lookin' fillin' that jest made a man want to give up.

"I was there three days, and every day I'd stop in front of that window and jest naturally hone fur a slice of that vision. The Chink was standin' in the door the first day.

" 'Six doll's,' he says, kind of enticin' me.

"He might as well 'a' said six thousand. I shook my head.

"Next day I was there again, yearnin'. The Chink see me and come out.

"'One doll' li'l piece,' he says.

"I says, 'No, you slant-eyed heathen,' or some such name as that. But when you're looking fur tests of character, son, don't let that one hide away from you. I'd play that fur the heftiest moral courage I've ever showed, anyway.

"The third day it was gone and a lemon pie was there, all with nice kind of brownish snow on top. I was on my way out then, pushin' the mule. I took one lingerin' last look and felt proud of myself when I saw the hump in the pack made by my bag of beans.

" 'That-like flummery food's no kind of diet to be trackin' up payrock on,' I says to kind of cheer myself.

"Four weeks later I struck it. And six weeks after that I had things in shape so't I was able to leave. I was nearer to other places 'twas bigger, but I made fur Grand Bar, lettin' on't I wanted to see about a claim there. I'd 'a' felt foolish to have any one know jest why I was makin' the trip.

"On the way I got to havin' nightmares, 'fear that Chink would be gone. I knew if he was I'd go down to my grave with something comin' to me because I'd never found jest that identical cake I'd been famishin' fur.

"When I got up front of the window, you can believe it or not, but that Chink was jest settin' down another like it. Now you know how that Monte Cristo carried on after he'd proved up. Well, I got into his class, all right. I walked in past a counter where the Chink had crullers and gingerbread and a lot of low-grade stuff like that, and I set down to a little table with this here marble oilcloth on it.

" 'Bring her back,' I says, kind of tremblin', and pointin' to the window.

"The Chink pattered up and come back with a little slab of it on a tin plate. I jest let it set there.

" 'Bring it all,' I says; 'I want the hull ball of wax.'

" 'Six doll's,' he says, kind of cautious.

"I pulled out my buckskin pouch. 'Bring her back and take it out of that,' I says—'when I get through,' I says.

"He grinned and hurried back with it.

"Well, son, nothing had ever tasted so good to me, and I ain't say'n' that wa'n't the biggest worth of all my money't I ever got. I'd been trainin' fur that cake fur twenty odd year, and proddin' my imagination up fur the last ten weeks.

"I et that all, and I et another one with jelly, and a bunch of little round ones with frostin' and raisins, and a bottle of brandied peaches, and about a dozen cream puffs, and half a lemon pie with frostin' on top, and four or five Charlotte rushes. The Chink had learned to make 'em all in 'Frisco.

"That meal set me back $34 75. When I went out I noticed the plain sponge cakes and fruit cakes and dried-apple pies—things that had been out of my reach fur twenty years, and— My! but they did look common and unappetisin'. I kind of shivered at the sight of 'em.

"I ordered another one of the big cakes and two more lemon pies fur the next day.

"Fur four days I led a life of what they call 'unbridled licentiousness' while that Chink pandered to me. I never was any hand fur drink, but I cut loose in that fancy-food joint, now I tell you.

"The fifth day I begun to taper off. I begun to have a suspicion the stuff was made of sawdust with plasty of Paris fur frostin'. The sixth day I was sure it was sawdust, and my shameful debauch comes to an end right there. I remembered the story about the feller that cal'lated his chickens wouldn't tell any different, so he fed 'em sawdust instead of corn-meal, and by and by a settin' of eggs hatched out—twelve of the chickens had wooden legs and the thirteenth was a woodpecker. Say, I felt so much like two cords of four-foot stove wood that it made me plumb nervous to ketch sight of a sawbuck.

"It took jest three weeks fur me to get right inside again. My, but meat victuals and all like that did taste mighty scrumptious when I could handle them again.

