

WHEN THE WATERS WERE UP AT JULES'.

BY BRET HARTE.

Illustrated by LANCELOT SPEED.



WHEN the waters were up at "Jules'" there was little else up on that monotonous level. For the few inhabitants who calmly and methodically moved to higher ground, camping out in tents until the flood had subsided, left no distracting wreckage behind them. A dozen half-submerged log cabins dotted the tranquil surface of the waters, without ripple or disturbance, looking in the moonlight more like the ruins of centuries than of a few days. There was no current to sap their slight foundations or sweep them away; nothing stirred that silent lake but the occasional shot-like indentations of a passing raindrop, or, still more rarely, a raft, made of a single log, propelled by some citizen on a tour of inspection of his cabin roof-tree, where some of his goods were still stored. There was no sense of terror in this bland obliteration of the little settlement; the ruins of a single burnt-up cabin would have been more impressive than this stupid and even grotesquely placid effect of the rival destroying element. People took it naturally; the water went as it had come, slowly, impassively, noiselessly; a few days of fervid Californian sunshine dried the cabins, and in a week or two the red dust lay again as thickly before their doors as the winter mud had lain. The waters of Rattlesnake Creek dropped below its banks, the stage coach from Marysville no longer made a detour of the settlement. There was even a singular compensation to this amicable invasion; the inhabitants sometimes found gold in those breaches in the banks made by the overflow. To wait for the "old Rattlesnake sluicing" was a vernal hope of the trusting miner.

The history of "Jules'" however, was once destined to offer a singular interruption of this peaceful and methodical process. The winter of 1859-60 was an exceptional one. But little rain had fallen in the valleys, although the snow lay deep in the high Sierras. Passes were choked, ravines filled, and glaciers found on their slopes. And when the tardy rains came with the with-

held south-westerly "trades" the regular phenomenon recurred; Jules' Flat silently, noiselessly, and peacefully went under water; the inhabitants moved to the higher ground, perhaps a little more expeditiously from an impatience born of the delay. The stage coach from Marysville made its usual detour and stopped before the temporary hotel, express offices, and general store of "Jules'" under canvas, bark, and the limp leaves of a spreading alder. It deposited a single passenger—Miles Hemmingway of San Francisco, but originally of Boston—the young secretary of a mining company, despatched to report upon the alleged auriferous value of "Jules'." Of this he had been by no means impressed as he looked down upon the submerged cabins from the box-seat of the coach and listened to the driver's lazy recital of the flood and of the singularly patient acceptance of it by the inhabitants.

It was the old story of the south-western miner's indolence and incompetency—utterly distasteful to his northern habits of thought and education. Here was their old fatuous endurance of Nature's wild caprices, without that struggle against them which brought others strength and success; here was the old philosophy which accepted the prairie fire and cyclone and survived them without advancement, yet without repining. Perhaps in different places and surroundings a submission so stoic might have impressed him; in gentlemen who tucked their dirty trousers in their muddy boots and lived only for the gold they dug, it did not seem to him heroic. Nor was he mollified as he stood beside the rude refreshment bar—a few planks laid on tressels—and drank his coffee beneath the dripping canvas roof with an odd recollection of his boyhood and an inclement Sunday-school picnic. Yet these men had been living in this shiftless fashion for three weeks! It exasperated him still more to think that he might have to wait there a few days longer for the water to subside sufficiently for him to make his examination and report. As he took a proffered seat on a candlebox which tilted under him, and another survey of the feeble

makeshifts around him, his irascibility found vent.

"Why, in the name of God! didn't you, after you had been flooded out *once*, build your cabins *permanently* on higher ground?"

Although the tone of his voice was more disturbing than his question, it pleased one of the loungers to affect to take it literally.

"Well, ez you've put it that way—'in the name of God!'"—returned the man lazily, "it mout hev struck us that ez *He* was bossin' the job, so to speak, and handlin' things

what I mean; you could have protected yourselves better. A levee on the bank would have kept you clear of the highest water-mark."

"Hev you ever heard *what* the highest water-mark was?" said the first speaker, turning to another of the loungers without looking at the secretary.

"Never heard it—didn't know there was a limit before," responded the man.

The first speaker turned back to the secretary. "Did you ever know what happened at 'Bulger's,' on the North Fork?

