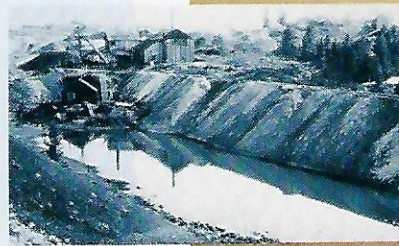
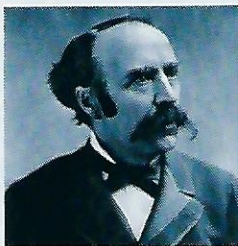


# f Part 1 of 2 ortune

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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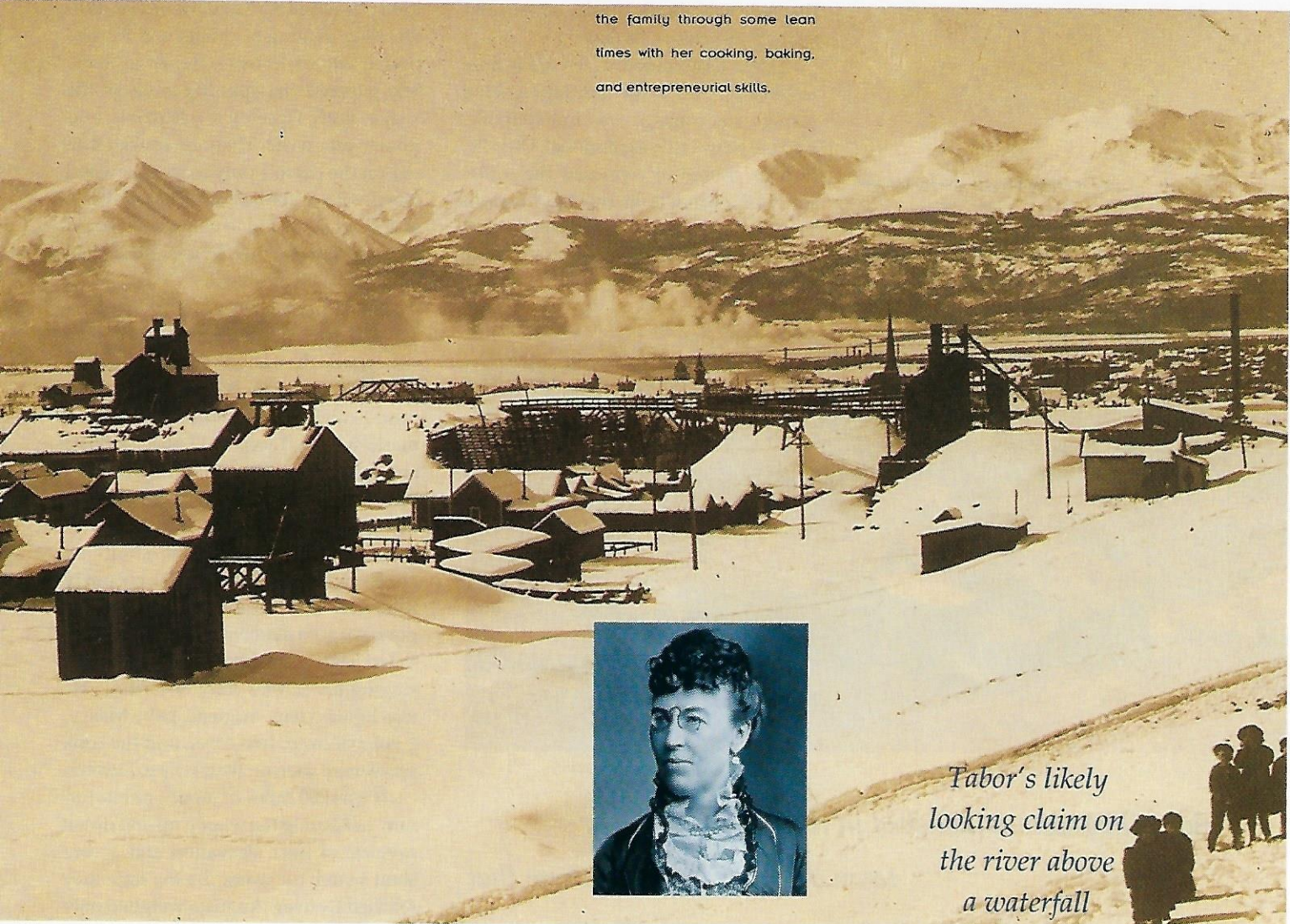
The Lady of Fortune knows all the angles and works every one of them. She beguiles the naive one with bold dreams and high hopes, and entices him with the possibility of success. Sometimes she even lets the dreamer think he's gotten away with the goods. But in a contract with the Witch of Fate, there 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*

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,

*turned out to be the worst in the camp . . . . Augusta mined far more gold from miners' pockets in her restaurant and bakery.*

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.