"After that when I'd been out in the hills fur a season I'd get that hankerin' back, and when I come in I'd have a little frosted-cake orgy now and then. But I kep' myself purty well in hand. I never overdone it like that again, fur you see I'd learned something. First off, there was the appetite. I soon see the gist of my fun had been the wantin' the stuff, the appetite fur it, and if you nursed an appetite along and deluded it with promises it would stay by you like one of them meachin' yellow dogs. But as soon as you tried to do the good-fairy act by it, and give it all it hankered fur, you killed it off, and then you wouldn't be entertained by it no more, and kep' stirred up and busy.

"And so I laid out to nurse my appetite, and aggravate it by never givin' it quite all it wanted. When I was in the hills after a day's tramp I'd let it have its fling on such delicacies as I could turn out of the fryin'-pan myself, but when I got in again I'd begin to act bossy with it. It's wantin' reasonably that keeps folks alive, I reckon. The mis-a-blest folks I've ever saw was them that had killed all their wants by overfeedin' 'em.

"Then, again, son, in this world of human failin's there ain't anything ever can be as pure and blameless and satisfyin' as the stuff in a bake-shop window looks like it is. Don't ever furget that. It's jest too good to be true. And in the next place—pastry's good in its way, but the best you can ever get is what's made fur you at home—I'm talkin' about a lot of things now that you don't probably know any too much about. Sometimes the boys out in the hills spends their time dreamin' fur other things besides pies and cakes, but that system of mine holds good all through the deal—you can play it from soda to hock and not lose out. And that's why I'm outlastin' a lot of the boys and still gettin' my fun out of the game.

"It's a good system for you, son, while you're learnin' to use your head. Your pa played it at first, then he cut loose. And you need it worse'n ever he did, if I got you sized up right. He touched me on one side, and touched you on the other. But you can last longer if you jest keep the system in mind a little. Remember what I say about the window stuff."

Percival had listened to the old man's story with proper amusement, and to the didactics with that feeling inevitable to youth which says secretly, as it affects to listen to one whom it does not wish to wound, "Yes, yes, I know, but you were living in another day, long ago, and you are not me!"

He went over to the desk and began to scribble a name on the pad of paper.

"If a man really loves one woman he'll behave all right," he observed to Uncle Peter.

"Oh, I ain't preachin' like some do. Havin' a good time is all right; it's the only thing, I reckon, sometimes, that justifies the misery of livin'. But cuttin' loose is bad judgment. A man wakes up to find that his natural promptin's has cold-decked him. If I smoked the best see-gars now all the time, purty soon I'd get so't I wouldn't appreciate 'em. That's why I always keep some of these out-door free-burners on hand. One of them now and then makes the others taste better."

The young man had become deaf to the musical old voice.

He was writing:

"My Dear Miss Milbrey: 'I send you the first and only poem I ever wrote. I may of course be a prejudiced critic, but it seems to me to possess in abundance those graces of meter, rhyme, high thought in poetic form and perfection of finish which the critics unite in demanding. To be honest with you—and why should I conceal that conceit which every artist is said secretly to feel in his own production?—I have encountered no other poem in our noble tongue which has so moved and captivated me.

"It is but fair to warn you that this is only the first of a volume of similar poems which I contemplate writing. And as the theme appears now to be inexhaustible, I am not sure that I can see any limit to the number of volumes I shall be compelled to issue. Pray accept this author's copy with his best and hopefullest wishes. One other copy has been sent to the book reviewer of the Arcady Lyre, in the hope that he, at least, will have the wit to perceive in it that ultimate and ideal perfection for which the humbler bards have hitherto striven in vain. Sincerely and seriously yours,

"P. PERCIVAL BINES."

Thus ran the exalted poem on a sheet of note paper:

"AVICE MILBREY.

Avice Milbrey, Avice Milbrey, Avice Milbrey,
Avice Milbrey, Avice Milbrey, Avice Milbrey,
Avice Milbrey, Avice Milbrey,
Avice Milbrey, Avice Milbrey,
Avice Milbrey, Avice Milbrey, Avice Milbrey.
And ninety-eight thousand other verses quite like it."