They had one o' them levees."

"No. What happened?" asked the secretary impatiently.

"They was fixed suthin' like us," returned the first speaker. "They allowed they'd build a levee above *their* highest water-mark, and did. It worked like a charm at first; but the water hed to go somewhere, and it kinder collected at the first bend. Then it sorter raised itself on its elbows one day, and looked over the levee down upon whar some of the boys was washin' quite comf'ble. Then it paid no sorter attention to the limit o' that high water-mark, but went six inches



"'It wasn't *our* flood to monkey with.'"

round here generally, we might leave it to Him. It wasn't *our* flood to monkey with."

"And as He didn't coven-ant, so to speak, to look arter this higher ground 'speshally, and make an Ararat of it for us, ez far ez we could see, we didn't see any reason for *settlin'* yer," put in a second speaker with equal laziness.

The secretary saw his mistake instantly, and had experience enough of Western humour not to prolong the disadvantage of his unfortunate adjuration. He coloured slightly and said with a smile, "You know

better! Not slow and quiet like ez it uster to, ez it does *here*, kinder fillin' up from below, but went over with a rush and a current, hevin' of course the whole height of the levee to fall on t'other side where the boys were sluicing." He paused, and amidst a profound silence added, "They say that 'Bulger's' was scattered promiscuous-like all along the Fork for five miles. I only know that one of his mules and a section of sluicing was picked up at Red Flat, eight miles away!"

Mr. Hemmingway felt that there *was* an

answer to this, but being wise, also felt that it would be unavailing. He smiled politely and said nothing, at which the first speaker turned to him—

"Thar ain't anything to see to-day, but to-morrow, ez things go, the water oughter be droppin'. Mebbe you'd like to wash up now and clean yourself," he added, with a glance at Hemmingway's small portmanteau. "Ez we thought you'd likely be crowded here, we've rigged up a corner for you at Stanton's shanty—with the women."

The young man's cheek flushed slightly at some possible irony in this, and he protested with considerable stress that he was quite ready "to rough it" where he was.

"I reckon it's already fixed," returned the man decisively, "so you'd better come and I'll show you the way."

"One moment," said Hemmingway, with a smile; "my credentials are addressed to the manager of the Boone Ditch Company at 'Jules'." Perhaps I ought to see him first."

"All right; he's Stanton."

"And——" hesitated the secretary, "you, who appear to understand the locality so well—

I trust I may have the pleasure——"

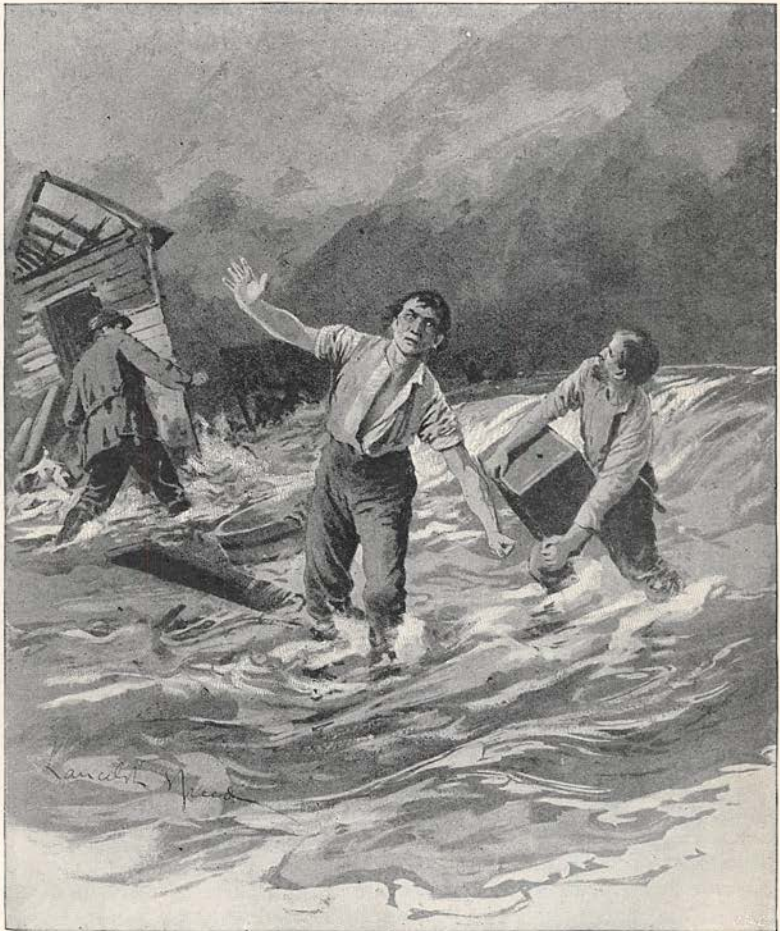
"Oh, I'm Jules."

