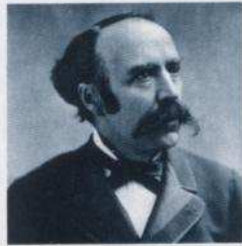


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BY SHARON ELAINE THOMPSON

For Horace Tabor, flamboyant silver baron of the 19th century, good fortune was many miles from where he started dreaming of it.

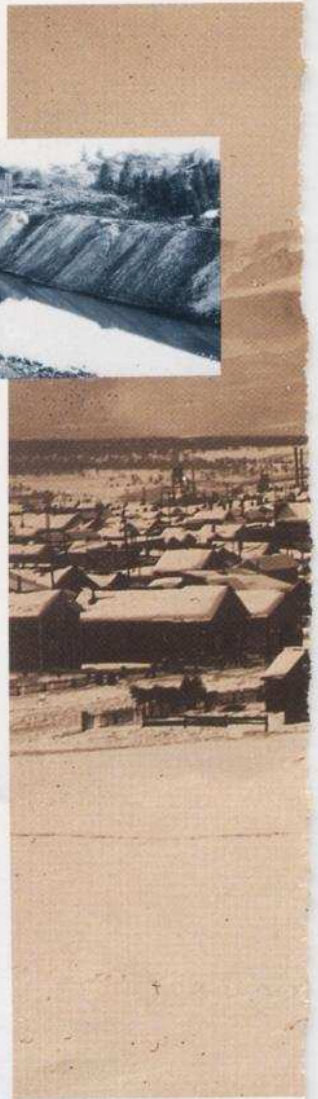
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The Lady of Fortune knows all the angles and works every one of them. She beguiles the naive one with bold dreams and high hopes, and entices him with the possibility of success. Sometimes she even lets the dreamer think he's gotten away with the goods. But in a contract with the Witch of Fate, there is only one winner: the lady herself. As quickly as she confers her blessings, she can snatch them away, leaving her poor victim bewildered. The good lady's gifts come without guarantees, as Horace Austin Warner Tabor had more than ample proof.

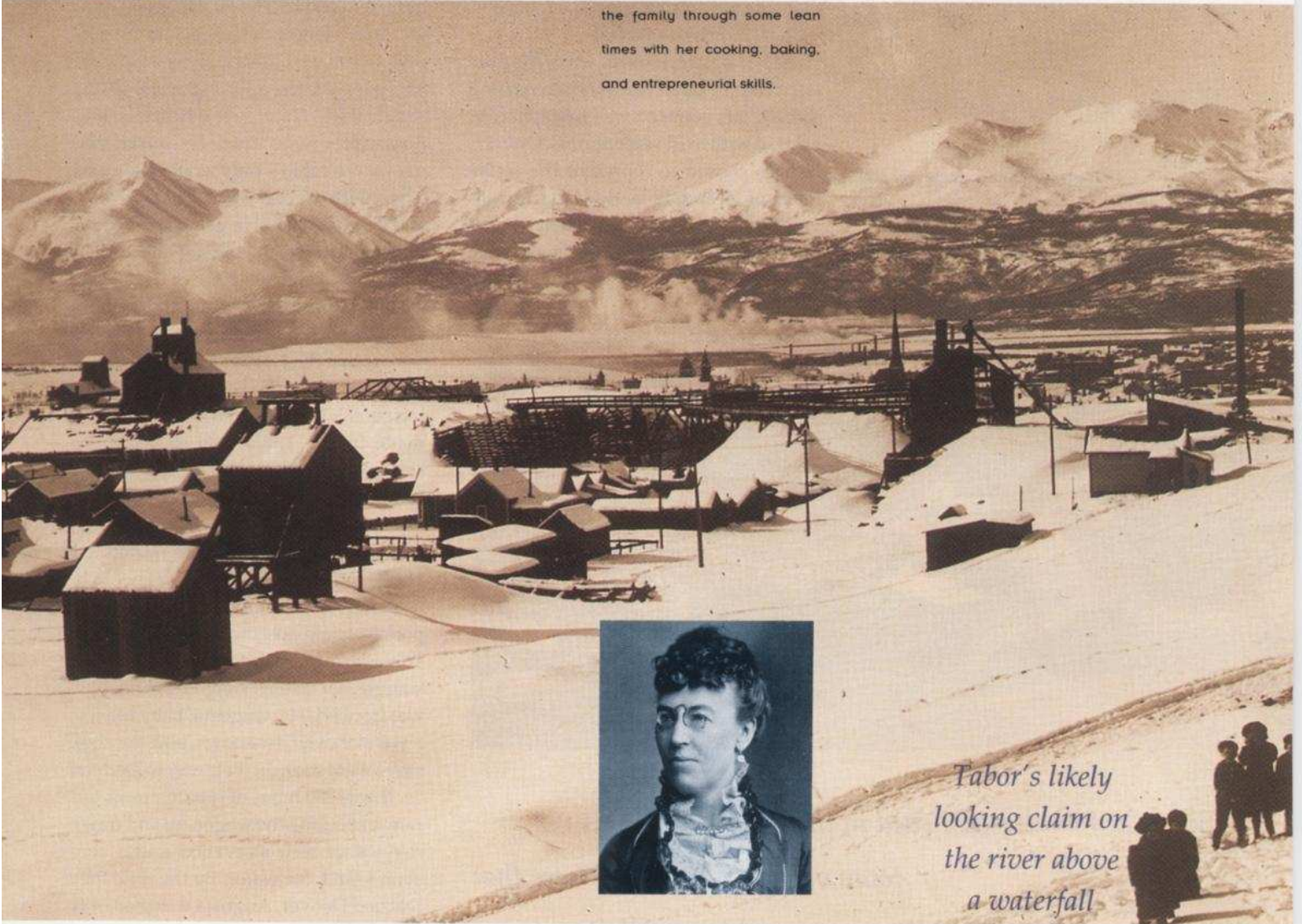
Tabor was one of Colorado's silver-barons. But there was nothing aristocratic about his birth in 1830 on a small backwoods farm in Holland, Vermont, far north near the Canadian border, where his parents, two brothers and one sister struggled to take a living out of the stony ground. Perhaps it was there that Tabor began to dream of untold wealth.