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.



*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.

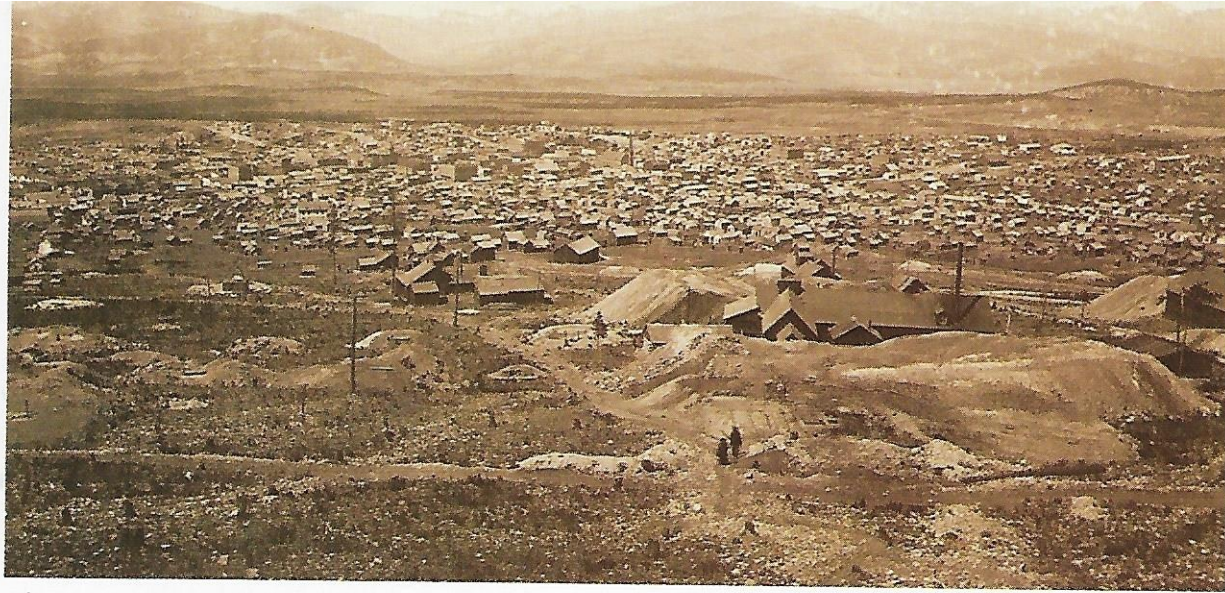
For the next two years, the Tabors scraped by. Although their corn crop was good, the market was bad. Tabor cut stone at nearby Fort Riley. Augusta raised chickens, milked their cow, and made butter. Tabor sold the chickens and eggs at the fort, while Augusta sold butter, milk, and meals to passing travelers.

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

Silver turned the fledgling settlement of Leadville into a boom town.



several times.

When they finally reached the gold camp, Augusta went to work cooking up provisions and selling them to grateful miners at gold field prices. By the time Tabor located what looked like a promising claim, the winter was coming on. A helpful friend painted terrifying pictures of winter in the mountains and advised the Tabors to winter over in Denver. They did. The following spring they found their claim had been jumped by their thoughtful acquaintance.

Their next destination was the rich strike at California Gulch up in the mountains near 10,000 feet. California Gulch was probably no worse, but certainly was no better, than other mining camps of the day. Murder and robbery were commonplace. Prostitutes operated out of the backs of wagons parked along the river. Other wagons were run as hotels, with tired miners packed in shoulder to shoulder.

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

Business was so good that in 1861, Augusta got Tabor to expand it into a general store. She was tired of trusting Lady Luck. She wanted a more dependable source of income.

