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CHAPTER III. Of the great discovery in Sylvan Silver Hollow it would seem that Collinson as yet revisit the locality. Neither the news of the registry of the claim nor the arrival of Key's workmen ever reached him. The few travelers who passed his mill came from the travelers who passed his mill came from the in a slipper that you said was give to ye," valley to cross the divide on their way to suggested Collinson pointedly, but with no Skinner's, and returned by the longer, but easier detour of the stage road over Galloper's Ridge. He had no chance to participate in the prosperity that flowed from the opening of the mine which plentifully besprinkled Skinner's settlement; he was too far away to profit even by the chance custom of Key's Sabbath wandering workmen. His stay!"

teristic simplicity he did not dream that it was because they had nowhere else to go their penniless condition. It was an incident to be pleasantly remembered, but whose nonrecurrence did not disturb his infinite patience. His pork barrel and flour sack had been replenished by other travelers; his own wants were few.

was a day or two after the midnight visit of the sheriff to Silver Hollow that Key galloped down the steep grade to Collinson's. He was amused—albeit, in his new importance, a little aggrieved also-to find that Collinson had as usual confounded his de-scent with that of the generally detached voice to the general uproar. This brought Collinson to his door.

Tve had your hoss hobbled out among the chickweed and clover in the green pasture horse, back o' the mill, and he's picked up that much that he's lopkin' fat and sassy," he said quietly, beginning to mechanically un-strap Key's bridle, even while his guest was in the act of dismounting. "His back's quite

healed up."

Key could not restrain a shrug of impa It was three weeks since they had met; three weeks crammed with excitement, energy, achievement and fortune to Key, and yet this place and this man were as stupidly unchanged as when he had left them. A momentary fancy that this was the realitythat he himself was only awakening from some delusive dream—came over him. But

Collinson's next words were practical. I reckoned that maybe you'd write from Marysville to Skinner to send for the hoss and forward him to ye, for I never kalkilated

you'd come back. It was quite plain from this that Collinson had heard nothing. But it was also awk-ward, as Key would now have to tell the whole story and reveal the fact that he had been really experimenting when Collinson overtook him in the hollow. He evaded this post-dating his discovery of the richness the ore until he had reached Marysville. But he found some difficulty in recounting his good fortune; he was naturally no boaster, he had no desire to impress Collinson with his penetration, or the undaunted energy he had displayed in getting up his company and opening the mine, so that he was actu-ally embarrassed by his own understate-ment, and under the grave, patient eyes of his companion, told his story at best lamely. Collinson's face betrayed neither profound innor the slightest resentment. When he had ended his awkward recital Collinson

said slowly:
"Then Uncle Dick and that other Parker feller ain't got no show in this yer find."
"No," said Key quickly. "Do you remember we broke up our partnership that don't suppose," he added with a forced half laugh, "that if Uncle Dick or Parker had struck a lead after they left me they'd have

Wouldn't they?" asked Collinson, gravely "Of course not." He laughed a little more naturally, but presently added, with an ureasy smile: "What makes you think they "Nuthin'!" said Collinson promptly.

Nevertheless, when they were seated before the fire, with glasses in their hands, Collinson returned patiently to the subject "You wuz saying they went their way and you went yours. But your way was back on the old way that you'd all gone together."

But Key felt himself on firmer ground here and answered deliberately and truthfully. 'Yes, but I only went back to the hollow to satisfy myself if there really was

any house there, and if there was to warn the occupants of the approaching fire. 'And there was a house there," said Cullinson, thoughtfully.
"Only the ruins." He stopped and flushed quickly, for he remembered that he had deits existence at their former meeting.

"That is," he went on hurriedly. "I found out from the sheriff, you know, that there had been a house there. But," he added, reverting to his stronger position, "my going back there was an accident, and my picking up the outcrop was an accident- and had no more to do with our partnership prespecting than you had. In fact," he added, with a reassuring laugh, "you'd have had a better right to share my claim, coming there as y n did at that moment, t'an t'ey. Why, if I'd known what the thing was worth, I might have put you in-inly it wanted capi-tal and some experience." He was glad that he had pitched upon that excuse, it had only just occurred to him, and glanced affably a Collinson. But that gentleman said soberly:

Why not?" said Key half angrily. Collinson paused. After a moment he said: Cos I wouldn't nev took anything cuter Key felt relieved. From what he knew of

Collinson's vagaries he believed him. He wise in not admitting him to his confidence beginning; he night have thought it his arry to tell others.

"I'm not so particular," he returned, laughingly, "but the silver in that hole was never touched, nor, I daresay, even imagined, by mortal man before. However, there is something and before. something else about the hollow that want to tell you. You remember the slipper that you picked up?""

"Yes."
"Well, I lied to you about that; I never dropped it. On the contrary, I had picked up the mate of it very near where you found yours, and I wanted to know to whom it yours, and I wanted to know to whom it belonged. For I den't mind telling you now. Collinson, that I believe there was a woman in that house, and the same woman whose face I saw at the window. You remember how the boys joked me about it—well, per-hans I didn't care that you shill. haps, I didn't care that you should laugh at me, too, but I've had a sare conscience over my ite, for I remembered that you seemed to my lie, for I remembered that you seemed have some interest in the matter, too, and I thought that maybe I might have thrown you off the scott. It seemed to me that it you had any idea who it was, we might now the matter over and compare notes. I talk the matter over and compare notes. I think you said—at least, I gathered the idea from a remark of yours." he added, hastily, as he remembered that the suggestion was an branched off on a long detour that wor intersect the traveled stage road. But here his ewn, and a satirical one—"that it re-minded you of your wife's slipper. Of course, as your wife is dead, that would offer no clew, and can only be a chance resemblance, unless—" he stopped.

