

our test. It is all decided. But promise, even if those unprincipled men rob you, you will use no violence."

"Rob me?" said Jardine, presently. "Are they not robbing you?"

And Eva said, softly: "Hush! Have you not forced me to speak plainly enough? You are rash and stubborn. Harry, but the men behind them are two to one for you. You must promise."

"I promise, unless they use force," said Jardine, reluctantly. "Heaven bless you, Eva, for your faith in me! And presently, comforted, but still uncertain if he had acted justly, he rode back to camp on one of Tourmaine's best horses he had a reason for borrowing.

The partners held a counsel, and Jardine said: "Our time runs out at midnight, and Evans has promised to renege the claim for us. He would take his chances with the jumpers, and when we had fought the lawsuit step out again."

"Mighty poor chances!" said Marston. "They'll have all fixed ready—fast horse relay, if wanted, a locomotive, and so they'd beat our man to the recorder's easily. Lawsuit! They'll buy enough witnesses and bring them along to break us before we'd almost begun."

Jardine, answering nothing, started across the valley. A swift, snow-fed river came roaring down between the long ranks of climbing pines, swung in a mad, white streaked whirlpool round a deep, rock-walled pool, and then plunged with a muffled thunder into a great rift between the ranges. Eight leagues over the high pass on the further side the railway stretched back to civilisation, but foid there was none, and the trail wound round several leagues further by a rude log bridge.

"The claim is recorded in your name; there is nothing to prevent me relocating it," he said; and Marston nodded.

"No. The fact that you found the money don't count. But what's the difference between you and the other fellows we could trust to?"

"Just this," said Jardine. "If I can record first the claim is mine, and I would take risks no money could tempt them to. I could get a long start by swimming the river."

"Have you gone mad?" asked Marston. "It is a flood, not a river, and no living man has ever swum it here."

"That is probably because no man has ever tried to," Jardine answered, quietly. "I'm tired of failing, and I'm tired of being poor. Besides, you ought to know my prize is worth any man staking his life for."

Further discussion followed, until Marston agreed that there was method in his comrade's madness, and walked out to meet the scattered neighbours who had promised to attend as witnesses, or allies in case of necessity. It was dusk when he returned with them, and found his partner carefully rubbing down Tourmaine's horse, a big, staunch beast of pedigree. Then, as the lingering darkness fell, Jardine lay down to rest, but not to sleep. This time every nerve was strung up and the suspense intense. The neighbours and Marston sat, sinking about a fire, and the red light which flickered athwart the charred trunks showed their faces were expectant and it paled as a broad, silver disk sailed up behind a shoulder of the range. The whole misty valley seemed to vibrate with the roar of the river, for the drainage of leagues of snowy fields was pouring that way in mad hurry to the sea. Jardine, as he noticed the sidelong glances towards him, felt he could understand the feelings of a condemned felon the night before he played a leading part in the spectacle of a public execution. At last a thud of horse hoofs trembled through the woods, and there was a sound of wheels creaking over rock outcrop, also with language, apparently, when they sank in the softer places.

"The jumpers are coming," said somebody.

Two men rode into the moonlight presently, leaving shadowy figures about the wagon behind them, and Marston stood up, leaning on his rifle. "Get off our claim before we put you off," he said.

"Anything to oblige?" was the answer. "Don't want a fuss. It's yours for half an hour or so, and then we purpose to renege it for you. There are six of us, all certified miners, and quite ready to maintain our rights."

"Miners!" repeated Marston, with unutterable scorn. "A common thief's roustabouts, you mean. Anyway, you'll wait until the time's up, or we'll hunt one or two of you."

"We want to save you trouble," answered the other, with a grin. "The first

man to get this record in will win, and we've an express service ready laid on. Do you hold anything to lose?"

"Get off the claim," said Marston, suddenly.

Jardine rose as the others withdrew, carefully tightening the saddle girth, then took up four square pegs and a hammer, and stood quivering with suspense beside a man who held out a watch. Shortly his turn would come. The minutes passed slowly; the others whispered hoarsely about him until there were footsteps in the bush, and a strained voice said:

"Time! Pull the stakes up!"

There was a rush for the first boundary post, but as Marston pulled one peg out, Jardine drove another, marked "No. 1 Discovery," in. A scuffle took place at the next, but he was first again, and the remaining corners were staked simultaneously. Then, amid a derisive howling, he shouted:

"Bear witness, I, Henry Jardine, free miner, have legally relocated the Bluebird claim."

