

THE OLD FISH POND.

Green growths of mosses drip and bead  
Around the granite brink  
And twist the black water round  
The wood birds dip and drink;

Slow falls the edge sleep;  
Swift-liriting water-floes  
Shoot on the surface; down the deep  
Dark fishes glom and rise.

Hard Monarch there, by right of night—  
And ages Autocrat,  
Whose "good old rule" is "Appetite,  
And subject to him and fat."

Will they, poor things, in wan despair  
Still hope for years—him  
And, dying, hand from her to heir  
The day undrawn and din.

Who knows what lurks beneath the tide?  
Who knows what waits in the  
Those "antres vast" and shadows hide  
Some patriarchal pike—

Some tough old tyrant, wrinkle-jawed,  
For whom the sky, the earth,  
Have but for a truce; down the deep  
And watch him wax in girth—

When the pond's terror too must go;  
Or, creeping in by stealth,  
A bolder man, on one fell blow,  
Shall slay him.

Who knows? Mean while the mosses bead  
Around the granite brink  
And twist the isles of water-weed  
The wood-birds dip and drink.

—Good Words.

MARRIED TO A HIGHWAYMAN.

A Black Hills Romance.

BY CHERRY JAMES.

"Do you think there is any danger, sir?"

The speaker was a lady on the great seat of a stage coach, which swayed to and fro in a frightful manner as the horses attached to it toiled on over the rough stage-road leading to Deadwood. The gentleman seated across from her, with his gaze bent through the window upon the dreary landscape, which attitude he had assumed in silence for hours previous. Now, however, he started as if from a reverie, at the sound of her voice, and replied courteously:

"I think not. Our driver is a careful fellow, and these coaches are not easy to overthrow."

"That is not what I had referred to," she said, with a slight tinge of impatience in her voice. "It is danger from the robbers that I apprehend. You know they have frequently stopped the coaches."

"Ah! so they have. They are ugly fellows to encounter, and in this wild region one don't know where he may meet them. Are you frightened?"

"I thought I would be, but I fear I am just a little," she said, with an attempt at a laugh that ended in a sob and a slight shiver. He noticed the latter, and, thinking it was occasioned by the chill of the evening, he took a soft blanket-robe from its straps, and gallantly placed it over her shoulders, for which she thanked him in very sweet tones. In this act of gallantry, their heads were for a moment almost in contact, and her hands almost brushed his cheeks.

When he again relapsed into his former position, he knew that at each of her beautifully shaped ears hung a magnificent solitary diamond, and that several of the fingers of her perfectly shaped hand bore a blinding, bewildering array of the same gems.

An hour after, the coach drew up at the lonely wayside ranche, where the lady and gentlemen we have introduced, and the only other passenger partook of a rude supper. Something about the coach had broken, and its departure was delayed half an hour over time while the damage was being repaired. The gentleman leaned against the side of the adobe corral, and listlessly watched the work of repair, and smoked a cigar. Suddenly, at the sound of voices close to him, he separated from him by the corral wall, he grew attentive and apparently anxious. The speakers, whoever they were, talked in, an undertone as if afraid of listeners, and yet loud enough for him to know that they did not suspect his presence.

"My ain't they go-organious," exclaimed one of the speakers, in ecstasy.

"That don't half tell it; they're just snipjoints, they're superlative, they are," replied a second voice in a lofty tone.

"Why, I'd lay 'em in at five thousand and shiners," a third voice added.

"Five thousand! Jim Pike, you're an idiot. They were imported especially for that gal, and cost twenty-five thousand in gold—gold, mind you, landed at New York and no commission added. I got the facts direct from her jeweler, in Chicago, by engaging him to bizardize them for me when I closed the sale of the Big Gulch mine for half a million. Ha, ha, ha! I s'pose he's still waiting."

The listener now had his ear close to the adobe wall.

"Any way, Ben, I was more'n half tempted to hold the gal up, right that at the table, and ease her of 'em. I could have done it slick, and cut before that big fellow a-sittin' beside could have waked us."

"If you had attempted it, Duchy, I'd have put a bullet through you myself. Cusses on you; we're not none of your cowardly sneak thieves, or pick pockets, nor robbers, nuther; we're gentlemen, we are."

"There now, Ben, don't be so touchy. I didn't mean to spoil your game, only I can't savvy the difference."

