

PLUCK AND LUCK

COMPLETE STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

FRANK TOUSEY, PUBLISHER, 168 WEST 23D STREET, NEW YORK.

No. 979.

NEW YORK, MARCH 7, 1917.

Price SIX Cents.

JACK HAWTHORNE OF NO MANS LAND; OR, AN UNCROWNED KING. AND OTHER STORIES

By NONAME



"I said you were going to crawl, and now I'll prove it," he continued. "Get down on your hands and knees, and crawl for that door, or as surely as I am Jack Hawthorne, I'll have you carried out, feet first; crawl, I tell you!"

PLUCK AND LUCK

STORIES OF ADVENTURE

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$3.00 per year. Entered at the New York, N. Y., Post Office as Second Class Matter by Frank Tousey, Publisher, 168 West 23d Street, New York.

No. 979.

NEW YORK, MARCH 7, 1917.

Price 6 Cents.

Jack Hawthorne of No Man's Land

—OR—

AN UNCROWNED KING

By "NONAME"

CHAPTER I.

WASP'S NEST.

"I think I have the drop on you, Black Harry, but if you are not entirely convinced of the fact, just lower your hands a little and I'll prove it by laying you out cold!"

The words were uttered calmly, and yet with terrible distinctness, and they proceeded from a youth scarcely past eighteen, and were addressed to a big, swarthy ruffian, who was familiarly known as Black Harry, the pseudonym having in all probability originated from one of two reasons: his swarthy and forbidding complexion, or the still more sable condition of his character, which was black in the extreme.

The scene was one common in the region.

It took place in a little town in No Man's Land, a town which had received the suggestive name of Wasp's Nest.

A half dozen adobe shanties and a few lean-to's comprised the town, but being the only place of its kind within a large radius, it was a favorable region for cattle tramps, maverickmen and toughs of all classes and descriptions.

Of the six adobe houses, five were saloons and gambling dens, while the sixth was the property of the young man whose remarks opened this chapter, and who was known far and wide through that region as Jack Hawthorne, of No Man's Land.

The picture presented was rather a startling one.

Imagine a large bar-room with several card tables arranged about it.

At the middle of one of the card tables, and therefore the most conspicuous, stood Jack Hawthorne of No Man's Land, with a self-cocking six-shooter held firmly in his extended right hand, the muzzle pointing directly at Black Harry's heart.

The dark-skinned ruffian was still seated in a chair, his head thrown back, and his arms extended at full length above his shoulders, while his face was convulsed with rage and baffled fury.

"Curse you," he muttered, "you young imp of Satan, but I'll be even with you for this, Jack Hawthorne!"

Jack laughed pleasantly.

"I have no doubt of it, Black Harry, if you ever get the chance," he said. "But if you want the opportunity to get even, you have got to answer my questions, or I swear I'll let daylight through you as sure as my name is Jack Hawthorne, of No Man's Land."

A murmur of approbation went up from the group of a score or more of rough-looking men who had formed a ring around the table.

They evidently were well pleased with the spectacle.

And with good reason.

Black Harry had been the bully of the place for many months.

Big, muscular, fierce, devoid of conscience and heart, the suspected leader of a band of desperadoes who infested the region and who were constantly upon the lookout to seize for their own purposes the wealth which energetic persons

succeeded in amassing; quick and expert with his weapons, many were the men who had gone down before his unerring aim and brutish and ruffianly bravado.

Punishment?

The word was unknown in No Man's Land.

A little strip of the Indian Territory, rightly named.

A harbor of refuge for the criminal, a region where crimes innumerable were committed daily without question.

A place where might made right; where the weaker inevitably fell before the stronger; where human life was accounted as nothing, and taken, or carelessly thrown away, with impunity.

Jack Hawthorne had been an inhabitant of the region for many years.

Indeed, his earliest recollection dated back to his childhood as a member of a family of Apache Indians, who had strayed from their tribe to finally settle there.

That he had been taken from a captured wagon train in his babyhood, his adopted Indian parents had told him, but that was all he knew regarding himself, except that his name was Jack Hawthorne.

How did he know that?

Simply enough.

An old hunter, who had learned how to read and write, had taught Jack the rudiments of these arts when a mere child, and he had never tired of perfecting himself in them. He made the greatest sacrifices to get books and study, and thus it was at the time we make his acquaintance he might be said to have attained what would be generally considered a fair education.

By some paradox of Indian nature the little dresses in which he was clothed when taken from the wagon train had been preserved, and upon each article was stamped the name of "Hawthorne," and upon his right arm, baby though he was, had been tattooed the words, "Little Jack."

Therefore, he was Jack Hawthorne without question.

But from whence came he?

Alas! he knew not.

Accordingly, with a smile of irony and as a perpetual sarcasm directed upon his fate, he had dubbed himself "Jack Hawthorne of No Man's Land."

"I owe allegiance to nobody—to no law," he had said once several years before. "Very well, I will force others to bow down to me. No Man's Land shall be mine in the sense that I will redeem it from the curse of crime, so far as I can."

He kept his word, and how well we shall see in the succeeding chapters of our story.

The moment he was strong enough to hold weapons in his hands, he began to study their uses, and his wonderful proficiency amounted almost to magic.

Indeed, many who knew him, and who had the shoots of superstition still sprouting in their ignorant hearts, said openly that he practiced black art, and was a veritable imp of the devil.

Of every known weapon he was a complete and perfect master.

With the revolver, even the quickest were slow when compared with him, and he would send a ball as unerringly from one position as another.

Jack was the only man in the region who never allowed a weapon to show upon his person.

To meet him upon the road one would suppose him to be unarmed, and yet, if the occasion required, he would stretch out his arms, while a six-shooter, small of size, but of large caliber, would seem to materialize in his grasp.

The report would follow instantaneously, and the missile, without any apparent effort upon Jack's part, would strike exactly upon the object he had intended, no matter how small.

He had been known upon one occasion to actually shoot a revolver out of the hands of a man who had "got the drop on him," effectually disarming his adversary with no injury being inflicted beyond a natural numbness of the hand and wrist, resulting from the sudden shock.

Where did he carry his weapons, that they were never seen until wanted, and then ever ready upon the instant?

Many had essayed to answer the question, but none had answered it satisfactorily.

In the wide, flowing sleeves of the gaudily trimmed buckskin jacket, which he wore?

Some thought so—others not.

Concealed among the feathers and gold braid with which the high crown and broad brim of his Mexican sombrero was made pleasing to the eye?

Again there was a difference of opinion.

Where, then?

Did they grow out of his hands ready loaded at will?

Alas, for the credulity of the ignorant, many thought so, while others secretly feared it was so.

Of one thing they were all certain; when he had use for them they were ready, and the roughest of the rough had been taught through unpleasant experience to leave Jack Hawthorne alone.

He had never killed unless absolutely compelled to in order to save his own life, but his aim was so perfect, so sure, that when molested he could "wing" his adversary, that is, disable him, without inflicting a fatal injury.

He never gambled, although he had proven that he could handle the cards with wonderful dexterity.

Once or twice when some wandering sport had arrived at Wasp's Nest and had succeeded in fleecing his victims, Jack had seated himself, and had in turn fleeced the sharper out of all his winnings, but only to return the money to those who had lost it upon condition that they could cease playing for gold or money.

That the promises were readily made and as readily broken can easily be understood, although occasionally he would find one who did live up to his word.

To that one Jack would become very friendly and at last the former gambler would disappear from the saloons entirely, except for occasionally dropping in as a spectator.

Thus from time to time Jack had secured a considerable number of friends in this and other equally ingenious ways.

Some lived in the town, others were scattered about the surrounding neighborhood.

He had one friend, however, whom we must mention at once, for it was upon his account that Jack got the "drop" on Black Harry.

Some six months previous to the opening of our story, a young Apache Indian, not more than sixteen or eighteen years of age at the most, had wandered into the "Shouter," which was the name of the principal saloon in Wasp's Nest.

He was slight and handsome; lithe and evidently full of courage.

But he was far from home—and an Indian.

Being an Indian, and evidently a friendless one, he instantly became the butt of coarse jokes, rude remarks and rough usage.

Several times his eyes had flashed ominously, but he had controlled himself and was about to leave the saloon when he heard a sharp command to halt.

Turning, he saw the ruffian whom he knew as Black Harry standing near the bar, revolver in hand.

"Come 'ere, Injun!" ordered Black Harry, "an' hev a drink afore ye go."

"Me no drink fire water," replied the youth, in a voice singularly soft and firm.

"Come 'ere, I say!" continued the bully, "'er I'll hev ye brung on a stretcher!"

"Me no come," replied the youth, calmly and without moving.

"Ye won't, eh?" cried Black Harry. "Then I'll bring ye!" and he took a step toward the young Indian, still holding his revolver pointed at his heart.

Grasping the youth by the arm, he dragged him toward the bar, amidst a loud guffaw from the spectators.

So interested were they all that no one saw Jack Hawthorne enter the room at that moment.

"Here, drink this, Injun," continued the ruffian, pushing a huge glass, filled to the brim with vile liquor, toward the youth.

"Ugh! Black face—coward!" said the young Apache, and with a sweep of his hand he dashed the glass and its contents to the floor.

An instant of surprise came over the scene, and then, with a yell of rage, Black Harry was about to leap upon the youth, when a sharp voice sounded like the crack of a whip through the room.

"Halt!"

They turned to see Jack Hawthorne standing in the doorway, and to realize that Black Harry's heart was covered by two weapons which never missed.

"Come here, boy," said Jack to the young Indian, who instantly obeyed, for he realized that he had found a friend.

Directing the youth to leave the room in advance of him, he backed through the door himself, saying mockingly as he closed it:

"Good-night, Harry dear!" and thus saying, he took his departure.

CHAPTER II.

PIERCING THE OUTLAW'S EARS.

The Indian youth had told Jack his story. He was harmless, and a wayfarer—an Apache Indian.

That he was an Apache was sufficient for Jack, for he remembered the kindness with which he had himself been treated by a family of Apaches.

The youth told Jack that he was nearly seventeen years old, and his name was Como.

It is needless to say that from that time forth Como made his home with Jack, and as the weeks flew past they became almost inseparable.

Como was rather slight and slender, and when compared with Jack's sturdy figure, he lacked muscle.

But he made up for it all in grace, suppleness, and quickness of motion, together with remarkable ready wit and thoughtfulness.

Thus six months had gone by.

But Black Harry had never forgiven nor forgotten the young Indian, and had been ever upon the watch for an opportunity to get even, as he expressed it.

Jack was as watchful as the outlaw, and had had forethought enough to foresee and foil the scoundrel's plans, until the time of the incident with which our story opens.

"Come," continued Jack pleasantly, "will you answer my questions, or not?"

"I can't answer 'em till I heard 'em, kin I?" retorted Black Harry.

"True enough," commented Jack, "so I will ask them."

"Well, go on, then."

"What have you done with Como?"

"Eh?" exclaimed the ruffian.

"You heard me, didn't you?"

"Who's Como?"

"You know very well who Como is; what have you done with him?"

"Ain't done nothin' with 'im; ain't seen him."

"Black Harry, you lie!"

The outlaw's eyes glittered savagely as he muttered between his teeth:

"It's easy enough to say such things as that when you've got the drop onto me, you young cur! Why don't you shoot me and have done with it?"

"I am about to do so," replied Jack calmly.

"Eh?" exclaimed Harry.

"I am going to shoot you now, you scoundrel, and I am going to keep on shooting you till you tell me where Como is, for I know that he is in your power.

"I know that you went to my door this morning when I

was away, and made some pretext for calling him out, when one of your scoundrels lassoed him.

"So you see, Black Harry, you have got to tell me where he is, and I am going to shoot at you till you do.

"The first shot will take off the lobe of your right ear, and if you still refuse to tell, off goes the left one."

"Now, once more, will you tell me?"

"I tell you I don't know nothin' about it."

"And I repeat that you lie!"

"Gentlemen," continued Jack, addressing those of the group who stood behind Black Harry's chair, "oblige me by stepping to one side."

They hastened to obey.

Black Harry, seeing that Jack meant what he said, then thought it wise to appeal to them.

"Say, pard," he cried, "air ye agoin' to stand there an' see this 'ere feller torture me like a redskin?"

"They will not interfere," said Jack, and his eyes swept rapidly over the group.

In that one glance he saw that he had as many friends there as had the outlaw.

"Will you answer my questions?" he said again to Black Harry.

"I tell you, you devil, that I don't know nothin'—"

Bang!

One of Jack's revolvers had discharged, and at the same instant, with a yell of fury, the outlaw leaped to his feet, clasping one hand to his right ear.

But the brave young fellow remained in his former position, unmoved, immovable.

"The lobe of your right ear is gone," he said coolly; "will you answer my question now?"

"Curse you!" groaned the outlaw, "curse you both!"

Bang!

Another yell of rage—another convulsive spring—and the outlaw's other hand flew to his left ear.

"I have pierced both ears," said Jack calmly; "next, off go their tops, if you still refuse to answer.

"Tell me, now—where is Como?"

"Wait, I'll tell," cried Black Harry, thoroughly cowed at last.

"Ah, your memory had returned. Very well, tell me."

"You'll quit shootin' off ears?"

"Yes, when I get the information I want."

"Well, the Injun is in a cabin up at Bed Rock."

"Is he unharmed?"

"Yes, at least he was when I left there about noon."

"Who was with him?"

"Nobody."

"He's alone, then?"

"That's wot I said."

"Why doesn't he escape?"

"'Cos he's wrapped up in a lariat so tight that Satan couldn't get out of it."

"And what were you going to do with him?"

"Nothin'—sullenly."

"That is another lie, Harry, but I'll let it pass, for I don't care. I shall go up and get him out of your clutches."

"We'll go with you!" exclaimed several voices in the group.

"No, thanks," replied Jack. "I will go alone. It is moonlight, and I have only about twenty miles to travel. Stay here, boys, and keep your eyes on Black Harry while I am gone."

"Harry," he continued, again addressing the outlaw, "I am going now to get Como, and if you leave this room before I return, I will kill you on sight. Do you understand me?"

"Well, ye said it purty plain."

"Exactly, and you know I do not make idle boasts."

"I repeat, if you are not here when I return, I will shoot you on sight; and if you are here and you have lied to me so that I do not find Como, I will kill you anyway."

"Oh, I'll be here, Jack Hawthorne, I'll be here and waiting for you, and I'll tell ye this now: You will find your Injun all O. K., and you'll find me here all O. K., too, 'cos I'll be a-waitin' fur ye; an' when ye git back, ef ye've any sand, ye'll stan' up an' give me a good square fight where both of us kin have equal chances, an' ef I don't do you up fur piercin' my ears—why, I'm willin' ter die, that's all!"

"Bah!" exclaimed Jack contemptuously, "who's talking about sand?—you haven't got any. Yes, I'll fight if you want to, and with any weapons you select."

Without another word Jack Hawthorne turned and left the

saloon, while those who remained repaired to the bar to discuss the event over their liquor.

All but two.

One of them was Black Harry, who went to a basin in one corner of the room to wash the blood from his face and ears.

The other was a heavy-bearded, villainous-looking fellow, who, having perceived a sign made by the wounded outlaw, sauntered quietly toward the door, and watching his opportunity, when none of the others were looking, slipped out through the door and disappeared in the darkness.