"Have you got 'em yet?"
"Yes, both," He took them from the pocket of his riding jacket. As Collinson received them, his face took upon itself an even graver expression. "It's mighty cur'ous," he said reflectively, "but looking at the two of 'em the likeness is more fetchin'. Ye see, my wife had a straight foot, and never wore reg'lar rights and lefts like other women, but kinder changed about; ye see, these shoes is reg'lar

rights and lefts, but never was worn as There may be other women as peculiar,"

suggested Key.

"There must be," said Collinson quietly.
For an instant Key was touched with the manly security of the reply, for, remembering Uncle Dick's scandal, it had occurred to him that the unknown tenant of the robbers' him that the unknown tenant of the robbers' less that the collinson's wife. He was before him—he must follow it? den might be Collinson's wife. He was glad | Yet he had sense enough to realize that

to be relieved on that point and went more confidently: So, you see, this woman was undoubtedly in that house on the night of the fire. She escaped, and in a mighty hurry, too, for she knew nothing. In spite of Key's fears that had not time to change her slippers for he might stray there on his return from shoes; she escaped on horseback, for that is shoes; she escaped on horseback, for that is to let it pass. This time the fair unknown how she lost them. Now what was she raised her long lashes and gazed suddenly doing there with those rascals, for the face Skinner's, he did not, nor did he afterward how she lost them. Now what was she "Seemed to ye sort o' contrairy, just as I reckoned my wife's foot would have looked

> implication of reproach in his voice. so much as spoke to a woman they'd have been whipped outer the state long ago. No!

that you discovered under the very spot where them slippers of hers had often trod.

Mr. Key had been thinking nothing of the the stranger's object was to scrutin-kiad, but for some obscure reason the scepti-cal jeer that had risen to his lips remained unsaid. He rose impatiently. "Well, there seems to be no chance of discovering any-seems to be no chance of discovering any-seems to be no chance of discovering anything now; 'ne house is burned, the band dispersed, and she has probably gone with them." He paused, and then laid three scent with that of the generally detached four large gold pieces on the table. "It's for boulder, and that he was obliged to add his that old bill of our party, Collinson," he said. "I'll settle and collect from each. Some time when you come over to the mine, and I hop you'll give us a call, you can bring the horse. Meanwhile you can use him, you'll find he's a little quicker than the mule. How is business?" he added, with a perfunctory glance around the vacant room and dusty

"Thar ain't much passin' this way," said Collinson, with equal carglessness, as he gathered up the money, "cept those boys from the valley, and they're most always strapped when they come here."

Key smiled as he observed that Collinson offered him no receipt, and, moreover, as in remembered that he had only Collinson's word for the destruction of Parker's draft. But he merely glassed at his unconscious host and said nothing. After a pause he returned in a lighter tone. I suppose you are rather out of the world here. Indeed, I had an idea at first of buying out your mill, Collinson, and putting in steam power to get out timber for our new buildings, but you see you are so far away from the wagon read that we couldn't haul the timber away. That was the trouble, or I'd have made you a fair

"I don't reckon to ever sell the mill," said Collinson simply. Then observing the look of suspicion in his companion's face, he added gravely, "You see, I rigged up the whole thing when I expected my wife out from the Key slightly lifted his brows, "But you

never told us, by the way, how you ever came to put up a mill here with such an uncertain water supply." "It wasn't onsartin when I came here. Mr Key; it was a full-fed stream straight from them snow peaks. It was the earthquake did it.

"The earthquake!" repeated Key.
"Yes. Ef the earthquake kin heave up that silver-bearing rock that you told us about the first day you kem here, and that you found t'other day, it could play roots with a mere mill stream, I reckon." "But the convulsion I spoke of happened ages on ages ago, when this whole mounta'n

range was being fashioned," said Key with a

laugh.
"Well this yer earthquake was ten years.
I recken I oughter hin a free in the woods, only there wasn't to keep the sun and dust from his head no wind. Not a breath of air anywhar. The leaves of them alders hung straight as a only caught the flash of a pair of steel-gray plumb line. Except for that thar stream and that thar wheel, nuthin' moved. Thar wasn't a bird on the wing over that canon; that wasn't a squirrel skirmishin' in the hull pearing in a cloud of dust before it. But wasn't a squirrel skirmishin' in the Buil wood; even the lizards in the rocks stiffened like stone Chinese idols. It kept gettin' quieter and quieter ontil I walked out on that ledge and felt as if I'd have to give a yell just to hear my own voice. Thar was a yell just to hear my own voice. That was a speed. Even with the stranger's advantage it would be a close race to the station. yell just to hear my own volce. Thar was a thin veil over everything, and the sun was rooted in the middle of it and couldn't move neither. Everythin' seemed to be waitin' waitin', waitin'. Then all of a suddin suthin scemed to give somewhar! Suthin' fetche away with a queer sort of rumblin', as if the peg had slipped outer creation. I looked up and kalkilated to see half a dozen of them boulders come, lickity switch, down the grade. But, darn my skin if one of 'em stirred, and yet while I was looking, the grade. But, darn my skin if one of 'em stirred, and yet while I was looking, the whole face o' that bluff bowed over softly, as if saying 'good by,' and got clean away somewhar before I knowed it. Why, you see that pile agin the side o' the canon! Well, a thousand feet under that there's trees, three hundred feet, still upright and standin'. You know how them pines over on that mountain side always seem to be climbi up, up, up, over each other's heads to the very top? Well, Mr. Key, I saw 'em climbin'! And when I pulled myself together and got back to the mill everything was quiet, and so was the mill wheel, and there wasn't two nches of water in the river!"
"And what did you think of it?" said Key,
interested in spite of his impatience.