CHAPTER XII.

PLANS FOR THE JOURNEY EAST.

Until late in the afternoon they rode through a land that was bleak and barren of all grace or cheer. The dull browns and grays of the landscape were unrelieved by any green or freshness save close by the banks of an occasional stream. The vivid blue of a cloudless sky served only to light up its desolation to greater disadvantage. It was a grim unsmiling land, hard to like.

"This may be God's own country," said Percival once, looking out over a stretch of gray sagebrush to a mass of red sandstone jutting up, high, sharp and ragged, in the distance—' out it looks to me as if he got tired of it himself and gave up before it was half finished."

"A man has to work here a few years to love it," said Uncle Peter, shortly.

As they left the car at Montana City in the early dusk, that thriving metropolis had never seemed so unattractive to Percival; so rough, new, garish, and wanting so many of the softening charms of the East. Through the wide, unpaved streets, lined with their low wooden buildings, they drove to the Bines mansion, a landmark in the oldest and most fashionable part of the town. For such distinctions are made in Western towns as soon as the first two shanties are built. The Bines house had been a monument to new wealth from the earliest days of the town, which was a fairly decent antiquity for the region. But the house and the town grated harshly now upon the young man. He burned with a fever of haste to be off toward the East—over the far rim of hills, and the farther higher mountain range, to a land that had warmed genially under three hundred years of civilized occupancy—where people had lived and fraternized long enough to create the atmosphere he craved so ardently.

While Chinese Wung lighted the hall gas and busied himself with their hats and bags, Psyche Bines came down the stairs to greet them. Never had her youthful freshness so appealed to her brother. The black gown she wore emphasized her blond beauty. As to give her the aspect of mourning one might have tried as reasonably to hide the radiance of the earth in springtime with that trifling pall.

Her brother kissed her with more than his usual warmth. Here was one to feel what he felt, to sympathize warmly with all those new yearnings that were to take him out of the crude West. She wanted, for his own reasons, all that he wanted. She understood him; and she was his ally against the aged and narrow man who would have held them to life in that physical and social desert.

"Well, sis, here we are!" he began. "How fine you're looking! And how is Mrs. Throckmorton? Give her my love and ask her if she can be ready to start for the effete East in twenty minutes."

It was his habit to affect that he constantly forgot his mother's name. He had discovered years before that he was sometimes able thus to puzzle her momentarily.

"Why, Percival!" exclaimed this excellent lady, coming hurriedly from the kitchen regions, "I haven't a thing packed. Twenty minutes! Goodness! I do declare!"

It was an infirmity of Mrs. Bines that she was unable to take otherwise than literally whatever might be said to her; an infirmity known and played upon relentlessly by her son.

"Oh, well!" he exclaimed with a show of irritation. "I suppose we'll be delayed then. That's like a woman. Never ready on time. Probably we can't start now till after dinner. Now hurry! You know that boat leaves the dock for Tonsolitis at 8:23—I hope you won't be seasick."

"Boat—dock—" Mrs. Bines stopped to convince herself beyond a certainty that no dock nor boat could be within many hundred miles of her by any possible chance.

"Never mind," said Psyche; "give ma half an hour's notice and she can start for any old place."

"Can't she though!" and Percival, seizing his astounded mother, waltzed with her down the hall, leaving her at the far end with profusely polite assurances that he would bring her immediately a lemon ice, an ice pick and a cold roast turkey with pink stockings on.

"Never mind, Mrs. Cartwright," he called back to her—"oh, beg pardon—Bines? yes, yes, to be sure—well, never mind, Mrs. Brennings. We'll give you time to put your gloves and a bottle of horseradish and a nail file and hammer into that neat traveling bag of yours.

"Now let me go up and get clean again. That lovely alkali dust has worked clear into my bearings, so I'm liable to have a hot box just as we get the line open ninety miles ahead."

