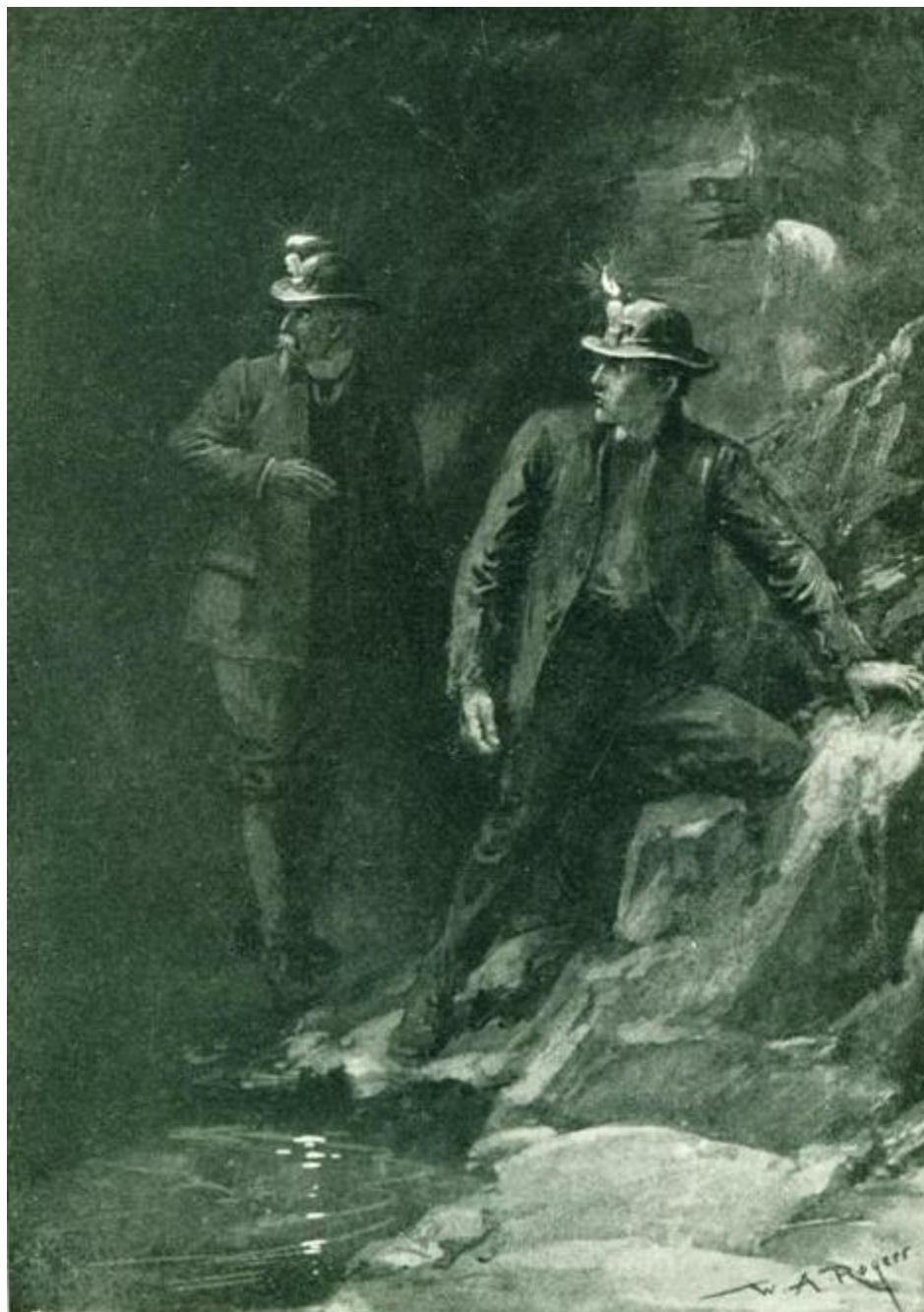
"No. Nothing but what you see. Good heavens, major! What's that?"

With blanched faces the two stood and listened. Strong men as they were, their very limbs trembled, while their hearts almost ceased beating.

Again it came from the black depths beyond them—a cry of agony, pitiful and pleading.

"Let's get out of this," whispered the major, clutching at Peveril's arm and endeavoring to drag him back the way they had come. "I've had enough."

"No," replied the other, resolutely; "we can't leave while some human being is calling for deliverance from this awful place."



THE TWO MEN STOOD AND LISTENED

"You don't think it a human voice?"

"I do, and at any rate I am going to see. There! Hear it?"

Again came the shrill cry, echoing from the rocky walls. "Help! For God's sake, don't leave us here to perish!"

At the sound Peveril sprang forward, and the major tremblingly followed him.

Back in the gloom, a hundred yards from where they had halted, they came upon a scene that neither will ever forget so long as he lives.

A slender youth and a white-haired man stood clinging to each other, and gazing with wildly incredulous eyes at the advancing lights.

"It is Richard Peveril, father! Oh, thank God! Thank God, sir, that you have come in time!" cried the younger of the two.

"Richard Peveril?" repeated the old man, huskily. "No, no, Mary! It can't be! It must not be! Richard Peveril is dead, and the contract is void. He has no claim on the Copper Princess. It is all mine. Mine and yours. But don't let him know. Keep the secret for one week longer--only one little week--then you may tell it to the world."



CHAPTER XXVI

FIRST NEWS OF THE COPPER PRINCESS

When Peveril made his miraculous escape from the old mine, he left his place of exit open. In his impatience to get away from the scene of his sufferings, he had not even given another thought to the great stone slab that he had raised with such difficulty and precariously propped into position by a few fragments of rock. So the narrow passage leading down from the cavern into the ancient workings that had been so carefully concealed for centuries was at length open to the inspection of any who should happen that way. Thus it remained during the day of exciting incidents in the cavern, and through the struggle that was ended by the smugglers bearing Peveril away captive to their schooner.

Having thus disposed of the person whom of all in the world he most dreaded, and placed him where it was apparently impossible for him to make a claim on the Copper Princess before the expiration of the term of contract, Ralph Darrell rejoined his daughter.

She, noting his excitement and fearing to increase it, made no mention of her own encounter with the other stranger, whose presence in the cavern seemed to have escaped her father's notice. So they only talked of Peveril; and the girl, picturing him as he had appeared on the several occasions of their meeting, wondered if he could really be trying to rob them of their slender possessions, as her father claimed.

The latter talked so incoherently of a conspiracy, a contract, and of the great wealth that would be theirs in one week from that time, that she was completely bewildered, and for the first time in her life began to wonder if her papa knew exactly what he was saying.

Thus thinking, she soothed him as best she could, and finally succeeded in getting him off to bed; but in the morning the subject was again uppermost in his mind, and he would talk of nothing else. Now he wondered how Peveril could have found his way into the cavern; and as Mary was also very curious on that point, she willingly accompanied him on a tour of investigation.