"I thought, Mr. Key-. No! I musn't say I thought, for I knowed it. I knowed that suthin had happend to my wife!" Key did not smile, but even fe't a faint superstitious thrill as he gazed at him. After pause Collinson resumed: "I heard a month after that she had died about that time yaller fever in Texas with the party she was comin' with. Her felks wrote that they died like flies, and wuz all buried together. unbeknownst and promiscuous, and wasn't no remains. She slipped away than

me like that bluff on that river, and that

was the end of it."

she might have escaped," said Key quickly forgetting himself in his eagerness. But Collinson only shook his head. "Then she'd have been here," he said, gravely. Key moved toward the door still abstractedly, he'd out his hand, shook his compan-ion's warmly, and, saying he would saddle his horse himself, departed. A sense of disar pointment, in which a vague dissatisfaction with himself was mingled, was all that had come of his interview. He took himself se-verely to task for fellowing his romantic quest so far. It was unworthy of the presi dent of the Sylvan Silver Hellow company, and he was not exite sure but that his confi-dences with Collinson might have imperiled even the interests of the company. for this momentary aberration and correct some business at Skinner's before returning and branched off on a long detour that would Intersect the traveled stage road. But here a singular incident overtook singular incident overtook him. As he wheeled into the turnpike he heard the

trampling hoof heats and fingling harness oncoming coach behind him. He had barely time to draw up against the bank be fore the six galleping horses and swinging vehicle swept heavily by. He had a quick impression of the heat and steam of sweating horsehide, the reek and varnish and leather and the mementary vision of a female facslibouetted against the glass window of the coach! But even in that flash of perception e recognized the profile that he had seen at the window of the mysterious hut!

He sat for an instant dazed and bewildered

in the dust of the departing wheels. Then, as the bulk of the vehicle reappeared, already narrowing in the distance, without a

uncouth but good-humored apology, he said You'll excuse me, miss! I don't know

examined the stranger more closely. Her face was bent listlessly over a book; there was unmistakably the same profile that he disappointment that was almost a revulsion of feeling came over him; he lingered, he glanced again; she was certainly a very pretty bowed a grave assent. woman; there was the beautifully rounded chin, the short straight nose, and delicately curved upper lip that he had seen in the profile—and yet—yet it was not the same ounces of clean gold dust in them boots, before the had december of With a gold and the content of the same ounces of clean gold dust in them boots, beprofile—and yet—yet it was not the same face be had dreamt of. With an odd provoking sense of disillusion he swept ahead of the coach, and again slackened his speed an odd expression, it seemed to him almost a glance of recognition and expectation, came cannot my wife a lost would be a singular signingested Collinson pointedly, but with no mplication of reproach in his voice.

"Yes," sa'd Key impatiently.

"I've read yarns afore now about them Eyeman brigands stealin' women," said Collination of hesitation, wonder, and yet it was as utterly unintelligible. A moment later, however, it was explained. He had fallen slightly behind in a new confusion of hesitation, wonder, "but I reckon it wouldn't go far ef you started to run. I've got a simpler game into her dark, languid eyes. The pupils conbeen whipped outer the state long ago. No! powerfully built man, mounted on a thorough-the woman as was there, came there to bred horse of a quality far superior to the ordinary roadster. Without looking at Key isolation from civilization—for those who came to him from the valley were rude western emigrants like himself—remained undisturbed. The return of the prospecting party to his bumble hospitality that night had been an exceptional case; in his characteristic simplicity he did not dream that it signal to him—a signal that to Key's fancy now betrayed some warning of himself. He was the more convinced as the stranger, after where them slippers of hers had often trod.
You're thinkin' that mebbe it might heviruned her and her man from their evil ways."

continuing a few paces ahend of the coach, holster with my gold dust, so! It's a displayed her and her man from their evil ways."

continuing a few paces ahend of the coach, holster with my gold dust, so! It's a displayed her and her man from their evil ways." to do the same. Instinctively conscious that the stranger's object was to scrutin-free every time!

ize or identify him, he deter-

the coach would not stop to take up a passenger between stations, and that the next station was the one three miles below Skinner's. It would not be difficult to reach this by a cut-off in time, and although the whiche had appeared to be crowded, he could not stop to take up a passenger between stations, and that the next station was the one three miles below Skinner's. It would not be difficult to reach this by a cut-off in time, and although the whiche had appeared to be crowded, he could not stop to take up a passenger between stations, and that the next station was the one three miles below your looks and gin'ral gait, you're a stranger in these parts but ex form a limit had been times, for at his high-toned style. Et he thinks a mon is hidin' anywhere he jest scalps of the passengers. We feel, and we between the chance of doin' it. He's with us that so scandaious and unmanly an and only only too, some-stimes, for at his high-toned style. Et he thinks a mon is hidin' anywhere he jest scalps of the politeness of her sex has burdened heritimes, for at his high-toned style. Et he thinks a mon is hidin' anywhere he jest scalps of the passengers. We feel, under the politeness of her sex has burdened heritimes, for at his high-toned style. Et he thinks a mon is hidin' anywhere he jest scalps of the politeness of her sex has burdened heritimes, for at his high-toned style. Et he thinks a mon is hidin' anywhere he jest scalps of the politeness of her sex has burdened heritimes, for at his high-toned style. Et he politeness of her sex has burdened heritimes, for at his high-toned style. Et he politeness of her sex has burdened heritimes, for at his high-toned style. Et he politeness of her sex has burdened heritimes, for at his high-toned style. Et he politeness of her sex has burdened heritimes, for at his high-toned style. Et he politeness of her sex has burdened heritimes, for at his high-toned style. Et he politeness of her sex has burdened heritimes, for at his high-toned style. Et he politeness of her sex has this by a cut-off in time, and although the vehicle had appeared to be crowded, he could no doubt obtain a seat on top.