At dinner and afterward the new West and the old aligned themselves into hostile camps, as of yore. The young people chatted with lively interest of the coming change, of the New York people who had visited the mine, of the attractions and advantages of life in New York.

Uncle Peter, though he had long since recognized his cause as lost, remained doggedly inimical to the migration. The home was being broken up and he was depressed.

"Anyhow, you'll soon be back," he warned them. "You won't like it a mite. I tried it myself thirty years ago. I'll jest camp here until you do come back. My! but you'll be glad to get here again."

"Why not have Billy Brue come stay with you?" suggested Mrs. Bines, who was hurting herself with pictures of the old man's loneliness, "in case you should want a plaster on your back or some nutmeg tea brewed, or anything? That Wung is so trifling."

"Maybe I might," replied the old man, "but Billy Brue ain't exactly broke to a shack like this. I know just what he'd do all his spare time; he'd set down to that new-fangled horseless piano and play it to death."

Uncle Peter meant the new automatic piano in the parlor. As far as the new cabinet was from the what-not this modern bit of mechanism was from the old cottage organ—the latter with its "Casket of Household Melodies" and the former with its perforated paper repertoire of "The World's Best Music," ranging without prejudice from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony to "I Never Did Like a Nigger Nohow," by a composer who shall be unnamed on this page.

"And Uncle Peter won't have any one to bother him when he makes a litter with all those old plans and estimates and maps of his," said Psyche; "you'll be able to do a lot more work, Uncle Peter, this winter."

"Yes; only I ain't got any more work to do than I ever had, and I always managed to do that, no matter how you did clean up after me and mix up my papers. I'm like old Nigger Pomeroy. He was doin' a job of whitewashin' one day and he had an old whitewash brush with most of the hair gone out of it. I says to him, 'Pomeroy, why don't you get you a new brush? You could do twice as much work. And Pomeroy says, 'That's right, Mr. Bines, but the trouble is I ain't got twice as much work to do.' So don't you folks get out on my account," he concluded politely.

"And you know we shall be in mourning," said Psyche to her brother.

"I've thought of that. We can't do any entertaining, except of the most informal kind, and we can't go out except very informally; but then, you know, there aren't many people that have us on their lists, and while we're keeping quiet we shall have a chance to get acquainted a little."

"I hear they do have dreadful times with help in New York," said Mrs. Bines.

"Don't let that bother you, ma," her son reassured her. "We'll go to the Hightower Hotel first. You remember you and pa were there when it first opened. It's twice as large now, and we'll take a suite, have our meals served privately, our own servants provided by the hotel, and you won't have a thing to worry you. We'll be snug there for the winter. Then for the summer we'll go to Newport and when we come back from there we'll take a house. Meantime, after we've looked around a bit, we'll build, maybe up on one of those fine corners east of the Park."

"I almost dread it," his mother rejoined. "I never did see how they kept track of all the help in that hotel, and if it's twice as monstrous now, however do they do it—and have the beds all made every day and the meals always on time?"

"And you can get meals there," said Percival. "I've been needing a broiled lobster all summer—and now the oysters will be due—fine fat Buzzard's Bay—and oyster crabs."

"He ain't been able to touch a morsel out here," observed Uncle Peter, with a palpably false air of concern. "I got all worried up about him, barely peckin' at a crumb or two."

"I never could learn to eat those oysters out of their shells," Mrs. Bines confessed. "They taste so much better out of the can. Once we had them raw and on two of mine were those horrid little green crabs, actually squirming. I was going to send them back, but your pa laughed and ate them himself—ate them alive and kicking."

"And terrapin!" exclaimed Percival, with anticipatory relish.

"That terrapin stew does taste kind of good," his mother admitted, "but land's sakes! it has so many little bits of bones in it I always get nervous eating it. It makes me feel as if all my teeth was coming out.