As soon as he left the saloon he slipped around the corner and ran with all his speed to a point a few hundred feet distant where several horses were tied.

Hastily loosing one of them, he sprang into the saddle and started away at a rapid gallop southward.

He did not go in the direction of Bed Rock, but at right angles with it, gradually swinging his horse, until he was making for a point two or three miles south of that which was Jack Hawthorne's destination.

A few moments after he started away, Jack Hawthorne dashed past the saloon, mounted upon his beautiful black stallion, Lightning.

He took his course straight east, along the base of the foot hills, making a bee line for Bed Rock, where he had been told that he would find Como.

But Black Harry's friend had got fully ten minutes the start of him, and it boded no good for the success of his expedition.

But Jack Hawthorne of No Man's Land was ever upon the alert, even when he seemed the least so; and, above all, he never lost confidence in his own ability.

CHAPTER III.

THE RACE FOR LIFE.

The night was far flown when brave Jack Hawthorne, of No Man's Land, sighted the little cabin, snugly set away under a huge rocky ledge at Bed Rock.

The moon was, however, still shining brightly, so that the cabin was plainly discernible.

Everything seemed silent and deserted in the neighborhood, as Jack reined in his horse and peered cautiously in every direction in search of signs of possible molestation.

"I don't believe that Black Harry has left Como there without some sort of a guard over him, human or otherwise," murmured Jack. "Possibly there may be an outlaw or two asleep in the cabin, and Harry expects them to do me up. That would account in part for his bravado in challenging me to fight him when I return.

"Bah! If there are a dozen of them there, on guard, I am going in just the same, and what is more, I am going to bring Como out with me."

Dismounting from his beautiful horse, which was a large, black stallion, very appropriately named "Lightning," by his master, he ordered him, in the Apache tongue, to wait for him, and Lightning with an intelligent pricking up of his ears, for an instant, lowered his head and began cropping the grass, which grew abundantly all along the base of the fertile hills.

He was a remarkably intelligent horse, although he knew the meaning of no word in English, for Jack had made it a point of always giving his commands in the Apache tongue, a circumstance which had on several occasions prevented the animal from being stolen from his master.

Rapidly, yet silently and with great caution, the young man approached the lonely cabin.

Everything was silent and deserted.

Not a sign of a living thing could be seen or heard, except the young American and his horse.

As Jack drew nearer to the cabin, he crouched down until he almost crept upon his hands and knees, but never once did he slacken his pace.

Soon the cabin was reached.

It was a low structure, barely high enough to allow a man to stand upright within its walls, and was about twelve feet square.

There was a window and one door in front, and these were the only openings in the structure, and the window had been effectually closed by huge blocks of adobe.

He reached the door in due time, and dropping flat upon the earth outside, placed his ear against the crack beneath it.

Yes, he could detect the sound of breathing.

But only of one person.

After listening intently for a full minute, Jack was satisfied that there was but one person within the hut.

That person could be no other than Como.

With a quick bound he regained his feet, and placing his shoulders against the door, pressed with all his might.

Much to his surprise, there was next to no resistance.

The door gave way immediately and he entered the cabin.

There in the middle of the floor lay what looked like a huge bundle of blankets.

But the bundle was Como, bound precisely as Black Harry had said.

It was the work of but an instant for Jack to produce his knife and sever the tight coils of the lariat which bound the Indian youth so helplessly in the folds of the blanket.

In a moment he had assisted the boy to his feet.

Bound and gagged for hours, lying prone upon the cold, earthen floor of the cabin, he had suffered terribly, but he made no complaint.

He only cast himself with a cry of joy into Jack's arms.

"Drop it, Como," was Jack's rather laconic and somewhat unfeeling comment. "I'm as glad as you are, and all that, but we've got no time for hugging like a couple of bears now. The thing for us to do is to light out of this before some of those fellows drop down upon us. Come."

He started toward the door, and Como endeavored to follow, but he staggered, and, with an exclamation of pain, sank to the floor.

He had been bound so long that his limbs were numb and helpless.

"Played out, eh, Como?" said Jack, turning quickly around. "Well, I don't wonder. It's enough to play out a tougher fellow than you are. Here, I'll carry you."

Stooping, and with apparently little or no effort, he raised the slight form of the young Indian from the floor, and started rapidly toward the point where Lightning was still nipping the grass.

"You are not much heavier than one of my feathers, Como," he said, as he hurried rapidly along.

"Hello! what's that?"

Jack had heard a familiar sound.

Stooping quickly, he placed his ear to the ground.

Yes, he was right.

The sound of horses' hoofs could be plainly heard.

Lightning, too, had raised his head and pricked up his ears.

"A good dozen of them, I should think," muttered Jack, as he again rose to his feet, "and coming from the south."

"Perhaps they are coming to intercept me, and perhaps not. It's more than likely that they are."

"Anyway, I'll light out in double-quick time."

He whistled shrilly, and with a few bounds Lightning was at his side, with quivering nostrils and flashing eyes, ready for the race, which evidently was about to begin.

"I don't like to compel you to carry double, old fellow," said Jack apologetically to the horse, as he placed Como just behind the saddle, and then vaulted easily into it himself, "but for this time you've got to do it."

"Put your arms around me, Como, and hang on, for we're off now," he continued, and then uttering a sharp command, Lightning proved the appropriateness of his name by starting away like the wind.

Nor did they make the start a moment too soon, for the beautiful stallion had not taken more than a half dozen of his wonderful leaps before a party of twelve horsemen dashed in sight over the top of a knoll, and within easy rifle range.

The instant when the approaching horsemen came in sight, they discovered, in the bright moonlight, the figures of Jack and Como mounted upon the black stallion.

With a loud cry they wheeled their horses to the left, and urging them to higher speed, started in pursuit.

At the same moment there sounded the sharp crack of a rifle, and it was followed by a groan from Como, who swayed for a moment where he sat.

Jack did not realize that his friend was hit until he felt the young Indian's arms begin to relax their hold about his body.

He was almost too late to save the youth from falling.

As it was, the poor fellow nearly reached the ground before Jack's hand seized him by the collar.

With almost superhuman strength, he raised Como again to the saddle, but this time held him in his arms, for the

youth had entirely lost consciousness, and was limp and apparently lifeless.

Jack, indeed, thought him dead, but he never once thought of letting him drop, in order to increase his own chances of safety.

With the Indian boy lying easily across the saddle in front of him, he leaned as far forward as possible and urged his horse to even greater speed.

Burdened as he was he could not return the fire of the outlaws and his only chance of safety consisted in beating them in the race.

That he could do so he felt no doubts, for he knew Lightning's powers of speed and endurance, and even though he was carrying double, he never once doubted but that he would soon distance his pursuers.

It was with considerable satisfaction, that closely following the rifle shot which had wounded or killed Como, he heard a hoarse shout of disapproval from one of the outlaws emphasized by an oath, commanding them to fire no more, but to take the fugitives alive.

"The black horse is carrying double. We kin soon tire him out," the voice had continued, and Jack had smiled grimly as he murmured:

"Easy, Lightning, let 'em gain a little, it will make them feel surer."

On, on they dashed, while mile after mile was covered, and they were nearing the vicinity of the settlement.

The moon had gone behind the front hills, and it was considerably darker.

"Five miles more," muttered Jack. "Lightning, old boy, can you stand it?"

He urged the horse to still greater exertions, and the noble steed responded so well that they began to draw away from the pursuers.

Then a hoarse shout went up from the outlaws.

"He'll escape us, after all!" was the cry. "Dead or alive now! Shoot, all of you! Wing the horse if you can!"

Immediately there followed the reports of a dozen rifles, and Jack, with a convulsive shudder, threw himself forward, still clinging to the form of Como.

His eyes closed, he breathed hard and fast, and his face grew frightfully pale, but he never once loosened his hold upon the young Indian; never once did his knees lessen their pressure upon the saddle flaps.

Report after report came from the pursuing rifles, but the silent and motionless riders on the black stallion flew onward, and still onward towards the goal of safety.

Would they reach it?

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHALLENGE—BIG MIKE CRAWLS.

The early morning air was startled by the reports of firearms.

The residents of Wasp's Nest in No Man's Land were never excited by such sounds, for they were of too constant occurrence.

Nevertheless, several of them peered from their homes in time to see a powerful black horse, bearing two persons on his back, dash past, and then all was still again.

The horse, guided by its own sagacious knowledge of locality, bounded straight through the village—or city, as it was fondly called—toward the house where Jack Hawthorne lived, nor did he once slacken his pace until the door was reached.

Then he came to a halt, and uttered a loud neigh, which served as an announcement to those within that he had arrived.

The door was instantly thrown ajar, and the horse, without waiting the word of command, passed through it and out of sight, and the door was instantly closed.

"Quick!" gasped Jack, to the two men who were there to receive him. "Take Como! we have both been hit, and I am afraid the boy is dead."

Como was taken from his arms and stretched on a pile of blankets. Jack himself was quickly helped from the horse's back, and then the animal was led through the wide hall into a high enclosure at the back of the house.

A careful examination showed that neither of the riders were severely hurt.

Both had been hit in the head, but both had escaped serious injury.

Como had been struck a glancing blow just over the temple, the ball having cut a furrow in the skin and drawn considerable blood, but it was evident that within a few hours he would be as well as ever.

As for Jack his vanity had saved him.

The huge sombrero—decked with silver coins—had acted as a shield.

The rifle ball struck squarely upon one of the silver dollars which were arranged in a band around the hat, having the same effect upon him as though struck sharply with a blunt instrument.

The blow had stunned him, but had drawn no blood, so that a few moments' rest and cold water applications rendered him as well as ever again, with the exception of a slight headache.

Having seen to it that Como was well cared for, in half an hour he started for the "Shouter" saloon, where he was to meet Black Harry.

A few moments took him there, but, as he had expected, the outlaw had escaped.

Nobody had seen him go, but that he had left was evident, for a careful search failed to produce him.

"Gentlemen," said Jack, when all were satisfied that Black Harry had preferred running to engaging in a conflict with the young American, "you all heard Black Harry challenge me to fight him; you all heard him say he would wait here until my return, and you are all aware that he has shown the white feather—that he was too much of a coward to wait for me here, even though I gave him his choice of weapons.

"If there are any here who sympathize with him and wish to take up his quarrel, let them step out like men, and if there are a dozen, I will fight them all, for I'll tell you plainly that I will shoot the scoundrel on sight."

He paused, but beyond a low murmur of approval from several of the bystanders, not a word of reply was spoken.

Then Jack again raised his voice.

"I went to the cabin at Red Bank," he said, "and I found Como there. As I was bringing him away, a dozen highwaymen took up the chase. Both of us were hit by their bullets, but neither of us were much hurt.

"Black Harry played me false; he is a scoundrel! Is there any one here who dares to express sympathy for his cause?"

There was a moment's silence, and then a big, red-whiskered fellow stepped forward.

He was known throughout the region as Big Mike, and was a dangerous character.

"Jack Hawthorne," he said in a gruff voice, "I ain't a-sympathizin' with Black Harry, an' I ain't a-lookin' fur no fight with you, but I've got suthin' ter say."

"All right, Mike—fire away."

"I war here when Black Harry lit out."

"Ah!"

"An' I saw him go."

"Exactly."

"He told me he war a-goin'—"

"And bade you a fond adieu," interrupted Jack.

"Wait, youngster. He left a message with me fur you."

"Ah, he did, eh?"

"Yes, he did. He allowed he couldn't git fair play here, where the hull bilin' lot were dead agin' him, an' thet's ther reason why he didn't stay to fight ye."

"Ah! he thought that all these gentlemen, yourself included, Mike, were as deeply dyed scoundrels as himself. Complimentary, very. But go on with your message."

"He left another challenge for ye."

"Another challenge? Bah! He's too great a coward to fight. But go on; let us hear it."

"He'll meet you to-night an hour afore sundown half way atween here an' Red Rock. You kin take six men with you, an' he'll have six with him ter see fair play.

"When the two parties come in sight o' each other, everybody is to halt, except Black Harry an' yourself, an' you two are to keep ridin' forward till one of ye drops. That's the challenge."

"It sounds all right," replied Jack, "but I am satisfied that there is a trick concealed in it somewhere, for I know that Black Harry is afraid to meet me."

"So you're a-goin' ter crawl, air you, Jack Hawthorne?" sneered Big Mike.

"Not much, Mikey," returned Jack, smiling a little; "nary a crawl, but I know somebody who is."

"Who?"

"You!"

"What!" and Mike's eyes blazed with wrath.

"You, I said," repeated Jack, "a great big, red-faced ruffian, known as Big Mike, is going to 'crawl,' as you call it, right here."

With an oath, Mike's hand fell upon the butt of his revolver.

"Drop it, Mike," said Jack, coldly, and his never-failing weapon was pointed straight at the ruffian's heart.

"Get down on your hands and knees and crawl for that door, or as surely as I am Jack Hawthorne, I'll have you carried out, feet first; crawl, I tell you!"

With a muttered curse, the ruffian obeyed, for he saw that Jack was in no mood for trifling.

"Listen, Mike," said Jack, as the burly fellow made his way laboriously towards the door; "but keep on crawling, for I can say all I've got to say before you reach the door."

"I know you are in league with Black Harry, and I know him to be in command of a gang of outlaws.

"If you ever get back you can tell him that I am going to exterminate every man of his band, or drive them from the country. You can tell him also that I will be on hand to-night for the fight he proposes, and that I know he is too big a coward to be there himself unless he has put up some job. If he has, it won't work.

"Now, as for you! If you have got any fight left in you, you can wait for me when you get outside, for I shall leave the Shouter exactly five minutes after you do. Will you be there, Mikey?"

A curse was his only reply.

Presently the door was reached, and an obliging hand having opened it, Big Mike crawled through it, and was gone.

CHAPTER V.

THE UNCROWNED KING.

The door had no sooner closed behind the creeping, crawling figure of Big Mike than Jack took his watch and began to count the minutes.

"Do you think he will wait for me, gentlemen?" he asked of those who remained, and who were waiting for the moment to come when Jack Hawthorne should step out and face his enemy.

"Sure to," responded one of them. "He'd be a fool if he didn't."

"Why so?" coolly demanded Jack.

"Because all he has got to do is to keep his pop ready, and when you show yourself, bore a hole through you before you have a chance to say scat."

"Think so? Well, we will see. I don't much believe that he will wait for me—but he may. If he does, it will be he that gets bored, and not Jack Hawthorne—mark that! I'm no quite ready to shuffle off yet."

An interval of silence ensued, and then Jack closed his watch with a snap.

"Time's up," he said, and started for the door.

"Stand back away from the door so that none of you get bored by mistake."

They were not slow to obey, for Big Mike was well known among them to be a good shot, and not one of them relished the idea of stopping a stray bullet.

The door, of course, opened in, and Jack had calculated how he could foil Big Mike's plan, if indeed the desperado should really be in waiting for him, ready to shoot him down as soon as he should appear.

Keeping well out of sight Jack threw the door wide open, and the sharp crack of a revolver instantly announced that Big Mike was on the alert, ready to kill.

The ball from his revolver whizzed through the open doorway and imbedded itself in the opposite wall, doing no damage whatever, for Jack was well out of the way.

But the report of the firearm told our hero all he wished to know, for by it he had without difficulty located the place where Big Mike was in hiding.

There was a window to the left of the door, covered by a green paper curtain.