In this search it was not long before they discovered the upraised stone slab at the rear end of the cavern, and peered curiously into the black passage beneath it, which from the very first Ralph Darrell was determined to explore.

"It is a part of our own mine," he said, "and so I must find out all about it. There is no danger, for I can go very carefully, and return when I please. I must go, though, for it is clearly my duty to do so. Who knows but what I may strike another vein down there, as valuable as the one we are already working. So, dear, do you wait here, and I will come back to you very shortly."

But brave Mary Darrell would not agree to any such proposition, and declared that if her father insisted on going into that horrid place she should follow him.

So the old man and the girl--the former filled with eager curiosity and the latter with a premonition of danger--crept under the great slab and entered the sloping passage. They had but a single candle with them, and of this Mary was glad, for she knew it would limit their exploration and compel a speedy return.

Both of them being of much slighter frame than Peveril, they found little difficulty in slipping through the passage and reaching the ancient workings to which it led. Here Darrell began to find copper, and went into ecstasies over its richness.

Forgetful of everything else, he pushed eagerly forward from one pile of the valuable metal to another, and Mary, inspired by his enthusiasm, almost forgot her dread of the gloomy place in which so much wealth was stored. So absorbed were they that neither of them paid any attention to a dull sound, as of some heavy body falling, that came from a distance.

Finally, their candle burning low warned them to hasten their return; but to their consternation, when they again reached the end of the passage, they found its entrance closed. The great slab, insecurely supported, had fallen into place, and the utmost exertion of their feeble strength was insufficient to move it.

As they realized the full extent of the disaster that had thus befallen them, the girl was awed into a despairing silence; while the old man's impaired intellect gave way completely beneath the awful strain of the situation, and he broke into incoherent ravings. At length Mary Darrell knew that her beloved father had lost his mind, and that she must share her living tomb with a madman.

In his ravings he declared that the situation was exactly as he wanted it; for now no one, not even Richard Peveril

himself, could share their new-found wealth. With the next breath he expressed an intention of getting back to the piles of copper as quickly as possible, that he might defend them with his life against all claimants.

Terrible as it was to the girl to hear her father talk in this way, his mention of Peveril brought a faint ray of hope. If the young man had indeed gained access to the cavern from this direction, then the old workings must possess some other exit. If they could only discover such a place, it was barely possible that they might still escape. Thus thinking, she humored her father's desire to return to the piles of copper, and even hastened his steps in that direction, for their candle was burning perilously low. So nearly had it expired that they had hardly regained the old workings before its feeble flame gave a final flicker, and they were plunged into blackness.

Through this they still groped their way until the old man's strength was exhausted and he refused to go farther. Then, clinging to him in an agony of despair, the poor girl closed her eyes and prayed:

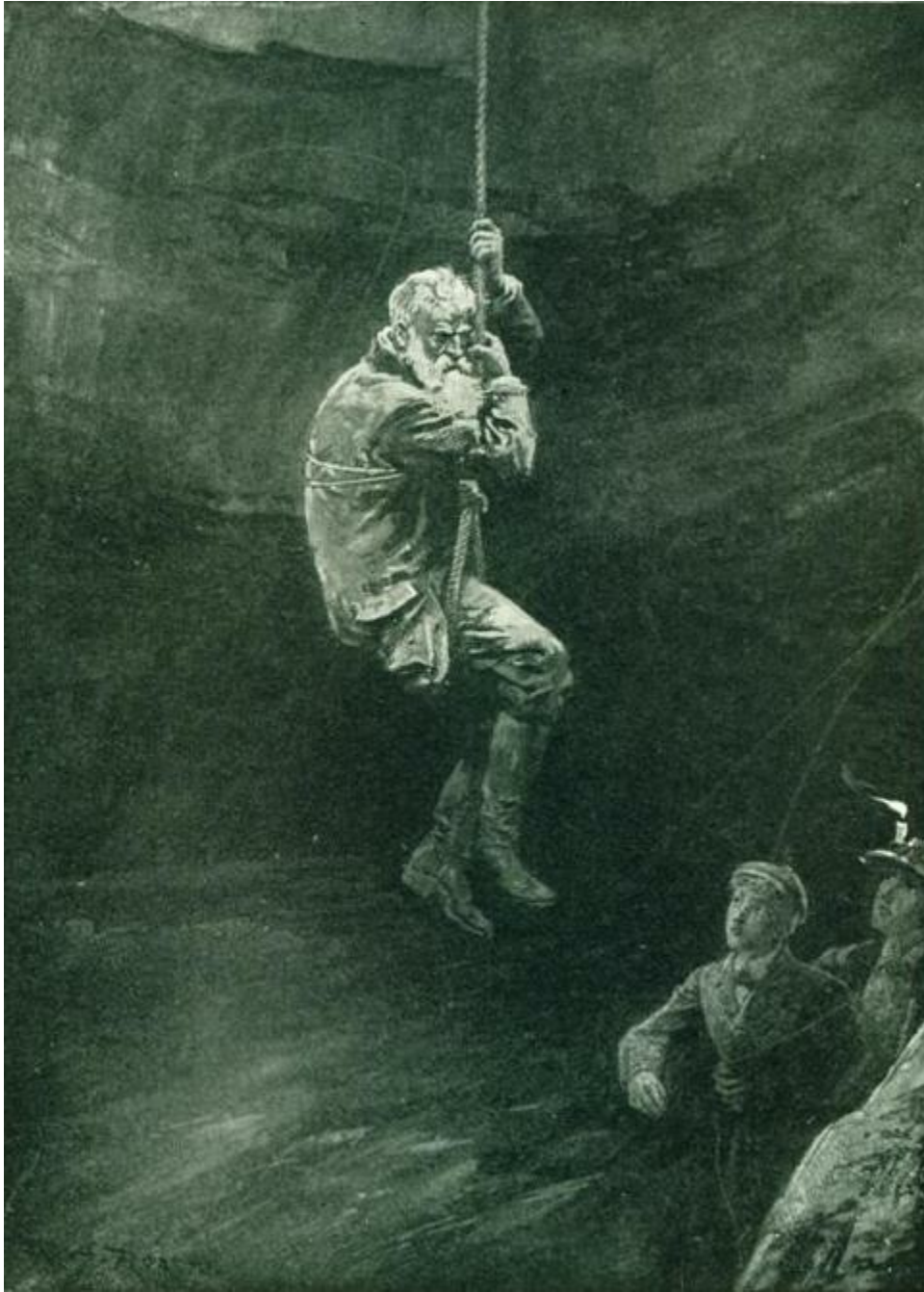
"Dear Christ, help me in this time of my bitter trouble, for I have no strength save in Thee!"

Her cry was heard and her prayer was answered even as it was uttered; for with the opening of her eyes she caught a far-away gleam of light. A minute later, when Richard Peveril came to her, he seemed like one sent from heaven, and at that moment she could have worshipped him.