The secretary was a little startled and amused. So "Jules" was a person, and not a place!

"Then you're a pioneer?" asked Hemmingway, a little less dictatorially, as they passed out under the dripping trees.

"I struck this Creek in the fall of '49, comin' over Livermore's Pass with Stanton,"

returned Jules, with great brevity of speech and deliberate tardiness of delivery. "Sent my wife and two children the next year; wife died same winter, change bein' too sudden for her, and contractin' chills and fever at Sweetwater. When I kem here first thar wasn't six inches o' water in the Creek; but there was a heap of it over there where you see them yallowish green patches and strips o' brush and grass; all that war



"'Bulger's' was scattered promiscuous-like all along the Fork for five miles."

water then, and all that growth hez sprung up since."

Hemmingway looked around him. The "higher ground" where they stood was in reality only a mound-like elevation above the dead level of the flat, and the few trees were merely recent young willows and alders. The area of actual depression was much greater than he had imagined, and its resemblance to the bed of some prehistoric

inland sea struck him forcibly. A previous larger inundation than Jules' brief experience had ever known had been by no means improbable. His cheek reddened at his previous hasty indictment of the settlers' ignorance and shiftlessness, and the thought that he had probably committed his employers to his own rash confidence and superiority of judgment. However, there was no evidence that this diluvial record was not of the remote past. He smiled again with greater security as he thought of the geological changes that had since tempered these cataclysms, and the amelioration brought by settlement and cultivation. Nevertheless, he would make a thorough examination to-morrow.

Stanton's cabin was the furthest of these temporary habitations, and was partly on the declivity which began to slope to the river's bank. It was, like the others, a rough shanty of unplanned boards, but, unlike the others, it had a base of logs laid lengthwise on the ground and parallel with each other, on which the flooring and structure were securely fastened. This gave it the appearance of a box slid on runners, or a Noah's Ark whose bulk had been reduced. Jules explained that the logs, laid in that manner, kept the shanty warmer and free from damp. In reply to Hemmingway's suggestion that it was a great waste of material, Jules simply replied that the logs were the "flotsam and jetsam" of the Creek from the overflowed mills below.

Hemmingway again smiled. It was again the old story of Western waste and prodigality. Accompanied by Jules, however, he climbed up the huge slippery logs which made a platform before the door and entered.

The single room was unequally divided; the larger part containing three beds, by day rolled in a single pile in one corner to make room for a table and chairs. A few dresses hanging from nails on the wall showed that it was the women's room. The smaller compartment was again subdivided by a hanging blanket, behind which was a rude bunk or berth against the wall, a table made of a packing-box, containing a tin basin and a can of water. This was his apartment.

"The women folks are down the Creek, bakin', to-day," said Jules, explanatorily; "but I reckon that one of 'em will be up here in a jiffy to make supper, so you just take it easy till they come. I've got to meander over to the claim afore I

turn in, but you just lie by to-night and take a rest."

He turned away, leaving Hemmingway standing in the doorway still distraught and hesitating. Nor did the young man recognise the delicacy of Jules' leavetaking until he had unstrapped his portmanteau and found himself alone, free to make his toilet, unembarrassed by company. But even then he would have preferred the rough companionship of the miners in the common dormitory of the general store to this intrusion upon the half civilisation of the women, their pitiable little comforts and secret makeshifts. His disgust of his own indecision which brought him there naturally recoiled in the direction of his host and hostesses, and after a hurried ablution, a change of linen, and an attempt to remove the stains of travel from his clothes, he strode out impatiently into the open air again.