Jack at once stepped toward it, and in an instant had made a hole the size of his finger, through which he peered.

As he had suspected, Big Mike had taken his position on

the opposite side of the street behind an empty hogshead which had come in on some wagon train.

He could see the desperado's right arm and a part of his face as he peered out, eagerly watching the doorway for Jack to appear.

"Now, boys," said Jack, "be ready to see the fun, for it is about to begin. I am going out of the door."

"He'll kill you before you have a chance to pull your gun up to a level," volunteered one of the bystanders.

"I guess not," returned Jack.

Seizing a stool, he placed it by the door jamb, and then got upon it.

"He expects me lower down," he said, in explanation, "and I am going to let him shoot under me."

"One, two, three!"

With a gigantic spring he leaped from the stool through the air, out of the door.

Almost as soon as his feet left the stool he fired his revolver.

A fraction of a second later came a report from the opposite side of the street, immediately followed by a yell of rage.

But Jack stood in the street uninjured.

Both his hands were extended, and in each he held one of the deadly weapons he so well knew how to use.

They were both pointed toward the hogshead behind which Big Mike was concealed, but not a sign of the outlaw's person could be seen.

"Can't you shoot with your left hand, Mikey?" shouted Jack, derisively, "or did the ball I just put through your right one take all the courage out of you? Try it with your left, Mikey; I am out here in plain sight."

There was a moment's silence and then a muttered curse from behind the hogshead.

Suddenly a hand, grasping a revolver, was pushed into view, but it had no sooner appeared than one of Jack's weapons cracked with a venomous ring.

Then another yell of rage and Jack coolly put his revolvers out of sight, turned and re-entered the "Shouter."

"It will be some time before Big Mike uses a weapon again," he said coldly, "and should any of you ever be in doubt as to his identity, you will always know him by the fact that he has had a bullet through each of his hands."

Returning to the door he shouted:

"You can come out, now, Mikey; I won't hurt you, but next time you had better tackle somebody nearer your size."

"Mark this, though—you have got forty-eight hours to light out of these diggings, and no more, for if you don't, I'll make another hole through you, and next time it will be straight between your eyes. You know what that means. Now, skip, or I'll shoot through the barrel."

The figure of Mike arose from its concealment, and without word or look, slunk away down the street and disappeared.

Those who were gathered together in the Shouter looked with awe upon the young man whose prowess with his weapons was so wonderful.

They might be excused from attributing supernatural powers to Jack Hawthorne, for there was not a man among them but had time after time looked death in the face in a hundred forms without flinching.

There was not one among them but felt that he was as quick with his weapons as any man living except Jack Hawthorne, but in him they one and all saw their superior, nor did any have the temerity to question the fact.

"Friends," said Jack, as he re-entered the saloon, "I have got a few words to say to you all."

"Some of you who are here now I know well enough to relieve you from any of the consequences which my words may precipitate; but there are others here who are comparatively unknown to me."

"To you all I want to say this: From this hour on I have sworn eternal enmity to Black Harry and his gang of outlaws and ruffians. If there is any one here who sympathizes with him, be warned now, for I am going to drive every man of them from this part of the country or bury them here."

"We are in a land where there is no law to protect either ourselves or our property, except such laws as we choose to enact and carry out ourselves."

"If we allow such people as those who form Black Harry's gang to have their heads, they will end by destroying every

good principle we have, besides depriving us of what little we may gather, as the result of our toil!

"Now listen! I am going to make a stand to which some of you may object, but it is for the good of the community I take it."

"I am going to appoint myself the chief of this district, and I and those who are my friends are going to see that order is preserved in and around this settlement."

"We shall make laws best suited to our needs, and every man who is fair and open in his conduct will be protected, and may become one of us, but every man who breaks our laws and who does not play fair in the game of life, will be notified to leave the country, and failing to do so will be buried here."

"If any of you have complaints to make, lodge them with me, and they shall be attended to."

"Yer makin' a sort o' uncrowned king of yourself, ain't yer?" growled one of the listeners.

"Yes, if you choose to call it so. Do you object to it, Jim Derby? I think you are one of the men who will have reason to fear me, so if you have any objections, step out now and state them."

"No, no, Jack Hawthorne, I ain't got no objections, an' as fur fearin' ye, well, I don't fear no man, I don't!"

A quiet smile flitted across Jack's face.

"Very well, Jim; I think I understand you."

"Mebby you'll understand me better later on."

"Perhaps. I expect to be shot at from behind, but I'm going to stay here long enough to carry out my scheme, just the same."

"You will oblige me by repeating what I have said to Black Harry."

"Don't lie, Jim. You'll have a chance inside of three hours, for when you leave here you will go straight to Black Harry. Carry my message to him, and tell him that Jack Hawthorne, the uncrowned king of No Man's Land, has declared war against him, and that if he is caught he will not be shot, but hung, like the horse thief he is."

After delivering these last words, Jack looked calmly around the room for a full minute, but seeing that none of them cared to question his resolve, he wheeled, and passed quickly out of the door into the street.

But he had not gone a dozen paces before he heard the report of a fire-arm, and at the same instant a ball whizzed past his right ear.

"Already!" he exclaimed as he wheeled and faced the direction whence the shot came.

A little puff of smoke gave him the locality, for it was slowly rising over the big hogshead behind which Big Mike had concealed himself.

Holding his weapon ready for instant use, Jack began slowly walking towards the hogshead, behind which he knew the enemy who had fired at him lay hiding.

CHAPTER VI.

SAWED-OFF SAM.

"Stand up and show yourself, or I will shoot through the hogshead!" ordered Jack, sternly, as he drew nearer, but the concealed enemy, whoever he was, refused to comply.

True to his word, Jack sent a bullet crashing through the huge barrel, purposely aiming very low, intending only to injure and not to kill his hidden foe.

A loud yell followed the report of his revolver, and then all was still again.

"Stand up!" ordered Jack.

The fellow, however, refused to stand up.

"Do you want me to shoot again?" asked Jack.

"Shoot and be blowed!" said a gruff voice. "It don't make no difference whether ye put a hole through me while I'm inside o' this here thing, 'r when I git out an' stan' up!"

"Ah! so you are inside the hogshead, are you?" asked Jack pleasantly.

"No, pard, it's a hog's head 'r a jackass's head wot's inside o' this 'ere barrel."

"Well, why don't you come out?"

"I'm engaged, I am! Besides, I've got er hole into one o' my knees, an' it don't bend reg'lar."

"Ah, my bullet!"

"Right ye be, stranger."

"Why do you call me stranger? Don't you know me?"

"Yaas, I know ye fur a cussed fool! What in blazes d'ye want'er go pokin' into my 'boodoir' fur?"

"Your what?"

"My bedroom."

"Ah! so you were asleep, were you?"

"I war, stranger, an' I call it docid onkind in ye ter wake me up so suddint like. Ye might ha' been a trifle more gentle 'bout it."

"So? And do you make a habit of snoozing in barrels and shooting at people in your sleep?"

"Hey?"

"Didn't you hear me?"

"Yaas, but I didn't couple onter wat ye said."

"Well, then, in plain English, what d'd you shoot at me for if you didn't want to be disturbed in your slumber?"

"Say, stranger, was thet you?"

"Oh, no; it's my ghost that is doing the talking. I'm lying out cold and stiff in the gutter just below here, with your bullet through my brain."

"My bullet?"

"That is what I said."

"But I ain't put no bullet into ye."

"No, but you tried to."

"Stranger, ye're a liar."

Jack started as though a bee had stung him.

He hadn't any doubt but that the person inside of the hogshead was the one who shot him, and yet there was a ring of honest indignation in his gruff voice when he refuted Jack's statement so emphatically.

"Did you hear me, stranger?" continued the voice, before Jack could reply. "I said ye war a liar, an' I kin prove it. Instead o' shootin' at you, you've been poppin' at me, an' wot's more, you've laid one o' my legs up fur repairs."

"Are you telling the truth?" asked Jack.

"You bet! You're the only liar present at this 'ere conversation. Jest help me outen this pesky barrel an' prop me up agin it on ther outside an' then git off a little ways an' I'll have a shootin' match with you to prove it."

"Do you want me to help you out?"

"You bet!"

Jack stepped forward without further ado and leaned over the top of the hogshead.

There, curled up in the bottom, was the figure of a man.

"Give me your hand," said Jack.

The man complied, and while our hero assisted him, managed to raise himself so that he stood upon one leg inside the hogshead.

He groaned with pain several times during the process, but finally, after great exertion, he was safely on the outside of his queer hiding place.

He presented a strange appearance as he stood there.

Quite short in stature, but supernaturally muscular, he had the look of being almost as broad as he was long.

He had a strong, kindly face, covered by a shaggy beard, and surrounded by a shock, unkempt head of iron-gray hair, and lighted up by a pair of keen gray eyes. His arms seemed to be of unusual length, and his legs remarkably short.

Jack looked at him in wonder, for he had never seen him before.

"Who are you?" he asked abruptly.

"I'm a stranger in these parts," responded the man, "but where they knew me best they calls me 'Sawed-off Sam.' Who be you?"

"Don't you know?" asked Jack, smiling, for although he was beginning to think he had made a mistake, he was not yet sure.

"Ef I did I wouldn't ax."

"Very well, I am Jack Hawthorne, of No Man's Land."

"Hey? Wat, ye-ou?"

Jack nodded.

"Well, I'm blowed, I am!" ejaculated the sawed-off.

"Very likely," responded Jack.

"Say, stranger, ef you're Jack Hawthorne, I've got suthin' interestin' to tell ye. But, hole on. Let's hev that shootin' match fust, an' then I'll tell my yarn," and he drew forth a heavy six-shooter. "I hope ye ain't got no preference fur posish, stran—that is, Jack, cos, since ye bored into my leg I can't move around as careless like I could afore, so ef ye'll jest git onto t'other side o' the road, we'll begin."

"Wait," said Jack. "I know a better way to settle this thing than shooting at each other."

"How?"

"We will first determine who is the best shot, and then let him do all the shooting."

"Right ye be, but say, I warn ye thet I never met a man yet as could beat me shootin'."

"All right," said Jack, smiling; "now here is what we will do. Have you got two pops?"

"You bet!"

"Very well. Cock the one in your hand and throw it into the air. Then draw your second and shoot at the trigger of the one in the air.

"I will do the same, and which one of us fires off both his weapons, wins. Is it agreed?"

"Agreed. Pard, shake! Thet is suthin' new in the way o' shootin', but Sawed-off kin do it, you bet!"

A moment of preparation and then—

"One, two, three!" counted Jack.

Two revolvers went hurtling high in the air.

"Crack! Crack!" sounded two others, and then, almost immediately:

"Bang! Bang!"

Both of the flying revolvers had been discharged in the air as they were turning over and over.

Jack turned to Sawed-off Sam in astonishment, only to meet an equally astonished look from the stranger.

Our hero put out his hand.

"Shake," he said, laconically; "I know now that you are not the man who shot at me, and I owe you an apology for plugging you through the hogshead."

He then went on to explain the circumstances which had led him to believe that it was the man in the hogshead who had tried to kill him.

"It's all O. K., pard," said Sawed-off. "I've got er sort of affection fur thet bullet in my knee, seein' as how you put it there. Jest tote me along somehow to yer wigwam an' give me plenty of whisky, an' I'll be all right purty soon. Besides, I've got a yarn to tell ye."

"A yarn?"

"You bet! an' one thet'll s'prise ye, too! but I ain't agoin' ter tell you till I git whar I'm more comfortable. Ye see, pard, I didn't stay all night an' half of to-day in thet air bedroom o' mine fur nothin'. I war purty rocky when I crawled in, but I was sober enough when I heerd wat I've got ter tell ye."

"Anything serious?"

"Waal, thet depends! Some fellers hev got a job put up on ye an' a youngster named Como, an' I guess their job would ha' worked ef ye hadn't met me. Mebby it 'twill anyway, cos I didn't hear the name of the traitor."

"Where?"

"In your shanty!"

"And these men propose—"

"Ter git into your wigwam ter-night, ter carry off the feller they call Como an' ter' drop suthin' into your eyes to blind ye forever. They dassent kill ye cos yer watched over by the devil 'r suthin', but they kin blind ye, see?"

Jack's lips set themselves firmly together, and his brow grew somber and stern.

"Come," he said, "for there is no time to lose. I will find a way to thank you later."

Assisting his new-found friend, Jack made his way rapidly homeward.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PLOT—"HANDS UP!"

"A traitor in my own house!"

Such was the thought which continued to repeat itself in the brain of Jack Hawthorne, as with difficulty assisting the crippled Sawed-off Sam, he made his way as rapidly as possible towards the only home he had in the world.

"Say, pard," said Sawed-off, suddenly; "I think I know wot yer a discussin' in yer mind. Ye're a wonderin' ef I ain't lied to ye."

"You are perfectly sure of what you say in regard to the plot against me?" Jack asked Sawed-off Sam.

"Es sure es shootin'."

"Tell me how you heard it all."

"Right. Ye see, pard, I biled over last night. The lickin's so cussed bad in thet air shop thet it knocked me out, an' 'thout knowin' exactly how 'r when 'r why I crawled into that air barrel.

"I don't know nothin' about how long I'd been there when I heerd talkin', and ther first words I heerd were: 'Cuss 'im, he's marked me fur life!'

"A purty brace of ears you've got now, Harry," says

another voice, an' then came some more cuss words which it ain't necessary to repeat.

"Say," says the fust voice, 'can't we do that air job we've been a-talkin' about to-night?"

"Any time," says t'other.

"How about Como?" says one. 'Ef Jack Hawthorne comes back this morning he'll bring Como with him. Ef he don't, thar won't be no use in your lettin' us into the house.'

"Wot air ye a-going ter do when ye git them inty yer power?" asked two; 'string 'em up?"

"Not much! Como's my huckleberry, an' es fur Hawthorne—well, I'm jest a-go'in' ter put out his peepers an' then turn him loose. He won't shoot so cussed straight when he can't see."

Jack shuddered. Who would not, with the prospect of having his eyes put out?

"Go on," he said hoarsely.

"Thar ain't much more. They talked fur some time about their plans, and the gist of it war this:

"As soon as it war known that you hed got back two war to let one an' his friends inty your house. They were to lie hid somewhere until the middle of the night, an' then they were to snatch Como bald-headed, arter which they were to copper you an' put out your eyes.

"They got that fur in their story an' then they went outen hearin', an' I went ter sleep ag'in.

"The next thing I knowed war when some one war shootin' from behind the barrel, an' a-cussin, 'cos he'd got a hole in his hand.

"Then somebody ordered him to light out, an' he lit, an' I went to sleep ag'in.

"The next thing I knowed war when I got ter dreamin' that I war in a scrimmage, an' then I got plugged in the knee, an' you know the rest.

In a very few moments more the twain reached the house.

Entering quickly, Jack conducted his companion to a room where he could lie down, and proceeded, with the aid of Como, who was already able to be around, to dress the old hunter's wound.

As soon as his new friend had been made comfortable Jack passed out of the house by the rear door, and crossing the corral, which had been before referred to, entered and disappeared between a crevice in the rocks.

It led into a natural cave, which had been rendered more commodious by artificial means.

After walking about a hundred feet he entered quite a large room, where several men were idly smoking and talking.

Jack hastily counted them.

There were eight present. Four were missing.