"Difference hay? We don't go skulking round with lanterns and shiners; form, and all that sort of rubbish; we just lay for our game openly, pick our stage, crack the driver over, and walk up boldly and politely ask the passengers to divy. We take their valuables, you see, and they keep their lives. If they object and want to try conclusions, why we're ready for 'em, d'ye see? What more could you ask of gentlemen? But come close up, boys, I've got a secret for you. There's a mighty pile more than that gal's diamonds to be waked."

"Thunder, Ben! Are you dead, down-right 'arnest?'"

"Of course I am, Lirken. You don't know me, boys, if you think I've been layin' around a hotel in Chicago a hull month, talking leads, and quartz, and big clean-ups, and making people believe I was gettin' up a stock company on the Big Gulch bonanza, all jest for them diamonds, spotted that gal at the hotel, and 'twas't till I s'posed that she'd lots of tin and was crazy to speculate with it, that I laid for her. Then I began to stuff her with all sorts of tall swaggar about the Hills, not meanin', you know, that I ever spoke to her, for I tell you, Thele Davidge is a perfect little lady, and a beauty; too, and I'd f'righten her with my handsome face, ha! ha! ha! but I just occupied days in hunting up every bit of print about the Hills that

about the mines, and I got them printed and sent them to her, and among them were several tellin' how some gals went out there and invested in mining property and made millions without their friends knowing anything about it. That did the biz. She just packed up at once. And now, boys, listen. I stood not five feet from her in a Chicago bank when she drew \$50,000—five ten-thousand-dollar bills—none of your checks, or drafts, or registered bonds, that a fellow's got to commit forgery and run a mighty risk on; but greenbacks, payable to bearer."

"By hoky! Ben, is that so? Has she got in now? Why didn't you nip 'em in the bank or on the road somewhere? Its always safest to take a thing when you can get it."

"Cusses on it, I missed her somehow. I hadn't a chance to play it sharp at the bank, and she took a carriage from there straight to the railway depot. It outrun me, but I thought I had her sure, for the hotel clerk told me she would go by the Northwestern. Durn his eyes, he must have suspected me, for he told me wrong, and I didn't know the difference until Chicago was sixty miles behind. At Omaha I missed her again, coming through on the train ahead of her. Sidney, got just two minutes while she was writing a telegram to go through her satchel, but the stuff wasn't there. I fished her portmionnie from her pocket, but there wasn't anything in it except a few visiting cards, some scraps of silk, and several hundred dollars in bills. I put the portmionnie back in her pocket with the contents untouched, so as not to arouse her suspicions."

"Ben, suppose she's changed her mind about carryin' them greenbacks and sent them on from Omaha through a bank, wouldn't you feel cheap?"

"You fool, you! Just let a woman think she's doin' somethin' she hadn't ought to, and she'll stick to it to eternity. Woman-like, she's got them bills sewed up in her clothes or hid about her person somewhere! We'll find 'em, don't fear. But now about the preliminaries. The horses?"

"Full of fire, and paving to be off."

"And the saddles and girths?"

"Depend on Jim Pike for that, Ben. No nag's fire; I don't like the looks of the big fellow that escorted the gal into supper. Do either of you know him?"

"I've a trusty revolver, and a mighty sharp knife."

"And you, Duchy?"

"Six chambers filled with sartin' death."

"And I've as much. Eighteen leaden pills for the driver and two passengers, not countin' the gal. Six apiece; that'll do. But, say here, boys, we don't want no nag's fire; I don't like the looks of the big fellow that escorted the gal into supper. Do either of you know him?"

"Never stop eyes on him before, but he's too sleepy lookin' to amount to much."

"Don't you be too certain of that, Jim Pike. Then sleepy lookin' fellers are sometimes mighty ugly customers when they're waked up. He looks like he wouldn't stand no foolin'."

"Oh, he's nothin'; a tailor or a teacher, 'll 'aint at the smell of powder."

"Where'll we tackle the stage, Ben?"

"At Frenchy creek, just where the road takes to the hill. It'll reach there about two, after the moon has set and them inside will be snoozin'. We'll go through 'em before they wake up. Maybe we'll get a loose thousand or two on that big fellow to swell our pile. I ain't certain, but we'll take the gal along with us. She's mighty pretty, and I'm struck on her."

"Just the thing; we'll have her and her swag both."