One man flung himself into the saddle, Jardine did the same, two leaped into the wagon, and, as with a quickening heat of hoofs and whirr of wheels, the cavalcade wept recklessly down the trail, Marston's roar broke through the mocking cries of the rest and the rancorous cheers: "Ride for your life, Harry. Good luck to you!"

For a space friend and foe rode level, muzzle to muzzle, and tail to tail, dropping the jolting wagon behind; then Jardine, driving his beast at a screen of bracken, vanished among the pines, leaving his rivals bewildered.

"I figured he'd have made a better race for it," said one.

It was a steep slope to the river, matted with skinnon berry, slippery with shale; but he went down it at a gallop, swaying low in the saddle to clear odd branches drooping between the great columnar trunks. Then he was out on the shingle under the moon with the flood roaring past him towards the pool, and the snorting beast went in with a plunge, as he drove the red spurs home. Jardine, who cleared his feet from the stirrups, slipped from the saddle when the battering hoofs lost their grip on the stone, loosened the bridle, and twined one hand in the mane, shifted it to the saddle, and saw nothing but frothing ridges while he trusted the brute's instinct to take it safe across.

Whether he swam or was merely towed he was never certain, but at least the water supported him, and the horse, which was used to shallower rivers, managed the steering, though now and then when they swung together across a smoother eddy he could see the dark pines sliding quickly up stream, and knew the big whirlpool lay ominously close below. But most of the time froth and water beat into his eyes, and the water was cold with the deathly chill of the glaciers; so at last it was with a gasp of fervent thankfulness that he heard sliding shingle rattle beneath the hoofs, and dropping his own feet, he gripped the bridle and floundered shorewards waist deep in water. He was in the saddle next moment, creaking at headlong gallop through the marsh swamp grasses toward the forest, while, when he swept into a narrow, tunnel-like trail, a half-seen man dragged two horses clear of it; and a voice cried: "Well done, well done! Don't spare the beast, Jardine."

As he rushed past like a whirlwind a slender, white-robed figure waved a hand to him, and the river's chilled blood stirred within him, for it was Tourmaine's voice, which encouraged him, and he spared neither the beast nor himself. All trails are had in that region, but the one in question led over a hugh-backed spur which no mounted man could pass in broad daylight, while every minute was precious. Jardine had calculated that he could just catch the Pacific express and reach Yale at least before his rivals made the long horseback journey to another mining recorder's station. They had taken it for granted no man could swim the river.

At last he dismounted, and, so he afterwards said, pulled; the horse up almost vertically a mile, and once, when he tried to shove it, was badly kicked for his pains. Anyone not used to them would find it difficult to negotiate most British Columbian passes without a rope and alpenstock; but they went up, over slippery outcrop and under climbing pines, through stunted juniper, and across broad belts of treacherous shale, until the spectral peaks now bare of timber loomed out above them in unearthly majesty, and Jardine wondered in the pale light of

down how he was ever to get down into the valley. Neither did he remember how it was done, though once a branch flung him out of the saddle heavily, and the horse rolled over, nearly crushing him, but at last, smashing through thickets and bounding amid giant bracken, they gained a narrow trail, and the beast responded gallantly to his last appeal.

The twilight was clear on the valley, and low, shingled roofs rose up ahead, when a trail of white vapour that moved swiftly appeared round the shoulder of a hill, and Jardine, who dare show no mercy, drove the clotted spurs in again. The roofs rose higher and higher among the sombre firs; twinkling metal and lines of glass showed beneath the advancing plume of smoke, and the rattle of flying wheels quivered across the pines, while the horse was blundering in its stride and the sweat stood beaded on the rider's forehead. But just as the great mountain locomotive came snorting into the little station they reeled, smoking, panting, whitened by lather and flecked red by dust, through the street of the wooden settlement, and Jardine, dropping from the saddle, flung the bridle into a startled lumberer's hand.

"Ten dollars if you feed and take the beast back to Tourmaine of Red Cedar," he shouted.

His knees felt useless under him, but just as the ears lurching out he charged into the depot at a shambling run, and, clutching at a handrail, swung himself on to the platform of the last one, where he sat down, and for nearly a minute fancied he was choking.

"Is it a wager or a fortune you were riding for?" asked the conductor, grinning.

"Something worth more than a fortune," gasped Jardine.