"Friends," said Jack, "I have a particular reason for wanting you all here to-night, so I wish some of you would slide out and find the others. I have got something to say, but I want to say it to you all."

Jack was greatly puzzled, and when the men had gone to do his bidding, he sat for a long time thinking over the situation.

There were two means of entrance and exit to and from Jack's headquarters.

One was through the house, as he had himself entered, and the other was by means of another cleft in the rocks, some distance up the hill.

That latter entrance was known to but two of his men, and strange to say, the very two who were unaccounted for as well as absent.

"That is the only way in which they could gain an entrance here without being discovered," mused the young hero, "and therefore it goes without saying that the traitor—if traitor there be—is either Phil Bently or Alf Winant.

"Anyway, I am prepared for them now, and they will get a very warm reception—one that will cure them of any desire to make a second visit."

But why did not Jack look behind him?

Even he would have been dismayed had he done so, for five dark forms had glided into the spacious subterranean room behind him, and were standing so as to bar the only means of exit from it.

They were standing there patiently waiting for him to turn and confront them.

Every man of the five held a weapon, and every weapon was pointed full at Jack's heart.

Presently he did turn.

Then he leaped back with a cry of consternation and surprise.

"Hands up!" said a stern voice at the same instant, and for the first time in his life Jack obeyed that order.

CHAPTER VIII.

TURNING THE TABLES.

Realizing upon the instant that there was no possible chance for him to escape capture, Jack calmly raised his hands over his head.

"You've got me," he said, coolly.

One of the five men instantly stepped forward.

It was Black Harry.

"Hand over your weapons, Jack Hawthorne," he said; "you ain't safe as long as you have got a shootin'-iron about you."

As soon as he had given up his revolvers and had been thoroughly searched to make sure that there were no others concealed about him, Black Harry turned to the men who were with him.

"Now, men," he said, "there is no use in postponing the balance of our work till night. We might as well finish this job now an' hev it done.

"The rest of you skip fur the house and nail onto Como, the Injun. Ye needn't mind nothin' nor nobody else, but I want him, fur sure! I'll stay here an' see that this 'ere chap don't take wings an' fly away."

A piece of rope was secured, with which Jack's hands were bound tightly behind his back, and then he was left alone with Black Harry.

"What are you going to do with Como?" asked Jack.

"That's my biz!" retorted the outlaw. "It may be as how I knows more about that chap than you do."

"What do you mean?"

"Mebby I mean southin', an' mebbly I don't, but I know he ain't no Injun."

"Not an Injun?" exclaimed Jack.

"Nary Injun! He's as white under the stain as you and I are—that is, whiter than I am."

"I certainly hope so," retorted Jack; "most Indians are."

"Talk away, youngster, if it does you any good."

Just then Jack gave a violent start, but instantly recovered his composure.

"Wot's the matter with you?" asked Black Harry.

"I saw something," replied Jack.

"What did ye see?"

"I saw a noose in the end of a rope coming down right over your head."

Black Harry moved uneasily and glanced hurriedly upwards in spite of himself.

As he did so there came a swishing sound through the air, and a noose did fall down over the outlaw's head.

He crouched and sprang away, but he was not quick enough.

"Pull, Como, pull!" cried Jack. "Choke the villain until he is unconscious, for his friends are likely to return at any moment."

Como did not need any urging. He was pulling, as Black Harry could have testified.

He was rapidly becoming Black Harry in earnest, owing to the strain upon his windpipe.

All the while he was struggling with might and main to tear the hated noose from his neck, and all the while Como was exerting himself equally hard to keep the noose tight.

Jack meanwhile was making his way slowly towards Como.

"Pull on the lasso with one hand and draw your knife with the other," he said to Como.

"That's right! Now cut this rope on my wrists," and he wheeled so that his back was toward the young Indian.

In another moment his hands were free.

Quickly seizing the lasso from Como's hands he applied his own strength to it, and in another moment the outlaw was glad to beg for mercy.

Hastily pinioning the outlaw's hands behind him in the same fashion in which his own had been tied but a few moments before, he said sternly:

"Now, you scoundrel, march, and I warn you if you make a sound I'll stop your breath forever."

Directing him away from the house, and therefore toward the secret entrance of the cave, he compelled Black Harry to move on in front of him.

They passed along some considerable distance in that way, and then turned abruptly into a narrow side passage, which led up a steep incline for about fifteen yards, and then came to an abrupt stop.

But there was a ladder before them, and Jack ordered Black Harry to climb it.

At first he refused, but a few meaning suggestions from our hero persuaded him that it was best to obey without question.

The ladder was quite long, and they stepped from it upon a flat, rock-floored room about ten feet square.

Quickly drawing the ladder up after him Jack struck a light.

Without much ado he proceeded to securely bind the outlaw, finishing the job by tying him fast to the iron ring in the rock.

"Your friends may look for you in vain, Harry; they will never find you here," said Jack when he had finished.

CHAPTER IX.

TRICKED.

In the further part of the cavernous apartment where Jack had conducted Black Harry, was another ladder, and towards that our hero hastened as soon as he was satisfied that the outlaw was made fast.

He climbed up to the top, emerging upon a natural shelf or ledge of rock, which, from any point below, must have seemed inaccessible.

It was, however, a most advantageous position, for it commanded a complete view of Wasp's Nest.

There Jack could calmly watch all that was going on in the settlement, with no danger of being himself seen.

A glance satisfied him.

All was quiet in the street and about his house.

Turning to Como, who had followed him, he said:

"How did you happen to be in the cave in the nick of time, Como?"

"I had followed you to warn you of danger, and was just about to speak to you when the five men entered the big room in the cave in front of me."

"And then you waited?"

"No, I ran for my lasso. You know it is the weapon I know best how to use."

"True. But tell me—did you hear what Black Harry said about you?"

"I did."

"Of course it is all a yarn."

"No, it is the truth."

"What,—you are not an Indian?"

"No. My nativity is as pure as your own."

"Then, Como, you have deceived me?"

"I have; but you will forgive me; nay, more, you will not force me to tell you more now."

"Force you? No! Tell me nothing that you do not wish to tell."

"Don't be displeased with me, Jack. It is only because I am not ready to tell you let, that I do not; it is not that I do not wish to. Trust me, and when the day comes that you know my story, you will tell me that I did right."

"All right, Como, as you please. But how did Black Harry find this out?"

"By letters which he took from me when he captured me. That is the only way."

"Ah! You said just now that you followed me into the cave to warn me of danger. What did you mean?"

"I meant that one of the men is a traitor."

"Ah! which one?"

"Alf Winant."

"Alf! Are you sure?"

"Very sure."

"How did you find it out?"

"I suspected it before Black Harry captured me, but I overheard enough while I was in his power to prove it."

"Then you think it was through his treachery that Black Harry got into the cave to-day?"

"I know it."

"Very well. Come now, we will go down. Those fellows have ransacked the house by this time and gone. I wonder what they have done with the Sawed-off?"

"Who?"

"Sawed-off Sam; the man whose wound we dressed."

"Perhaps they have carried him off in place of ourselves."

"I hardly think so, but come."

They went down the ladder again, Jack leading the way. Black Harry was exactly as they had left him, and except for a few deep curses upon his luck, said nothing.

"Good-by, Harry," said Jack pleasantly. "I will be back again before long with something more secure than that rope to fasten you with."

When they reached the house they found that but little had been disturbed.

As for Sawed-off Sam he had not been molested.

He said that two men had entered the room and asked him where Como was.

Supposing them to be friends of Jack he had told them that the youngster had just gone out somewhere, and that was all he had seen of any of them.

Returning to the cave, Jack found signs of them, and came to the conclusion that they had departed as they came, no doubt thinking that Black Harry had got tired of waiting and had gone on without them with his prisoner.

A full hour had gone by ere Jack was ready to return to the spot where he had left the outlaw chief, and before going he sent Como out upon a short errand, for the purpose of saving time, for he was determined to begin his career as the uncrowned king at once.

Law and order were unknown quantities at Wasp's Nest, and he was resolved to have them recognized.

He had given warning to that effect, and he meant to carry out his word to the letter.

But he must begin at home by making an example of Alf Winant.

That he meant to do.

Turning his plans over in his mind, and chain in hand, he made his way toward the upper cavern, where he had left Black Harry.

On leaving the place with Como, he had lowered the ladder from its resting place.

It took but a moment to put it into place again.

Just what to do with the outlaw he did not know.

That he was a dangerous man to let run at large he knew, and yet to take the law into his own hands sufficiently to punish the fellow as he deserved, he did not care to do.

Slowly mounting the ladder he threw the rays of the light which he carried into the corner where Black Harry should be.

But the outlaw was not there.

Jack rubbed his eyes and looked again.

No, he was not mistaken.

Black Harry was gone.

With a quick bound Jack reached the spot where the fellow had been tied to the ring in the rock.

The ropes still hung there, but they had been cut as if with a sharp knife.

"I know that he did not have a knife about him," muttered Jack; "and therefore it follows that some one has liberated him."

"But who? One of his own men? That is very unlikely because none of them would know where to look for him, and they might search this cave over for days without finding this spot."

"Who, then? Alf? Surely it must have been Alf."

"But how could he get up here to cut the cords? Harry was tied so securely that he could not possibly get away himself, nor did he have a knife with which to cut his bonds as these are cut."

"It must have been Alf. He has found the ladder, climbed up and liberated Black Harry, and then upon going away, he has taken the ladder down again, leaving it as he found it."

"I will climb up to the lookout and have a peep before I go back, for there is no use in hurrying now."

Suiting the action to the word, he hurried towards the second ladder.

But that, also, was missing.

"Hello!" he thought; "possibly I am mistaken after all. Black Harry may have freed himself, climbed up into the lookout and drawn the ladder up after him."

Turning hastily, he grasped the other ladder and quickly pulled it up.

Carrying it across the room, he placed it in position and began climbing upward toward the lookout.

His weapons were in readiness, but he had no use for them.

Although he expected to see Black Harry crouched and ready to spring upon him, he did not.

The lookout was untenanted.

He crawled out upon the ledge and laid at full length, peering with comprehensive glance down upon the street in Wasp's Nest.

Suddenly he uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Black Harry, as sure as I live!" he cried.

He was right.

Walking along the street was no other person than the outlaw chief himself.

"Well, I call that cheek!" muttered Jack. "Harry is making the most of his opportunity. Knowing that I have got to return here and am not likely to encounter him upon the street, he is busily walking about in defiance of me, for every man in the village knows that I have sworn to kill the scoundrel on sight.

"Hello, there comes Como! They are sure to meet. I wonder what the result will be.

"Will they pass each other, or will there be trouble?"

Jack gazed with a sort of fascination upon the scene below him.

He was out of ear-shot as well as pistol-shot, where he was, and the way to the village was so winding that he knew he could not get there in time to intercept Harry if he tried.

"In another moment they will be together," he muttered.

"Ah! Black Harry has seen who is approaching, while Como has not.

"He is getting his revolvers ready.

"Now he tells him to throw up his hands—Como obeys—Harry approaches nearer—he is taking Como's weapons away from him."

Jack could see it all from his point of lookout.

At that instant a man dashed up the street on horseback leading two other horses.

In another moment Harry had compelled Como to mount one of the horses, himself mounting the other.

Then, putting spurs to his animal, they started away at full swing.

With a cry of rage Jack dashed toward the ladder.

Como taken prisoner before his own eyes and he unable to render him any service.

It was extremely galling.

With one bound he started for the ladder.

It was gone!

Somebody had taken it down while he was watching the street below.

"Tricked!" he cried, as he started back. "But by whom? Who has followed me here to make a prisoner of me after this fashion? Who, but the same traitor who is the cause of all of to-day's doings?"

Nevertheless, the ladder was gone.

Como was captured before his own eyes, and he himself was in a fair way to become a captive again in a few hours.

CHAPTER X.

COMO A PRISONER.

Como was hurrying along the street towards the house, returning from the errand which had been Jack's bidding, when suddenly came the order:

"Hands up!"

He glanced up quickly, at the same time raising his hands over his head, for in that lawless country to disobey such an order even for an instant meant death.

His surprise when he saw Black Harry before him, may be better imagined than described.

The outlaw, whom he and Jack had left so securely bound to the rock in the cave, was already at large, and was evidently intent upon wreaking his vengeance without delay.

Just then the horses were brought up, and Como was soon being carried at a rapid gait over the plains.

They drew near to a range of foothills, not unlike those near Wasp's Nest, only higher and more extensive—so that they might merit the term mountains.

They made their way up a narrow canyon, winding and very steep, at length emerging upon a mesa or tableland,

which was only accessible by the path which they had used. It was evidently the headquarters for the band of outlaws, for there were two rather commodious adobe houses, and every appearance of permanent headquarters.

"There, youngster," exclaimed Black Harry. "I guess I've got you now where even Jack Hawthorne won't find ye right off."

Leaving Como to his own devices the outlaw chief dismounted and disappeared in one of the adobe houses.

But presently he reappeared, and jerking his thumb toward the door said, not unkindly:

"Ef ye want some grub go in; thar's some left, I guess."

Como was hungry, and he accordingly entered the building.

There were several men there, all busily engaged in devouring what was left of the cold meal, and Como proceeded to help himself.

But his appetite was soon satisfied, and he went out again, glad to leave the close room for the pure air of the hills.

Black Harry was waiting for him, and at once motioned for him to go where he was half stretched upon a blanket puffing at an old clay pipe, black with age, dirt and constant use.

"Now what's yer right name?" he said shortly, and without preamble. "Don't lie, cos I'll know ef ye do."

"Dutton," replied Como, shortly.

"Right! Wot goes in front of it? Wot's your fust name?"

"Charles."

"Hev ye got a sweetheart somewhere in ther East, youngster?"

Como started violently, but made no answer.

"Ain't there a purty little gal wot's a-longin' ter see ye—eh?"

Como breathed freer. He even smiled a little, but before he could respond, Black Harry continued:

"And don't she write letters to ye once in the while, and when she does, don't she begin 'em by sayin' 'Darlin' Frankie,' eh?"

Como nodded.

"Hev ye got a father, 'darlin' Frankie,' eh?"

"I have a father."

"Is he rich?"

"He is."

"Does he dote on ye any?"

"He was very fond of me."

"Kin ye write?"

"I can."

"Well, write an' tell him thet Black Harry's got yer—thet yer a-goin' ter be roasted at ther end o'—let me see—say three months. Thet's time enough—"

"Go on."

"But thet he can save yer fur jest—say, how rich is he?"

"I don't know."

"Well, say ten thousand dollars. If he'll send thet air little boodle ter me ye kin go; if he don't, ye'll roast. Ketch on, youngster?"

Some paper was finally found, and also an envelope which had not been used, and Como went to the shanty which Black Harry had said should be his to write his letter.

Here is what he wrote:

"My Very Dear Father.—I am compelled to write this letter, else I would not, for it is best that you should not know of my whereabouts. The writing and sending will give me three months' time to escape from my captors, who think I am asking you to send a large amount of money here to ransom me. At the end of three months, if I have not escaped, I shall be no more. It would, perhaps, be as well so. You probably do not care to know where I am, unless it would enable you to bring me to your wishes; but the post-mark will tell you nothing, for it is three hundred miles from here to the nearest post-office. Good-by. I shall not write again. Frankie."

The letter was sealed and addressed.