"Where'll we lay, in the underbrush to the right of road?"

"Yes. You'll watch me, Jim, and dash for the coach when I do. And you, Duchy—"

"We'll see that that the driver don't trouble you."

"Good!"

"Suppose, after we get the swag, we have a little talk?"

"Then let each man make the best of his way to Spanish Mike's tavern in Deadwood. Theirs isn't a soul outside the folks of our trade that knows its a shelter for free and easy road agents. Just mention Mike's, and it's a passport among any of the boys."

"But, Ben, here's something we haven't talked over. Some of the boys may get their work in on the stage before we can reach Frenchy, and then we'll feel cheap."

"There isn't much fear of that. The boys know there's no treasure box aboard to-night, and only a light passenger list."

"By the way, Ben, it's reported that Nat Burgess, the king of road agents and terror of the Pueblo roads, is coming up here to learn us how he can walk in ahead of the smartest of us. In fact, the boys have been expecting to hear of some of his work for nights past."

"Why he's chain lightning, that's so? Why he gets in on our work, our cake's dough, you can just bet your bottom dollar on that."

"Not much if I say things. If he's interfered with our game—pulled our trap, you know, here's one that won't let him go off with it if I get in reach of him."

"Them's my sentiments, Jim. Never Ben and you but I have worked up this thing, and we ain't got to sit down and let any other road agent boss us out of it, even if we have to try conclusions with this Nat Burgess that they all talk about. Aint them your sentiments, Ben?"

"What! turn around ag'in a fellow professional because he's stampeded the game afore us? Not much, and if you're that style of fellows, don't count on me. It'd be as soon think of cleaning out a meanin' house as gain through another professional. Durn it, boys, it's the most dishonorable thing in this world. Besides—have you ever met this Nat Burgess?"

"No, though everybody's talkin' about him and scared to death of meetin' him."

"I haven't met him nuther."

"Nor I, but, if half they tell about him is true, none of you, nor all of us put together, and I want to fool with him, or some of us will need plantin', sure as breathin'."

The three confederates talked several minutes longer; and when they stole cautiously out of the corral, the man who had listened so long, was seated in the coach, apparently asleep, and the lady passenger occupied the seat facing him, as before. A few minutes later the repaired coach was toiling over the rough road again, and the sleeping passenger awoke at a time to look over her shoulder and catch a glimpse, against the rising moon, of three dark objects—men on horseback, he imagined—rapidly outstripping the coach in its labored journey northward. Was it this scene that animated him into addressing the lady passenger, and wooing her into holding a lively conversation with him? How many speedier the hours of the long journey fled, she thought, as they came, and how agreeable and entertaining he was; how manly and honest the tone of his voice, and how strange that, ere she knew it, she was talking about herself—telling him many of her pet

thoughts and hobbies, and repeating to him many bits of her history and many of her purposes and plans of life, just the same as if she had known him and trusted him during all the conscious years of her life!

Midnight came round while they thus conversed together, and grew to know each other. She could scarcely be convinced that they had spent hours in their delightful communion—it all seemed but minutes to her, and it was then only because of his earnest solicitation, that she allowed him to fix a pillow for her to rest her head on, and promised to try to sleep. It was not until his furtive glances, drawn from the landscape without to her face, told him that her eyes were veiled by their drooping lashes in quiet, innocent slumber, that he forgot the landscape, forgot everything, apparently, but to watch the sleeping figure. The silvery glint of the moonlight relieved by its reflecting rays the sombre gloom of the interior of the coach enough to enable him to see her plainly. A petite figure, of graceful carriage, with a face lovely at any time—trembly so now in the softened light and the repose slumber brought to its perfectly moulded features, though their greatest beauty, the soft, liquid gleam of her eyes of seal brown were veiled—all that added to an engagingly comely atmosphere of girlish youthfulness and ladylike refinement and dignity, made her strangely interesting to her traveling companion.

"Beautiful!" he questioned to himself, gazing upon her with strange interest; "yes, more than beautiful—lovely! And she would be still more charming if she would not persist in confining her splendid hair in that detestable bag."

