

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Lichtenberg Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lenz Hambrecht Doyle Gjellerup
Mommssen Thoma Tolstoi Hanrieder Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Thoma Verne Hägele Hauptmann Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer George
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Dickens Grimm Jerome Rilke Bebel Proust
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy
Storm Casanova Lessing Langbein Gilm Gryphius
Chamberlain Tersteegen Gilm Grillparzer Georgy
Brentano Claudius Schiller Lafontaine Kralik Iffland Sokrates
Strachwitz Bellamy Gerstäcker Raabe Gibbon Tschechow
Katharina II. von Rußland Schilling Kraus
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Wilde Gleim Vulpius
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Morgenstern Goedicke
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Kleist Mörike Musil
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke
Nestroy Marie de France
Nietzsche Nansen Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht Ringelnatz
Marx Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz
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A Mountain Europa

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Imprint

This book is part of the TREDITION CLASSICS series.

Author: John Fox

Cover design: toepferschumann, Berlin (Germany)

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg (Germany)

ISBN: 978-3-8491-4817-1

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A Mountain Europa

By
John Fox, Jr.

TO JAMES LANE ALLEN

I

As Clayton rose to his feet in the still air, the tree-tops began to tremble in the gap below him, and a rippling ran through the leaves up the mountain-side. Drawing off his hat he stretched out his arms to meet it, and his eyes closed as the cool wind struck his throat and face and lifted the hair from his forehead. About him the mountains lay like a tumultuous sea—the Jellico Spur, stilled gradually on every side into vague, purple shapes against the broken rim of the sky, and Pine Mountain and the Cumberland Range racing in like breakers from the north. Under him lay Jellico Valley, and just visible in a wooded cove, whence Indian Creek crept into sight, was a mining-camp—a cluster of white cabins—from which he had climbed that afternoon. At that distance the wagon-road narrowed to a bridle-path, and the figure moving slowly along it and entering the forest at the base of the mountain was shrunk to a toy. For a moment Clayton stood with his face to the west, drinking in the air; then tightening his belt, he caught the pliant body of a sapling and swung loose from the rock. As the tree flew back, his dog sprang after him. The descent was sharp. At times he was forced to cling to the birch-tops till they lay flat on the mountain-side.

Breathless, he reached at last a boulder from which the path was easy to the valley below, and he leaned quivering against the soft rug of moss and lichens that covered it. The shadows had crept from the foot of the mountains, darkening the valley, and lifting up the mountain-side beneath him a long, wavering line in which met the cool, deep green of the shade and the shining bronze where the sunlight still lay. Lazily following this line, his eye caught two moving shadows that darted jagged shapes into the sunlight and as quickly withdrew them. As the road wound up toward him, two figures were soon visible through the undergrowth. Presently a head bonneted in blue rose above the bushes, and Clayton's half-shut eyes opened wide and were fixed with a look of amused expectancy where a turn of the path must bring rider and beast into plain sight. Apparently some mountain girl, wearied by the climb or in a spirit of fun, had mounted her cow while driving it home; and with a smile at the thought of the confusion he would cause her, Clayton stepped around the boulder and waited. With the slow, easy swing

of climbing cattle, the beast brought its rider into view. A bag of meal lay across its shoulders, and behind this the girl-for she was plainly young-sat sidewise, with her bare feet dangling against its flank. Her face was turned toward the valley below, and her loosened bonnet half disclosed a head of bright yellow hair.

Catching sight of Clayton, the beast stopped and lifted its head, not the meek, patient face he expected to see, but a head that was wrinkled and vicious-the head of a bull. Only the sudden remembrance of a dead mountain custom saved him from utter amazement. He had heard that when beasts of burden were scarce, cows, and especially bulls, were worked in ploughs and ridden by the mountaineers, even by the women. But this had become a tradition, the humor of which greater prosperity and contact with a new civilization had taught even the mountain people to appreciate. The necessities of this girl were evidently as great as her fear of ridicule seemed small. When the brute stopped, she began striking him in the flank with her bare heel, without looking around, and as he paid no attention to such painless goading, she turned with sudden impatience and lifted a switch above his shoulders. The stick was arrested in mid-air when she saw Clayton, and then dropped harmlessly. The quick fire in her eyes died suddenly away, and for a moment the two looked at each other with mutual curiosity, but only for a moment. There was something in Clayton's gaze that displeased her. Her face clouded, and she dropped her eyes.

