

Another Woman's Territory.

BY ALIEN

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CHAPTER I.

A. FIRST ANTAGONISM.

IT was a wild night, and the great valley that lay between a curving sweep of mountains was torn by the wind. Fitful moon gleams shone in patches on the swollen river that roared between its rocky barriers, and the only man on the road looked anxiously ahead for a friendly light. He knew there ought to be a township near, but when the dense cloud-rifts obscured the moon, the landscape was blotted out, and the dull thunder of the river was the only guide.

In his search for new worlds, Howard Grey had tramped many miles of the famous West Coast, carrying his swag like a "sundowner," camping by lonely river-sides, or in deserted huts, where there were no wayside inns or hospitable farmhouses to receive him. Sometimes he had taken coach, sometimes ridden through the heart of the mining country. He had seen all sorts of odd nook and corner townships, built among "tailings" on the verge of forests and the banks of streams. He had heard strange stories, with which his brain was busy for future use; and a new passionate hope surged up in his heart, that by one of them he might yet make himself more than heard. He had escaped from city routine and fatigue, to flee the ghost that was pursuing him—the ghost of failure. To the world he was clever, talented; the word he hungered for was *genius*, and he scorned himself that he had missed it. The kingdom of heaven meant to him kingdom over his fellow men, not partial, but absolute; to dictate thought, to sway, move,

rule. For this he had suffered, sacrificed and toiled; for the ecstasy, the intoxication of triumph he would willingly give all else. And he had only achieved.

In bitterest contempt he viewed his achievement. He had piled it up, grain by grain, with a patience defying all obstacles; difficulties, instead of damping his zeal, had but roused in him an obstinate determination that gave to his face a look of power, and to his manner a cool self-possession which was mistaken for mastery. In his own pitiless criticism of himself he did not hit upon his real lack of dominion—lack of the poet soul with its exuberant sympathies and fruitful imaginations—he had looked everywhere for inspiration save in himself, and a deep inner conviction had taken possession of him that the first burst of intellectual enthusiasm, which had stirred him to vigorous effort, had spent itself. He was oppressed with a sense of mediocrity. He had plunged into new scenes, and snatched at physical exercise as a distraction, and falling in with a wild, romantic phase of life, pursued it with the deliberate tenacity of purpose characteristic of him.

The wind was momentarily growing colder; the masses of cloud, banked like great rocks, lowered, and presently Howard Grey felt the tingling of snow in his face. Each minute it grew thicker, and the night darkened about him ominously. There was but one thing to do, to press on, and descending, and still descending into the heart of the valley, at last the twinkling of a light gladdened him—but on the other side of the river!

After long search he had all but abandoned