Peveril's heart leaped at the sound of her voice, and he received two other distinct thrills of delight from her father's incoherent words. One was when he addressed the slight figure at his side as "Mary," and the other was caused by his mention of the Copper Princess. By the first Peveril's recently aroused suspicion concerning the sex of the wearer of that golf costume was reduced to a certainty, while by the other he gained his first clue to the mine of which he was in search.

At the moment, however, these things merely flashed through his mind; for he realized that the present was neither the time nor the place to discuss them. The two helpless ones, so wonderfully intrusted to his care, must be removed at once from the place in which they had suffered so keenly. Both he and the major agreed that it would be best to take them out by way of the shaft, and though they were full of curiosity as to how the Darrells came into their distressing position, both manfully refrained from asking questions until they had escorted them to the entrance. For this forbearance the major deserved even greater credit than his young friend; for as yet he had no knowledge of who the strangers were, nor how it happened that they seemed to know Peveril.





RESCUED FROM THE SHAFT

Arrived at the shaft, it was decided that the major should ascend first, to prepare those at the top for what was coming, as well as to receive the old man, who would be sent up next. As he adjusted the rope about his body, he whispered to Peveril, who was assisting him:

"Who are they?"

"Darrells," was the laconic answer.

"Not old man Darrell of the 'Folly'?"

"Yes."

"And his daughter?"

"I believe so," replied the young man, at the same time wondering how the other had discovered so quickly the rightful

sex of the apparent lad.

"But how on earth do they happen to know you?"

"They ought to, seeing that the old man has shot at me twice; while Miss Darrell and I have met several times, and on one occasion, at least, she saved my life."

"Whew! No wonder you greet each other like old friends," rejoined the major, as he swung off over the black pool and began slowly to ascend the ancient shaft.

When the rope was again lowered it brought some bits of stout cord for which Peveril had asked, and with these he fastened the old man so securely into the loop that there was no possibility of his falling out. Although Ralph Darrell was still highly excited and talked constantly, he readily agreed to every proposition made by his daughter, and offered no objection to going up the shaft.

As he swung out from the platform, and those above began to hoist on the rope, his daughter bent anxiously forward to note his progress. Apparently unconscious of her own danger, she leaned out farther and farther, until Peveril, fearful lest she should lose her balance and plunge into the pool, reached an arm about her waist and held her.

The girl was so intent upon watching her father that for a moment she paid no attention to this. Then, suddenly becoming conscious of the strong support against which she was leaning, she stepped quickly back to a position of safety.

"I didn't suppose you would think it necessary to take such care of a boy," she said, with an attempt at dignity.

"I shouldn't," laughed Peveril; "but why didn't you tell me yesterday that you were a young lady, and that your name was Mary?"

"I don't remember that you asked me."

"That's so. It was you who asked all the questions and I who answered them. So now it is my turn."

"I sha'n't promise to answer, though."

"Oh, but you must; for there are some things that I am extremely anxious to know. For instance, why do you dress in boy's costume?"

"Because my father wished me to."

"An excellent reason. Now I want to know if 'Darrell's Folly' and the Copper Princess are one and the same mine?"

"I believe the Copper Princess has been called by that other name, which, however, I will thank you not to repeat in my presence."

"All right, I won't; but tell me--"

"Here is the rope, Mr. Peveril, and, thanking you over and over again for your very great kindness, I will bid you *au revoir*," said the girl, hurriedly adjusting the loop and preparing to ascend.

There was never a more amazed or abashed man in this world than was Mike Connell when the "young lady" whom he, full of curiosity, was helping to hoist from the old shaft made her appearance, and he discovered her to be the "lad" whom he had treated with such freedom the evening before. He was so staggered that he could not utter a word, but simply stared at her with an expression in which mortification and admiration were equally blended.

The moment the girl gained a footing on the surface she made a comprehensive little bow to the men assembled about the shaft-mouth, and said:

"My father and I thank you, gentlemen, from overflowing hearts, for your great kindness to us, and shall hope to see you at our home for supper, after you have been rejoined by Mr. Peveril. Come, papa, let us go and make ready for company." With this she led the old man away in the direction of his "Folly."

Half an hour later the four men from White Pine were received at the door of the Darrell house by a dignified young lady, simply but becomingly dressed in the usual costume of her sex. Looking directly at one of them, she said:

"I bid you welcome, Mr. Peveril, to your own Copper Princess."

CHAPTER XXVII

A NIGHT WITH A MADMAN

When left alone at the bottom of the ancient shaft, with the impenetrable gloom of the prehistoric workings crowding him close, Peveril had found a few minutes in which to reflect upon the strange happenings of the past half-hour. "Darrell's Folly" was the Copper Princess, the mine in which he owned a half-interest--the one for which he had searched so long and had almost given up hopes of finding. Was it of any value? Or did the name, applied in derision, rightly describe it? And the old man who had twice attempted to take his life, whom he had just rescued from a living tomb, was his partner! How could they ever work harmoniously together? He certainly should not agree to the carrying on of further smuggling operations, and so there was a barrier to their amicable relations at the very outset.

But was that man the person with whom he would have to deal, after all? He was evidently crazy, and probably had been from the very first; for Peveril now remembered that Mr. Ketchum had hinted at something of the kind during their last interview. As a crazy man could not legally transact business, his dealings would then be with Ralph Darrell's heirs or legal representatives. Who were those heirs? Were there any other besides this daughter, Mary? He hoped not. What a brave, splendid girl she was, and how pleasant it would be to discuss business plans with her! How absurd of him not to have recognized her at once, even in her boyish costume, and how stupid she must think him!

He wished those fellows up above had not been in such a hurry with that rope, for there were a lot more questions he wanted to ask her. So many that he would not have objected if he and she had been left down there together ever so much longer. How different the old mine seemed now to what it had when he first knew it! Hereafter it would always be associated in his mind with memories of a slight figure that he had been permitted to hold for a single minute, a flushed face, a pair of glorious eyes, and a voice that he should never forget. How shy she was, and at the same time how dignified; how sweet and womanly in her anxiety about her father! He hoped they could be friends, as all business partners should be. Of course they could never be anything more than that; for he was not forgetting his obligation to Rose--oh no, not for one minute.

How infernally slow those chaps up above were now, and why didn't they let down the rope? Were they going to keep him waiting in that beastly hole forever? It really seemed so.

By a simple process of reasoning, and the putting together of the various bits of information gained from her father, Mary Darrell had reached the conclusion that the young man whose fortunes had been so strangely interwoven with hers during the past ten days was the rightful owner of the mine that her father had claimed for so many years. She was too loyal to the latter to believe for a moment that he had consciously attempted to defraud Peveril of his rights, but credited all his actions to the sad mental condition of which she had only now become aware.

"Poor, dear papa!" she said to herself. "He has done splendidly to take care of me for so long as he has, and now I will take care of him. We will go away from this horrid place, where he gets so excited, and find some little home in the East, where he can rest until his mind is wholly restored.