Como handed it to Black Harry, who transferred it to his messenger whose duty it was to post it.

CHAPTER XI.

SAWED-OFF SAM'S STORY.

As soon as night began to fall Como retired to the adobe hut which had been assigned to him.

It was a very small affair, containing but one room, one

door and an aperture which was called a window, but which was little more than a loophole.

At length, when satisfied of his surroundings, he kneeled down beside the couch, and, clasping his hands, prayed.

Prayed fervently and long; prayed with all the pent-up sorrow and anguish of his heart and soul.

Reader, have you not guessed?

Como's real name was not Charles Francis Dutton, but Charlotte Frances Dutton.

Como was not a youth, but a girl.

Helpless and alone in the power of unprincipled bandits, is it strange that she prayed for any fate than that they should know her as she was—a girl?

"Oh, Jack, Jack!" she murmured, when her prayer was finished, "did you but know of my peril you would move heaven and earth and fly to my rescue. But, alas! you know even less concerning me than this uncouth ruffian who has brought me here.

But Jack will not hesitate to fly to Como's aid more than he would, did he know that Como was Frances Dutton—a girl.

Could she have seen Jack at that moment, she would have felt new courage, for he was galloping over the plain, followed by seven of his most trusted men, hot upon the trail left by Black Harry and his bandits.

When he flew to descend the ladder and found it missing from its place, his first thought was that he was again at the mercy of the outlaws.

He listened and watched, and waited, but no sound broke the stillness of the cave—no sign of other presence than his own was given.

At length he began to examine more closely, and finally becoming satisfied that he was indeed alone, he lighted a match and once more ignited the candle which he had extinguished upon going into the lookout.

By the light thus afforded, he could see the ladder at the bottom of the ledge of rocks which it was used to surmount.

Carefully measuring the distance with his eyes, and calculating to a nicety the shock he would receive, he sprang out and down.

The next instant he was upon his feet and hurrying through the cavern toward the house.

To call such of his men together as he wanted, to saddle Lightning and mount was but the work of a few moments, and he dashed away over the plain in pursuit of the outlaws.

And when night overtook them, they camped upon the trail where they were, picketing their horses and building no fire, for fear of attracting attention.

"Boyees," said Sawed-off Sam, as they were arranging their blangets for the night: "I feel jist like tellin' a story, if ye've a mind to listen."

The proposition met with approval at once, and Sawed-off began.

"Wot I'm agoin' ter tell ye is true," he said, "an' if any feller hyer don't believe it, he's gotter fight in the mornin'.

"Once upon a time, nigh on to twenty years ago—the exact date don't make no difference—I was actin' as er guide, an' scout, an' hunter fur a train o' three waggins wot war headin' down the ole Sante Fe trail.

"I ain't got no memory fur names, so I don't remember who the people in the waggins war, only thet thar war two fellers in the fust two waggins wot war rather curious, related. They war brothers an' yet they hed different names—half brothers, they called it

"Well, they both hed their families with 'em, of course an' one had two boys an' t'other had two girls, aged about alike.

"The other waggin war no relation to the two first, but had jined 'em on the frontier jist afore startin'.

"Thar war no kids in thet waggin 'cept a boy, an' he war a daisy!

"A two-year-ole, an' es bright es a dollar.

"Well, thet air kid, young es he war, seemed to 'preciate me, fur he war never so happy es when I had him.

"Waal, one day we found a nice place ter camp, an' es the stock was sorter tired, we concluded ter lay to an' rest for a few days.

"'Twas jist afore daylight in the mornin' that I kim in sight of 'em, an' thar was the hull three ablazin' away like mad—on fire, ye know.

"Apaches, sez I.

"Wot ter do, I didn't know. Ef it warn't fur the kid I kud

a-sailed in, but I couldn't drag him inty a row—he wasn't old enough.

"But I hed a hoss wot was a hoss, an' a bright idea kim ter me.

"I jist tied thet air kid onto the saddle an' picketed the hoss with a hull length o' lariat, an' crept toward the waggins alone.

"Waal, I squinted around a bit, an' then sez I: Sawed-off, ye're got a kid onto yer hands; wot'r ye goin' ter do with it?"

"Dunno, sez Sawed-off.

"Keep it, sez I, an' we agreed.

"So I'd started back ter where I'd left my hoss, thinkin' I'd make tracks fur the east with the kid an' git somebody ter take care of it.

"Waal, I found the hoss whar I'd left him, but, gentlemen, thet air kid war gone.

"I had left him tied to thet saddle, and thet hoss war thet free with his heels thet he wouldn't 'low nothin' livin' 'cept me ter go nigh him.

"But thet kid war gone, and thet hoss didn't seem ter know it neither.

"Now, boyees, ever since thet air night I've hed a purpose in life, an' it's ter find thet air kid."

"Wot was his name?" asked one.

"His name was Jack—same's Jack Hawthorne's."

"Did he have a mark on him anywhere that you remember?" asked Jack.

"Thet he had, fur I put it there myself—'Little Jack' on one of his arms."

"Sawed-off Sam," said Jack, rising, and greatly agitated, "I have that mark, and I can remember much of the story as you tell it, though I never remembered it till now."

CHAPTER XII.

THE AMBUSH.

Sawed-off Sam had leaped to his feet in amazement.

"So you're my kid!" he cried. "Well—well—well. I allers said ye war a kid to be proud of! Whew!"

"Tell me," said Jack, "can you not remember the name of my family? Was it not Hawthorne?"

"Sure 'nuff! Thar war sich a name es thet in thet train, an' it must ha' been yourn."

And while the others present rolled themselves in their blankets and were soon wrapped in slumber, Jack and Sam talked on far into the night.

At dawn they were again astir, and the trail was taken up after a frugal breakfast, their horses starting at a rapid lope over the plain.

By and by the mouth of the canyon became visible, and Jack raised his eyes from the trail.

"They have gone through that canyon," he said. "We must look out for an ambush now, for Black Harry knows me well enough to know that I will follow on his trail."

"Hadn't we better wheel off to the right 'r left an' wait fur night?" asked Sam.

"A good idea! Yes, we will do it," replied Jack, guiding his horse to the left. "I should have thought of that before."

"Time enough now," said Sam.

"I hope so," replied Jack; "but they may have seen us already, and in that case, they will be ready for us."

They found another and smaller canyon further to the west, and there dismounted to await the coming of the night, under cover of which Jack hoped to be able to creep upon the outlaws unawares.

* * * * *

It was nearly noon of that day in Black Harry's camp when a horseman came riding in, his steed covered with foam.

"He's coming," he said laconically to the chief.

"Making straight fur the kenyon?" asked Black Harry.

"No. He has wheeled off west'ard, an' disappeared behind a bluff," was the reply.

"Um! waitin' fur night, I s'pose. How many men has he got with him?"

"Seven or eight; I couldn't see very well ter count."

The outlaw chief was at once all energy. He called his men around him and told them that Jack Hawthorne was below, hiding in a gulch farther up, and that at night he would no doubt attempt to creep in upon them.

"Now, I've jest got a little pickle in brine fur him," he continued, "an' it's this wise:

"About half way between here an' the mouth of ther canyon is a narrer path whar they'll hev to kim through one by one, as ye all know.

"Well, I'm agoin' down thar with a keg of powder, and I'm agoin' ter put it under that boulder thet lies jist over the narrer pass.

"Thet'll shet ther gate on 'em so's they can't git out, an' all you fellers hev ter do is ter shoot 'em down like so many mufflers. They can't run ef ther gate is shet, and they can't come up the canyon fast enough to do us any damage.

"I wants Jack Hawthorne alive, ef we kin ketch him, but ef I can't, why I wants him dead; ketch on?"

Thus he continued laying his plans for the annihilation of Jack and his followers.

He either did not notice Como was near by drinking in every word that he uttered, or if he noticed it he did not think it worth remarking.

Be that as it may, Como was nearby, and he—we will continue to refer to him as a boy—took pains to lose no word that passed concerning the outlaw's plans.

Como, as he listened, suddenly thought of a way in which he could foil Black Harry and save Jack from certain death.

It was a desperate chance, and one in which his own life was at stake with fearful odds against him, but he did not hesitate.

It was the only chance, and if he forfeited his life, he felt that he could save Jack's.

He was resolved to give them a warning in time to defeat the bandit's plans.

The day wore on and night drew near.

Black Harry and his men were busy making their preparations for the ambushade.

The powder had been placed under the boulder, and the fuse attached to it in readiness to ignite.

The men were posted further up the canyon, armed, and in waiting to send their leaden hail hurtling towards the venturesome pursuers.

* * * * *

Daylight faded into twilight, and twilight into darkness. The darkness deepened almost to blackness, for clouds obscured the moon and stars.

It was ten o'clock when Jack, followed by his picked men, all on foot, left their hiding place in the gulch, and made their way rapidly towards the outlaw's retreat.

Not a word was spoken—not a sound was made of any kind.

As silently as a band of spirits they stole along in Indian file, skirting the base of the hills towards the big canyon. Jack felt some misgivings as to the outcome of the expedition.

He knew that he had approached the place too boldly during the day, and that if Black Harry had a sentinel on the lookout there was not the slightest doubt but that they had been seen and reported.

If that was the case it meant an ambushade, and for such a predicament he felt that he must be constantly on his guard.

The canyon was reached and entered, and there Jack paused.

"Men," he said, "I am going on ahead, and when you have counted ten, slowly, one of you follow; then count ten more, and another, and so on until you are all on the move.

"Be in readiness with your weapons, and if you shoot, shoot to kill."

Then he started on alone, resorting to his hands and knees as a means of locomotion, as being safer in the black darkness of the canyon and more noiseless.

Presently he reached the narrow pass to which Black Harry had referred, and over which he was at that very moment hovering ready to touch a light to the fuse connecting with the powder barrel.

Suddenly he felt an uncontrollable desire to sneeze. He tried to repress it, but could not.

It burst forth with a noise which, in the stillness of the canyon, seemed tenfold its real volume.

Then there was a quick flash overhead, followed instantly by the falling of a heavy body through the air.

It struck Jack upon the shoulder and knocked him down.

A loud yell told him that it was one of the outlaws, and he sprang upon and grappled with him.

A moment of intense struggling. Then a terrible report.

The powder keg had exploded, and Jack and the outlaw were directly beneath the spot where the boulder must fall.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FIGURE ON THE CLIFF.

For several seconds after the explosion which hurled the outlaw down full upon the head and shoulders of Jack Hawthorne, neither of them realized exactly what had occurred, and Jack less so than Black Harry.

By a miracle, neither were hurt beyond the consequences of the violent jarring they had received.

With a quick and muscular motion, Jack turned under the outlaw and threw his arms around his neck, drawing his head down close to himself, and holding him there, helpless, in spite of his violent efforts to escape.

Black Harry struggled and swore, and strove to get at the weapons in his belt, but all to no purpose.

Jack was on his back with the outlaw's head drawn tightly to him, and they were lying just under the edge of the rock.

Consequently he could see upwards against the strip of sky over his head.

Suddenly he could see something protruding over the edge of the cliff above him.

It was the head of a human being.

What would he not have given at that moment to have been rid of the cumbersome outlaw?

But it was not to be.

Slowly but surely the strange head projected further out, then the shoulders followed.

That the approaching person was an enemy—one of the outlaws—Jack did not for a moment doubt.

"The one who was with this fellow to set off the mine," he thought rapidly to himself, "and now that all is so silent here he is coming down to find out what has become of the one I am hugging so affectionately.

"Well, let him come. Perhaps by the time he gets here some of my boys will be on hand to welcome him, and if not, it makes no difference, as I can see. I can't get away from this fellow any more than he can get away from me, and something may turn up at the last moment to simplify matters."

Suddenly a piece of stone was dislodged from its place by the descending figure, and it fell squarely upon the back of Black Harry's head.

The outlaw, astonished out of his caution by the accident, uttered a loud exclamation of pain.

The figure upon the face of the cliff, still a number of feet above them, started violently.

So violently, in fact, that the hold upon the projections was lost.

For an instant he grasped wildly around him to save himself from falling, but it was useless.

Then, as if realizing that he must fall and resolving to make the best of it, he sprang out into the air.

Jack saw it all and it was a lucky thing he did, for he saw that the stranger was going to alight upon them.

With a violent effort, he threw his own body from beneath that of the outlaw, as the figure fell.

He was just in time.

Both of the stranger's feet landed full in Black Harry's back, knocking the wind out of him effectually.

In an instant Jack was upon his feet, and in the same instant his weapons were ready for use.

"Hands up, and no noise!" he ordered in a low tone, "or you are a dead man!"

He was but little prepared for the surprise which awaited him.

"Jack!" exclaimed a familiar voice out of the darkness, and speaking in the same low tone he had employed; "Jack, is it indeed you?"

"What! Como?" was Jack's elated response.

"Yes, Como."

At that instant the outlaw sighed. He was returning to consciousness.

Without pausing for further conversation, Jack fell upon his knees by Black Harry and whispered in his ear:

"If you utter a sound or attempt to escape I will instantly kill you without mercy. I am Jack Hawthorne, and you know that I will keep my word. Will you obey?"

"I'm as dumb as an oyster," replied the outlaw.
 "Good! I will relieve you of any dangerous weapons you may happen to have on your person."

In another moment he had searched the prisoner and taken away every weapon that he possessed.

"Now come with me," he said, "and I will see what is best to be done with you."

With one hand upon the outlaw's shoulder and with Como bringing up the rear they began to make their way beneath the huge rock towards the spot where Jack had left his followers.

CHAPTER XIV.

JUDGE LYNCH.

Jack and the outlaw chief, Black Harry (although our hero as yet had no idea that it was the chief he had captured), closely followed by Como, had barely passed from beneath the huge rock which had been thrown into the pass by the explosion, when they found themselves in the presence of Jack's men.

They had been creeping cautiously forward, reconnoitering, when they heard the three approaching, and had waited in order to ascertain who it was that was coming towards them.

After a short whispered colloquy they all proceeded towards the mouth of the canyon, where they could discuss matters with less chance of being surprised, and consequently with more freedom.

Black Harry was quickly bound and gagged to prevent his giving the alarm to his companions.

"Now, boys," said Jack, "what shall we do? Shall we wipe out Black Harry and his gang or leave them to the tender mercies of fate, now that we have got Como back again?"

"What d'ye say, Jack?" asked one of them.

"I say stay and finish the job," replied Jack. "We've made a good start, and there is no reason why we can't scatter them now so that they will be easy handling afterwards.

"On the other hand, if we draw off now, they will only make themselves the stronger, and we will have to do the work over again that we have already done. I say stay and go for them."

"And I!"

"And I!"

The decision was unanimous.

A lariat was quickly supplied, and the noose was placed over Black Harry's head.

"Say your prayers, Harry, if you know any to say, for your time is come."

"Thar ain't nothin' ter hang me to, 'cept ther stars," replied the outlaw insolently, still putting on a bold front.

"Oh, yes, there is. There is a rock that juts out just in the mouth of the canyon which will do admirably. You probably know it."

"Fetch him along, boys."

They were not slow to obey.

Without much ado, the outlaw chief was hurried into the mouth of the canyon and the lariat thrown over the jutting rock.

"Now, Harry," said Jack, "you have got just five minutes to live. Have you anything to say before we pull you into the air?"

"No, I ain't."