"You'll soon learn all those things, ma," said her daughter—"and not to talk to the waiters, and everything like that. She always asks them how much they earn, and if they have a family, and how many children, and if any of them are sick, you know," she explained to Percival.

"And I s'pose you ain't much of a hand fur smokin' cigarettes, are you, ma?" inquired Uncle Peter casually.

"Me!" exclaimed Mrs. Bines in horror; "I never smoked one of the nasty little things in my life."

"Son," said the old man to Percival, reproachfully, "is that any way to treat your own mother? Here she's had all this summer to learn cigarette smokin', and you ain't put her at it—all that time wasted, when you know she's got to learn. Get her one now so she can light up."

"Why, Uncle Peter Bines, how absurd!" exclaimed his granddaughter.

"Well, them ladies smoked the other day, and they was some of the reg'lar Van Vanvans. You don't want your poor ma kep' out of the game, do you? Goin' to let her set around and toy with the coppers, or maybe keep cases now and then, are you? Or, you goin' to get her a stack of every color and let her play with you? Pish, now, havin' been to a Frisco seminary—she can pick it up, prob'ly in no time; but ma ought to have practice here at home, so she can find out what brand she likes best. Now, Marthy, t'em Turkish cigarettes, in a nice silver box with some naked ladies painted on the outside, and your own monogram 'M. B.' in gold letters on every cigarette—"

"Don't let him scare you, ma," Percival interrupted. "You'll get into the game all right, and I'll see that you have a good time."

"Only I hope the First Methodist Episcopal Church of Montana City never hears of her outrageous cuttin's-up," said Uncle Peter, as if to himself. "They'd have her up and church her, sure—smokin' cigarettesc with her gold monogram on, at her age!"

"And of course we must go to the Episcopal Church there," said Psyche. "I think those Episcopal ministers are just the smartest looking men ever. So swell looking, and any way it's the only church the right sort of people go to. We must be awfully high church, too. It's the very best way to know nice people."

"I s'pose if every day'd be Sunday by-and-bye, like the old song says, it'd be easier fur you, wouldn't it?" asked the old man. "You and Petie would be 401 and 402 in jest no time at all."

Uncle Peter continued to be perversely frivolous about the most exclusive metropolitan society in the world. But Uncle Peter was a crabbed old man, lingering past his generation, and the young people made generous allowance for his infirmities.

"Only there is one thing," said his sister to Percival, when later they were alone; "we must be careful about ma; she will persist in making such dreadful breaks, in spite of everything I can do. In San Francisco last June, just before we went to Steaming Springs, there was one hot day, and of course everybody was complaining. Mrs. Beale remarked that it wasn't the heat that bothered us so, but the humidity. It was so damp, you know. Ma spoke right up so everybody could hear her, and said, 'Yes, isn't the humidity dreadful? Why, it's just running off me from every pore!' "

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ARGONAUTS RETURN TO THE RISING SUN.

It was mid-October. The two saddle horses and a team for carriage use had been shipped ahead. In the private car the little party was beginning its own journey eastward. From the rear platform they had watched the tall figure of Uncle Peter Bines standing in the bright autumn sun, aloof from the band of kerchief-waving friends, the droop of his head and shoulders showing the dejection he felt at seeing them go. He had resisted all entreaties to accompany them.

His last injunction to Percival had been to marry early.

"I know your stock and I know you," he said, "and you got no call to be rangin' them pastures without a brand. You never was meant for a maverick. Only don't let the first woman that comes ridin' herd get her iron on you. No man knows much about the critters, of course, but I've noticed a few things in my time. You pick one that's full-chested, that's got a fairish-sized nose, and that likes cats. The full chest means she's healthy, the nose means she ain't finicky, and likin' cats means she's kind and honest and unselfish. Ever notice some women when a cat's around? They pretend to like 'em and say 'Nice kitty!' but you can see they're viewin' 'em with bitter hate and suspicion. If they have to stroke 'em they do it plenty gingerly and you can see 'em shudderin' inside like. It means they're catty themselves. But when one grabs a cat up as if she was goin' to eat it and cuddles it in her neck and talks baby-talk to it, you play her fur bein' sound and true. Pass up the others, son.