It was singularly mild even for the season. The south-west trades blew softly, and whispered to him of San Francisco and the distant Pacific, with its long, steady swell. He turned again to the overflowed Flat beneath him, and the sluggish yellow water that scarcely broke a ripple against the walls of the half-submerged cabins. And this was the water for whose going down they were waiting with an immobility as tranquil as the waters themselves! What marvellous incompetency—or what infinite patience! He knew, of course, their expected compensation in this "ground sluicing" at Nature's own hand; the long rifts in the banks of the Creek which so often showed "the colour" in the sparkling scales of river gold disclosed by the action of the water; the heaps of reddish mud left after its subsidence around the walls of the cabins—a deposit that often contained a treasure a dozen times more valuable than the cabin itself! And then he heard behind him a laugh, a short and panting breath, and turning, beheld a young woman running towards him.

In his first astounded sight of her, in her limp nankeen sunbonnet, thrown back from her head by the impetus of her flight, he saw only too much hair, too much white teeth, too much eye-flash, and, above all—as it appeared to him—too much confidence in the power of these qualities. Even as she ran, it seemed to him that she was pulling down ostentatiously the rolled-up sleeves of her pink calico gown over her shapely arms. I am inclined to think that the young gentleman's temper was at fault, and his conclusion

hasty; a calmer observer would have detected nothing of this in her frankly cheerful voice. Nevertheless, her evident pleasure in the meeting seemed to him only obtrusive coquetry.

"Lordy! I reckoned to git here afore you'd get through fixin' up, and in time to do a little prinkin' myself, and here you're out already." She laughed, glancing at his clean shirt and damp hair. "But all the same, we kin have a talk, and you kin tell me all the news afore the other wimmen get up here. It's a coon's age since I was at Sacramento and saw anybody or anything." She stopped, and instinctively detecting some vague reticence in the man before her, said, still laughing, "You're Mr. Hemmingway, ain't you?"

Hemmingway took off his hat quickly with a slight start at his forgetfulness. "I beg you pardon; yes, certainly."

"Aunty Stanton thought it was 'Hummingbird,'" said the girl, with a laugh, "but I reckoned not. I'm Jinney Jules, you know; folks call me 'J. J.' It wouldn't do for a Hummingbird and a Jay Jay to be in the same camp, would it? It would be just *too* funny!"

Hemmingway did not find the humour of this so singularly exhaustive, but he was already beginning to be ashamed of his attitude towards her. "I'm very sorry to be giving you all this trouble by my intrusion; for I was quite willing to stay at the store yonder. Indeed," he added, with a burst of frankness quite as sincere as her own, "if you think your father will not be offended, I would gladly go there now."

If he still believed in her coquetry and vanity he would have been undeceived and crushed by the equal and sincere frankness with which she met this ungallant speech. "No! I reckon he wouldn't care if you'd be as comf'ble and fit for to-morrow. But ye *wouldn't*," she said reflectively. "The boys thar sit up late over euchre, and swear a heap, and Simpson, who'd sleep alongside of ye, snores pow'ful, I've heard. Aunty Stanton kin do her level at that, too, and they say"—with a laugh—"that I kin, too, but you're away off in that corner, and it won't reach you. So, takin' it all, by the large, you'd better stay whar ye are. We wimmen—that is, the most of us—will be off and away down to Robinson's Bar shoppin' afore sun up, so ye'll sleep ez long ez ye want to, and find yer breakfast ready when ye wake. So I'll jest set to and get ye some supper, and ye kin tell me all the doin's in Sacramento and Frisco while I'm workin'."

In spite of her unconscious rebuff to his own vanity, Hemmingway felt a sense of relief and less constraint in his relations to this decidedly provincial hostess.

"Can I help you in any way?" he asked eagerly.

"Well, ye *might* bring me an armful o' wood from the pile under the alders ef ye ain't afraid o' dirtyin' your coat," she said tentatively.

Mr. Hemmingway was not afraid, he declared himself delighted. He brought a generous armful of small cut willow boughs, and deposited them before a small stove, which seemed a temporary substitute for the usual large adobe chimney that generally occupied the entire gable of a miner's cabin. An elbow and short length of stove pipe carried the smoke through the cabin side. But he also noticed that his fair companion had used the interval to put on a pair of white cuffs and a collar. However, she brushed the green moss from his sleeve with some towelling, and although this operation brought her so near to him that her breath—as soft and warm as the south-west trades—stirred his hair, it was evident that this contiguity was only frontier familiarity, as far removed from conscious coquetry as it was, perhaps, from educated delicacy.