Then there was a deathlike silence, so that the ticking of Jack's watch, as he held it in his hand, could be plainly heard.

"One minute more, Harry," he said finally. "Still nothing?"

The outlaw did not reply.

"Time's up!" said Jack suddenly. "Pull away, boys."

There was a quick tightening of the lariat.

Black Harry was almost raised from off his feet.

Only the tips of his toes remained upon the ground.

He managed to gasp out a few words.

"Let me down—wait!" he said. "I will tell all I know."

Jack gave the order and the rope was again slackened.

"Speak quickly," he said sternly, "for we have no time to waste on such a vermin as you."

"W'hl ye let me off ef I tell ye how ye can gobble the gang?" moaned Black Harry.

"The conditions I offered you before are still good," returned Jack.

"Waal, I'll accept, only take this cussed thing offen my neck."

"Not yet; tell your story first."

"An' git hung arterwards."

"Pull him up, boys; I'm in no mood for fooling," said Jack.

"No—no—no—no!" exclaimed the outlaw. "Go up ther kenyon 'bout twenty yards beyond whar the rock fell into ther pas. On ther right hand side ye will find a narrer crevice or fissure. Follow that fissure to ther top, it'll bring ye out into one of the adobe houses on the mesa. It's a private entrance only known to two besides myself an' they ain't likely ter be usin' it.

"When ye get thar ye kin do ez ye please. Ef ye kin fight well enough, mebby ye kin lick my fellers—ef ye can't ye'll git licked, that's all, but that won't be no fault o' mine."

"Of course not," asserted Jack.

"Now, bind and gag me, and leave me here, an' go on with yer work, an' ef ye kin wipe out my fellers, w'y I'll leave the kentry anyhow; ef ye can't, they'll probably find me here afore you do. I've told ye how ye kin git onto the mesa, an' ye'd never git close enough to hev a fight ef I hadn't, so I've done my part."

"One more question," said Jack. "How many men are there in your party?"

"'Bout a dozen."

"No more?"

"No—not here."

In a few moments more, Black Harry was bound and gagged in such a manner that there could be no possible chance of his liberating himself, and then the party made their way up the canyon toward the fissure he had described.

Black Harry's thoughts were evil as he saw them go, and yet there was a quantity of fiendish delight in them also, for he could not help hoping that his friends would in some manner foil the designs of Jack Hawthorne.

Five minutes after their departure had scarcely elapsed, however, before a dark figure sprang up from behind a rock near by, and rushed towards him.

In an instant Black Harry's bonds were cut, and he stood up free and unfettered.

There was no time to stop for thanks.

"Quick!" he cried; "we will beat them yet. We will follow and when they have all gone into the fissure we will go on by the canyon. If we can beat them to the mesa not one of them will leave it alive—not one!"

"It was a lucky thought of mine to tell them the way, after all!"

And away they bounded, bent upon the destruction of Jack Hawthorne and his followers.

CHAPTER XV.

"LIKE RATS IN A TRAP."

To the outlaws who frequented the canyon and the mountain passes the way to the mesa was as familiar as the byways of a great city are to a gamin of the streets, and thus it was that with but little effort Black Harry and his companion overtook our hero and his men by the time they had reached the huge rock.

But they took good care not to approach too near to those whom they were following.

Although it was densely dark in the canyon, still to eyes accustomed to it they could plainly see the deeper shadows made by the stealthy moving figures ahead.

They followed them through the pass beneath the rock, and saw them enter the narrow fissure to which they had been directed.

Saw them enter to the last man; saw that they had nothing to fear from them en passant, and so they crept by.

Once past the danger point they again rose to their feet and rushed forward, heedless of the projecting rocks against which they bruised their legs and bodies and faces, in their eagerness to reach the mesa in time to warn their companions of the approaching danger, and to unite with them in one great effort to sweep the much-feared Jack Hawthorne from the face of the earth forever, together with the men who were foolhardy enough to follow him and his fortunes.

Ere they had gone a hundred paces farther they were met with a sharp command to halt.

Black Harry, heedless of the consequences of listening ears, shouted out the pass-word, and in another moment in excited words he was relating all that had transpired.

"Quick now, pards!" he said in conclusion—"to the mesa, every one of you! Never mind the pass, for we have nothing to fear in this direction. They have all gone like rats into trap, an' all we've gotter do is to spring it!"

"But stop!" he cried suddenly, before they had moved a dozen paces. "I kin spare two of ye, I guess. Two of ye climb back down the pass and see if ye can't stop up the fissure, so's they can't get out that way if they wanten."

"Stop it up with suthin'—rocks, 'r anything ye light onto, but stop it up; then one of ye stay an' guard the place, an' t'other one gin back up hyar with us."

They obeyed with alacrity, and the outlaws again hurried toward the mesa, less two of their number.

* * * * *

We must return to Sawed-off Sam for a moment.

As the reader knows, he came with Jack to the foot hills upon his own earnest request.

When, however, the little party went into camp in the smaller canyon farther along, to wait the darkness for the rest of their work, Jack would not hear of Sam's attempting to go farther than that with him.

"No, Sam," he had said. "You're not fit to go, and are not in a fit condition to fight, for if we should get the worst of it and have to use our legs, you would either get left or we would have to carry you. Now, none of us would relish that job, and so you have got to stay here."

"Somebody ought to remain to guard the horses, anyway, and under the circumstances, you are just the man for the job."

"I am captain here, and my orders are that you remain and guard the animals; we will do the fighting if there is any to be done, and when you get your legs under you again, you can do something to make up for lost time."

Sawed-off Sam was greatly disappointed, for he dearly loved a fight, but he had sense enough to see that the young commander was right, and so he acquiesced with as good grace as he could.

"Say, boyees," he said, as they were departing, "save one o' ther cussed critters fur me, will ye? Jes' fetch him hyer alive an' let me fight him. Cos I've gotter hev a scrimmage somehow 'r I'll bust."

When they were gone he lighted his pipe and sat down ruefully to bemoan his fate.

"Left like a cussed papoose Injun," he muttered, "ter watch over a lot o' four-legged hosses, jes' cos I got er chunk of lead in my knee, an' I cud lick any three o' ther fellers wot Jack took with him this minit."

"An' thet air boyee; he'll go an' git a cussed hole through his carcass jes' cos I jes' found him, arter all these years o' lookin' fur him, too—it's mean, by thunder, it's mean!"

Then he puffed away at his pipe, for a while in silence. But ever and anon he would break out into further invective against the run of luck which had made it necessary for him to remain behind, until finally he worked himself into a fever of excitement that he could hardly bear.

Nearly two hours had passed and then he heard the dull boom of the explosion of the keg of powder.

"Wot's thet?" he exclaimed. "By thunder, ef I don't believe them cussed cut-throats hev got er cannon up there, an' air a-tryin' ter shoot my boyee. I can't stand thet, no-how!"

A sudden idea took possession of the tough old frontiersman.

Quickly unpicketing his horse, he managed with considerable difficulty to mount him, and then he rode him out of the canyon, and turned in the direction which the others had taken.

Two or three times he halted or listened, and never once did he allow the horse to go faster than a walk, mentally bewailing that he was not able to go afoot, and thus avoid the noise which the horse's hoofs made.

The time consumed by Sawed-off in thinking it over and the slowness of his progress was fortunate for all concerned, for he entered the canyon just after Black Harry had been released by his friend.

Urging his horse slowly ahead, and yet allowing him to pick his own way, he continued on, until suddenly the horse came to a standstill, and refused to go further.

"Wot's this?" muttered Sam. "Must be ther end o' the cussed hole. W'y don't they hev a light when they expect visitors? But hole on; mebbly they don't expect any. Anyway, I'll excuse 'em. I wonder if I could get down offen this animile?"

He slid from the saddle to the ground, alighting upon his uninjured leg, seemingly totally unmindful of the pain in the other one.

Leaving the horse to care for himself, Sam crawled forward, and soon discovered that there was a way under the rock.

Without hesitating he dragged his body through the pass to the other side, feeling certain that his friends had gone through before him.

What struck him as strange was that not a sound smote his ears.

He had confidently expected to hear the sound of desultory firing when he got near enough, and he judged that he must by that time have reached a point where, if there was firing going on above, he could hear it.

But everything was as still as though he were the only being in the hills.

But stop!

Sawed-off Sam suddenly pricked up his ears—if I may use the phrase.

He had heard a sound.

Placing his ear against the hard rock beneath him he listened attentively.

"Two of 'em," he muttered, "an' a-comin' this 'ere way. Friends 'r foes, I wonder? I wish thet cussed animile t'other side o' thet rock war—well, in t'other kenyon now, 'cos ef them fellers ain't friends, w'y they're enemies, thet's all, an' ef they find thet air animile, es they're sure to do if they get far enough—Hello! They've stopped!"

He waited for a moment, and then he could plainly hear subdued voices in conversation and now and then the sound of stones coming together.

"One thing's sure," thought Sam, "they ain't much afeared o' bein' overheard, an' another thing's equally sartin, they're a-pilin' up stones fur some purpose 'r other."

"I've gotter find out wot they're up to fur sure."

He crept forward slowly, using all the caution which long experience had taught him.

Presently he was close enough to hear the words which passed between the two men.

The first words he heard startled him.

"They're in there, sure enough," said one of the men, "and they've got to come out at one end or the other. Well, they can't come out more than two at a time here with all them stones piled in there. Every mother's son of 'em has got to go under for sure."

"Suppose that they have heard us here and know what we are up to, and refuse to come out at either end?" asked the other.

"Then we'll smoke 'em out."

And so on, until Sam understood the situation pretty well.

Finally the job was finished and one of the outlaws took his departure, leaving the other one there alone.

"Now," thought Sam, "is my time. I must down thet feller 'thout any noise, an' then mebbly I kin do suthin' fur the boyee."

The outlaw was sitting upon a rock with his back towards Sam. His shadow was just discernible to the old frontiersman.

Using all the caution of which he was master, the old hunter worked his way nearer and nearer to the unsuspecting man.

Suddenly Sam's wounded knee came into sharp contact with a stone, and in spite of himself he uttered a quick exclamation of pain.

Instantly the outlaw turned, and in the next second the two men were locked together in a silent but terrible struggle.

CHAPTER XVI.

A STRANGE FIGHT.

The struggle which then took place between Sawed-off Sam and the outlaw who had been left to guard the entrance to the fissure, was silent and terrible.

The outlaw knew, as did the old borderman, that it was a life and death contest—that one of them must go down before the inevitable; that only one of them could live to see the light of a new day.

Sam was at a disadvantage owing to his wound, but he never once thought of it.

Though much shorter in stature than his foe, he was broader and more firmly knit—stronger, in fact.

Moreover, he was fighting for his beloved "boyees."

He had heard enough of the conversation between the two outlaws to realize that more lives than his own depended upon the struggle in which he was engaged.

He was fighting for the entire company of men who had followed gallant Jack into the canyon.

They tugged and strained, and strove with all their muscular and nerve tissues.

Sam, forgetting his wounded knee, would now and then attempt to bear his weight upon that leg.

But it would give way beneath him, and for a moment it would seem as though he must go down beneath his adversary, and meet his doom there in the darkness of the wild canyon.

Still he would recover the lost ground at the last instant, and again the two men would swing back and forth.

Both were silent, for both were afraid of calling to their presence some one or more of the friends of the other.

And so they struggled on, dependent only upon themselves for the victory.

Had the struggle taken place in the full light of the noon-day, and had you, reader, been an eager spectator, you could not have replied to that question.

Methinks had Sawed-off Sam been in possession of his full prowess, had he not received the wound in his knee, which in a great measure disabled him, he would soon have won the victory, but as it was, the natural superior strength which was his was more than counterbalanced by the infirmity, and his arms and back were forced to supply the deficiency created by his disabled leg.

At length, as if by common consent, they both paused, still, however, locked in each other's grasp, to regain their breath.

Then a strange thing occurred. One which the average man would say entirely out of keeping among such desperate characters.

Sawed-off Sam arose from his position atop of the outlaw, and putting his revolver coolly in his pocket, drew some tough leather thongs from one of the receptacles of his capacious coat.

The outlaw remained perfectly quiet while Sam bound his hands and feet securely, taking care to make them so secure that there was no chance of the man slipping them from his limbs and making his escape.

"Thar!" exclaimed Sam when the job was done, "that air is beautiful. Ef I should happen ter be laid out afore I git back, ye jist tell Jack that I said ye war ter go scot free."

"Yes, but who be ye?"

"Sawed-off Sam, from——"

"Wot!" fairly yelled the bound outlaw, "Sawed-off Sam of Placer Bottom?"

"Right ye be."

"Ther biggest ole liar in ther Nevada diggin's?"

"Thet's me."

"Ther feller wot done up Sandy Alick four year ago?"

"Right ag'in."

"Wot uster have a pard named 'Long Tom the Terror?'"

"Yep! Blast my eyes. He war ther cussedest old galoot in ther hull diggin's when I war there, an' he cud fight like a hull pack o' catamounts, but one day he turned up missin', an' I spent a hull year a-lookin' fur him or the feller wot laid him out, ter git squar'."

"Ye did, eh?"

"I did, an' ef I cud ha' foun' out who done the biz fur Tom I'd ha' follered him close ter Jericho an' buried him."

"Sho!"

"Fact! But, say—who be you?"

"Waal, Sam, ye old pizen critter, I'm Long Tom ther Terror."

"Wot!"

It was Sam's turn to be surprised now.

"Ye heerd me, didn't ye?"

"Ye're jokin'!"

"Strike a light an' see!"

"I'll do it!"

In another instant a lighted match was held so close to the outlaw's face that he remonstrated, but the flickering light assured Sawed-off Sam that the man had told the truth.

Without a word he took out his knife and drew its sharp

edge quickly across the bonds he had so lately placed around Long Tom's wrists and ankles.

"Stan' up, Tom," he said; "ye'r free es ther air."

"Right, Sam. Wot next?"

"Wot next! W'y, ye cussed idjit, don't ye see thet we've got ter help our fellers outen this 'ere scrape. Ye ain't one o' those pizin' folks, an' I know it."

"No. I got a leg broke some time ago an' one of 'em carried me here on his horse till ther bone growed together ag'in, an' I sorter hung on, but I'm wid ye, Sam, every time."

"I knowed it—kim on; I'll hear yer story arter the ball. Here's yer weepins. Now fur ther fissure!"

"Fire away, Sam!"

In another moment, Sam, with limping step, was leading his old pard through the fissure, hurrying as rapidly as they could to overtake Jack and his party in time to save them from the trap which had been set to catch them, first knocking away the greater part of the rock barrier at the entrance to the fissure.

CHAPTER XVII.

A SURPRISE.

While the relation of the incidents in the two preceding chapters has consumed considerable time, the occurrences themselves occupied comparatively but little.

Such struggles, while they seemed long enough to those participating in them, in reality are always short and quickly settled.

Thus it was that but little time, as time is reckoned, had passed between the moments when Jack and his party entered the fissure and that when Sam and his old pard, newly found, went in, hastening to overtake them.

Nevertheless, Sawed-off was only just in time to prevent the plans of Black Harry from being carried out to the letter.

When he overtook the hindmost one of the party ahead, Jack, who was in the lead, had just reached the point where the passage led into the adobe hut on the mesa.