"G'long," she said, in a low tone. But the bull had lowered his head, and was standing with feet planted apart and tail waving uneasily. The girl looked up in alarm.

"Watch out thar! " she called out, sharply. "Call that dog off-quick!"

Clayton turned, but his dog sprang past him and began to bark. The bull, a lean, active, vicious-looking brute, answered with a snort.

"Call him off, I tell ye! " cried the girl, angrily, springing to the ground. "Git out o' the way. Don't you see he's a-comm' at ye?"

The dog leaped nimbly into the bushes, and the maddened bull was carried on by his own Impetus toward Clayton, who, with a

quick spring, landed in safety in a gully below the road. When he picked himself up from the uneven ground where he had fallen, the beast had disappeared around the boulder. The bag had fallen, and had broken open, and some of the meal was spilled on the ground. The girl, flushed and angry, stood above it.

"Look thar, now," she said. "See whut you've done. Why'n't ye call that dog off?"

"I couldn't," said Clayton, politely. " He wouldn't come. I'm sorry, very sorry."

"Can't ye manage yer own dog?" she asked, half contemptuously.

"Not always."

"Then ye oughter leave him to home, and not let him go round a-skeerin' folks' beastes." With a little gesture of indignation she stooped and began scooping up the meal in her hand.

"Let me help you," said Clayton. The girl looked up in surprise.

You go 'way," she said.

But Clayton stayed, watching her helplessly. He wanted to carry the bag for her, but she swung it to her shoulder, and moved away. He followed her around the boulder, where his late enemy was browsing peacefully on sassafras-bushes.

"You stay thar now," said the girl, " and keep that dog back."

"Won't you let me help you get up?" he asked.

Without answering, the girl sprang lightly to the bull's back, Once only she looked around at him. He took off his hat, and a puzzled expression came into her face. Then, without a word or a nod, she rode away. Clayton watched the odd pair till the bushes hid them.

"Europa, by Jove!" he exclaimed, and he sat down in bewilderment.

She was so very odd a creature, so different from the timid mountain women who shrank with averted faces almost into the bushes when he met them. She had looked him straight in the face with steady eyes, and had spoken as though her sway over mountain and road were undisputed and he had been a wretched trespasser.

She paid no attention to his apologies, and she scorned his offers of assistance. She seemed no more angered by the loss of the meal than by his incapacity to manage his dog, which seemed to typify to her his general worthlessness. He had been bruised by his fall, and she did not even ask if he were hurt. Indeed, she seemed not to care, and she had ridden away from him as though he were worth no more consideration than the stone under him.

He was amused, and a trifle irritated. How could there be such a curious growth in the mountains? he questioned, as he rose and continued the descent. There was an unusual grace about her, in spite of her masculine air. Her features were regular, the nose straight and delicate, the mouth resolute, the brow broad, and the eyes intensely blue, perhaps tender, when not flashing with anger, and altogether without the listless expression he had marked in other mountain women, and which, he had noticed, deadened into pathetic hopelessness later in life. Her figure was erect, and her manner, despite its roughness, savored of something high-born. Where could she have got that bearing? She belonged to a race whose descent, he had heard, was unmixed English; upon whose lips lingered words and forms of speech that Shakespeare had heard and used. Who could tell what blood ran in her veins?

Musing, he had come almost unconsciously to a spur of the mountains under which lay the little mining-camp. It was six o'clock, and the miners, grim and black, each with a pail in hand and a little oil-lamp in his cap, were going down from work. A shower had passed over the mountains above him, and the last sunlight, coming through a gap in the west, struck the rising mist and turned it to gold. On a rock which thrust from the mountain its gray, sombre face, half embraced by a white arm of the mist, Clayton saw the figure of a woman. He waved his hat, but the figure stood motionless, and he turned into the woods toward the camp.