Tabor also opened an express delivery service carrying the miners' gold to Denver. It was a risky business with the mountains full of bandits who had discovered a simpler way to pan for gold than with pick and shovel. But Tabor

*Horace and Augusta Tabor lived in Leadville for several years before he grubstaked some lucky prospectors.*

had a foolproof plan. Loading the gold into gunnysacks, he stashed it under the horse's blanket and saddle. On top of the saddle was Augusta. Although they were robbed frequently, and Tabor was relieved of the small amount of gold he carried, the chivalrous highwaymen never disturbed Augusta.

**ON TO LEADVILLE.** When gold production at the Gulch dropped, the miners moved on to other camps and so, perforce, did the Tabors. They spent seven hardworking years at Buckskin Joe running a general store. When Buckskin Joe played out, Tabor and his family went back up to California Gulch where lead and silver had been found. Soon they were established in the fledgling town of Leadville. Tabor became its first mayor.

It was here that the Lady of Fortune caught up with them.

For six years Augusta ran their store

in Leadville while Tabor searched sporadically for a strike. While Augusta tried to build up a small nest egg, Tabor dispensed her hard-earned gold dust and supplies to almost anyone who asked.

It was his reputation for generosity that, in 1878, brought August Riche and George Hook to Tabor's door. Two out-of-luck prospectors, they were looking for a grubstake. If Tabor would supply them with food and supplies for the prospecting venture, they would cut him in for a third of the mine.

Tabor had grubstaked many unlucky miners. Riche and Hook were just two more. He gave them supplies, wished them luck, and sent them off.

Almost immediately the two prospectors struck a rich lode of silver. From then on, if Midas' touch had been silver, his name would have been Horace Tabor.

Within two months of their strike, the Little Pittsburg mine was earning \$50,000 a month for the three partners. Hook sold out early. His partners, however, bought another claim, the New Discovery, which turned out to be enormous. Within a year, it had yielded its owners \$4 million.

Tabor sold his interest in the New Discovery for a million dollars and bought a half interest in the Matchless mine. Over the next 10 years, the Matchless would at times produce \$80,000 worth of silver a month. It would become the backbone of his dream.

For Horace Tabor, his Lady of Fortune had proven true after all. At least that was the way it looked for a while. ♦

*to be continued*



Tabor built the Tabor Opera House in Leadville at a cost of \$65,000 and became Leadville's cultural center and also housed Tabor's office, saloon, gambling hall, and a restaurant. LEFT: Tabor's investments were not limited to Leadville. In Denver, he built this office building named Tabor Block, as well as the Windsor Hotel across the street from an opera house.

Photos: Colorado Historical Society

It is said that money isn't everything, but you would never have been able to convince Horace Tabor of that. When his Colorado silver mines started to pay in 1878, he was earning an estimated \$1 million a year. No one knows the exact figures. Even Tabor never knew how much he was earning — or spending.

And spend he did. He bought interests in mines that ranged from solid, producing enterprises to risky prospects. If they busted, it didn't matter. There was always more money. He bought real estate in Leadville, Denver, and Chicago; copper mines in Texas; grazing land in Colorado; and timber land in Honduras. He invested in smelters, toll roads, irrigation canals, and railroads. He became the major supporter in a project that, in honor of his contribution, was named the Tabor Grand Hotel.

Tabor was still well known for his generosity, a soft touch for every hard-luck story he heard. The fellows at the saloon knew it was always Tabor's turn to buy. But his generosity also extended to the community. When citizens wanted to bring gaslight to Leadville, he bought the majority of shares in the fledgling gas company. As postmaster, he found a decent site for the post office, hired 20 clerks to sort the mail, and paid them from his own pocket. As crime in the town rose, Tabor organized two military companies to keep the peace: the Tabor Highland Guards and the Tabor Light Cavalry.

He also built lavish monuments to his wealth. The Tabor Opera House in Leadville was built at a cost of \$65,000, an enormous sum at that time. One of Tabor's very successful enterprises, it became Leadville's cultural center. It also housed Tabor's office, a saloon, gambling hall (which Tabor frequented), and one of the better restaurants in town.