His eager curiosity, however, led him to put side of the coach, as if passing it, while he examined the strayer more closely. Here we have the side of the coach, as if passing it, while he examined the strayer more closely. Here we have the side of the coach, as if passing it, while he examined the strayer more closely. Here mind, miss, for, it's bein' in your presence, I'll jest pull off my but and ease my feet for a spell."

had seen, but the full face was different in Neither the singular request nor the smile outline and expression. A strange sense of it evoked on the faces of the other passen-Neither the singular request nor the smile

> tween the upper and lower soles, and mighty tight packing for my feet. Ye heft it," he said, as he removed one i heft it," he said, as he removed one boot and held it up before them. "I put the dust there for safety, kalkilatin that while these road gentry allus goes for a man's pockets and his body belt, they never thinks his butes, or haven't time to go through

talian brigands stealin' women, said Collinson reflectively. "but that ain't California road agent style. Great Scott! If one even so much as spoke to a woman they'd have mind tellin' ye. The first thing these yer road agents do, after they've covered the driver with their shotguns, is to make the passengers get out and hold up their hands. That, ma'am"-explanatorily to the lady"is to keep them from drawing their revolvers. A revolver is the last thing a road wants, either in a man's hand or in his holster. So I sez to myself, 'Ef a six-shooter ain't of no account, wot's the use of carryin' it'' So I just put my shootingfrom in my vallse when I travel and fill my holster with my gold dust, so! It's a dence sight heavier than a revolver, but they don't

think he likes the chance of doin' it. He's got a regular set speech, and he's bound to go through it all, even if he makes everything wait and runs the risk of capture. Yet he ain't the chief—and even, I've heard folks say, ain't got any responsibility if he's took, for he don't tech anybody or anybody's say, ain't got any responsibility if he's took, for he don't tech anybody or anybody's noney—and couldn't be prosecuted. I reeken he's some sort of a broken-down lawyer—d'ye see?"

'Not much of a lawyer, I imagine," said the professional man smiling, "for he'll find himself quite mistaken as to his share of ponsibility. But it's a rather clever was responsibility 'Its the smartest gang that was ever stafted in the Sierras. They feeled the sheriff of Sierra the other day. They gave him a sort of idea that they had a kind of hidin' place in the woods whar' they met and kept their booty, and, by Jinks! he goes down thar' with his hull posse-just spilin' fight—and only lights upon a gang of inno-cent greenhorns who were boring for sliver on the very spot where he allowed the robbers had their den! He ain't held up his head since."

Key cast a quick glance at the lady to see the effect of this revelation. But hereface if the same profile he had seen at the winlow-betrayed neither concern nor riosity. He let his eyes drop to smart boot that peeped from be her gown, and the thought of his ing to identify it with the slipper he had picked up seemed to him as ridiculous as his other misconceptions. He sank back gloom-ily in his seat; by degrees the fatigue and excitement of the day began to mercifully benumb his senses, twitight had fallen and the talk had ceased; the lady had allowed her book to drop in her lap as the darkness gathered, and had closed her eyes; he closed his own, and slipped away presently into a dream in which he saw the profile again as he had seen it in the darkness of the hollow only that this time it changed to a full facunlike the lady's or any one he had ever seen. Then the window seemed to open with a rattle and he again felt the cool olors of a rattle and he again felt the cool ofors of the forest, but he awoke to find that the lady had only opened her window for a breath of fresh air. It was nearly 8 o'clock; it would be an hour yet before the coach stopped at the next station for supper; the passengers were drowsly nodding; he closed his eyes and fell into a deeper sleep, from which he woke with a start. The coach had stopped!

CHAPTER IV. "It can't be Three Pines yet," said a par senger's voice, in which the laziness of sleep still lingered, "or else we've snoozed over five mile. I don't see no lights; wot are we stoppin' for?" The other passengers strug-gled to an upright position. One nearest the window opened it; its place was instantly occupied by the double muzzle of a shot-gun! No one moved. In the awe-stricken silence the voice of the driver rose in drawl

ing protestation.
"It t'aint no business o' mine, but it sorter strikes me that you chaps a playin' it just a little too fine this time! It ain't three niles from Three Pine Station, and forty men! Of course, that's your look out-no

The audacity of the thing had evidently truck even the usually taciturn and phiegmatic driver into his first expostulation of

"Your thoughtful consideration does you great credit," said a voice from the darkness, "and shall be properly presented to our manager, but at the same time we wish it inderstood that we do not hesitate to take any risks in strict attention to our business and our clients. In the meantime, you will expedite matters and give your passengers a chance to get an early ten at Three Pines by handing down that treasure box and mail pouch. Be careful in handling that blunder buss you keep beside it; the tast time is unfortunately went off, and I regret to say slightly wounded one of your passengers. Accidents of this kind, interferring as they do, with the harmony and pleasure of our chance meetings, cannot be too highly deplored.

