

of the old and well established mining regions, and they decided to try their luck in a new locality. Their wagons were abandoned, and their belongings packed on horses and burros. In two days they had passed the majority of claims already staked out. Five days brought them, on December 5th, to what seemed to them a desirable place for location. Temporary lodges were constructed, and soon they were ready to dig the precious metal from the rough mountains. Their prospecting was not as successful as they had expected, but they labored on because indications were good for a find.

Anael, now past fifteen, was the pride of the camp, which sprang up around their new settlement. Her household duties were simple, and she was frequently up in the mountains gathering wild flowers, or bagging some choice game, for she had become proficient with the rifle in her Indiana home. Christmas week approached, but the prospects for a cheery Christmas was not very bright to them.

On the morning of the 24th Anael did her light household duties early, and was intent upon taking an excursion further up the mountain than ever before, and secure some good game for the Christmas dinner, besides some flowers and native novelties which would do to keep as presents, although they were not especially polished. Full of gaiety and hopes for a bright future, she was soon climbing the mountain sides. While pushing upwards her foot loosened a large boulder, and sent it to the bottom of a deep precipice with a loud noise, crashing down the mountain side like an avalanche. Anael sprang forward without danger to herself, and looking around she saw a yellow lump glittering in the sun. She hastened back to examine it, and it proved to be one of the most valuable gold nuggets ever found in that valley. As she rolled it over, her eyes sparkled with delight. What a Christmas present it would be! But how to get it home? She found she could carry it, but to conceal it was the question. She had on a

large shawl, and wrapping her apron around it, folded the shawl and put the nugget in the folds. She made a sling out of the shawl, and throwing it over her back tugged it home. While she had not secured as fine game as she expected, she had some rabbits and squirrels, so made them answer for turkey and cranberry sauce. She hid her find for a Christmas surprise. The men came in at night disheartened. All of Payne's shiftlessness had ceased in this wild search for wealth, and he was removing as much dirt from the mountain side as any of his neighbors.

The camp was to take a vacation on Christmas day. Anael was up early next morning to prepare breakfast. She didn't awake the men folks until the meal was ready. She placed the nugget at his plate, and covered it with a napkin, which she had raked up for the occasion. "Hey, a napkin for use at this Christmas feast," said John as he approached the table, "a rarity indeed." He sat down and after dishing up the meal caught hold of the napkin, and uncovered the lump beneath it. The surprise was so great that he sprang back as if seized with terror. After a few moments silent observation, glancing first at the nugget, and then at Anael, he exclaimed: "Can it be possible? No! it must be a dream." But all doubts could but vanish. It was a reality, and Anael had by a single turn of the foot uncovered the fortune which they had spent hour upon hour of tiresome labor in striving for. Anael explained her trip to the mountains with radiant cheeks, and great was the Christmas celebration for the Paynes.

Payne appeared more jovial than he had been for days at the "ball" given that night, but none learned the reason why. It was best to keep that a secret. A few days later he announced his intention of forever leaving the gold fields, and soon afterward bid his brothers farewell. He went to San Francisco and settled there, going into a prosperous business with his son. After he had disposed of his nugget, he wrote his friends the reason of his sudden departure. Anael Payne became a belle in coast society and her name spread far and wide as that of an accomplished and charming young lady.