Fashioned in an extremely tasteful in everything else about her, she seemed to be sensitive about it herself, for her hands go up to it very frequent, even, in her slumber, as if to hide it from view. She'd be an angel with that glorious mass of ringlets floating over her neck and shoulders. Innocent? Yes, as a child, of the tricks and deceptions of the world—brave, honest little woman with a girl's impulses and woman's romance and weakness; the most successful, the most extravagant taste for gems and jewels, and her unwise inclination to display them on her own beautiful person, not because they represented so much wealth, but because they are things of beauty, to be petted and admired, like birds and flowers and music; the latter displayed in her anxiety to overstep the limits of action allotted to her sex, and prove by her successes in a sphere where even brave men hesitate to venture, that she has nerve and wisdom enough to win success in the very vantage ground of the sterner sex. Poor, romantic girl, how humiliating to be her failure!"

And while he ruminated thus, and thought her asleep, her brown eyes, apparently closed, were looking out through their drooping lashes into his face with yearning scrutiny. During all the long day, now gone, she had been very homesick, very lonely. The ease and exhilarating motion of railway travel had kept her excited spirits at full tide, causing here to feel like a crusader of old going to do battle for a holy cause. With this awful tramping of stage-coach travel, this dreary stretch of plain and hill, the rude habits, the ruder men and women, the talk of Indian and bandit depredations along the route she was taking, the sight of every man armed with deadly weapons, and the tales of bloodshed and rapine repeated everywhere with utmost scorn, *to-day*—all these drove her to a state bordering on hysterics. She awakened to the silly fallacy that had spurred her into this, for her, worse than idiotic journey. She would gladly have sacrificed half her fortune to be safely back among her friends; she was sick with terror, ready to burst into tears on the least provocation. This was her feeling when she first ventured to address this quiet, retiring man sitting opposite her. From that moment she had felt no relief.

Now, after hours of conversation with him, she was pretending slumber, while furtively reading his face, which was in the full moonlight.

"He is not really handsome, she thought, but, oh so noble and manly looking, and so thoughtful and tender. He must be one of those great robbers or bandits I have read about. Oh, if it could be so, at any rate I feel safe with him, and I never met any gentleman that I like half as well."

Saying this, and feeling strangely pleased and yet full of wonder at the way his sad eyes lingered upon her, she fell asleep.

And the other passenger, the little man on the rear seat? He had been asleep for hours, and his snoring reverberated through the coach like the blasts of a fog horn.

An hour or more passed, when the man who sat watching the sleeping girl, spoke in a cautious undertone to the driver.

"How far are we from Frenchy creek?" he asked.

"Will be there in about half an hour if all goes well," was the answer.

The girl was half conscious in her sleep of the question and reply, but at that moment she was dreaming that the stage had been attacked by robbers, that the passenger sitting opposite her was fighting with them, and she was in her defense, and that one of them had grasped her violently.

She awoke with a smothered scream, to discover that her imagined defender's hand was resting on her shoulder in an attempt apparently to arouse her.

"O, it is not so! it is only a dream after all," she gasped.

"What?" he questioned.

"That we were attacked by robbers, and you—but what is the matter? Why do you look at me so strangely?" she added in a sudden unaccountable alarm.

His eyes had been fastened most pleadingly, pitifully, and yet sternly, upon hers. Now, however, he started, painfully brushed his hands over his brow, and said hurriedly:

"Pardon me, madam, if I must give you a painful shock. I am ungallant enough to request you to deliver over to me your valuables, and to sit down."

"What?" she fairly shrieked, arousing the little man on the rear seat from his sleep.

"It may simplify matters, madam, if you will look upon me as a highwayman and accede quietly to my request for your valuables."

"With cutting, biting scorn in her face, in her voice, in her bearing, she forgot for a moment her alarm, and proudly drawing herself up, she barked out:

"You are the creature whom I thought a gentleman, whom I stooped to converse with, and allowed to show me the civilities of a gentleman, until you lulled me into security, and you now pounce upon your game. None but a villain of the lowest type would thus seek a lady's confidence and in so cowardly a manner take advantage of her trust and helplessness."

He dropped his eyes as if struck a fierce blow.

"I despise and defy you," she added on catching her breath. "I will call on the driver to protect me."

"Do so," he said, looking up quickly, with a dangerous gleam in his eyes.

The driver heard her cry for help, reined his horses up in an instant, and dashed his hand into the boot for his revolver, preparatory to rushing to the lady's assistance.

"Jehosophat!" he exclaimed in consternation, "my shootin' iron is missin'!"