"By gosh!" ejaculated an outside passenger in an audible whisper.

"Thank you, sir," said the voice quietly,
"but as I overlooked you, I will trouble you

now to descend with the others."

The voice moved nearer, and by the light of a flaming bull's-eye cast upon the coach it could be seen to come from a stout, medium-sized man with a black mask, which however, showed half of a smooth, beardless face and an affable yet satirical mouth. The speaker cleared his throat with the slight reparatory cough of the practiced orator, and, approaching the window, to Key's in tense surprise, actually began in the identiprofessional and rhetorical style pre-

viously indicated by the miner. "Circumstances over which we have no control, gentlemen, compel us to oblige you to slight, stand in a row on one side and old up your hands. You will find the arti tude not unpleasant after your cramped posttion in the ceach, while the change from its onfined air to the wholesame night breeze of the Sierras cannot but prove salutary and refreshing. It will also enable us to relieve you of much so-called valuables and treasures in the way of gold dust and coin, which, I regret to say, too often are misapplied is areless hands and which the teachings of he highest morality distinctly denominate as the root of all evil! I need not inform you, gentlemen, as business men, that promotitude and celerity of compliance will insure dispatch and shorten an interpress which has been sometimes needlessly and, I regret to

say, painfully protracted." He drew back deliberately with the same monotonous precision of habit and disclosed the muzzles of his confederates' weapons still leveled at the passengers. In spite of their astonishment, indignation and discomfiture, his practiced effrontery and deliberate display appeared in some way to touch their humorous sense, and one or two smiled hysterically as they rose and heritatingly filed out of the vehicle. It is possible, however,

nder the combined focus of the bull's-eyes, the shining gun barrels and a running, but still carefully prepared commentary from the spokesman: "It is to be regretted that bust-ness men, instead of intrusting their property to the custody of the regularly consti-tuted express agent, still continue to secrete it on their persons, a custom that, without enhancing its security, is not only an injustice to the express company, but a great detriment to dispatch. We also wish to point out that while we do not as a rule interfere with the possession of articles of ordinary personal use or ornament, such as simple fewelry or watches, we reserve our right to restrict by configuation the vulgarity and unmanilness of diamonds and enormous she had preferred the stage. There was she had preferred the stage. There was she had preferred the stage.

The act of spoliation was apparently complete, yet it was evident that the orator was small. And a triffing circumstance had alestraining himself for a more effective climax. Clearing his throat again and stepping before the impatient but mystified file of passengers, he reviewed them gravely. Then in a perfectly pitched tone of pain and apology, he said slowly:

most unconsciously influenced him, after his romantic and superstitious fashion, as to this final step.

He had been singularly moved when he heard that San Luis was the lady's probable destination. It did not seem to bear any

on the extreme left, which evidently give him great pain and impede his locomation. We had even retained its Old World flavor and also seldom deviate from our rule of obliging our clents to hold up their hands during this examination, but we gladly make an exception in favor of the gentleman next to years of his adventurous youth had bee him and permit him to hand us the altogether spent to the long Alemeda or double too heavily weighted helster which presses of ancient trees which connected upon his hip. Gentleman!" said the orator, the convent of Santa Luisa, and some upon his hip. Gentleman!" said the orator, slightly raising his voice with a depreciating gesture, "you need not be alarmed! The indignant movement of our friend just now was not to draw his revolver—for it isn't there!" He paused while his companions speedily removed the farmer's hoots and the miner's holster, and with a still more apologetic air approached the coach, where only the lady remained erect and rigid in her cortical to the sail and some of youthful "devotions," it had been the sery of his romance. He was annaer what seemed to be the irony of fate in linking it with this folly of his maturer a head yet he was uneasily conscious being more aeriously affected by it. An was with a greater anxiety than this ad ture had ever yet cost him that he at last rived at the San Jose hotel and from the lady remained erect and rigid in her cort. the lady remained erect and rigid in her cor-ner. "And now," he said with simulated hesitation, "we come to the last and to us the proached. She was there! But at her said was the proached. seen these road agents." said the professional man, turning to the miner. "Of course you could be able to identify them?"
"Nary a man! You see they're all masked and only one of 'em ever speaks."
"The leader or chief?"
"The orator?" repeated the professional man in amagement.
"The orator?" repeated the professional man in amagement.
"Well, you see, I call him the orator, for he's mighty gib with his tangue and reels lady out of the gentleness of her heart and to us the most painful suspension of our rules. On these very rare occasions when we have they reached. She was there! But at her side, as she descended from the coach, was the most painful suspension of our rules. On these very rare occasions when we have they could not mistake the well built figure whatever doubt there had been about the features which had been so carefully concailed. With the asterishment of this rediscovery there flashed across tim again the features which had been so carefully contained the inspiration which had levided him not to go in the coach. His

when the package is removed."

"One moment," said the professional man, indignantly, "there is a man here whom you have spared—a man who lately joined us. that man," pointing to the astonished Key, one of your confederates?"

"That man," returned the spokesman with a laugh "Is the owner of the Sylvan Hellow We have spared him because we owe him some consideration for having been turned out of his house at the dead of night while the sheriff of Sierras was seeking us. He stopped, and then in an entirely different voice and in a totally changed manner, said roughly: "Tumble in there, all of you, quick! And you, sir -to Key- 'I'd advise you to ride outside. Now, driver, raise so much as a rein or a whiplash, until you hear the signal, and by God you'll know what

He stepped back and seemed to be instantly swillowed up in the darkness, but the light of a solitary bull's eye—the holder himself invisible—still showed the muzzles of the guns covering the driver. There was a momentary stir of voices within the closed coach, but an angry roar of "Silence!" from the darkness hushed it.