"In the meantime this Mr. Peveril can have the old mine, to do with as he pleases. I shall let him know that we consider it his property before he has a chance to even make a claim against it. I mustn't let him see for a moment how badly we feel about it, though, for he seems very nice, and has certainly placed us under a great obligation by coming to our rescue so splendidly. I wonder how he knew that papa and I were down in that awful place?"

Having got her father to his room, told Aunty Nimmo to prepare for company, and hurriedly changed her dress, Mary Darrell greeted the expected guests according to her privately arranged programme, and invited them in to supper. After seeing them seated at the table and provided with a bountiful meal, she left them on the plea that her father needed her attention.

The girl had not been gone many minutes, and Peveril's friends were still congratulating him upon having come into his fortune, at the same time speculating whether the "Folly" was worth anything or not, when she re-entered the room with a frightened expression on her face. Addressing herself to Major Arkell, she said:

"Would you mind coming up to see my father, sir? I fear he is very ill."

The major at once complied with this request, and, after he had gone, Captain Spillins said: "I shouldn't wonder if the old fellow played out and left you in sole possession of the Princess, after all, Mr. Peveril."

"Which Princess are you meanin', captain?" asked Mike Connell. "Sure it seems to me there's two of them."

"Have a care, Connell," said Peveril, warningly. "Remember the circumstances under which we are here."

"I beg your pardon, Mister Peril," exclaimed the Irishman, contritely; "I'd near forgot that you was already bespoke."

A hot flush sprang to the young man's cheek, but ere he could frame a reply Major Arkell reappeared, looking greatly worried.

"Boys," he said, "we've a very serious case on our hands, and one that demands immediate action. The old man upstairs is fairly out of his head, besides being in a high fever. He needs medical attendance as quickly as it can be got to him, and careful nursing. I have given him an opiate, which I hope will keep him quiet for a while, and now I propose to go to Red Jacket in the tug for a doctor and a nurse. Captain Spillins will, of course, go with me, and we shall try to be back by morning. In the meantime the poor young lady must not be left alone, or with only that old aunty, who is nearly frightened out of her wits, and so I think you, Peveril, ought to stay here with Connell and do what you can. You are, in a sense, the proprietor here, you know, and as Connell has also been here before, maybe the old man will be more reasonable with you than he would be with entire strangers."

"I quite agree with you that some of us ought to stay here and do what we can," said Peveril; "and, under the circumstances, I suppose Connell and I are the ones to do so. At the same time, I haven't had much experience in caring for madmen."

"No more have I," said Connell, "but I'll do me best, for sake of the young lady, and maybe she'll forgive me for treating her the same as I would a lad."

"And, major," added Peveril, "if you will kindly fetch my luggage from the Trefethen's I shall be greatly obliged."

So the party separated; and, while two of them wended their way back to the tug at Laughing Fish, the others prepared for the long vigil of the night.

After the effect of the opiate had passed, their patient was seized with paroxysms of raving and frantic efforts to leave his bed for the purpose of protecting his property. At such times it required the united efforts of the two volunteer nurses to restrain him, and after each attack he was left weak and helpless as an infant. Then he would weep, and beg piteously not to be abandoned to the mercy of his enemies; or he would fancy himself still in the awful blackness of the ancient workings, and plead with his attendants not to be left thereto die.

"For the sake of my daughter, gentlemen--my only child--who has no one else in the world to love her or care for her, I beg of you to save me. If you are human, take pity on her and let me go!" he would cry.

At such times no voice, not even Mary's, seemed to soothe him as did that of Peveril, and his most violent struggles were controlled by the gentle firmness of the young athlete.

All through that dreadful night Mary Darrell watched Peveril with tear-filled eyes, wondering at his strength and gentleness, and unconsciously loving him for them. Not that she would for an instant have admitted such a thing even to herself. She tried instead to believe that he was the cause of all this sorrow, and that she hated him for it. "In whatever he does," she said to herself, "he is actuated by remorse, and a desire to atone in some way for ruining my father's life."

The anxiously awaited dawn found Ralph Darrell lying quietly with closed eyes and Peveril keeping wakeful watch beside him. Aunty Nimmo had been sent to her bed long since, and Connell was fast asleep on the floor of the hall just outside the sick-room door. Mary Darrell sat in an easy-chair, overcome by exhaustion, also sleeping lightly.

As the growing light fell on her tear-stained face, crowned by a wealth of close-clipped hair curling in tiny ringlets, Peveril looked at her curiously, and wondered why he had never thought her beautiful until that moment. Apparently conscious of the young man's gaze, the girl suddenly opened her eyes, and a faint flush suffused her pale cheeks. Ere either she or Peveril could speak, the muffled sound of a steam-whistle broke the morning stillness.

"Our friends have come, Miss Darrell," whispered the watcher. "You have just time to go to your room and refresh yourself with a dash of cold water before they appear."

Nodding assent, the girl accepted the suggestion and departed.

Then Peveril sent Connell to meet the new-comers, who, as he knew, would steam directly into the land-locked basin, and remained to finish his vigil alone.

Suddenly, as he sat absorbed in meditation, the madman, who had been watching through half-closed eyes, sprang upon him without a sound of warning and clutched his throat with a vise-like grip.

Not even the utmost exertion of Peveril's splendid strength served to loose that horrid hold. In silence he fought for his life, until he grew black in the face and his eyes started from their sockets. His head seemed on the point of bursting. He reeled, staggered, and then, together with his terrible assailant, fell heavily to the floor. As they did so, the old man's head struck on a sharp corner; he uttered a moan, and at last the deadly clutch on Peveril's throat was relaxed.

With his next moment of consciousness Peveril was sitting on the floor gasping for breath, and Ralph Darrell lay motionless beside him in a pool of blood. Then came quick steps on the stair, and Mary Darrell, accompanied by Major Arkell and the doctor from Red Jacket, entered the room.

For an instant the girl stared horror-stricken at the scene before her. Then she darted forward and clasped her father's body in her arms, crying out as she did so:

"You have killed him, Richard Peveril!--killed an old man, sick and helpless; robbed him of his all, and then murdered him! Oh, papa!--dear, dear papa! Why did I leave you for a single minute?"

"My! How she hates poor Mr. Peril!" whispered Nelly Trefethen, who had come to act as nurse, and who, guided by Mike Connell, reached the doorway in time to witness the tableau, as well as to hear Mary Darrell's cruel words.



CHAPTER XXVIII

LEFT IN SOLE POSSESSION

Although Ralph Darrell was to all appearance dead, the doctor pronounced him to be still alive, and caused him to be lifted back to the bed, where he dressed his wound, at the same time administering restoratives. While this was being done, Major Arkell, taking charge of Peveril, led him to another room, in which his things, brought from the Trefethen house, had been placed. The young man was still trembling from his recent awful experience.