"Yes," answered the nonchalant voice of the ady's assailant, from his seat in the rear of the coach, "I forgot to inform you, driver that I borrowed it at the station where we halted for supper."

"The devil you did! Who are you anyway," the driver demanded.

"Did you ever hear of Nat Burgess?"

"Nat Burgess, the terror of the roads; Thunder and lightning, he's come as late," the driver exclaimed. "I'm sorry for you, but there ain't any five men on the road'll tackle Nat Burgess, much less me, that hasn't any shootin' iron. You'd better fork over peaceably."

"I'll be right in, boss, picked up the reins and started the animals as if a thousand demons were after him, while the girl sank back with a moan of helplessness. But suddenly she beheld the staring eyes of the little man on the rear seat and pleaded with him to protect her. Her assailant turned and looked the man over curiously, which had the effect of having him in his fright throw himself on his knees in the bottom of the coach, and beg for his life on condition of his giving up all the money he possessed. The self-confessed highwayman turned away with a motion of disgust.

"The earrings, if you please, madam," he said impatiently to his now helpless victim.

It was not a dream—it was reality, and there was no escape for her. Thele Davidge drew the flashing gems from her ears and threw them into his outstretched hand.

He dashed painfully as he slipped them into his pocket.

"The rings on your fingers, now," he said.

They were stripped off—those glorious gems—and handed over.

"Do you wish my portmionnie," she asked, languidly. "No plunder is too insignificant for creatures of your stamp, I believe."

Again he flushed painfully, but answered quietly:

"You may retain your portmionnie. I will, however, take the fifty thousand dollars concealed on your person."

A quick, choking gasp and a wild stare was his only answer for a minute. Then he said, with a great effort at calmness, but in broken, husky words:

"Since you imagine me possessed of so great a sum, your imagination may also lead you to advise me where to search for it."

"Among your hair, madam," he replied, unhesitatingly.

She cast a look at her hair, which she would have guessed, and then she said, with a gasp:

"Unquished at last! all the courage that up to this point had steeled her nerves, and the man who was ruthlessly robbing her, secretly wonder and admire her, and she gave up completely. Dashing aside the net that held up her wavy masses of hair, they fell over her shoulders in clustering richness; and out from them fell a small package containing the five bank notes of ten thousand dollars each which she had drawn from the Chicago banks. The unsuspecting thief, who had placed this package unopened, in his pocket, where the diamonds already lay, and while Thele Davidge, with her face hidden, wept silently upon the landscape visible from the coach.

Thus he remained for many minutes, until his quick eye caught a silvery gleam, like water, a little distance in advance.

It was that stream of water Frenchy creek," he shouted to the driver.

"Yes, Mr. Nat Burgess. We'll be there in five minutes," the driver politely replied. "And the moon is an hour high yet! Thank God!" he muttered.

Then addressing the weeping girl and the little man cowering on the rear seat, he said:

"You must both immediately lie down on the floor of the stage and not move from that position until I command you to. Not here—on the left side."

The weeping girl looked up defiantly, but there was something in his eyes that told her he had better be obeyed.

Crouching there, weak and helpless, she saw him draw forth two revolvers, examine them carefully, and after glancing to see that she was crouching low, turn his back upon her in such a way as to entirely cover her from the view of any one from the right side of the coach, remaining in that position, stationary as a statue, with eyes bent outside and a cocked revolver in each hand.

What could be the meaning of all this?

The coach splashed into and through the waters of a narrow creek, crunched over a stretch of sand, gravel and bowlder, and, just as it began to ascend a hillside, a figure of a man sprang from a clump of bushes at the roadside and grasped the check rein of the leaders while he pointed a revolver at the head of the driver, shouting:

"Draw up, Tracy, and hold up your hands, or I'll put a bullet clean through you. We're going through this coach."

At the same moment two confederates with drawn revolvers, sprang from the undergrowth toward the coach.

"You're too late, boys," growled the driver. "Nat Burgess got his work in ahead of you."

"Hay!" "What!" "Damnation!" cried the three robbers, stopping as if paralyzed, and in the sudden shock of this news even dropping the muzzle of their revolvers.

"Sure as gospel! Nat Burgess has cleaned out the whole shebang," the driver answered.

"Curses on our luck, there's seventy-five thousand dollars gone."

"See here, Tracy, you're not putting up a stiff on us," exclaimed one of the men. "If you are, you'll never draw rein over another team, mind you."