The moments crept slowly by; all now were breathless. Then a clear whistle rang from the distance, the light suddenly was extinguished, the levelled muzzles vanished with it, the driver's lash fell simultaneously on the backs of the horses, and the coach leaped

The jolt nearly threw Key from the top, but

a moment later it was still more difficult to keep his seat in the headleng fary of their progress. Again and again the lash descended upon the maddened horses, until the whole coach seemed to leap, bound, and werve with every stroke. Cries of protes and even distress began to come from the nterior, but the driver heeded them not. window was suddenly let down, the voice the professional man saying "What's the matter? We're not followed. You are im-You are im perling our lives by this speed," was answered only by "Will some of ye throttle that fool?" from the driver and the renewed fall of the lash. The wayside trees appeared a solid plateau before them, opened, danced at their side, closed up again behind them, but still they sped along. Rushing down grades with the speed of an avalanche they as-cended again without drawing rein, and as if by sheer momentum, for the heavy vehicle now seemed to have a diabolical energy of its own. It ground scattered rocks to powder with its crushing wheels, it swayed heavily on ticklish corners, recovering itself with the resistless forward propulsion of the straining teams until the lights of Three Pine station began to glitter through the trees. Then a succession of yells broke from the driver, so strong and dominant that they seemed to outsirip even the speed of the unbated cattle. Lesser lights were presently seen running o and fro and on the outermost fringe of the stilement the stage pulled up before a crowd

of wondering faces and the driver spoke,

'We've been held up on the open road not

three miles from whar ye men are sitting tere yawpin'! If thar's a man among ye that hasn't got the soul of a skunk, he'll foller and close in upon 'em afore they have chance to get into the brush." Having thus relieved himself of his duty as an en-forced non-combatant, and allowed all further responsibility to devolve upon his recreant fellow employes, he relapsed into his usual taciturnity and drove a triffe less recklessly to the station, where he grimly set down his bruised and discomfitted passengers. As Key mingled with them he could not help perceiving that neither the late "orator's" exelving that neither the late "orator's" ex-planation of his exemption from their fatnor the driver's surly corroboration of his respectability had pacified them. For a time this amused him, particularly as he could not help remembering that he first appeared them beside the mysterious horseman whom some one thought had been identified as one of the masks. But he was not a little piqued to find that the fair unknown appeared to participate in their feelings, and his first civility to her met with a chilling response. Even then, in the general disillusion of his romance regarding her, this one of them the profile of the face with a would have been only a momentary annoy-had just thought he had lost forever! ance; but it strangely revived all his pre-vious suspicions and set him to thinking. Was the singular sagacity displayed by the orator in his search purely intuitive? Could any one have disclosed to him the secret of the passengers' hoards? Was it possible for her while sitting alone in the coach to have communicated with the band? Suddenly the remembrance flashed across him of her open-ing the window for fresh air! She could have easily then dropped some signal. If this were so, and she really was the culprit. it was quite natural for her own safety that she should encourage the passengers in their absurd suspicion of himself! His dying interest revived; a few moments ago he had half resolved to abandon his quest and turn back at Three Pines. Now he determined to follow her to the end. But he did not indulge in any further sophistry regarding his duty, yet, in a new sense of honor, he did not dream of retaliating upon her by communicating his suspicions to his fellow passengers. When the coach started again he took his seat on the top and re-mained there until they reached Jamestown the early evening. Here a number of his despoiled companions were obliged to wait to communicate with their friends. Happily the exemption that had made them indignant enabled him to continue his journey with a full purse. But he was content with a modest surveillance of the lady from the top of the coach.

On arriving at Stockton this surveillance became less easy. It was the terminus of the stage route and the divergence of others by boat and rail. If he were lucky to discover which one the lady took, his presence now would be more marked, and might excite her suspicion. But here a circumstance, which he also believed to be providential, determined him. As the lugthat the leveled shotguns contributed more or less directly to this result.

Two masks began to search the passengers expressman to check the "lady's" trunk to San Luis. Key was seized with an which seemed to solve the difficulty though it involved a risk of losing the contirely. There were two routes to San Luis, one was by stage and direct, though slower; the other by steamboat and rail, via San Francisco. If he took the bogt there, was less danger of her discovering him, even if she chose the same conveyance; if she took the direct stage—and he to a woman's avoidance of the h o a woman's avoidance change and transhipment for that cho still the chance that in losing sight of he she might escape him, but the risk seeme she might most unconsciously influenced him, after his remantic and superstitious fashion, as t

ology, he said slowly; destination. It did not seem to bear relation to the mountain wilderness and wild life she had just quitted; it was ap own, we are obliged on this present occasion own, we are obliged on this present occasion to suspend one or two of our usual rules. We are not in the habit of interfering with the wearing apparel of our esteemed clients, but in the interests of ordinary humanity we are obliged to remove the boots of the gentleman on the extreme left, which evidently give him on the extreme left, which evidently give him. the stranger and so estopped this convincing denouement. It was quite possible that her companion, by relays of horses and the ad-yantage of bridle cut-offs, could have easily followed the Three Pine coach and joined her at Stockton. But for what purpose? The lady's trunk, which had not been disturbed luring the first part of the journey, and had been forwarded at Stockton untouched before Key's eyez, could not have contained booty be disposed of in this forgotten old

town.