"In another minute all would have been over with me," he said, in describing the incident to his friend. "For I could no more loosen his clutch than if it had been a band of steel."

"That fall was a mighty lucky thing, then," commented the other.

"Yes, I suppose it was, for apparently nothing else could have saved me. At the same time, think how unpleasant it would have been for me if it had killed him, and I had been charged with his murder!"

"Oh, pshaw! no one would have imagined such a thing."

"His daughter did," replied Peveril, in whose ears Mary Darrell's terrible accusation was still ringing.

"She didn't know what she was saying. You must remember the trying circumstances of her position, and forgive and forget everything else. If I am any judge of human character, she is just the girl to bitterly regret her hasty words, if she ever recalls having uttered them."

"Of course I forgive her," said Peveril; "but I doubt if I can forget as long as I live."

A bath in water as hot as he could bear it, followed by a cold douche and a brisk rubbing with the coarse towels procured from Aunt Nimmo, restored the young man to his normal condition. Then he exchanged the ragged garb of a miner, that he had worn ever since leaving Red Jacket, for a suit of his own proper clothing. With this transformation in his appearance was so complete that when, a little later, Mary Darrell passed him in the hall, it was without recognition. She only regarded him as one of the many strangers who seemed suddenly to have taken unauthorized possession of her home.

At breakfast-time the doctor reported that his patient was sleeping quietly and doing wonderfully well. "In fact," said the medical gentleman, "I believe the blood-letting that resulted from his fall was just what he needed; and, as he seems to have a vigorous constitution, unimpaired by intemperate living, I predict for him a speedy recovery."

This prediction was so far fulfilled that, within two days, Ralph Darrell was sitting up, and, by the end of a week, he had very nearly regained his strength. At the same time his excitability had wholly disappeared, leaving him very quiet and as docile as a child, but with little memory of past happenings. His daughter was the one person whom he recognized, and to her he clung with passionate fondness, readily accepting her every suggestion, but always begging her to take him back to his Eastern home.

His rapid convalescence was largely due to her devoted care, and to the capital nursing of Nelly Trefethen, who proved most efficient in the sick-room. During that week the night-watches were taken by Mike Connell, whom Miss Darrell engaged expressly for the purpose, but Peveril was not asked to share them.

On the few occasions when he and Mary chanced to meet she treated him with formal politeness, but rarely spoke, and never gave him the opportunity of exchanging with her more than a few commonplace remarks. At the same time she watched him furtively, and he seldom left the house or entered it without her knowledge. She had learned his history, so far as Nelly Trefethen knew it, and, by her readiness to listen, encouraged the girl to talk by the hour on this theme.

She also learned one thing about him that was not told her, and that was that he was engaged to be married. One evening Nelly and Connell, coming back from a walk, encountered Peveril near the house, and close under a window at which Mary happened to be standing. As the young man was about to pass them the Irishman stopped him, saying:

"Oh, Mister Peril, would you mind telling Nelly here the thing you told me down the new shaft that time?"

"I don't think I remember what it was."

"About your being bespoke."

"Oh! about my engagement? Yes, I remember now that you did want me to tell Miss Nelly of it, though I am sure I can't

imagine why it should interest her."

"Arrah, Mister Peril, don't every young woman be interested to know if she's to smile on a young man or give him the cold stare?"

"If that is the case," laughed Peveril, "I am afraid all the girls must give me the cold stare, for I certainly am engaged; and, by the way, Miss Nelly, do you know if there is a letter awaiting me at your house? I received one from my sweetheart on the very day that I left Red Jacket, and, with most unpardonable carelessness, managed to lose it without having even opened it."

"I don't know, Mr. Peril--I mean, I didn't hear mother, speak of it," stammered the girl, so frightened that for a moment she had no idea of what she was saying. "I do mind, though, seeing one advertised in the post-office with a name something like yours," she added, more coherently.

"Then I must have dropped it on the street, and whoever found it must have been honest enough to return it to the post-office. I will write at once for it, and am much obliged for your information."

Some days later Peveril did write to the Red Jacket postmaster, and received prompt answer that the bit of mail-matter in question had been sent to the dead-letter office. So he wrote to Washington concerning his missing letter, and in due time learned that it had been returned to sender. Then, as he had no idea of "sender's" present address, he decided to wait until hearing from her again before attempting to forward his explanation of how it all happened.

In the meantime he was extremely interested in other affairs that engrossed more and more of his attention. On that very first morning he had shown to Major Arkell several papers that came to him with his baggage. Among these were Boise Carson's letter, lawyer Ketchum's note of identification, and the famous contract under which he claimed a half-ownership in the Copper Princess.

At a later date he also attempted to show these papers to Mary Darrell, but she declined to look at them, saying that, as she did not doubt the validity of his claim, she had no desire to discuss it.

Major Arkell, however, examined the papers carefully, and expressed himself as thoroughly satisfied that his young friend was a half-owner in the mine heretofore known as "Darrell's Folly."

"And now," he said, "let us examine the property, and see whether it is worth anything or not."

So these two set forth on a tour of inspection. They found the several buildings to be in fair order, and all machinery in an excellent state of preservation. Then they descended the shaft and examined the material through which the several galleries had been driven, and which the White Pine manager pronounced as barren even of promise as any rock he had ever seen.

"The trouble seems to be," he said, "that they persistently drifted in exactly the wrong direction, and went away from the true vein--which I believe to be indicated by those ancient workings over yonder--instead of towards it. Thus the engineer who laid out this mine either displayed great ignorance, or else your property does not include that strip of territory. But I'll tell you what we'll do. You stay here and hold the fort for a few days while I go and look the thing up."

"I don't like to have you take so much trouble," protested Peveril.

"No trouble at all, my dear fellow--purely a matter of business. I want, if possible, to become associated with you in this proposition. As it now stands, your mine is worthless, unless it includes, or can be made to include, those old workings. I believe they will make it extremely valuable, for I am persuaded that the vein indicated by them can be reached at a lower level from this very shaft."

So the major took his departure, and Peveril waited a whole week for his return. In the meantime he familiarized himself with his property, and, by means of a careful survey, established the relative positions of the prehistoric mine and the shaft of the Copper Princess.

During this week, as has been said, he saw very little of Mary Darrell, and often wondered how she occupied her time.

Finally there came a day when Miss Darrell informed Mike Connell that, as her father was now so much better, it would no longer be necessary to watch with him at night. So the honest fellow, who had been working hard with Peveril on his measurements, and was rejoiced at the prospect of an unbroken night's rest, retired early to the quarters that he and the young proprietor occupied together at some distance from the Darrells' house.

Very early on the following morning the two men were awakened by a loud knocking at their door, and the voice of Nelly Trefethen calling as though in distress.