The big express stopped some minutes at Yale, and Jardine, who learned that no mining official was present, had time to send a telegram to the Crown offices at Vancouver before he went on there with the train. He hurried straight to the chief recorder's office when he reached the seaport city, and a soldierly-looking gentleman stared with mild surprise as the haggard, dishevelled and travel-stained miner was ushered in.

"Mr Jardine, who wired us? A disputed claim, I presume?" he said. "I am ready to consider any particulars you can give me."

Jardine told the whole story unreservedly, and the listener made a few notes during the narrative. It was a fairly common story to him, for there is frequently litigation over a successful mine, and perhaps as often as not over those that fail. He had also a long experience of the miner's character, and, though he did not say so, fully believed Jardine.

"We shall doubtless hear from your rivals through the district recorder," he said, with a quiet smile. "You did well to come direct to me. But the application may require consideration, for while one's sympathy may be with the discoverer, the law is stringent, and you were carelessly negligent in postponing legal developments. I will advise you later if we can grant a record."

For several days Jardine wandered about Vancouver in anxious suspense before he was informed that the authorities had registered him as discoverer of the claim, after which he called upon a certain honourable mine financier and a lawyer. There are honourable exploiters of mining ventures, though the opposite kind are perhaps more numerous. The one agreed to send an expert back with him and the latter said: "You haven't proof enough against your rivals and it might be better to leave the—er, gentleman you mention alone. His cat's-paws are hardly likely to ask an injunction against you now, and I could resist it successfully if they did."

Jardine returned to his partner exultant, and the expert in due time to Vancouver satisfied, one result of which was that a few days later Jardine laid a letter from the latter city before Tourmaine.

"It's a fair offer, and I intend accepting it," he said. "Unless that sur-

veyor is far wrong the stock they offer me should provide a reasonable income, and there will be the director's fee. So I venture to claim the fulfilment of your promise."

"Build your house, and you shall have it," said Tourmaine, smiling. "When you took my horse through the river I was willing to climb down. I figured you'd get the dollars some day, and most things you set your heart upon. Oh, yes, you have won her fairly, and I see her in the orchard. Eva, come in!" Eva came in fresh and dainty, a cluster of red roses at the waist of her white dress, and a smile upon her face, until a flush of colour surpassing that of the roses burnt in either cheek as she noticed the letter and the expression of the two men.

"We never back down on a bargain, and I suppose you haven't changed your mind since you asserted your right to choose for yourself?" said Tourmaine, with a twinkle in his eyes. "Well, then, I wish you good luck with him, and I guess he has shown himself the kind of man I can trust you to. You're starting fair, Eva, and it was only remembering what your poor mother went through made me try to do my best for you. Well, well, I'm getting an old man; but I think, maybe, she is pleased, too. And may heaven make the long trail you're beginning smooth for both of you."

The Tsar's Children.

The little Russian princesses do not quite bear out the prevailing impression that all the children of the crowned heads of Europe are necessarily paragons of perfection or little prudes. These small girls are children in every sense of the word, warm-hearted, mischievous, high-spirited, free of speech, unfettered of action, and possessed of a full appreciation of their own exalted rank. The latter is quite particularly true of the fair-haired, blue-eyed Grand Duchess Olga; she has often been known to stop her little pony carriage in the parks of Peterhoff—the Tsar's summer residence—to call to order some passer-by who had failed to accord her the attention she considered due to an Emperor's daughter.

Here is an anecdote about this consequential little lady which has not found its way into print before:—One day last summer, when the Court was still at Peterhoff, the four little duchesses were playing on the beach in front of the Alexandrine Palace, when they saw, some distance away, a young officer, who, with casquette thrust back from his hat, perspiring forehead, was engaged in supervising a group of tired-looking sailors executing a difficult piece of work. The men, on perceiving the children's approach, instantly suspended their labour, and, standing at attention, rendered them the full military honours that were their due. This amused the little girls to such an extent that they instantly abandoned their game to strut demurely up and down in front of the workers, who were thus compelled to neglect their labour and salute each time they passed. This went on for some time, until the officer began to lose patience. Observing that the little girls meant to continue their game indefinitely, he quietly ordered the men to go on with their work and take no further notice of them. To the Grand Duchess Olga's amazement then, no one moved to acknowledge her presence a moment later when she came tripping along the path. She gazed first at the officer, then at the sailors, as if at a loss whom to hold responsible for this gross act of contempt to her Imperial person. Then, stamping her small foot, she cried, "Salute at once, or I'll tell papa!"

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