"The boys gin'rally kem to take up enough wood for me to begin with," she said; "but I reckon they didn't know I was comin' up so soon."

Hemmingway's distrust returned a little at this obvious suggestion that he was only a substitute for their general gallantry, but he smiled and said somewhat bluntly, "I don't suppose you lack for admirers here."

The girl, however, took him literally. "Lordy, no! Me and Mamie Robinson are the only girls for fifteen miles along the Creek. *Admirin'*! I call it jest *pesterin'* sometimes! I'll reckon I'll hev to keep a dog!"

Hemmingway shivered! Yes, she was not only conscious, but spoiled already. He pictured to himself the uncouth gallantries of the settlement, the provincial badinage, the feeble rivalries of the young men whom he had seen at the general store. Undoubtedly this was what she was expecting in *him*!

"Well," she said, turning from the fire she had kindled, "while I'm settlin' the table tell me what's a doin' in Sacramento! I reckon you've got heaps of lady friends thar—I'm told there's lots of fashions just from the States."

"I'm afraid I don't know enough of them to interest you," he said drily.

"Go on and talk," she replied. "Why, when Tom Flynn kem back from Sacramento, and he warn't thar more nor a week, he jest slung yarns about his doin's thar to last the hull rainy season."

Half amused and half annoyed, Hemmingway seated himself on the little platform beside the open door and began a conscientious description of the progress of Sacramento, its new buildings, hotels, and theatres, as it had struck him on his last visit. For a while he was somewhat entertained by the girl's vivacity and eager questioning, but presently it began to pall. He continued, however, with a grim sense of duty, and partly as a reason for watching her in her household duties. Certainly she was graceful! Her tall, lithe, but beautifully moulded figure, even in its characteristic south-western indolence, fell into poses as picturesque as they were unconscious. She lifted the big molasses-can from its shelf on the rafters with the attitude of a Greek waterbearer. She upheaved the heavy floursack to the same secure shelf with the upraised palms of an Egyptian caryatid. Suddenly she interrupted Hemmingway's perfunctory talk with a hearty laugh. He started, looked up from his seat on the platform, and saw that she was standing over him and regarding him with a kind of mischievous pity.

"Look here," she said, "I reckon that'll do! You kin pull up short! I kin see what's the matter with you; you're jest plumb tired, tinkered out, and want to turn in! So jest you sit that quiet until I get supper ready and never mind me." In vain Hemmingway protested, with a rising colour. The girl only shook her head. "Don't tell me! You ain't keering to talk, and you're only playin' Sacramento statistics on me," she retorted with unfeigned cheerfulness. "Anyhow, here's the wimmen comin' and supper is ready."

There was a sound of weary, resigned ejaculations and pantings, and three gaunt women in lustreless alpaca gowns appeared before the cabin. They seemed prematurely aged and worn with labour, anxiety, and ill nourishment. Doubtless somewhere in these ruins a flower like Jay Jules had once flourished; doubtless somewhere in that graceful nymph herself the germ of this dreary maturity was hidden. Hemmingway welcomed them with a seriousness equal to their own. The supper was partaken with the kind of joyless formality which in the

south-west is supposed to indicate deep respect, even the cheerful Jay falling under the influence, and it was with a feeling of relief that at last the young man retired to his fenced-off corner for solitude and repose. He gathered, however, that before "sun up" the next morning the elder women were going to Rattlesnake Bar for the weekly shopping, leaving Jay as before to prepare his breakfast and then join them later. It was already a change in his sentiments to find himself looking forward to that *tête-à-tête* with the young girl, as a chance of redeeming his character in her eyes. He was beginning to feel he had been stupid, unready, and withal prejudiced. He undressed himself in his seclusion, broken only by the monotonous voices in the adjoining apartment. From time to time he heard fragments and scraps of their conversation, always in reference to affairs of the household and settlement, but never of himself—not even the suggestion of a prudent lowering of their voices—and fell asleep. He woke up twice in the night with a sensation of cold so marked and distinct from his experience of the early evening, that he was fain to pile his clothes over his blankets to keep warm. He fell asleep again, coming once more to consciousness with a sense of a slight jar, but relapsing again into slumber for he knew not how long. Then he was fully awakened by a voice calling him, and opening his eyes beheld the blanket partition put aside, and the face of Jay thrust forward. To his surprise it wore a look of excited astonishment dominated by irrepressible laughter.