Tabor invested so much money in Leadville that one editorial



Part 2 of 2

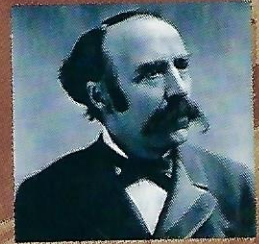
# f ortune

BY SHARON ELAINE THOMPSON

When the clouds of scandal and a lost fortune settled over Horace Tabor, the silver linings were love, loyalty, and the courage to hold fast to his dreams.

and

# f olly



called him "the father of Leadville . . . he is entitled to its allegiance and reverence." Due reverence was shown in the fall of 1878 when Tabor was elected lieutenant governor of Colorado.

Soon Tabor was investing his millions in Denver as well. He built the Tabor Block, a building of offices that cost approximately \$200,000. Across the street, he developed the Windsor Hotel. He built another opera house. And he bought the finest house in Denver and settled Augusta in it.

This apparently considerate move was not really done for Augusta, but for Tabor, who was trying to put some distance between his wife and himself. Augusta's tongue, it seemed, was becoming a burden.

**ALL THEIR MARRIED LIFE**, Augusta had struggled to save money. She thought their flood of riches should be hoarded and invested carefully, not flung away with wanton abandon. She was appalled by Tabor's extravagance. From all reports, her comments on the subject were acidic.

But there was another, more pressing reason, that Tabor wanted prim, stern, scolding Augusta out of Leadville. That reason was a five-foot-two blond bombshell nicknamed "Baby."

In those days, Elizabeth McCourt Doe would have been (and often was) called a "fast piece." In later years, around Denver, she was sometimes referred to as "that shameless hussy." But when she was born in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, in 1854, she was the beautiful darling daughter of an Irish Catholic tailor and his wife.

ABOVE: Horace Tabor.

Colorado silver baron, married

Augusta Pierce Tabor in 1857.

years before he made his fortune

in Leadville, Colorado.

## Fortune and Folly...

At 22, she shocked Oshkosh society by entering a figure skating contest open only to men. She paralyzed them by wearing a skating costume that showed generous portions of her calves in a day when the sight of a woman's ankle was considered sinful.

The display served its purpose, however. She caught the attention of Harvey Doe, son of a wealthy Oshkosh family who had made its money in Colorado mining ventures. In 1877, Elizabeth married Harvey despite his mother's contrived "heart condition." As a wedding gift, the elder Doe gave the newlyweds the Fourth of July mine in Colorado.

The mine was a bust. But Elizabeth, who had by now been given the nickname "Baby," was undismayed. When they ran out of money, she insisted Harvey work the mine himself. And then she put on grubby work clothes and swung a pick right alongside him. It was Denver's turn to be shocked.

Even Baby's determination could not make the Fourth of July pay. Harvey took to drink and Baby took to Jake Sandelowsky who owned a Denver clothing store. Their romance was such an open secret that when Baby's first child was stillborn in 1879, there was rampant speculation about who the child's father was.

Baby divorced Harvey in 1880, fed up with his inability to provide her with the life of comfort she craved. Sandelowsky wanted to marry her, but Baby had other plans. She moved to Leadville, her mind bent on claim jumping.

It wasn't long before she had maneu-

*He became desperate  
to get his divorce  
from Augusta,  
marry Baby, and  
put the scandal  
behind him.*



Elizabeth McCourt Doe, nicknamed Baby

Doe, became Tabor's mistress,

then his wife.

vered a meeting with Horace Tabor, who was known for his appreciation of a pretty face. In record time, he had paid off her debts to Sandelowsky, purchased her a new wardrobe, and settled her into the most expensive hotel in Leadville as his mistress.

Tabor might have been open-handed with drinking buddies, with down-on-their-luck prospectors, and his dazzling mistress. But in 1880, when Leadville miners struck for higher wages (\$4 a day), shorter hours (8 hours instead of 12), and safer mine conditions, Tabor's generosity vanished. Along with other mine owners he voted to reduce the daily wage of \$3 to \$2.75 (at a time when Tabor's holdings were paying about \$1 million a year). The mine owners established a vigilante group called the Committee of Safety, but it wasn't the safety of the strike leaders they were concerned about. When the head of the state militia arrived to bring order to the area, he discovered the Committee's plot to trap and murder the strike leaders. The plot was foiled and peace restored to Leadville. The miners were forced to return to work — at reduced wages.