"Coming!" shouted Peveril, as they both sprang from bed and hurriedly dressed. As they emerged from the house the girl exclaimed:

"They're gone, Mr. Peril! gone in the night, and I never heard a sound. How they went, no one can tell, for all the outer doors were left locked, with the keys on the inside. But they're gone, for I have hunted high and low without finding a sign of them."

"Who have gone?" demanded Peveril.

"Miss Mary and her father and the old colored woman."

That these three had taken a mysterious departure was only too apparent when the two men returned with Nelly to the house and searched it from top to bottom.

Then, under Connell's guidance, they went through the secret passage to the cavern. There they found a lighted lantern hung on the stunted cedar just outside the entrance, the canvas curtain drawn aside, the derrick swung out, and its tackle hanging down to within a foot of the black ledge, but that was all.

Three months after that time Peveril received the following letter:

"DEAR MR. PEVERIL:

"I feel it a duty to tell you that my dear father has at length passed peacefully away, and so will never trouble you again. At the very last he spoke lovingly of Richard Peveril, and said he was a splendid fellow; but I am inclined to think he referred to your father rather than to yourself. He was also perfectly rational on all subjects except that of the Princess, which he persisted in declaring was one of the richest copper mines of the world. I, of course, know better, for I realized long ago how truly the name 'Darrell's Folly' described that unfortunate venture.

"Whatever pleasure you may find in owning such an unremunerative piece of property you may enjoy without any fear of molestation, for I, as my father's sole heir, shall never lay claim to any share in it, and hereby authorize you to do with it as you think best.

"We have been very happy since we left you so suddenly and unexpectedly. The opportunity for departure came, and we embraced it.

"I have but one more thing to say before closing this one-sided correspondence forever--I humbly beg your pardon and crave your forgiveness for the cruel injustice that I once did you in a moment of agony.

"Trusting that you are happy (I knew of your engagement) and prosperous,

"I remain, always under obligations, your friend,

"MARY DARRELL."

With this letter there was no date nor address, and its only post-mark was the stamp of the railway postal-service on a distant Eastern road.

CHAPTER XXIX

A ROYAL NAME FOR A ROYAL MINE

Peveril was greatly distressed at the unforeseen and mysterious disappearance of the Darrells; for it made him feel as though he had driven them from their home and usurped their rights. The place also seemed very empty and forlorn without Mary Darrell's winning face and all-pervading presence; for, though he had seen but little of her and had reason to believe that she did not feel kindly towards him, he now realized how much his happiness had depended on the knowledge that she was always close at hand.

Then, too, the domestic establishment that ran on so smoothly under the supervision of Aunty Nimmo was completely broken up. Nelly Trefethen must, of course, return at once to Red Jacket, and this she did that very day on Mary Darrell's pony, under escort of Mike Connell, who was only too happy to make the journey on foot. The few men employed by Mr. Darrell having been paid off and discharged, the departure of his two remaining friends left the young proprietor entirely alone, in a place as desolate as though it were beyond the reach of human knowledge. The sky was overcast, making the day dark and cheerless, so that, as Peveril wandered disconsolately about his deserted property, the future looked to him as gloomy as the present.

"There can't be anything in it," he said to himself, as he gazed moodily down the black mouth of the shaft. "Of course, the men who sank a fortune in that hole would have found it out long ago if there were. As for those prehistoric workings on which the major counts so largely, I don't believe but what the old fellows who opened them also made a pretty thorough clean-up of everything in them. Certainly the few small piles of copper that they left behind would not now pay for their removal.

"It has all been very pleasant to dream of becoming a wealthy mine-owner, but the sooner I realize that it is only a dream, and wake from it to the necessity of earning a livelihood by hard work, the better off I shall be. At any rate, I know I won't spend another day alone in this place. If I did, I should go crazy. No wonder old man Darrell lost his mind under the conditions surrounding him. I don't believe Major Arkell will come back, anyway. Why should he, if, as is probable, he has discovered the utter worthlessness of the property? He knows that if he leaves me here alone I must turn up in Red Jacket sooner or later, and thinks the bad news he has to tell will keep until I do. Well, I shall throw the whole thing up to-morrow and go to him for a job. There isn't anything else for it that I can see.

"I guess he will give me something to do, and after a while I shall rise to be a plat-man, or timber boss, or even store-keeper, and then--Well, then I can settle down and marry some nice girl like Nelly Trefethen, perhaps achieve fame as a local politician, and so end my days in a blaze of glory. Oh, it's a lovely prospect! As for poor Rose, there's no use in thinking any longer of her, and the sooner she forgets me the better. Probably she has ere this, and, if so, I can't blame her."

At length the long day dragged itself wearily away, and darkness found Peveril faint with hunger, for he had not had the heart to prepare a dinner, awkwardly attempting to provide himself with something to eat in Aunty Nimmo's kitchen. A single lamp threw a faint ray out from the window, and in all that forlorn little mining village it was the only gleam of light to be seen.

Suddenly there came a clatter of hoofs and a cheery "Hello, the house!"

Instantly forgetful of his culinary operations, Peveril sprang to the door, just in time to fling it open and welcome Major Arkell, who was alighting from a weary-looking horse.

"What will you take for your Copper Princess, my boy?" shouted the new-comer as he entered the room, rubbing his hands and sniffing expectantly at the pleasant odors of cooking with which it was pervaded.

"About five cents," responded Peveril.

"Done! It's a bargain," cried the other. "And we'll settle the details of the transfer after eating the elegant supper that I discover in process of preparation. But you are not cooking half enough. I could eat twice as much as that and still be hungry. Let me show you how. What has become of Aunty Nimmo, that I find you presiding over her domain? Never mind; tell me later, after you've called Connell or some one to look after my horse."

"I will gladly attend to the horse, major, if you will take charge of the cooking," said Peveril, laughing for the first time that day. "You see, I am not an expert at this sort of thing, and--"

"No, I should judge not," interrupted the other, glancing comically at the various burned, lumpy, and muddy failures

with which the stove was covered; "but I'll do the trick for you if you will look after the beast."

Half an hour later the two sat down to a bountiful and fairly well-cooked meal that in the major's cheery company seemed to poor, hungry Peveril about as fine a one as he had ever eaten. While it was in progress he told of the happenings of the past week, including the mysterious disappearance of the Darrells; but, as the major did not seem to have any news to impart in return, he concluded that there was none to tell, and so forbore to ask questions.

It was not until after they had finished supper and were sitting before a cheerful blaze in the cosy living-room of the Darrell house that the major said:

"Now for our bargain. Though I could, of course, hold you to that five-cent deal, I won't do so, but will, instead, make an offer of ten thousand dollars for one-half of your half-interest in the Copper Princess."

"What!" gasped Peveril.

"Yes, I mean it; and, in addition, if you will devote that sum to the development of the mine, I will advance an equal amount, or ten thousand dollars more, for the same purpose. Now don't say a word until I have explained the situation. By a careful searching of old records and maps I have discovered that the Princess property not only embraces our prehistoric mine, but extends some distance beyond it. I think I have also found out why those who originally laid out this mine started their cuts on the wrong side of their shaft. They evidently knew that ancient workings existed somewhere in this neighborhood, but they were deceived as to their location, for on all the maps I find them marked, but the place thus indicated is always in the opposite direction from that in which we now know them to lie."