Be it known that the fissure did not serve as the passage entire, but that an artificial passageway had been dug through the ground from its end to a point beneath the floor of the hut into which it opened by means of a trap door, for while boards were a rarity in that region, adobe could be utilized as well for a flooring as for the outer walls of a house.

"Pass the word along fur a halt, quick!" said Sam to the one whom he had overtaken. "Thar's danger ahead. Don't stop ter ask why now."

The word was passed, and the message came back inquiring what had happened.

"Tell Jack I want him hyer fur a minute," replied Sam.

Jack was accordingly notified, and knowing well that Sam would not call him upon a trivial matter, made haste to comply with the request, all the while wondering how Sam in his wounded condition had managed to follow them there.

"What is it, Sam?" he said, as soon as he had squeezed his way past his companions and reached the spot where Sam was awaiting him.

In as few words as possible Sam related all that had transpired, not forgetting his struggle with Tom, in which, he said, he did not hesitate to admit that he had taken a very unfair advantage of his old chum.

"This 'ere's Long Tom," he concluded, "an' he's a howlin' Terror from Terrorsville an' don't ye forget it!"

"He was abunkin' with them critters upon ther mesa, but he ain't one of 'em, not by a cussed sight, he ain't, an' I stan' ready ter vouch fur him an' fight with ther fust galoot wot don't swaller what I say hull, see?"

"All right, Sam; your word is plenty. Now to business. You say they are onto our game to surprise them this way; and that Black Harry has escaped. Good.

"Your friend here, Long Tom, probably knows the ropes.

"You bet."

"Well—you stay here and lead the boys through the cabin while I go with Long Tom and two or three of the men back through the fissure and up the other way, which you say has been left unguarded."

"Keyreckt!"

"Go up to the end of the passage," continued Jack, "and take your stand right under the floor of the hut; when you

hear firing, lead your men through and get them all inside the hut."

"You bet."

"Then keep your eyes and ears peeled, and at the right moment come out and sail into the outlaws from behind while we are taking up their attention from the other side. Do you understand the plan?"

"I does."

"Good! then here goes!"

Calling to three of them, he requested them to follow him, and led the way, accompanied by Long Tom, back down the passage and through the fissure to carry out the plan he had mapped.

At the same time Sawed-off Sam worked his way by the others, until he found himself directly beneath the hut, with the trap door over his head.

Raising the door ever so little, he pushed the blade of his knife through the crack, thus enabling him to hear much better, and then he settled himself to wait and listen.

A full half hour went by, and still not a sound, and Sawed-off Sam was beginning to feel uneasy.

The hardest thing in life for him to withstand was inaction.

He could not bear to be idle while others were on the move, especially when there was in view the prospect of a fight.

"It's cussed mean," he grumbled. "Jack might ha' let me go with Long Tom, an' stayed hyer hisself. But ef thar's any waitin' ter be done, I've gotter do it, every time. I'll—Hello! Wot's that?"

He had heard the report of a fire-arm.

But he had no occasion to ask himself the question a second time.

The report which he had heard was quickly followed by others until they rattled away like dice in a pasteboard box. "They're at it!" he cried. "Holy smoke, but hear 'em! Ain't it bee-cautiful? Don't I wish I war there? Kim on, boyees!"

With a quick motion he threw the trap door back, and raised himself through, rolling over and over upon the floor in his hurry to get out of the way of the others who were to come after him.

They were by no means slow in following his lead, and in less time than it takes to relate it every man of them was inside the adobe hut with weapons drawn and ready to rush outside and take part in the fight.

They had, however, now quieted down considerably, only a stray shot being heard now and then, and Sam wisely concluded that both parties had taken to cover, and were only firing when they could see something at which to shoot.

And he was correct.

Jack and his party had stolen up through the canyon without accident, and without being discovered.

Even when they reached the mesa not a sign of the outlaws could be seen, and putting two and two together, Jack had come to the conclusion that they were hiding behind the very hut from which he and his party were expected by them to make their appearance upon the scene.

He was enabled to conclude which cabin that was from the information which Como could give him, for Como was sure it was the one to which he had been assigned. He had examined it too carefully before retiring.

Creeping stealthily onward, Jack and his party had finally managed to get behind one, and then by peering closely, they could discern the darker figures of several of the outlaws crouching behind the other one.

Jack could see only three of them, but directing two of his men to select two, he had taken the third, and they had fired.

The three outlaws thus exposed had dropped like logs in their tracks.

But instantly all was confusion and excitement.

The others, thinking that Jack and his party had managed to creep from the cabin undiscovered, had rushed out only to be met by a death-dealing leaden hail.

They had returned the fire as quickly as they could, with but little damage, and had then rushed back to cover behind their cabin.

It was thus that they were situated when Sawed-off and his men came through the trap door.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TRYING MOMENT COMES.

Suddenly Sawed-off Sam heard a shot which was so close by that it made him jump.

He almost exclaimed aloud, for the report had been close to his ear, while he was attempting to peer through the wall of the hut where an imperfect stone had partially crumbled away.

"Jehosephat!" he muttered, under his breath. "Cuss'd ef I didn't think I war shot fur a minut!"

"One o' them parties air behind this 'er cabing—sure's death, but which? Thet air's wot I dunno. Wot's more, it's wot I must find out, cos ef it's Black Harry we kin drive 'em out, while ef it's Jack, we don't wanter do no sich trick, you bet."

He waited until he heard another shot some distance away and located it.

"That spoke from over there," he thought, "consequently the cussed varmints air a-hidin' behind the side o' ther cabing furthest from the shot—always providin' thet it air the varmints wot air here, and Jack wot air of t'other party, an' thet's just wot I'm goin' ter find out ter oncet."

He crossed the cabin stealthily to the other side and began picking his way closely with his knife at an adobe stone.

It was slow work, but he had to work slowly in order to make no noise, for if he should attract the attention of those on the outside, there was no knowing what might happen.

But the wall was thick and the stone was very hard, and after working at it for several minutes, he gave it up as impracticable.

"No use," he muttered, "it won't work. There's only one way an' thet's fur me ter go outside ter find out wot I wants ter know."

"It's sorter dangerous, but wot o' thet?"

"Boyees," he continued in a whisper, "ther outside door o' this here shebang am on the side nearest to the other party, an' I'm a-goin' out ter find out which is which."

"Mebby I'll get another hunk o' lead inter me fur my pains, an' mebbly one o' our party will put it there ef ther other feller happens ter be ther ones behind this cabin, cos they'll think I'm one o' ther cussed varmints. But ther thing has got ter be did, an' I'm ther feller wot's a-goin' ter do it; so here goes."

They made no effort to detain him from departure upon an errand which was almost certain death.

Every one of them saw the necessity for some such move to be made, and even if it should result in the death of one of their number, it would be in a good cause, and life was held very lightly among them, even personally.

Sawed-off Sam opened the door slowly and carefully, taking care to make no noise.

He opened it just wide enough to allow his body to squeeze through, and then with a low "Good-by, boyees," he crawled out, flat upon his belly.

It was a mode of progress with which he was perfectly familiar, for he had had occasion to use it many times among the hostiles.

He had a way of squirming noiselessly along without raising his body, and in that position he resembled more of a log of wood or stone lying upon the ground than a human being.

The greatest danger which he had to fear was that of being seen and fired upon by the party behind the other cabin; but he had to take the risk, and he took it.

But luck was with him.

They evidently did not see him.

He edged along with great care, finally reaching the corner of the cabin, and turning without being discovered.

Then he looked up.

At once he started, for at the other end of the cabin, creeping along slowly toward the spot where he was lying, was another dark figure.

"Ef it's one o' the cussed varmints, I'll try an' pass off fur one o' them wat's gone around the hut ther other way," he thought.

So he continued on his way.

Suddenly the man who was creeping towards him discovered that he was not alone on that side of the cabin.

He paused and raised himself upon his knees, gazed a moment in evident perplexity, and then as if having arrived at a satisfactory conclusion, again dropped flat and crept onward towards Sam.

"He's a-comin'," said Sam to himself, "es sure's guns. Waal, I'm ready fur him, an' if I don't make him weary by name's not Sawed-off."

Both men continued to advance until they were within a foot of each other. Sam being careful to keep his face close to the ground.

"I say," muttered the stranger, "you're a creeper from Creepersville, ain't you?"

"You bet," replied Sam, muffling his voice in the grass under his face.

"Ye must ha' started 'fore I did," he continued.

"Nary a start," replied Sam.

"Anything around on ther front side?" was the next remark.

"Nothin'!"

"Door open?"

"Wide open."

"Anybody inside?"

"Nixie."

"Then thar ain't no use in my going any further and riskin' a lead pill, is there? You've found out all thet Harry wanted ter know, ain't ye?"

"I hev."

Th last remark told Sam all that he wanted to know.

But it told him more, for by it he knew that one of the outlaws was creeping along behind him somewhere, and might at any moment overtake him, especially if he prolonged the present conversation any further.

In that case he would find himself in a tight fix.

Realizing it, he made a sudden and desperate resolve.

"Let's go back your way," he muttered.

"O. K. I'm agreeable," replied the outlaw, but he did not move.

"Well, go on, then," said Sam gruffly.

Then the fellow seemed still to hesitate, but only for a moment.

Turning, he began creeping the other way.

It was the opportunity which Sam wanted.

Rising with a quick motion he threw himself upon the outlaw, jamming his head deep into the grass and dirt beneath them.

At the same instant he raised his revolver in his other hand and brought it down with terrific force upon the outlaw's cranium.

The only sound that was made in the short struggle was of the blow with the butt of Sam's revolver.

As for Black Harry's man, he was rendered instantaneously senseless.

"So far so good," muttered Sam, as he started to arise after dealing the terrible blow.

But a hand was placed on his shoulder, and a voice said in his ear:

"What has happened?"

In an instant Sam realized that the outlaw who had gone the other way around the hut had arrived.

Turning like a flash, his fist shot out, striking the newcomer fairly in the stomach and doubling him up like a jack-knife.

But the blow was not sufficient to silence him.

He gave one terrific yell, which sounded in the stillness of the night like a hundred voices.

Instantly all was commotion, and Sawed-off Sam knew that the trying moment had come at last.

CHAPTER XIX. THE WILD CHARGE.

The trying moment had arrived.

The moment when the battle was to wage fierce and terrible for a while, then to die away to leave one party victorious over the others.

But which?

Of the two parties opposed to each other in that conflict which must succeed?

Would might triumph over right, or would the right prevail?

Who can answer?

To Sawed-off Sam, crippled though he was, there did not seem a doubt?

To him it was preordained that he should be on the winning side in every battle, for he was one of the kind who could turn defeat into victory many times, even with the odds greatly against him.

When the outlaw uttered the terrible yell which startled everybody within hearing, the brave borderman did not pause to repeat the blow.

He knew full well that the outlaw was beyond doing any mischief for some time to come.

With a cry of defiance he leaped over his prostrate body, toward the corner of the hut, shouting as he did so:

"Don't shoot, boys, till I git inside ther shanty."

They must have both heard and recognized his voice, for although he could easily have been shot down from the other cabin, not a ball was fired at him, so that he reached the door and passed inside in safety.

"That's done!" he cried, as he barred the door behind him; "an' now to work. Them cussed varmints air all around this 'ere shebang, an' ther fust thing fur us to do is to manufacture some loopholes ter shoot through."

Lying on the floor, just inside the door, was a piece of timber, evidently a part of some ill-fated plain wagon.

Seizing it, Sam enjoyed it as a battering ram, and began at once jamming a hole through the side of the hut.

It did not take long with such a formidable weapon, and soon one of the stones fell outward, leaving a large square hole.

It had scarcely fallen from its place, however, when there was a loud report, and a bullet whizzed unpleasantly close to Sam's ear.

"Whew!" he whistled; "they're in fightin' trim, anyhow!"

Leaving the loophole thus created, he moved farther along the wall, and began making another, taking care this time, however, to keep out of the reach of bullets when the work was nearly completed.

It was well that he did, for again there was a loud report, and a bullet buried itself in the opposite wall.

"Them fellers air purty fly, anyhow," said the borderman, sotto voce, "but now I guess I'll take a turn."

Suiting the action to the word, he fired his own revolver through the opening, and then with a quick motion sprang forward and thrust his hand through.

He fired two shots each way along the outside wall before he drew it in again, and he knew if any one was concealed there he came unpleasantly close to them.

It was a reckless thing to do, to thrust his hand through in the manner he did, for ten to one he would get a ball through it.

His luck, however, seemed to be in the ascendant, for though a bullet from one of the outlaws struck the barrel of his revolver, he was himself unhurt.

Quickly leaping to the other loophole, he repeated the experiment there, with very much the same effect as before although this time even his own weapon was not struck.

Posting one of the men at one of the loopholes and himself taking the other, they kept up this desultory sort of firing for some time.

Suddenly, however, there came a wild shout from without.

They heard the rushing of hurrying feet, then an answering cry of defiance from the direction of the other cabin.

"They grabbed ther bison by ther horn!" cried Sawed-off greatly excited. "Kim on, boyees, they think they're agoin' ter down us by numbers, but they don't know that ole Sawed-off's here!"

With a wild leap, or rather hop, for he could scarcely use his disabled leg at all now, he sprang through the door uttering a loud cry as he went.

"Durned if they didn't fire ther cabing afore they left," he cried.

It was true enough.

The roof of the cabin where Sawed-off had been with his detachment of the men was made of prairie grass, and it had become dry and exceedingly inflammable.

Realizing this, as well as that the light thus created would be of material benefit to him in the coming fight, Black Harry had touched a match to it just before making the rush.

It blazed up almost instantly, with a brilliant flame which lighted the surrounding scene weirdly and beautifully.

Many of the outlaws who sprang out from the sheltering walls of the cabin where they had been in cover, and started in the charge toward the other one behind which Jack and his men were concealed, never reached their goal.

The revolvers in the hands of the self-created vigilants rattled like a watchman's rattle, and those at whom the bullets were aimed went down to rise no more.

But the others continued on their way, unmindful of the fate of their companions; unmindful of any fate save that of self, for each man knew beyond the peradventure of a doubt that this was a combat, not for revenge, not for any purpose in particular, but one for extermination.

Each knew that the hardy Westerners, under the leadership of Jack Hawthorne, were there to drive them from the neighborhood forever, and that they could expect no mercy but the rope if captured alive.

It was, therefore, to kill or to be killed, and naturally they preferred the active to the passive voice of that at best unpleasant verb.

Jack saw them coming, or rather knew that they were coming from the instant when the match came in contact with the thatched roof.

"At them, boys!" he cried, himself leading the way by springing out into full view and firing his revolvers rapidly.

What is especially strange in events of the kind I am relating is that the very best marksmen will inevitably shoot wild upon such occasions.

To say that one man fell to every ten shots fired will be to put a large estimate upon the fact, as every tried warrior will testify.

"There come the boys from the cabin!" cried Jack suddenly. "Be careful not to hit any of our own men."

The warning was necessary, and was instantly heeded, which perhaps rendered the shooting even wilder than it would otherwise have been.

But Jack himself did not pause. While firing at the approaching men he was trying in vain to search out the person of Black Harry.

"Once get him out of the way and the gang is broken up," he thought.

But he was nowhere to be seen.

CHAPTER XX.

COMO AGAIN.

The rush which the outlaws made was not one to be stopped by the bullets or by anything short of an impassable barrier.

