die, was thrown into strong relief against the deep shadow behind. With a rapid glance the eyes of the intruder took in the scant detail of the room until they fell on the face in the corner; there they rested with a surprised, inquiring look that gradually changed to one of apprehension. The figure in the corner remained motionless, while a pair of gleaming eyes, that seemed to burn their way to his very soul, rested fixedly on the stranger. Once he removed his gaze for a moment, but, as if fascinated, his eyes wandered back again, and he stood as before, silent,—waiting.

For a few minutes nothing broke the silence but the crackling of the hard wood in the fireplace; and then, with a shiver, as if shaking off some dread feeling, the visitor spoke, but it was in a subdued tone, far different from that in which he had demanded admittance a short time before.

"Well, stranger, this here aint much of a welcome ter give a b'lated passenger, now, is it?" and he paused as if for a reply; but as none came, he continued once more, uneasily shifting his gaze around the room, "I seed yer light from the trail, and in coorse me and the nag made fer it; but durn my boots," he added, "if we didn't hev ter do all the enwitin' ourselves. Now see here, mister," and he advanced a step nearer, "yer know durn well there's no gittin' through ther pass to-night, an' so yer might as well make the most outen it ye can. I'm goin' ter camp right here;" and he moved toward the table, but stopped short.

The hitherto motionless figure in the corner rose suddenly to its feet, revealing the long, lank figure of a man well along in years. His thin, emaciated features worked convulsively, and his eyes fairly burned with the fury of a madman.

"Stop!" he shrieked; "stand back!" and leaning forward he thrust a long, bony finger almost in the face of the startled man, who involuntarily recoiled before it to the door. Suddenly the old man bent low over the table, and grasping something up in his arms he hugged it tightly against his ragged coat, and moaned, "They cannot have it; they cannot have it; it is mine— all mine!"

The man at the door started, gazed intently at the object in the madman's arms, and with an oath strode to the table.

Bending low, he set his dark, sinister eyes full on the gleaming orbs of the other; and thus, with gaze fixed on one another, they stood, while their breaths came thick and fast. Suddenly the intruder raised his arm; there was a quick movement, and the bottle containing the lighted candle struck the opposite wall with a crash, and fell to the floor in a thousand pieces, leaving all enveloped in semi-darkness.

At the same instant a shrill, mocking laugh rang out through the room, and the voice of the madman was heard calling, "Ha! ha! they did not get you, my precious gold—gold! Let them come; let them——" The sentence was suddenly cut short, and ended in a gurgling sound, as of some one choking.

For the next few minutes there were sounds of a struggle, which, hard and long at first, gradually grew spasmodic and faint, and finally they ceased altogether, and only a heavy, labored breathing broke the stillness.

Then there followed a slight noise, as some one rose with difficulty and groped around in the darkness as if searching for something.

After awhile a light was struck, and, as the blue flame of the sulphur gave way to the bright light, it lighted up the dark face of the intruder. Lighting the candle, which he had found on the floor, he stuck it in a chink in the wall, and, wiping the sweat from his face, he stood looking long and thoughtfully at the quiet form stretched on the now cold hearthstone. At last, with an impatient gesture, he turned away, and crossing the room, picked up the shining object which his victim had been so careful of.

"Gold," he exclaimed, "and enough for a fortune," as he noted its weight. "Ha! ha! I don't wonder the old fool hugged it," he added, glancing in the direction of the fireplace. Placing the candle on the table and drawing up the solitary stool in the cabin, he busied himself with a careful examination of the nugget.