

THE JAWS OF DEATH

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649617630

The Jaws of Death by Grant Allen

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
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GRANT ALLEN

**THE JAWS
OF DEATH**



THE
Jaws of Death

BY
GRANT ALLEN

AUTHOR OF
"The Woman Who Did," etc.



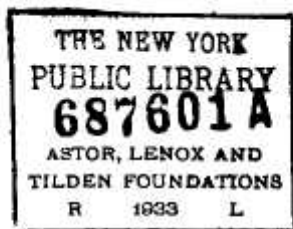
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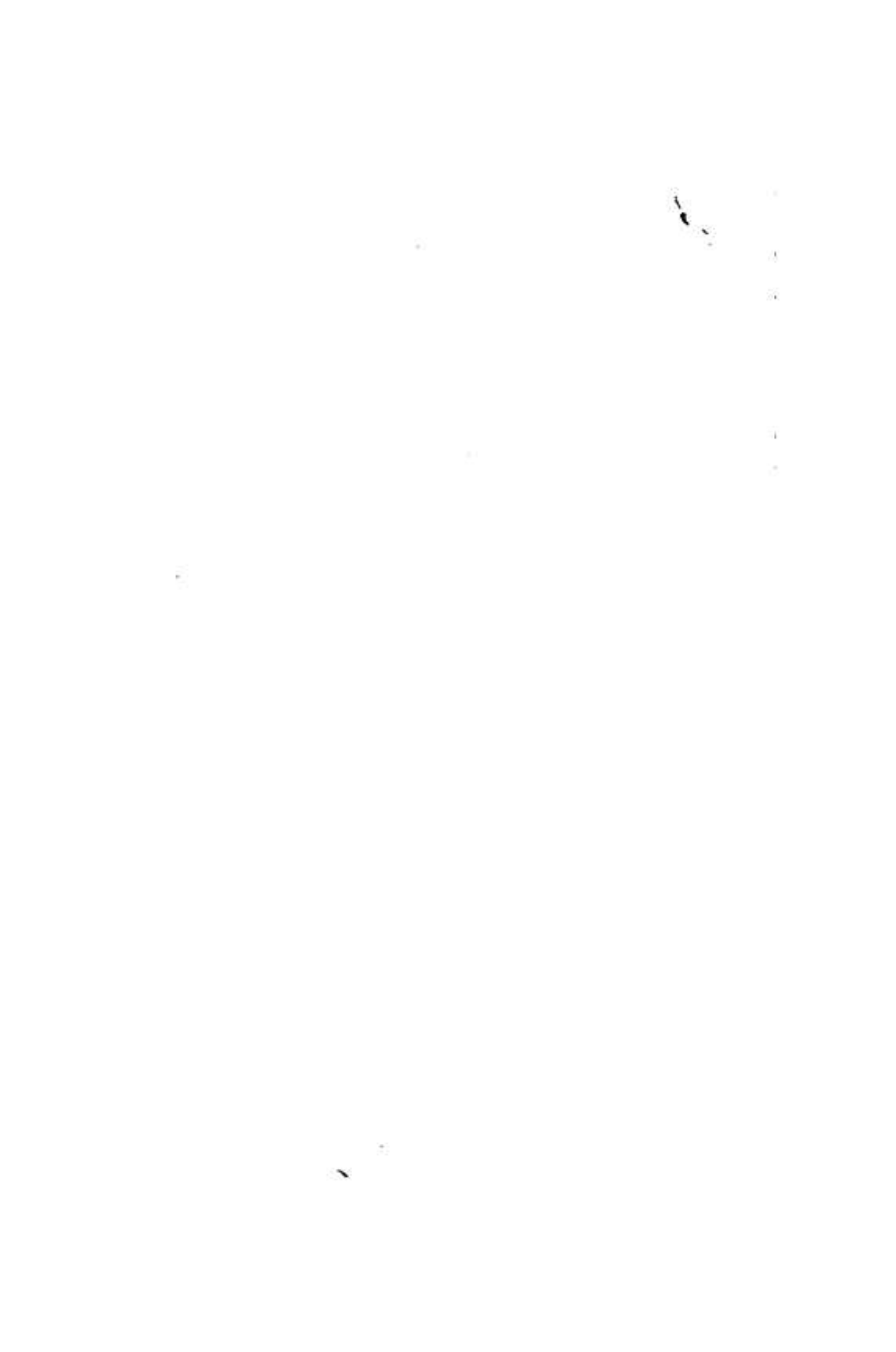
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CHAPTER I.

A PIONEER OF COOPER'S PIKE.

Enjoy the spring of Love and Youth,
To some good angel leave the rest;
For Time will teach thee soon the truth,
There are no birds in last year's nest!"

—LONGFELLOW.



WHY, certainly. A great many folks ask me what it was that turned my hair white. And you don't often see a young man of my age with snow-white locks like these, I'm aware. I consider it a *spécialité*. Well, it was that awful night at San Francisco that did it, if you want to know. I tell you, gentlemen, if ever any fellow was rescued from the jaws of death by the skin of his teeth, it's the individual that now stands before you. But it's a long yarn, and a dry yarn, and it'll take some time to tell it properly. Let's adjourn to the billiard-room, and have it all out over a brandy and soda, since you *will* be inquisitive. I always require a brandy and soda myself when I tell that tale, just to keep my mouth moist; the horror of the thing

comes back to me so still, that it somehow seems to dry my blood up.

But first, before I begin to reach the tragedy of it—for you may guess it *was* a tragedy, and no mistake—let me start fair with the story how I came at all, an Englishman born and bred, and one of the Frekes of Devonshire, to go to San Francisco.

You've had a cursory look round Cooper's Pike this afternoon in my buggy, and you can see what sort of a city it is nowadays. There isn't another manufacturing town on the Pacific slope that can hold a candle to Cooper's Pike this minute in the matter of industries. We claim to do the biggest trade in hardware of any city in the State, and our population ran out to over seventy thousand souls at the last enumeration. But the Pike was a precious different sort of a place when I first came here, ten years since.