It was the girl; and when Clayton disappeared she too turned and went on her way. She had stopped there because she knew he must pass a point where she might see him again. She was little less indifferent than she seemed; her motive was little more than curiosity. She had never seen that manner of man before. Evidently he was a "furriner "from the " settlemint." No man in the mountains had a

smooth, round face like his, or wore such a queer hat, such a soft, white shirt, and no galluses," or carried such a shiny, weak-looking stick, or owned a dog that he couldn't make mind him. She was not wholly contemptuous, however. She had felt vaguely the meaning of his politeness and deference. She was puzzled and pleased, she scarcely knew why.

"He was mighty accomodatin'," she thought. But whut," she asked herself as she rode slowly homeward-" whut did he take off his hat fer

II

LIGHTS twinkled from every cabin as Clayton passed through the camp. Outside the kitchen doors, miners, bare to the waist, were bathing their blackened faces and bodies, with children, tattered and unclean, but healthful, playing about them; within, women in loose gowns, with sleeves unrolled and with disordered hair, moved like phantoms through clouds of savory smoke. The commissary was brilliantly lighted. At a window close by improvident miners were drawing the wages of the day, while their wives waited in the store with baskets unfilled. In front of the commissary a crowd of negroes were talking, laughing, singing, and playing pranks like children. Here two, with grinning faces, were squared off, not to spar, but to knock at each other's tattered hat; there two more, with legs and arms indistinguishable, were wrestling; close by was the sound of a mouth-harp, a circle of interested spectators, and, within, two dancers pitted against each other, and shuffling with a zest that labor seemed never to affect.

Immediately after supper Clayton went to his room, lighted his lamp, and sat down to a map he was tracing. His room was next the ground, and a path ran near the open window. As he worked, every passer-by would look curiously within. On the wall above his head a pair of fencing-foils were crossed under masks. Below these hung two pistols, such as courteous Claude Duval used for side-arms. Opposite were two old rifles, and beneath them two stone beer-mugs, and a German student's pipe absurdly long and richly ornamented. A mantel close by was filled with curiosities, and near it hung a banjo unstrung, a tennis-racket, and a blazer of startling colors. Plainly they were relics of German student life, and the odd contrast they made with the rough wall and ceiling suggested a sharp change in the fortunes of the young worker beneath. Scarcely six months since he had been suddenly summoned home from Germany. The reason was vague, but having read of recent American failures, notably in Wall Street, he knew what had happened. Reaching New York, he was startled by the fear that his mother was dead, so gloomy was the house, so subdued his sister's greeting, and so worn and sad his father's face. The trouble, however, was what he had guessed, and he had accepted it with quiet resignation.

The financial wreck seemed complete; but one resource, however, was left. Just after the war Clayton's father had purchased mineral lands in the South, and it was with the idea of developing these that he had encouraged the marked scientific tastes of his son, and had sent him to a German university. In view of his own disaster, and the fact that a financial tide was swelling southward, his forethought seemed an inspiration. To this resource Clayton turned eagerly; and after a few weeks at home, which were made intolerable by straitened circumstances, and the fancied coldness of friend and acquaintance, he was hard at work in the heart of the Kentucky mountains.

The transition from the careless life of a student was swift and bitter; it was like beginning a new life with a new identity, though Clayton suffered less than he anticipated. He had become interested from the first. There was nothing in the pretty glen, when he came, but a mountaineer's cabin and a few gnarled old apple-trees, the roots of which checked the musical flow of a little stream. Then the air was filled with the tense ring of hammer and saw, the mellow echoes of axes, and the shouts of ox-drivers from the forests, indignant groans from the mountains, and a little town sprang up before his eyes, and cars of shining coal wound slowly about the mountainside.