"Get up quick as you kin," she said gaspingly; "this is about the killingest thing that ever happened!"

She disappeared, but he could still hear her laughing, and to his utter astonishment with her disappearance the floor seemed to change its level. A giddy feeling seized him; he put his feet to the floor, it was unmistakably wet and oozing. He hurriedly clothed himself, still accompanied by the strange feeling of oscillation and giddiness, and passed through the opening into the next room. Again his step produced the same effect upon the floor, and he actually stumbled against her shaking figure, as she wiped the tears of uncontrollable mirth from her eyes with her apron. The contact seemed to upset her remaining gravity. She dropped into a chair, and pointing to the open door gasped, "Look thar! Lordy! How's that for high?" threw her apron



"A strong grasp seized his coat collar."

over her head, and gave way to an uproarious fit of laughter.

Hemmingway turned to the open door. A lake was before him on the level of the cabin. He stepped forward on the platform; the water was right and left, all around him. The platform dipped slightly to his step. The cabin was afloat, afloat upon its base of logs like a raft, the whole structure upheld by the floor on which the logs were securely fastened. The high ground had disappeared—the river—its banks—the green area beyond. They, and *they* alone, were afloat upon an inland sea.

He turned an astounded and serious face upon her mirth. "When did it happen?" he demanded. She checked her laugh, more from a sense of polite deference to his mood than any fear, and said quietly, "That gets me. Everything was all right two hours ago when the wimmen left. It was too early to get your breakfast and rouse ye out, and I fell asleep, I reckon, until I felt a kind o' slump and a jar." Hemmingway remembered his own half-conscious sensation. "Then I got up and saw we wez adrift. I didn't waken ye, for I thought it was only a sort of wave that would pass. It wasn't until I saw we were movin' and the hull rising ground gettin' away, that I thought o' callin' ye."

He thought of the vanished general store, of her father, the workers on the bank, the helpless women on their way to the Bar, and turned almost savagely on her.

"But the others—where are they?" he said indignantly. "Do you call that a laughing matter?"

She stopped at the sound of his voice as at a blow. Her face hardened into immobility, yet when she replied it was with the deliberate indolence of her father. "The wimmen are up on the hills by this time. The boys hev bin drowned out many times afore this and got clear off, on sluice boxes and timber, without squealing. Tom Flynn went down ten miles to Sawyer's once on two bar'ls, and I never heard that *he* was cryin' when they picked him up."

A flush came to Hemmingway's cheek, but with it a gleam of intelligence. Of course the inundation was known to them *first*, and there was the wreckage to support them. They had clearly saved themselves. If they had abandoned the cabin it was because they knew its security, perhaps had even seen it safely adrift.

"Has this ever happened to the cabin

before?" he asked, as he thought of its peculiar base.

"No."

He looked at the water again. There was a decided current. The overflow was evidently no part of the original inundation. He put his hand in the water. It was icy cold. Yes, he understood it now. It was the sudden melting of snow in the Sierras which had brought this volume down the cañon. But was there more still to come?

"Have you anything like a long pole or stick in the cabin?"

"Nary," said the girl, opening her big eyes and shaking her head with a simulation of despair, which was, however, flatly contradicted by her laughing mouth.

"Nor any cord or twine?" he continued.

She handed him a ball of coarse twine.

"May I take a couple of these hooks?" he asked, pointing to some rough iron hooks in the rafters, on which bacon and jerked beef were hanging.

She nodded. He dislodged the hooks, greased them with the bacon rind, and affixed them to the twine.

"Fishin'?" she said demurely.

"Exactly," he replied gravely.

He threw the line in the water. It slackened at about six feet, straightened, and became taut at an angle, and then dragged. After one or two sharp jerks he pulled it up. A few leaves and grasses were caught in the hooks. He examined them attentively.

"We're not in the Creek," he said, "nor in the old overflow. There's no mud or gravel on the hooks, and these grasses don't grow near water."

"Now that's mighty cute of you," she said admiringly, as she knelt beside him on the platform. "Let's see what you've caught. Look yer!" she added, suddenly lifting a limp stalk, "that's 'old man,' and thar ain't a scrap of it grows nearer than Springer's Rise—four miles from home."