The register of the hotel bore simply the name of "Mrs. Chivers" of Stockton, but no record of her companion, who seemed to have disappeared as mysteriously as he came. That she occupied a sitting room on the same floor as his own-in which she was apparently sectuded during the rest of the day was all he knew. Nobody else seemed to know her. Key felt an odd hesitation, that might have been the result of some that might have been the result of some in making any marked inquiry or imperiling his secret by the bribel espionage of servants. Once when he was passing her door he heard the sounds of laughter—albeit innocent and heart free-which seemed so inconsistent with the gravity of the situation and his own thoughts, that he was strangely shocked. But he was still more disturbed by a later occurrence. In his watchfulness of the movements of his neighbor he had been equally careful of his own, and had not only refrained from registering his name, but had enjoined secrecy upon the landlord, whom he knew. Yet the next morning after his arrival, the porter not answering his bell promptly enough, he so far forgot himself as to walk to the staircase, which was near the lady's room, and call the employe over the balustrade. As he was still leaning over the railing the faint creak of a door and a ingular magnetic consciousnes of being overlooked caused him to turn slowly, but only in time to hear the rustle of a withdrawing skirt as the door was quickly closed. In an instant he felt the full force of his foolish heedlessness, but it was too late. Had the mysterious fugitive recognized him? Perhaps not; their eyes had not met and his face had been turned away.

He varied his espionage by subterfuges

which his knowledge of the old town made He watched the door, himself unseen, from the windows of a billiard saloon opposite, which he had frequented in former days. Yet he was surprised the same after-noon to see her, from his coign of vantage, re-entering the hotel, where he was sure he had left her a few moments ago. Had she gone out by some other exit-or had she een disguised? But on entering his room that evening he was confounded by an in-cident that seemed to him as convincing of her identity as it was audacious. Lying on his pillow were a few dead leaves of an his pillow were a few dead leaves of an oderous mountain fern known only to the Sterras. They were tied together by a nar-row blue ribbon and had evidently been intended to attract his attention. As he took them in his hand, the distinguishing, subtle aroma of the little sylvan hollow in the hills came to him like a memory and a revelation! He summoned the chambermaid; she knew nothing of them, or, indeed, of any one who had entered his room. He walked cautiously into the hall; the lady's sitting room door was open, the room was empty. The occu-pant, said the chambermaid, "had left that pant, said the chambermaid, afternoon." He held the proof He held the proof of her identity in his hand, but she herself had vanished! That she had recognized him there was now no doubt; had she divined the real object of ais quest, or had she accepted it as a mere sentimental gallantry at the moment when the knew it was hopeless and she herself was perfectly safe from pursuit? In either event be had been duped. He did not know had been duped. whether to be piqued, angry-or relieved of its irresolute quest.

Nevertheless he spent the rest of the twi-

ight and the early evening in fruitlessly wandering through the one long thoroughfare of the town, until it merged into the bosky Alamada or spacious grove that connected it with Santa Luisa. By degrees his chagrin and disappointment were forgotten in the memories of the past, evoked by the familiar pathway. The moon was slowly riding over-head and silvering the carriage-way between the straight ebony line of trees, while the footpaths were dispered with black and white chequers. The faint tinkling of a tram-car bell in the distance apprised him of one of the few innovations of the past. The car was approaching him, overtook him, and was passing with its faintly illuminated windows, when, glancing carelessly up, he beheld at one of them the profile of the face which he He stopped for an instant, not in indecision

this time, but in a grim resolution to let no chance escape him now. The car was going slowly: it was easy to board it now, but again he tinkle of the bell indicated that it stopping at the corner of a road beyond. He hecked his pace-a lady alighted-it was she. She turned into the cross street, darkned with the shadows of some low surburban tenement houses, and he boldly followed. He was fully determined to find out her secret, and even, if necessary, to accost her for that purposes He was perfectly aware what he was doing and all its risks and penalties; he knew the danger of following a possible confidante of desperadoes, but he felt in his right-hand pocket for the derringer that was equal to it. They were both there; he was

He was nearing the convent and the oldest and most rulnous part of the town. He did not disguise from himself the gloomy significance of this; even in the cld days the crumbling adobe buildings that abutted on the garden wall of the convent were the haunts lawless Mexicans and vagabond peons. As the roadway began to be rough and uneven. and the gaunt outlines of the sagging roofs of tiles stood out against the sky above the lurking shadows of rained doorways, he was prepared for the worst. As the crumbling but still massive walls of the convent garden loomed shead, the tall, graceful, black gowned figure he was following presently turned into the shadow of the wall itself. He spickened his pace lest it should aga'n escape aim. Suddenly it stopped and remained motionless. He stopped, too. At the same mo

ment it vanished! He ran quickly forward to where it had stood and found himself before a large iron gate with a smaller one in the center that had clanged to on its rusty hinges. rubbed his eyes!--the place, the gate, the wall, were all strangely familiar! stepped back into the roadway and looked at

t again. He was not mistaken. He was standing before the porter's lodge of the Convent of the Sacred Heart, (To be continued.)



