

BROKEN SHACKLES

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Broken shackles by John Gordon

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JOHN GORDON

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SHACKLES**

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BY
JOHN GORDON

"Such is man that it is reality which surprises us."



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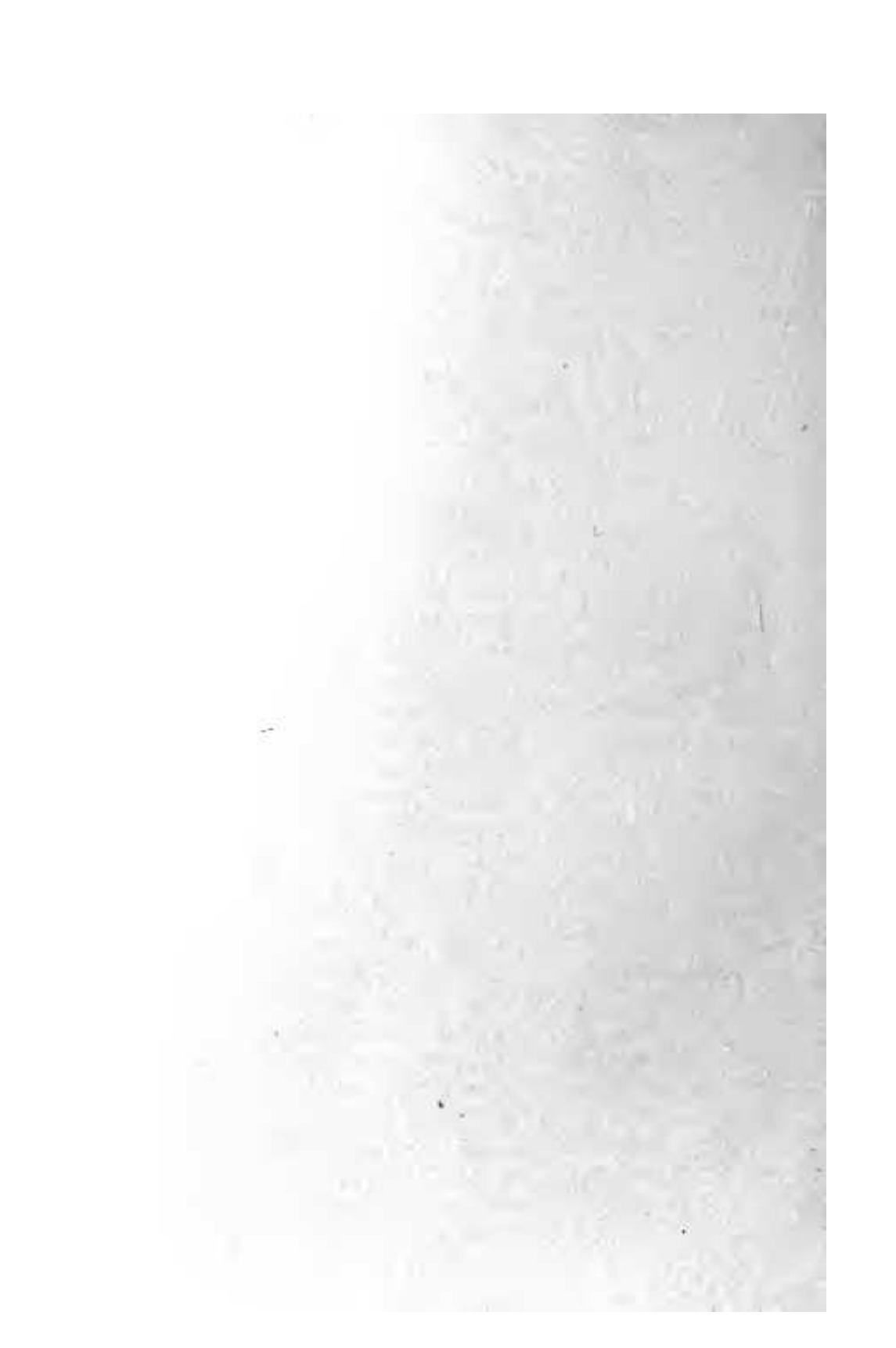
THE HEWERS OF WOOD
AND
THE DRAWERS OF WATER
WHEREVER THEY MAY BE

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*This is a Novel of Work;
and of the Wages of Work*

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Broken Shackles

WORK

I

AESTHETIC souls have pried in vain for Slab Fork's *raison d'être*. The strictly business sort, however, would have quickly touched another side, seen that that side was *business*, and pronounced it good. Slab Fork was only a victim of circumstances. Circumstances were forests, great counties of them; and a man — large of pocket, small of soul. The greater victim that was the Fork had shortly its trifling victims: men and women, red hands, lean bodies, tired feet. But they certainly did the business.

The town sat at the wide-branched fork of a mountain river which sprang from climbing hills and travelled, swiftly first, then at an amble, to the sea. Looked down at pleasantly from hilltops all about, you would have claimed it "squatted" there, much more than sat, for Slab Fork was the most one-storied, sprawled-out sort of place man ever saw. It began beside the River, and reached back in a struggling sort of way to culled-pine forests. Woods choked it in and hemmed it close, throwing advance-guards of trees even to the Fork's back door.