"Are you sure?" he asked quickly.

"Sure as pop! I used to go huntin' it for smelldidge."

"For what?" he said, with a bewildered smile.

"For this"—she thrust the leaves to his nose and then to her own pink nostrils; "for—for—" she hesitated, and then with a mischievous simulation of correctness, added, "for the perfume."

He looked at her admiringly. For all her five feet ten inches, what a mere child she was, after all! What a fool he was to have taken a resentful attitude towards her! How

charming and graceful she looked, kneeling there beside him!

"Tell me," he said, suddenly, in a gentler voice, "what were you laughing at just now?"

Her brown eyes wavered for a moment, and then brimmed with merriment. She threw herself sideways, in a leaning posture, supporting herself on one arm, while with her other hand she slowly drew out her apron string, as she said in a demure voice—

"Well, I reckoned it was jest too killin' to think of you, who didn't want to talk to me, and would hev given your hull pile to hev skipped out o' this, jest stuck here alongside o' me, whether you would or no, for Lord knows how long!"

"But that was last night," he said, in a tone of raillery. "I was tired, and you said so yourself, you know. But I'm ready to talk now. What shall I tell you?"

"Anything," said the girl, with a laugh.

"What I am thinking of?" he said, with frankly admiring eyes.

"Yes."

"Everything?" he said boldly.

"Yes, everything." She stopped, and leaning forward, suddenly caught the brim of his soft felt hat, and drawing it down smartly over his audacious eyes, said, "Everything *but that*."

It was with some difficulty and some greater embarrassment that he succeeded in getting his eyes free again. When he did so, she had risen and entered the cabin. Disconcerted as he was, he was relieved to see that her expression of amusement was unchanged. Was her act a piece of rustic coquetry, or had she resented his advances? Nor did her next words settle the question.

"Ye kin do your nice talk and philanderin' after we've settled whar we are, whar we're goin', and what's goin' to happen. Jest now it 'pears to me that ez these yere logs are the only thing betwixt us and 'kingdom come,' ye'd better be hustlin' round with a few spikes to clinch 'em to the floor."

She handed him a hammer and a few spikes. He obediently set to work, with little confidence, however, in the security of the fastening. There was neither rope nor chain for lashing the logs together; a stronger current and a collision with some submerged stump or wreckage would loosen them and wreck the cabin. But he said nothing. It was the girl who broke the silence.

"What's your front name?"

"Miles."

"Miles—that's a funny name. I reckon that's why you war so *far off* and *distant* at first."

Mr. Hemmingway thought this very witty, and said so. "But," he added, "when I was a little nearer a moment ago, you stopped me."

"But you was moving faster than the shanty was. I reckon you don't take that gait with your lady friends at Sacramento! However, you kin talk now."

"But you forget I don't know 'where we are,' nor 'what's going to happen.'"

"But *I* do," she said quietly. "In a couple of hours we'll be picked up, so you'll be free again."

Something in the confidence of her manner made him go to the door again and look out. There was scarcely any current now and the cabin seemed motionless. Even the wind, which might have acted upon it, was wanting. They were apparently in the same position as before, but his sounding line showed that the water was slightly falling. He came back and imparted the fact with a certain confidence born of her previous praise of his knowledge. To his surprise she only laughed and said lazily, "We'll be all right, and you'll be free, in about two hours."

"I see no sign of it," he said, looking through the door again.

"That's because you're looking in the water and the sky and the mud for it," she said with a laugh. "I reckon you've been trained to watch them things a heap better than to study the folks about here."

"I daresay you're right," said Hemmingway cheerfully, "but I don't clearly see what the folks about here have to do with our situation just now."

"You'll see," she said with a smile of mischievous mystery. "All the same," she added with a sudden and dangerous softness in her eyes. "I ain't sayin' that *you* ain't kinder right neither."

An hour ago he would have laughed at the thought that a mere look and sentence like this from the girl could have made his heart beat. "Then I may go on and talk?"

She smiled, but her eyes said, "Yes," plainly.