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linen duster over clothes that appeared to be ago, just after I came. I reckon I oughter remember it. It was a queer sort o' day in the fall, dry and hot, as if thar might heve the fall, dry and hot, as if thar might heve to keep the sun and dust from his head to keep the sun and dust from his head to keep the sun and had the advantage of him. He superior in fashion and material, also had part his face and head draped by a white silk

Nevertheless, as he dashed on he was by means insensible to the somewhat Quixotic nature of his undertaking. If he was right in his suspicion that a signal had been given by the lady to the stranger, it was exceedingly probable that he had covered, not only the fair inmate of the robbers' den, but one of the gang itself, or at east a confederate and ally. Yet, far from deterring him, in that ingenious sophistry with which he was apt to treat his romance he now looked upon his adventure as a practical pursuit in the interests of law and justice. It was true that it was said that the band of road agents had been dispersed; it was a fact that there had been no spoliation of coach or teams for three weeks, but none if the depredators had ever been caught and their booty, which was considerable, was known to be still intact. It was to the interest mine, his partners and his workmen that this clue to a danger which threatthe locality should be fo end. As to the lady, in the locality to the end. As to the say, and of the disappointment that still rankled in his breast, he could be magnanimous! She might be the paramour of the strange horseman; she might be only escaping from some hateful companionship by his aid. And yet one thing puzzled him; she was evidently not acquainted with the personality of the active gang, for she had without doubt at first mistaken him for one of them, and after recognizing her real accomplice had

It was a great relief to him when the rough and tangled "cut-off" at last broad-ened and lightened into the turnpike road again, and he beheld, scarcely a quarter of a mile before him, the dust cloud that over-hung the coach as it drew up at the lonely wayside station. He was in time, for he knew that the horses were changed there, but a sudden fear that the fair unknown might alight, or take some other convey-ance, made him spur his jaded steed for-As he neared the station he glanced eagerly around for the other horseman, but he was nowhere to be seen. He had evidently either abandoned the chase or ridden

It seemed equally a part of what he believed was a providential intercession that on arriving at the station he found there was a vacant seat inside the coach. It was diagonally opposite that occupied by the lady and he was thus enabled to study her face as it bent over her book, whose pages, how-ever, she scarcely turned. After her first casual glance of curiosity at the new passenger she seemed to take no more notic him, and Key began to wonder if he had not mistaken her previous interrogating look. Nor was it his only disturbing query; he was conscious of the same disappointment, now that he could examine her face more attentively, as in his first cursory glance. She was certainly handsome; if there was no longer the freshness of youth there was still the indefinable charm woman of 30, and with it the delicate lines of experienced muliebrity and repose. Some of these lines, particularly those around the mouth and fringed eyelids, were deepened mouth and fringed cyclids, were deepened as by pain, and the chin, even in its rounded fulness, had the angle of determination. From what was visible below the brown linen "duster" that she wore, she appeared to be tastefully although not richly dressed. As the coach at last drove away from the station a grizzled, farmer-looking man seated beside her uttered a sigh of relief so combable as to attract the general sitention. palpable as to attract the general attention. Turning to his fair neighbor with a smile of

shade, but seemed to excite an emulation among the passengers. Other methods of securing their property were freely dis-cussed, but the excitement culminated in th-leaning forward of a passenger who had up to that moment maintained a reserve almo equal to the fair unknown. His dress and general appearance were those of a proessional man; his voice and manner roborated the presumption. "I don't think, gentlemen," he began with

a pleasant smile, "that any man of us here would like to be called a coward, but it

fighting with an enemy who never attacks, or even appears, except with a deliberately prepared advantage on his side, it is my opinion that a man is not only justified in avoiding an unequal encounter with him, but in circumventing by every means the object of that attack. You have all been frank in talling too. frank in telling your methods. I will be equally so in telling mine, even if I have perhaps to confess to a little more than you have. For I have not only availed myself of a well known rule of the robbers who infest these mountains to exempt all wome and children from their spoliation—a rule which, of course, they perfectly understand gives them a sentimental consideration with all Californians—but I have, I confess, also availed myself of the innocent kindness of one of that charming and justly He paused and bowed courtcousty to the fair unknown. When I en-tered this coach I had with me a bulky parcel which was manifestly too large for pockets, yet as evidently too small and to to be entrusted to the ord nary lug-Seeing my difficulty, our charming gage. companion opposite, out of the very kindness and innocence of her heart, offered to make place for it in her satchel, which was no I accepted the offer joyfully. When I state to you, gentlemen, that that package contained valuable government bonds to a considerable amount, I do so, not to claim your praise for any originality of my own to make this public avowal to our fair fellow passenger for accepting this most fect security and immunity from the road agent that has been yet recorded."

With his eyes riveted on the lady's face. Key saw a faint color rise to her otherimpassive face, which might have been called out by the enthus astic praise followed the lawyer's confession. was painfully coascious of what now seemed to him a monstrous altuation! Here was the actual accomplica; or reconfidant of the road agents calmly redeiving the complacent and uerile confessions of the men who were seeking to outwit them. "Could be, in ordinary justice to them, bee himself, or the m'ssion he believed he was pursuing, refrain from exposing her-or warning them privately? certain? «Was a vague remembrance of a profile momentarily seen-and as he must even now admit-inconsistent with the full face he was gazing at, sufficient for such an accusation? More than that was th ection she had apparently afforded the law yer consistent with the function of an accom-

"Then if the dargef's over," said the lady gently, reaching down to draw her satchel from under the seat. T suppose I may return "By no meana! Don't trouble yourself!

Pray allow me to still remain your debtor—at least as far as the next station," said the lawyer gallantiy.

The lady uttered a languid sigh, sank back

in her seat and calmly settled herself to the perusal of her book. Key felt his cheeks eginning to burn with the embarrassma and shame of his evident misconception. And here he was on his way to Marysville to follow a woman for whom he felt he no longer cared, and for whose pursuit he had no onger the excuse of justice.

"Then I understand that you have twice seen these road agents." said the professional