"And speakin' of the fair sex," he added, as he and Percival were alone for a moment, "that enterprisin' lady we settled with is goin' to do one thing you'll approve of.

"She's goin'," he continued, in answer to Percival's look of inquiry, "to take her bank-roll to New York. She says it's the only place fur folks with money, jest like you say. She tells Coplen that there wa'n't any fit society out here at all—no advantages fur a lady of capacity and ambitions. I reckon she's goin' to be 403 all right."

"Seems to me she did pretty well here; I don't see any kicks due her."

"Yes, but she's like all the rest. The West was good enough to make her money in, but the East gets her when spendin' time comes."

As the train started he swung himself off with a sad little "Be good to yourself!"

"Thank the Lord we're under way at last!" cried Percival, fervently, when the group at the station had been shut from view.

"Isn't it just heavenly!" exclaimed his sister. "Think of having all of New York you want—being at home there—and not having to look forward to this desolation of a place."

Mrs. Bines was neither depressed nor elated. She was maintaining that calm level of submission to fate which had been her lifelong habit. The journey and the new life were to be undertaken because they formed for her the line of least resistance along which all energy must flow. Had her children elected to camp for the remainder of their days in the center of the desert of Gobi, she would have faced that life with as little sense of personal concern and with no more misgivings.

Down out of the maze of hills the train wound; and then by easy grades after two days of travel down off the great plateau to where the plains of Nebraska lay away to a far horizon in brown billows of withered grass.

Then came the crossing of the sullen, sluggish Missouri, that highway of an earlier day to the great Northwest; and after that the better wooded and better settled lands of Iowa and Illinois.

"Now we're getting where Christians live," said Percival, with warm appreciation.

"Why, Percival," exclaimed his mother, reprovingly, "do you mean to say there aren't any Christians in Montana City? How you talk! There are lots of good Christian people there, though I must say I have my doubts about that new Christian Science Church they started last spring."

"The term, Mrs. Thorndike, was used in its social rather than its theological significance," replied her son, urbanely. "Far be it from me to impugn the religion of that community of which we are ceasing to be integers at the pleasing rate of sixty miles an hour. God knows they need their faith in a different kind of land hereafter!"

And even Mrs. Bines was not without a sense of quiet and rest induced by the gentler contours of the landscape through which they now sped.

"The country here does seem a lot cozier," she admitted.

The hills rolled away amiably and reassuringly; the wooded slopes in their gay coloring of autumn invited confidence. Here were no forbidding stretches of the gray alkali desert, no grim bare mountains, no solitude of desolation. It was a kind of land fat with riches. The shorn yellow fields, the capacious red barns, the well-conditioned homes, all told eloquently of peace and plenty. So, too, did the villages—those lively little clearing-houses for immense farming districts. To the adventurer from New York they seem always new and crude. To our travelers from a newer, cruder region they were actually esthetic in their suggestions of an old and well-established civilization.

In due time they were rattling over a tangled maze of switches, dodging interminable processions of freight cars, barely missing crowded passenger trains whose bells struck clear and then flatted as the trains flew by, defiling by narrow waterways crowded with small shipping, winding through streets lined with high, gloomy warehouses, amid the clang and clatter, the strangely sounding bells and whistles of a thousand industries, each sending up its just contribution of black smoke to the pall that lay always spread above, and steaming at last into a great roomy shed, where all was system and where the big engine trembled and panted as if in relief at having run in safety a gauntlet so hazardous.

"Anyway, I'd rather live in Montana City than Chicago," ventured Mrs. Bines.

"Whatever pride you may feel in your discernment, Mrs. Cadwallader, is amply justified," replied her son, performing before the amazed lady a bow that indi-

"TEA MISS MILBREY JUSTLY RECKONED AMONG THE SANITIES OF LIFE."