He turned to take a chair near her. Suddenly the cabin trembled, there was a sound of scraping, a bump, and then the whole structure tilted to one side and they were both thrown violently towards the corner, with a swift inrush of water. Hem-

mingway quickly caught the girl by the waist; she clung to him instinctively, yet still laughing, as with a desperate effort he succeeded in dragging her to the upper side of the slanting cabin, and momentarily restoring its equilibrium. They remained for an instant breathless. But in that

the water before the cabin! The submerged obstacle or snag which had torn them from their fastenings was still holding the cabin fast. Hemmingway saw the danger. He ran along the narrow ledge to the point of contact and unhesitatingly leaped into the icy cold water. It reach his armpits before his feet struck the obstacle—evidently a stump with a projecting branch. Bracing himself against it he shoved off the cabin. But when he struck out to follow it he found that the log nearest him was loose and his grasp might tear it away. At the same moment, however, a pink calico arm fluttered above his head and a strong grasp seized his coat collar. The cabin half revolved as the girl dragged him in the open door.

"You bantam!" she said with a laugh, "why didn't you let *me* do that? I'm taller than you! But," she added, looking at his dripping clothes and dragging out a blanket from the corner, "I couldn't dry myself as quick as you kin!" To her surprise, however, Hemmingway tossed the blanket aside, and pointing to the floor, which was already filmed with water, ran to the still warm stove,

detached it from its pipe, and threw it overboard. The sack of flour, bacon, molasses, and sugar, and all the heavier articles followed it into the stream. Relieved of their weight the cabin base rose an inch or two higher. Then he sat down and said, "There! that may keep us afloat for that



"They both stood silent, watching the canoe."

instant he had drawn her face to his and kissed her.

She disengaged herself gently with neither excitement nor emotion, and pointing to the open door said, "Look there!"

Two of the logs which formed the foundation of their floor were quietly floating in

'couple of hours' you speak of. So I suppose I may talk now!"

"Ye haven't no time," she said in a graver voice. "It won't be as long as a couple of hours now. Look over thar!"

He looked where she pointed across the grey expanse of water. At first he could see nothing. Presently he saw a mere dot on its face which at times changed to a single black line.

"It's a log, like these," he said.

"It's no log. It's an Injin's dug out*—comin' for me."

"Your father?" he said joyfully.

She smiled pityingly. "It's Tom Flynn. Father's got suthin' else to look arter. Tom Flynn hasn't."

"And who's Tom Flynn?" he asked, with an odd sensation.

"The man I'm engaged to," she said gravely, with a slight colour.

The rose that blossomed on her cheek faded in his. There was a moment of silence. Then he said frankly, "I owe you some apology. Forgive my folly and impertinence a moment ago. How could I have known this?"

"You took no more than you deserved, or that Tom would have objected to," she said, with a little laugh. "You've been mighty kind and handy."

She held out her hand; their fingers closed together in a frank pressure. Then his mind went back to his work, which he had forgotten—to his first impressions of the camp and of her. They both stood silent, watching the canoe, now quite visible, and the man that was paddling it, with an intensity that both felt was insincere.

"I'm afraid," he said, with a forced laugh, "that I was a little too hasty in disposing of your goods and possessions. We could have kept afloat a little longer."

"It's all the same," she said, with a slight laugh, "it's jest as well we didn't look too comf'ble—to *him*."

He did not reply, he did not dare to look at her. Yes! It was the same coquette he had seen last night. His first impressions were correct.

The canoe came on rapidly now, propelled by a powerful arm. In a few moments it was alongside, and its owner leaped on the platform. It was the gentleman with his trousers tucked in his boots, the second voice in the gloomy discussion in the general store last evening. He nodded simply to the girl and shook Hemmingway's hand warmly.

Then he made a hurried apology for his delay: it was so difficult to find "the lay" of the drifted cabin. He had struck out first for the most dangerous spot—the "old clearing" on the right bank, with its stumps and new growths—and it seems he was right. And all the rest were safe, and "nobody was hurt."

"All the same, Tom," she said, when they were seated and paddling off again, "you don't know *how near you came to losing me*." Then she raised her beautiful eyes and looked significantly, not at *him*, but at Hemmingway.

When the water was down at "Jules'" the next day, they found certain curious changes, and some gold, and the secretary was able to make a favourable report. But he made none whatever of his impressions "when the water was up at 'Jules,'" though he often wondered if they were strictly trustworthy.

* A canoe made from a hollowed log.