Activity like this stirred his blood. Busy from dawn to dark, he had no time to grow miserable. His work was hard, to be sure, but it made rest and sleep a luxury, and it had the new zest of independence; he even began to take in it no little pride when he found himself an essential part of the quick growth going on. When leisure came, he could take to woods filled with unknown birds, new forms of insect life, and strange plants and flowers. With every day, too, he was more deeply stirred by the changing beauty of the mountains hidden at dawn with white mists, faintly veiled through the day with an atmosphere that made him think of Italy, and enriched by sunsets of startling beauty. But strongest of all was the interest he found in the odd human mixture about him—the simple, good-natured darkies who slouched past him, magnificent in physique and picturesque with rags; occasional foreigners just from Castle Garden, with the hope of the New World still in their faces; and now and then a gaunt mountaineer stalking awkwardly in the rear

of the march toward civilization. Gradually it had dawned upon him that this last, silent figure, traced through Virginia, was closely linked by blood and speech with the common people of England, and, moulded perhaps by the influences of feudalism, was still strikingly unchanged; that now it was the most distinctively national remnant on American soil, and symbolized the development of the continent, and that with it must go the last suggestions of the pioneers, with their hardy physiques, their speech, their manners and customs, their simple architecture and simple mode of life. It was soon plain to him, too, that a change was being wrought at last—the change of destruction. The older mountaineers, whose bewildered eyes watched the noisy signs of an unintelligible civilization, were passing away. Of the rest, some, sullen and restless, were selling their homesteads and following the spirit of their forefathers into a new wilderness; others, leaving their small farms in adjacent valleys to go to ruin, were gaping idly about the public works, caught up only too easily by the vicious current of the incoming tide. In a century the mountaineers must be swept away, and their ignorance of the tragic forces at work among them gave them an unconscious pathos that touched Clayton deeply.

As he grew to know them, their historical importance yielded to a genuine interest in the people themselves. They were densely ignorant, to be sure; but they were natural, simple, and hospitable. Their sense of personal worth was high, and their democracy-or aristocracy, since there was no distinction of caste-absolute. For generations, son had lived like father in an isolation hardly credible. No influence save such as shook the nation ever reached them. The Mexican war, slavery, and national politics of the first half-century were still present issues, and each old man would give his rigid, individual opinion sometimes with surprising humor and force. He went much among them, and the rugged old couples whom he found in the cabin porches—so much alike at first—quickly became distinct with a quaint individuality. Among young or old, however, he had found nothing like the half-wild young creature he had met on the mountain that day. In her a type had crossed his path—had driven him from it, in truth—that seemed unique and inexplicable. He had been little more than amused at first, but a keen interest had been growing in him with every thought of her. There was an indefinable

charm about the girl. She gave a new and sudden zest to his interest in mountain life; and while he worked, the incidents of the encounter on the mountain came minutely back to him till he saw her again as she rode away, her supple figure swaying with every movement of the beast, and dappled with quivering circles of sunlight from the bushes, her face calm, but still flushed with color, and her yellow hair shaking about her shoulders-not lustreless and flaxen, as hair was in the mountains, he remembered, but catching the sunlight like gold.

Almost unconsciously he laid aside his pencil and leaned from his window to lift his eyes to the dark mountain he had climbed that day. The rude melody of an old-fashioned hymn was coming up the glen, and he recognized the thin, quavering voice of an old mountaineer, Uncle Tommy Brooks, as he was familiarly known, whose cabin stood in the midst of the camp, a pathetic contrast to the smart new houses that had sprung around it. The old man had lived in the glen for nearly three-quarters of a century, and he, if any one, must know the girl. With the thought, Clayton sprang through the window, and a few minutes later was at the cabin. The old man sat whittling in the porch, joining in the song with which his wife was crooning a child to sleep within. Clayton easily identified Europa, as he had christened her; the simple mention of her means of transport was sufficient.

Ridin' a bull, was she? " repeated the old man, laughing. "Well, that was Easter Hicks, old Bill Hicks' gal. She's a sort o' connection o' mine. Me and Bill married cousins.

She's a cur'us critter as ever I seed. She don' seem to take after her dad nur her mammy nother, though Bill allus had a quar streak in 'im, and was the wust man I ever seed when he was disguised by licker. Whar does she live? Oh, up thar, right on top o' Wolf Mountain, with her mammy."

Alone?