"But--" began Peveril.

"Wait a minute. Of course those old fellows may merely have struck a pocket and exhausted it, but I don't believe so, and am willing to risk twenty thousand dollars on the continuance of the vein. If it is there, that sum of money ought to enable us to reach it from your present shaft; and if we do strike it, why, in the slang of the day, the Copper Princess is simply a 'peach.' Are you game to accept my offer and go in for raising that kind of fruit?"

"I certainly am."

"Good! Shake. The bargain is made, and the sooner we get to work the better."

Ten days from that time sees the legal formalities of that quickly concluded bargain settled, and the mining village of Copper Princess presenting a vastly different appearance from what it did on the melancholy day when Peveril was its sole occupant. All its houses are now occupied, and from every window cheery lights stream out with the coming of evening shadows.

Peveril occupies the comfortable quarters so long ago provided for the manager, and until recently the home of the Darrells. With him lives a young engineer of about his own age, recommended by Major Arkell, and here, too, are the several offices. The nearest cottage to it is that of our old friends the Trefethens--for Mark Trefethen is captain of the mine, and Tom is shaft boss. Mrs. Trefethen and Nelly have their hands full in caring for both these houses and in providing meals for their occupants. Mike Connell is timber boss, and, in timbering the ancient mine, as well as the new workings, is one of the busiest men in the place.

Although he has a cottage of his own, it is still a lonely one, and he is looking eagerly forward to the time when the anxiously expected vein shall be struck. Then, and not until then--and, in case it is not struck at all, perhaps never--will Nelly Trefethen become his wife. So it is no wonder that the impatient fellow descends the shaft each day to anxiously inspect the new work.

With nearly one hundred sturdy miners engaged on it, and the other tasks necessary to its progress, it is driven by night as well as by day, and in reality advances with great rapidity, though to Connell it seems to creep by inches. The great chimney pours forth clouds of smoke, heavy skips hurry up and down the shaft, there is always a cheerful ring of anvils, rafts of logs lie in the land-locked basin, men and teams are to be seen in every direction, and everywhere is heard the inspiring hum of many industries, though as yet not one pound of copper has been brought up from the underground depths.

For weeks and months the work goes on with unabated energy. Peveril, always willing to listen to advice and never ashamed to ask it from those more experienced than himself, is everywhere, seeing to everything and directing everything. Though he is thinner than when we first met him, and his face has taken on an anxious look, it wears at the same time an expression of greater manliness, self-confidence, and determination.

Major Arkell has not yet appeared on the scene in person, and only the young proprietor is known as the responsible head of all this bewildering activity.

It is bewildering to outsiders to see the long-abandoned "Darrell's Folly" suddenly transformed into one of the busiest mining-camps of the copper region, for as yet no one, except Connell and the Trefethens, knows the secret hopes of the proprietors. Even those who are driving the new side-cut far beneath the surface, straight as a die towards the prehistoric mine, though on a much lower level, know not what they are expected to find.

At length three months have passed since the night on which Peveril sold for ten thousand dollars an undivided half of his interest in the Copper Princess. Since that time he has not once left the scene of his labors, his hopes, and his fears. He has not even visited Red Jacket since the morning, that now seems so long ago, when he left it in charge of a gang of log-wreckers. Now the money put into this new venture is very nearly exhausted. It will hold out for one more pay-day, but that is all. And as yet only barren rock has come up from that yawning shaft that seems to gulp down money with an appetite at once inordinate and insatiable.

A huge pile of rock has accumulated about its mouth. If it were copper rock it would be worth a fortune; as it is, it is worse than worthless, for it contains only disappointed hopes. And yet a point directly beneath the ancient workings has been reached and passed. Is the quest a vain one, after all? Is Peveril's as great a folly as Darrell's ever was? It would seem so; and the young proprietor's heart is heavy within him.

He has just received the letter in which Mary Darrell declares the Copper Princess to be a worthless property. With it in his pocket he visits the mouth of the shaft, intending to descend. As he approaches it, a skip containing several men comes to the surface. When they emerge into daylight they are yelling in delirious excitement. One of them leaps out and runs towards him, shouting incoherently. It is Mike Connell.

What had gone wrong? Has there been some terrible accident underground?

"We've struck it, Mister Peril! We've struck the vein, and it's the richest ever knowned!" yells the Irishman. "Here's a specimen. Did ever you see the like? It's gold--nothing less! Hooray for us! Hooray for the Princess! and hooray for Nell Trefethen, that'll be Mrs. Michael Connell this day week, plaze God!"

A few minutes later every cottage in the settlement holds specimens of the wonderful rock glistening with glowing metal. Every man is cheering himself hoarse. The great steam-whistle is shrieking out the glorious news, and Richard Peveril, with heavy pockets, is riding like mad in the direction of Red Jacket. The Copper Princess--a royal name for a royal mine--has at last entered as a power the ranks of the world's wealth-yielding properties.



CHAPTER XXX

PEVERIL ACQUIRES AN UNSHARED INTEREST

An autumn evening two years later finds Richard Peveril seated in the smoking-room of the University, the most thoroughly home-like and comfortable of all New York clubs. He has dined alone, and now, with a tiny cup of black coffee on the stand beside him, is reflectively smoking his after-dinner cigar.

This is his first visit to the East since he left it, more than two years before, almost penniless and wellnigh friendless, on a search for a mine that he was assured would prove worthless when found. Today that same mine is yielding an enormous revenue, of which he receives one-quarter, or a sum vastly in excess of his simple needs, for he is still a bachelor, acting as manager of the Copper Princess, and still makes his home in the little mining settlement on the shore of the great Western lake.

A fortune twice as large as his own, and derived from the same source, lies idle in the vaults of a trust company awaiting a claimant who cannot be found. Her name is Mary Darrell, and though from the very first Peveril has guarded her interests more jealously than his own, and though he has made every effort to discover her, her fortune still awaits its owner.

He has not only been disappointed at the non-success of his efforts in this direction, but is deeply hurt that the girl, who has been so constantly in his thoughts during his two years of loneliness, should so persistently ignore him. That she has occupied so great a share of his time for thinking is due largely to the fact that there is no one else to take a like place, for Rose Bonnifay long since released him from his engagement to her, and he has contracted no other.

As soon as he believed his *fiancee* to be in New York, he wrote her a long letter descriptive of his good-fortune and promising very soon to rejoin her for the fulfilling of his engagement. To his amazement it was promptly returned to him, endorsed on the outside in Miss Bonnifay's well-known handwriting.

"As my last to you came back to me unopened, I now take pleasure in returning yours in the same condition."