In the meantime, Baby was pressuring Tabor to marry her. Tabor asked for a divorce, but Augusta refused. Instead she sued for a property settlement claiming non-support. She demanded the house in Denver and \$50,000 a year. Needless to say, citizens of Denver were scandalized.

**THE TIMING OF THE SCANDAL** was very bad for Tabor. President Chester Arthur had appointed Senator Henry M. Teller from Colorado to the Department of the Interior, leaving the Senate seat open. The Colorado legislature was to choose someone to finish the last month of Teller's term and to serve for the next six years. (Senators at that time were not elected by the general populace.) Tabor wanted that Senate seat. But so did several others. He became desperate to get his divorce from Augusta, marry Baby, and put the scandal behind him.

In the process he threw his reputation for honesty out the window. He obtained an illegal divorce in the town of Durango, far south of Denver, and never bothered to notify Augusta. He then ran off to St. Louis and married Baby in secret.

Augusta finally capitulated and gave Tabor his divorce. She got to keep the house and was awarded \$250,000. (When she died in 1895 in Pasadena, California, she left an estate of \$1.5 million.)

Tabor bought this Denver residence,

at 1260 Sherman Street.



The divorce came through only a few days before the Senatorial election in the legislature. But the divorce and the scandal surrounding it had hurt Tabor. Despite his money and the favors he tried to call in, another mine owner, Tom Bowen, was elected to the six-year term.

To appease Tabor and keep his financial backing, the Republicans chose him to serve the last month of Teller's term. He claimed he was "thankful and satisfied" with the decision. But later in the Senate, when a tariff bill came up that exempted jute from import taxes, he was allegedly heard to say, "I want them to have enough hemp in Colorado to hang those fellows who wouldn't elect me to this club for six more years."

### *At 63, Tabor ended up hauling slag as a common laborer — at \$3 a day.*

Shortly after he arrived in Washington, Tabor married Baby legally. Although the wedding was attended by many politicians, many of their wives refused to come. One sent her invitation back to Baby — torn in half. About this time the news of the false divorce and bigamous marriage leaked out. Washington society was appalled. Back home in Colorado, Tabor was castigated in the papers as a "conscienceless millionaire — coarse, corrupt, and ambitious." All suggestions of reverence disappeared.

The reverberating scandal destroyed Tabor's political chances and Baby's social ambitions. But there was enough to keep their minds engaged at home. They were involved in countless lawsuits with other mine owners over boundaries between mines. And Tabor continued to invest in property and buildings. When the output of the mines began to falter in 1887, he simply mortgaged them and kept spending, confident they would come back.

**MATCHLESS SPIRIT.** Tabor didn't realize that his Lady of Fortune had walked out on him. In 1893, in the midst of a depression, the Silver Act, which had authorized Congress to purchase 4.5 million ounces of silver a month, was repealed. The value of silver plum-

meted. In Denver, banks closed. Tabor, unable to reach his money and pay his mortgages, lost everything. The only mine he managed to hang onto was his Matchless.

The Tabors and their two young daughters moved into a \$30 a month shack. At 63, Tabor started the long search for work. He ended up hauling slag as a common laborer — at \$3 a day. All Denver was betting that Baby would run. But she surprised them. She was in love with Horace Tabor and she stayed in love with him through the grinding poverty.

Six years later, in 1899, Tabor died, making Baby promise to hang onto the Matchless, assuring her that it would pay some day.

And in a way it did. For the next 36 years, Baby Doe Tabor wheedled money out of backers, fought off foreclosure,

and kept living in a shack on the Matchless claim. Wearing nothing but rags, her feet wrapped in burlap in the bitter Colorado winters, she was a familiar sight in Leadville. She refused to take charity. When clothes and food were left on her doorstep, she always found out who the donor was and returned the package. She eked along living on day-old bread and fatty beef, which she "charged" at a Leadville store. Her bills were paid by the town charity fund.

The mine was sold in 1927 to pay the mortgage, but no one forced Baby off. She continued to live undisturbed in her mountain shack. Amid visions and bodiless voices that terrified her, she died in 1935 at age 81. Only two dollars were found in her drafty cabin.

All his life Horace Tabor trusted Lady Luck, sure she would give him everything he dreamed of. She gave him glory and love and loyalty — and she let him keep his dreams. And until he died, Horace Tabor was sure he would again hear the silver Siren song of Fortune. ♦