"Of course I'm not. Inquire inside if you question it."

"Where did it happen?"

"About five miles back on the road."

"By the way, boys, we caught Nat Burgess with the plunder. Which way did he break, Tracy?"

"Why, he didn't break—he's inside that."

"Here I am, gentlemen, at your service," interrupted a tantalizing voice from the coach. "Hold there, no nearer please. Drop that hand Duchy. Don't move Pike, you see, I hold two full hands. I cover every man of you, and if either of you attempts to use a weapon I'll lay all three of you out."

"Done for, by thunder! Trapped off guard!"

"Covered, and nary a chance to play a hand."

"That big fellow, by jingo! our game's up."

These were the exclamations of the three confederates, as, on hearing that voice, they turned hastily towards the coach and discovered the barrels of those two revolvers pointing unerringly at their heads, and, accidentally, overheard the plans of three ruffians to attack the stage at Frenchy creek, their object being to secure your jewelry and money, if not worse. One of these

"Well, what do you propose, gentlemen," added the mocking voice? "First came, first served I believe is the law of the highway; I've got the plunder, and if you propose getting it, I'll promise to make the game as interesting as possible for you. Take care, Ben Davis, another move like that and I'll send you to kingdom come."

"See here, now, Burgess, you've got us, but don't be too hard on us; one of the confederates has been in the night; he's probably a fool and a traitor; that gal and her stuff, and you might divy with us, it would only be fair, you know."

"Well, we will talk that over, boys, when we meet at Spanish Mike's, up at Deadwood."

"Boys, he's one of us sure," muttered Ben to his comrades, "else he wouldn't know nothin' about Spanish Mike's. I doleed him first, but hands off, boys, or we'll get mighty hurt, if I can't get 'em."

"All right, Burgess," said Jim Pike. "we'll wait; only turn us over the gal now. She's no value to you since you've got the plunder."

A smothered moan sounded behind the man who stood there facing the robbers.

"What do you mean?" he demanded fiercely.

"Why the gal's best out of your way, and we'll take care you won't see her again."

"That's so," Duchy said, "it's only fair we'd get revenge some way for our disappointment."

"Insinuate such a dastardly thing again, either of you, and I'll put you where your villainy won't trouble this world. Before you harm a hair of her head you will have to walk over me," he replied in ringing tones.

"God bless you! I forgive you all else for saving me from them," he heard Thele Davidge say in a tone of deep thankfulness, and he whispered:

"Crouch low; the danger is not over yet."

"Clasp your hands behind your backs," he demanded of the three confederates. "Drop your weapons first. Oh, you won't; well, a little coercion from one of these pets may help you. Oh, that's best; obedience saves trouble. Now, face the other way. Very good; the first man who attempts to reach his weapon, starts to run or turns his face or body for the next five minutes, has his fate upon his own hands. Are you ready to go on, driver?"

"Ready and anxious, Mr. Burgess."

"Drive on lively then. I'll protect you."

The crack of the whip sounded, the horses eagerly sprang forward, and the coach sped up the hill at a lively gait. It had not gone far, when Jim Pike, no longer able to resist the temptation, turned his head and saw those two threatening revolvers, held by an unerring hand, still on guard, and he saw, also, besides the form and face of the courageous man who held them, the pale face of Thele Davidge peering, awed and inquiring, past his shoulder. With a loud curse, he stooped like a flash, grasped his revolver lying at his feet, ready cocked, sprang round facing the coach and fired, exclaiming:

"Tell that fellow to face wench."

Thele Davidge saw the movement; the man standing before her saw it first, however, and devining its cause, threw himself forward to more completely cover her. At the same moment his fingers touched the trigger of the revolver he held, and simultaneously with the crack of Jim Pike's revolver, a bullet pierced his brain, and another overtook Duchy as he was stooping to secure his revolver.

"I hoped to avoid bloodshed, but it is better so," muttered the perpetrator of this. "If they had escaped unhurt, they would have followed after us on their horses and attacked us elsewhere, when all the advantage would have been theirs. Now, the only survivor will not touch us."

Assuring the young lady and the other passenger that all danger was past, he again turned his gaze out upon the stretch of country that he had just traversed. After some minutes he felt a light touch upon his arm, and looking up, he saw Thele Davidge gazing strangely upon him.