He immediately wrote again, only to have his second letter treated as the first had been, except that this time it came to him without a word. From that day he had heard nothing further from Rose Bonnifay.

Now business had called him to New York, and he had reached the city but an hour before his appearance at the club. Here he gazed curiously about him, as one long strange to such scenes, but who hopes to discover the face of a friend in that of each new-comer. Thus far he had not been successful, nor had he been recognized by any of the men, many of them in evening-dress, who came and went through the spacious rooms. Peveril was also in evening-dress, for he had conceived a vague idea of going to some theatre, or possibly to the opera. And now he listlessly glanced over the advertised list of attractions in an afternoon paper.

While he was thus engaged, a young man, faultlessly apparelled and pleasing to look upon, stood in front of him, regarded him steadily for a moment, and then grasped his hand, exclaiming:

"If it isn't old Dick Peveril--come to life again after an age of burial! My dear fellow, I am awfully glad to see you. Where have you been, and what have you been doing all these years? Heard you had gone West to look up a mine, but never a word since. Hope you found it and that it turned out better than such properties generally do. Was it gold, silver, iron, or what?"

"You may imagine its nature from its name," answered Peveril, who was genuinely glad to meet again his old college friend, Jack Langdon; "it is called the 'Copper Princess.'"

"The 'Copper Princess!'" cried the other. "By Jove! you don't say so! Why, that mine is the talk of Wall Street, and if you own any part in it, you must be a millionaire!"

"Not quite that," laughed Peveril, "though I am not exactly what you might call poor."

"I should say not, and only wish I stood in your shoes; but, you see--" Here Langdon plunged into a long account of his own affairs, to which Peveril listened patiently. Finally the former said:

"By the way, what have you on hand for to-night?"

"Nothing in particular. Was thinking of going to some theatre."

"Don't you do it! Beastly shows, all of them. Nothing but vaudeville nowadays. Come with me and I'll take you to a

place where you will not only have a pleasant time, but will meet old friends as well. You remember old Owen?--'Dig' Owen, we used to call him."

"Yes."

"Well, he is here in New York, and has made a pot of money--no one knows how. Shady speculations of some kind, and, between ourselves, it is liable to slip through his fingers at any moment. But that's neither here nor there. He married, about a year ago, a nice enough girl, who has apparently lived abroad all her life. Rather a light-weight, but entertains in great shape. Always has something good on hand--generally music. They give a blow-out to-night, to which I am going to drop in for a while, and, of course, they will be delighted to see you. So don't utter a protest, but just come along."

In accordance with the programme thus provided, Peveril found himself an hour later entering the drawing-room of a spacious mansion on upper Fifth Avenue. It was already so well filled that it was some time before the new-comers could approach their hostess.

When they finally reached the place where she was talking and laughing with a group of guests, her face was so averted that Peveril did not see it until after Langdon had said:

"Good-evening, Mrs. Owen. You have gathered together an awfully jolly crowd, and I have taken the liberty of adding another to their number. He is an old college friend of your husband's, and quite a lion just now, for he is the owner of the famous Copper Princess that every one is talking about. May I present him? Mrs. Owen, my friend Mr. Richard Peveril." With this Langdon stepped aside, and Peveril found himself face to face with Rose Bonrifay.

For an instant she was deadly pale. Then, with a supreme effort, she recovered her self-possession, the blood rushed back to her cheeks, and, extending her hand with an engaging smile, she said:

"This is indeed an unexpected pleasure, Mr. Peveril, and I am ever so much obliged to Mr. Langdon for bringing you. Did he know, I wonder, that you were an old friend of mine, as well as of Mr. Owen's? No! Then the surprise is all the pleasanter. Oh! there is mamma, and she will be delighted to meet you again. Mamma, dear, here is our old friend, Mr. Peveril. So pleased, and hope we shall see you often this winter."





PEVERIL FINDS MARY AGAIN

Other newly arrived guests demanding Mrs. Owen's attention at this moment, Peveril found himself borne away by her mother, who had greeted him effusively, and now seemed determined to learn everything concerning his Western life to its minutest details. To accomplish this she led him to a corner of the conservatory for what she was pleased to term an uninterrupted talk of old times, but which really meant the propounding of a series of questions on her part and the giving of evasive answers on his.

While Peveril was wondering how he should escape, a hush fell on the outer assembly, and some one began to sing. At first sound of the voice the young man started and listened attentively.

"Who is she?" he asked.

"Nobody in particular," responded Mrs. Bonnifay; "only a girl whom Rose met when she was studying music in Germany. I fancy she spent her last cent on her musical education, which, I fear, won't do her much good, after all; for,

as you must notice, she is utterly lacking in style. She is dreadfully poor now, and earns a living by singing in private houses--all her voice is really fit for, you know. So Rose takes pity on her, and has her in once in a while. Why, really, they are giving her an encore! How kind of them; and yet they say the most wealthy are the most heartless. But you are not going, Mr. Peveril? I haven't asked you half--"

Peveril was already out of the conservatory and making his way towards the piano, as though irresistibly fascinated. For her encore the singer was giving a simple ballad that had been very popular some years before. The last time Peveril heard it was when cruising along a shore of Lake Superior, and it had come to him from somewhere up in the red-stained cliffs.

At last he had found Mary Darrell--"his Mary," as he called her--in quick resentment of the smiling throng about him, who *paid* her to sing for them.

He did not speak to her then, nor allow her to see him, but when, with her task finished, she left the room, his eyes followed her every movement and lingered lovingly on her beautiful face--for it was beautiful. He knew it now, as he also knew that he loved her, and always had done so from the moment that he first beheld her, a vision of the cliffs.

When, accompanied by faithful Aunty Nimmo, she left the house, he was waiting outside. She tried to hurry away as he approached her, but at the sound of his voice she stood still, trembling violently.

An hour later, in the modest apartment far downtown, which was the best her scanty earnings could afford, he had told his story. Mary Darrell knew that she was no longer a poor, struggling singer, but an heiress to wealth greater than she had ever coveted in her wildest dreams. But to this she gave hardly a thought, for something greater, finer, and more desirable than all the wealth of the world had come to her in that same brief space of time. She knew that she was loved by him whom she loved, for he had told her so. Even now he stood awaiting, with trembling eagerness, her answer to his plea.

Could she not love him a little bit in return? Would she not go back with him, as his wife, to the house that had been hers, and still awaited her, by the shore of the great lake?

"But I thought, Mr. Peveril--I mean, I heard that you were engaged?"

"So I was. I was engaged to Mrs. Owen, at whose house you sang this evening, and where I was so blessed as to find you. But she thought me unworthy and let me go. I know I am unworthy still; but, Mary dear, won't you give me one more chance? Won't you take me on trial?"

"Well, then, on trial," she answered, though in so low a tone that he barely caught the words.

In another instant he had folded her in his arms, for he knew that she was wholly his, and that in *this* Copper Princess his interest was unshared.

THE END

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