"Yes; fer her dad ain't thar. No; 'n' he ain't dead. I'll tell ye"-the old man lowered his tone-" thar used to be a big lot o' moonshinin' done in these parts, 'n' a raider come hyeh to see 'bout it. Well, one mornin' he was found layin' in the road with a bullet through him. Bill was s'picioned. Now, I ain't a-sayin' as Bill done it, but when a

whole lot more rode up thar on hosses one night, they didn't find Bill. They hain't found him yit, fer he's out in the mountains some-whar a-hidin'."

"How do they get along without him?" asked Clayton.

"Why, the gal does the work. She ploughs with that bull, and does the plantin' herself. She kin chop wood like a man. An' as fer shootin', well, when huntin's good 'n' thar's shootin'-matches round-about, she don't have to buy much meat."

"It's a wonder some young fellow hasn't married her. I suppose, though, she's too young."

The old man laughed. "Thar's been many a lively young fellow that's tried it, but she's hard to ketch as a wildcat. She won't have nothin' to do with other folks, 'n' she nuver comes down hyeh into the valley, 'cept to git her corn groun' er to shoot a turkey. Sherd Raines goes up to see her, and folks say he air tryin' to git her into the church. But the gal won't go nigh a meetin'-house. She air a cur'us critter," he concluded emphatically, "shy as a deer till she air stirred up, and then she air a caution; mighty gentle sometimes, and ag'in stubborn as a mule."

A shrill, infantile scream came from within, and the old man paused a moment to listen.

"Ye didn't know I had a great-grandchild, did ye? That's it a-hollerin'. Talk about Easter bein' too young to merry! Why hit's mother air two year younger'n Easter. Jes come in hyeh a minit." The old mountaineer rose and led the way into the cabin. Clayton was embarrassed at first. On one bed lay a rather comely young woman with a child by her side; on a chest close by sat another with her lover, courting in the most open and primitive manner. In the corner an old grandam dozed with her pipe, her withered face just touched by the rim of the firelight. Near a rectangular hole in the wall which served the purpose of a window, stood a girl whose face, silhouetted against the darkness, had in it a curious mixture of childishness and maturity.

"Whar's the baby?" asked Uncle Tommy.

Somebody outside was admiring it, and the young girl leaned through the window and lifted the infant within.

Thar's a baby fer ye! " exclaimed the old mountaineer, proudly, lifting it in the air and turning its face to the light. But the child was peevish and fretful, and he handed it back gently. Clayton was wondering which was the mother, when, to his amazement, almost to his confusion, the girl lifted the child calmly to her own breast. The child was the mother of the child. She was barely fifteen, with the face of a girl of twelve, and her motherly manner had struck him as an odd contrast. He felt a thrill of pity for the young mother as he called to mind the aged young wives he had seen who were haggard and care-worn at thirty, and who still managed to live to an old age. He was indefinitely glad that Easter had escaped such a fate. When he left the cabin, the old man called after him from the door:

"Thar's goin' to be a shootin'-match among the boys to-morrer, 'n' I jedge that Easter '11 be on hand. She al'ays is."

"Is that so? " said Clayton. " Well, I'll look out for it."

The old mountaineer lowered his voice.

"Ye hain't thinkin' about takin' a wife, air ye?"

"No, no!"

" Well, ef ye air," said the old man, slowly, "I'm a-thinkin' yu'll have to buck up ag'in Sherd Raines, fer ef I hain't like a goose a-pickin' o' grass by moonshine, Sherd air atter the gal fer hisself, not fer the Lord. Yes," he continued, after a short, dry laugh; "'n' mebbe ye'll hav to keep an eye open fer old Bill. They say that he air mighty low down, 'n' kind o' sorry 'n' skeery, for I reckon Sherd Raines hev told him he hav got to pay the penalty fer takin' a human life; but I wouldn't sot much on his bein' sorry ef he was mad at me and had licker in him. He hates furriners, and he has a crazy idee that they is all raiders 'n' lookin' fer him."

"I don't think I'll bother him," said Clayton, turning away with a laugh. "Good-night t" With a little cackle of incredulity, the old man closed the door. The camp had sunk now to perfect quiet; but for

the faint notes of a banjo far up the glen, not a sound trembled on the night air.

