

kept the boy and girl apart, and as soon as Henry was old enough she managed that he should be sent to Auckland to school, and though in the brief holidays Henry came to the house as his home, yet even then he was made to feel his dependent position. Potter did not notice this change, he was too much wrapped up in business, and his wife was too astute to show anything but the best motives. She governed things in her own way as if in the interests of others; but one thing she could not govern, and that was the friendship between her young daughter and the boy playmate. Perhaps her cleverest actions intensified this feeling; but she recognised it and worked accordingly. Henry set his mind on becoming a mining engineer, and Potter encouraged him in this, the boy attended the chemistry class at the Auckland College, and Potter, who knew the value of things, began to talk of Frieberg. Mrs. Potter pricked her ears at this, she saw a way, and when Henry had finished his school course, Potter had been led to believe that to give the orphan lad a three years' residence at Frieberg would be one of the noblest acts of his life, and one of the most beneficial to the boy. Henry received the idea with gratitude, and preparations were made for his departure. Mrs. Potter took quite a motherly interest in them, and when the time came, gave him in secret what she called motherly advice. It was advice that made the boy's eyes grow stern and lips set, and it made him speak that night to Evelyn as he had never spoken before. Mrs. Potter was a clever woman, much too clever to understand youths like Henry Steel. So Henry Steel went to Frieberg, and even there Mrs. Potter continued her advice until the young man swore under his incipient moustache a strange oath. Carefully guarded as he had been in Waitui, he knew more about the transactions between Joe Potter and his father than Potter dreamt

of, and now he acceded to the clever woman's plan and cut himself off from the Potter household, recognising that he must fight his own way in the world, and stand no more in the light of Evelyn's advantages, but he wrote to Evelyn.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### REFRACTORY ORE

Potter found his deficiency in social respects amply made up by his wife. She persuaded him to sell the Hotel, and to put a manager in the store, and she prepared him to stand for Parliament. She had visions of being the wife of an M.H.R. and of seasons in Wellington, and she worked and planned. But even in this she was too clever. A hotel is a much better stand-by in Colonial politics than a woman's craft, and Potter's social advancement had sent him ahead of certain voters. Potter's ardour was roused, and he fought well, fought not only for ambition's sake, but for more. His business affairs which had been so prosperous began to change. A summer fire, lighted by some Maori gumdigger, swept away both his timber and his mill. The store under new management, and against new competition, ceased to be profitable; and worst of all, the mine which had yielded him such handsome profits began to fail in its returns; as the lower levels were reached the reef changed its character, and became what is called "refractory"—that is, it ceased to be free milling ore giving free gold, and became highly mineralised. It still assayed high; but the battery process could not save more than 20 per cent. of the bullion value, and all the while his expenditure increased. Social advantages are costly things in the Colony, and a political campaign absorbs much money.

Potter tried in his own practical way to improve the extraction of gold from the quartz; but it was a chemical problem, and he was no