At 17, he left home to become a stone mason. When, at 22, he was hired to cut



TOP LEFT: Horace Tabor, Colorado silver baron, made his fortune first in Leadville, Colorado. TOP RIGHT: One of his silver mines, the Matchless.

Horace and Augusta Tabor lived in Leadville several years before striking it rich. BELOW: Augusta Pierce Tabor, in 1880, had carried the family through some lean times with her cooking, baking, and entrepreneurial skills.



Tabor's likely looking claim on the river above a waterfall turned out to be the worst in the camp Augusta mined far more gold from miners' pockets in her restaurant and bakery.

stone for the insane asylum in Augusta, Maine, Tabor won more than a work contract in Maine: over the next three years, the tall, thin, broad-shouldered young man wooed and won the boss's daughter, Augusta Pierce.

Inspired by the editorials of Horace Greeley (of "Go west, young man" fame), Tabor proposed that he and Augusta settle in Kansas Territory where, it was rumored, land was rich and fertile and there for the taking. Ever

practical, Augusta insisted that her fiancé go on ahead of her, find work, buy land, build a cabin, and return the following year to marry her. Confident of success, as he would always be, Tabor went west.

He was not alone on the road to Kansas in 1855. The Kansas-Nebraska Act, passed by Congress in 1854, had established the right of a state's citizenry to decide for themselves whether their state would be free or slave. As a result,

The Matchless mine produced \$80,000 worth of silver a month in its most productive years. Tabor bought in early on and clung to this mine till his death.

both slavery supporters and abolitionists were pouring into Kansas, each side hoping to supply enough voters to swing the state in their direction. Neither side was above murder, arson, and robbery to achieve its ends.

Tabor, an abolitionist, arrived in time to be caught up in the fighting. Among settlers, his courage was indisputable, his skill with a rifle exceptional. Only 25, he was chosen to represent the settlement of Zeandale at the First Kansas Free State legislature, which challenged the legitimacy of the pro-slavery state government.



Soon they were established in the fledgling town of Leadville. It was here that the Lady of Fortune caught up with him.

NOT IN MAINE ANYMORE. It was a heady time for the young New Englander. But war and politics left almost no time to work on the homestead he had staked out. When, in 1857, he was finally able to bring Augusta to their "home" on the prairie, all he could show her was a 12-foot by 16-foot cabin with one window, a dirt floor, and a sod roof. There was not a tree in sight.

If there had been railroad service nearby, Augusta might have cut her losses and gone back to Maine. But there was a long, difficult, dangerous trip behind her. Besides, Augusta was no quitter. After venting her anger and frustration in a storm of tears, she set to work. She papered the split-log walls of the shack with Greeley's editorials and flour-water paste. Then she cooked dinner on the cabin's only asset — a wood stove with a good draft. That stove — and Augusta's skill in using it — would provide the Tabors' living more than once in the years ahead.

For the next two years, the Tabors scraped by. Although their corn crop was good, the market was bad. Tabor cut stone at nearby Fort Riley. Augusta raised chickens, milked their cow, and made butter. Tabor sold the chickens and eggs at the fort, while Augusta sold butter, milk, and meals to passing travelers.

They were in desperate straits by 1859, when a neighbor, recently returned from Colorado, dropped a pouch of gold dust on their table. Horace Tabor heard the faint voice of Lady Luck singing her Siren's song of fortune. He was hooked. He, Augusta, baby Maxcy, a yoke of oxen, two cows, and the cook stove were soon on their way to Denver.

It was 200 miles of mountainous terrain, of hauling the wagon up and down ravines, of near starvation and a constant search for water. By the time they reached Denver, Augusta weighed only 90 pounds.

From Denver they trekked through more mountains to the gold fields. Their route was suited only for foot traffic, not a heavily laden wagon. They had to build the road as they went. At the frequent canyon crossings, they unloaded the wagon, lowered it with block and tackle, hauled it up on the other side, and loaded up again. The places they camped at night were sometimes so steep, they rolled a log against stakes driven into the ground and slept with their feet against the log. They were lost