The rim of the moon was just visible above the mountain on which Easter-what a pretty name that was !-had flashed upon his vision with such theatric effect. As its brilliant light came slowly down the dark mountain-side, the mists seemed to loosen their white arms, and to creep away like ghosts mistaking the light for dawn. With the base of the mountain in dense shadow, its crest, uplifted through the vapors, seemed poised in the air at a startling height. Yet it was near the crest that he had met her. Clayton paused a moment, when he reached his door, to look again. Where in that cloud-land could she live?

III

WHEN the great bell struck the hour of the next noon, mountaineers with long rifles across their shoulders were moving through the camp. The glen opened into a valley, which, blocked on the east by Pine Mountain, was thus shut in on every side by wooded heights. Here the marksmen gathered. All were mountaineers, lank, bearded, men, coatless for the most part, and dressed in brown home-made jeans, slouched, formless hats, and high, coarse boots. Sun and wind had tanned their faces to sympathy, in color, with their clothes, which had the dun look of the soil. They seemed peculiarly a race of the soil, to have sprung as they were from the earth, which had left indelible stains upon them. All carried long rifles, old-fashioned and home-made, some even with flint-locks. It was Saturday, and many of their wives had come with them to the camp. These stood near, huddled into a listless group, with their faces half hidden in check bonnets of various colors. A barbaric love of color was apparent in bonnet, shawl, and gown, and surprisingly in contrast with such crudeness of taste was a face when fully seen, so modest was it. The features were always delicately wrought, and softened sometimes by a look of patient suffering almost into refinement.

On the other side of the contestants were the people of the camp, a few miners with pipes lounging on the ground, and women and girls, who returned the furtive glances of the mountain women with stares of curiosity and low laughter.

Clayton had been delayed by his work, and the match was already going on when he reached the grounds.

"You've missed mighty fine shootin'," said Uncle Tommy Brooks, who was squatted on the ground near the group of marksmen.

Sherd's been a-beatin' ever'body. I'm afeard Easter hain't a-comm'. The match is 'most over now. Ef she'd been here, I don't think Sherd would 'a' got the ch'ice parts o' that beef so easy."

"Which is he? " asked Clayton.

That tall feller thar loadin' his gun."

"What did you say his name was?"

"Sherd Raines, the feller that's goin' to be our circuit-rider."

He remembered the peculiar name. So this was Easter's lover. Clayton looked at the young mountaineer, curiously at first, and then with growing interest. His quiet air of authority among his fellows was like a birthright; it seemed assumed and accepted unconsciously. His face was smooth, and he was fuller in figure than the rest, but still sinewy and lank, though not awkward; his movements were too quick and decisive for that. With a casual glance Clayton had wondered what secret influence could have turned to spiritual things a man so merely animal-like in face and physique; but when the mountaineer thrust back his hat, elemental strength and seriousness were apparent in the square brow, the steady eye, the poise of the head, and in lines around the strong mouth and chin in which the struggle for self-mastery had been traced.

As the mountaineer thrust his ramrod back into its casing, he glanced at the woods behind Clayton, and said something to his companions. They, too, raised their eyes, and at the same moment the old mountaineer plucked Clayton by the sleeve.

"Thar comes Easter now."

The girl had just emerged from the edge of the forest, and with a rifle on one shoulder and a bullet-pouch and powder-horn swung from the other, was slowly coming down the path.

"Why, how air ye, Easter?" cried the old man, heartily. "Goin' to shoot, air ye? I 'lowed ye wouldn't miss this. Ye air mighty late, though."

"Oh, I only wanted a turkey," said the girl. "Well, I'm a-comm' up to eat dinner with ye to-morrer," he answered, with a laugh, "fer I know ye'll git one. Y'u're on hand fer most o' the matches now. Wild turkeys must be a-gittin' skeerce."

The girl smiled, showing a row of brilliant teeth between her thin, red lips, and, without answering, moved toward the group of mountain women. Clayton had raised his hand to his hat when the