But such a barrier they found in Jack Hawthorne and his men.

The outlaws never stopped, it being their aim to fight their way through the enemy's lines and so reach the canyon, which a few of them could hold against an army.

Once there, they could keep the others at bay until they were starved out and would be glad to make any terms in order to escape the terrible fate of starvation.

But they had miscalculated.

If Jack's men were fewer in numbers, they were greater in bravery and fighting prowess.

They held their ground as though they were rooted there, and that which but a moment before had been a battle with revolvers now became a hand-to-hand conflict, with the butts of weapons for clubs—with knives and even with fists.

A young outlaw about Jack's build fell to his share, and grappled with him before he had a chance to use any of his weapons.

They locked themselves together in old-fashioned wrestling style.

But the contest was of short duration.

While it might have been prolonged indefinitely, it was brought to a sudden termination by the advent of Sawed-off Sam, who had hopped into the midst of the melee and had at once espied how Jack was employed.

With a quick hop he was at his "boyee's" side, and in another instant the young outlaw was stretched upon the grass by a blow from the old fellow's revolver.

"All right, Jacksie!" he yelled, as he struck down the young hero's opponent. "Find another. I'll—"

But there he himself got a rap on the head which sent him whirling forward.

But he did not fall.

His old head was too hard to be cracked by a toy pistol, he afterwards remarked.

Staggering into an upright position, he saw the man who had dealt him the blow with his arm raised, ready to follow it up with another.

His favorite trick was again put into practice.

Dropping like a flash to the ground, his fist shot out and took the fellow squarely in the stomach.

Down he went, like a bullock stricken with an ax.

Instantly Sam was up and on him, and a couple of good resounding raps on the head quieted the outlaw effectually.

"Sawed-off's alive!" shouted the old borderman, in the ecstasy of the momentary excitement.

And truly he was alive.

Here, there, everywhere.

Now engaged in a most desperate hand-to-hand struggle with one of the foes.

Now breaking loose and going to the rescue of some one of his friends who was getting the worst of it.

Seemingly invulnerable, unconquerable.

But what of Jack, when Sam ended the struggle in which he had lately engaged?

He did not find another almost immediately.

All the while he had been striving to catch a glimpse of Black Harry.

But in vain.

He had come to the conclusion that the outlaw chief was even a greater coward than he had supposed him to be, when he suddenly saw him beyond the group of fighters, and just outside the circle of brightest light, skulking towards the cabin nearest to the canyon, evidently with the intention of making his escape.

Instantly Jack darted after him.

"The villain shall not escape me!" he muttered between his teeth as he sprang toward the outlaw chief. "I will have him yet!"

A few quick bounds served to overtake him.

Harry heard the sound of his quick approach and turned just in time to prepare himself for the onslaught.

Jack's revolvers were long since empty; his knife had been lost in the previous struggle.

Therefore, he was almost unarmed.

Not so with Black Harry.

Recognizing instantly with whom he had to do battle, realizing by some sort of intuition that Jack was unarmed, the outlaw raised his revolver and pointed it directly at Jack's heart.

"Halt!" he cried. "Throw up your hands or I'll bore you through and through."

But at that instant a whirring sound was heard and a lariat encircled Harry's neck.

Then, looking to see whence came the lariat, he was rejoiced to perceive Como.

"I must return to the men over there by the cabin," said Jack. "You had better remain where you are. Dawn has begun to break and the fighting has ceased. I can see Sam hopping to and fro, and our side has won, while he is doubtless looking for me.

"I will bring one of them to help carry you to the cabin. It will hurt your wound less if two of us carry you, than if I should do it alone.

"I won't be long."

He turned away, murmuring a "God bless you!" as he did so.

He thought he had left Black Harry perfectly secure, as indeed he had.

But he had neglected one important precaution; one which he should not have forgotten.

He had not placed a gag in the outlaw's mouth.

Even had he thought of it, he would hardly have considered it necessary, but it would have saved him much anguish and effort had he done so.

A few hasty strides took him to the cabin where the men were standing looking at five outlaws lying bound upon the ground.

Black Harry made the sixth, and the others had fallen to rise no more.

There was not a person in Jack's party who had not received a wound, more or less severe, but, strange to say, not one of them had been killed.

Jack was the only one who had come out of the fight unscathed.

Two of the men were very badly hurt, but when Jack examined them he felt that with care they would recover.

When Sawed-off Sam saw our hero, he exclaimed:

"Glory hallelujah!" he shouted, "ef that air cussed boyee hain't gone an' bobbed up smilin', arter all! W'y, sonny, I s'posed ye war dead an' buried by this time. I've been a-lookin' fur ye everywhere, but ye didn't materialize wuth a cent. Neither did Black Harry, an' I'm blamed ef I didn't allow that he hed grabbed ye up an' carried ye off bone an' body. I did, so help me!

"Say, whar did ye get hit?"

"I did not get hit, Sam."

"Ye don't say so! Great Scott and Zach'ry Taylor! Waal, ye're ther only one in ther hull caboodle as didn't. Hev ye seed Tom?"

"No—why?"

"Well, he never was very purty to look at, an' now them galoots hev gone an' spiled wot little beauty he had fur good an' all."

"How is that?"

"W'y, one o' ther cussed varmints got a squint at him over the barrel of his shooter, an' I'm blowed ef they didn't carry away ther hull bilin' end of his perbosis at one whoop. It was no small job fur an ordinary sized bullet, neither, boyee, you hear me!"

"Shot his nose off?"

"Yaas, that's jest it; nothin' more an' nothin' less. Look at him! Ain't he purty? That's ther most beautifulest mug I've seed in many a long day! I say, Tom, air ye agoin' to git a false one?"

"Look here, Sam!" said Long Tom, "I love ye like a brother, but by the great hornspoon, ef ye don't dry up to onet, I'll lay ye out."

"All right, Tom; I'm dry"—then reflectively—"that's er fact; never were so cussed dry in my life.

"But I say, Jack," he continued, "wot hev you been adoin' all this time?"

Thus appealed to, Jack related all that had happened to him from the moment when he had parted from the others.

He did not forget to extol Como for his bravery in saving him from the knife of Black Harry.

"Come, Tom," he concluded, "although your nose is gone, you've got your arms and legs; help me bring Como and Black Harry here."

Tom arose and followed Jack towards the spot where he had left Como and the lasso-bound outlaw.

As he drew nearer to the spot he began to strain his eyes to see the prostrate figures upon the ground.

It had grown quite light in the interim, but nevertheless he could not see them.

"Como!" he called loudly, and then listened, but got no answer.

With a terrible fear at his heart he broke into a run.

But when he arrived at the spot where he had left Como, there was nothing to be seen.

Both he and the helpless outlaw had mysteriously disappeared.

With a cry of anguish Jack looked around him over the plain.

Nothing could be seen but the grass and the hills.

"My God!" he cried, "to what terrible fate have they taken Como now?"

"Come, Tom; quick! Back to the others and bring all who are able to move. We must take the trail and follow while the dew is on the grass! Quick, Tom, quick, for God's sake!"

CHAPTER XXI.

A VILLAIN'S THREAT.

It would be impossible to describe the mixed character of Jack Hawthorne's feelings as he stood there waiting for Long Tom to bring such of the others as were able to travel, in order to at once begin the work of trailing Black Harry and his prisoner—the wounded Como.

The new horror which lent itself to the present predicament was far greater than any connected with the previous incidents in which Como had been taken away.

"Why is Black Harry so persistent in his efforts to capture Como?" muttered Jack. "Does he know the truth that I have so lately discovered? Does he even suspect it? Can it be possible that the heartless villain— But no! I will not believe it; there must be some other motive which prompts him in his designs against Como."

At that instant Long Tom returned, followed by two others, of whom one was Sawed-off Sam, hopping upon one foot, being barely able to touch the other to the ground.

"Wot's this 'ere, boyee?" he cried, as soon as he was within speaking distance. "Air Tom a-lyin', 'r air it true that ther cussed varmint hev got up an' walked off with ther young Injun?"

"It is only too true, Sam," replied Jack, "and we must take the trail and find them."

"Right, sonny! Ye allers war right from a leetle kid up. Hev ye squinted at ther trail yet?"

"No."

"Then set Tom onto it. He's about ther best bloodhound I know, ef his smeller is a bit spiled by ter-day's racket."

Without deigning to reply, Long Tom bent over and began examining the grass carefully for the trail.

Jack watched him eagerly, knowing full well that one could do that sort of work better than two.

Tom got upon his knees and spent several moments in examining the ground at the point where Jack had left Como lying.

Then he slowly made his way toward the point where Black Harry had been left so securely bound in the coils of the lasso.

Jack, watching, saw him pass beyond that point for a considerable distance, still creeping upon his hands and knees, and evidently entirely absorbed in what he saw.

At last, when he had traversed a considerable distance in that way, he paused and resumed an upright position.

Then, with the swaggering gait which seemed a part of him, he rejoined the others.

"Well?" said Jack, inquiringly, and with considerable impatience.

"Yer forgot suthin' when ye tied up the feller ye downed, didn't ye?" responded Long Tom.

"What was that?" asked Jack.

"Yer forgot ter gag him."

"I did not think it necessary to do so."

"Waal, ef ye'd ha' done it, they'd both be here now."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that both Black Harry an' thar young Injun war a-lyin' in sorter hollers in ther ground—"

"I mean that thar was one o' them critters wot grubbed with Harry, a-goin' past over yonder whar ye saw me stop. Seein' as how the two here was a-lyin' in hollers, he would not have seen them ef Harry hadn't been able to sing out.

"But he did sing out, and he probably recognized Harry's voice, cos he kim over an' let him loose.

"His trail turns short back thar an' makes for this pint.

"He let Harry loose, an' then they picked the Injun up atween 'em an' carried him off. D'ye see now wot I mean?"

Jack nodded, while Sawed-off Sam cried out in admiration:

"Waal, Tom, ef the cussed varmints did shoot off yer nose, they left yer smeller behind, didn't they?"

"Have you any idea where they would go?" asked Jack, breaking in before Long Tom could reply to the last remark.

"Yes," he said reflectively. "I think I know exactly where they hev gone."

"Where?" cried Jack.

"Hole on! Let's reason this 'ere thing out in proper shape.

"They couldn't hev gone very far, nor hev traveled very fast, could they?"

"Not very well—no!"

"So they couldn't expect ter git down ther canyon to ther hosses afore us, cos ef they knowed anything they knowed that we'd be arter 'em like a streak es soon es we found out that they'd skipped."

"Exactly!"

"Agin, they don't know that I'm with ye, probably."

"Probably not."

"Consikently Black Harry an' t'other feller'll think thar ain't no danger o' any one a-tellin' ye about ther cave."

"A cave?"

"Perzactly—a cave. That air trail'll lead straight to a little cave in ther hill, further up ther canyon, an' so thar ain't no use in follerin' it, cos I kin go straight thar without no trail."

"But you may be mistaken."

"Nary a mistake! Don't I give you my reasons? It's ther only place whar they could hide around here, an' they're bound ter hide somewhere."

"Now, there's two of them, an' there is three of us—Sawed-off I don't count, an'—"

"Don't, eh? Waal, ye kin jes' bet yer sweet life thet in this 'ere emergency, I counts double, see?" broke in Sam with vehemence.

"That's when you count," said Long Tom dryly; "I was a countin' fur myself."

"Lead on, Tom, and take us to the cave; if they are there we will rout them out."

Without further words Tom started away at a rapid pace, while the others followed, Jack assisting Sam as best he could, as the old borderman insisted upon going.

They soon entered the canyon, and turning to the right made their way up to the other fork of it.

Suddenly Long Tom paused.

"De'y see thet air boulder?" he asked of Jack.

"Yes."

"Well, thet cave is just behind it, an' if them fellers mean b'z, an' hev got the ammernition, it's no fule's job ter git 'em out."

"What do you suggest, Tom? You must take the lead now."

"Waal, ef ye say so, all right. Jest stay here then an' listen."

He started forward, keeping upon the side of the canyon opposite the boulder he had indicated.

He remained upright, in full view for some distance, until he had almost reached the boulder.

Then he dropped first upon his knees, making his way along by creeping forward.

Then he sank still lower, and crawled until he reached the shelter of a large rock exactly opposite the huge boulder.

Once more standing upright, he peered cautiously out.

Then raising his voice, he shouted:

"Harry!"

A few moments of silence and then a gruff voice replied:

"Wot d'ye want!"

"I want ter come in," replied Tom.

"Waal, ye can't!"

"Why not?"

"'Cos I don't want ye. Ef ye show yer head I'll put a hole through it! I don't want ye, thet's w'y not!"

CHAPTER XXII.

A BARGAIN.

Jack turned to Sawed-off Sam.

"What shall we do?" he asked, and the agony he felt showed itself in his voice.

"Air ye bound to rescue thet Injun?" asked Sam.

"Yes, or leave my own bones to bleach here in the canyon."

"Thet settles it, boyee. We're bound to save him in thet case, cos yer bones wouldn't look good hyer, nohow. The next thing is ter figger out how we're agoin' ter do thet job."

"I leave it to you, Sam. Tom an' me uster hev a way o' telegraphin' ter each other. Ef he ain't forgot it, I kin talk with him es well whar he is, es though he war here."

After a moment's trial he succeeded in attracting Long Tom's attention, and then they began a series of pantomimic gestures not unlike the method employed by the deaf and dumb in communicating with each other.

They kept it up for several minutes, but finally desisted.

"Thar!" exclaimed Sawed-off Sam. "He kin try it, anyway, an' mebbey it'll work, an' mebbey it won't."

"What is it, Sam?" asked Jack.

"Listen an' ye'll find out," replied the old borderman.

In another moment they heard Long Tom again calling to Black Harry.

"We've been a talkin' over wot ye said jest now."

"Well, how do you like it?"

"We don't like it, but we're agoin' ter stay jest the same."

"Ye air, eigh? Well, I might as well begin now, then, in thet ear-cuttin' biz."

"Yaas; but I've suthin' ter say fust."

"Fire away!"

"We're agoin' to stay here till you come out, an' when ye come, we'll sarve ye in jest thet same way as ye sarve thet Injun—ketch on?"

"I ain't a comin' out."

"Waal, then ye'll have ter either starve, 'r shoot yerself, cos we're agoin' ter wait."

"I'll shost myself afore I'll let you fellows git hold of me, ye kin bet yer life onto thet."

"All right, Harry; go ahead. an' when ye've done thet biz fur yerself, we'll come in an git ye. an' sarve ye jest thet same es though ye was alive. an' then cook wot's left of ye an' chuck it to the coyotes."

"That won't hurt me none," replied Black Harry, as dauntless as he could, and yet there was a very perceptible tremor in his voice, and Tom knew it.

"Mebbey not," he continued; "only 'tain't pleasant ter think on. How do you like it?"

"Ye don't mean to say that ye're a-goin' ter stay here an' let me cut off thet Injun's ears, do ye?"

"Ef ye'll send thet boy Como out to us, an' he is all O. K.—no cuts about him; sound in wind an' limb in every particular, jest as soon es we're satisfied of it, you an' yer pard can kin out, too, an' vamoose just as quick es ye've a mind to."

"Thout bein' held up?"

"Thout havin' a cussed word said to ye; 'thout bein' molested in any way. Ye kin both go scot free ef ye'll send thet boyee out to us first, so's we kin see thet he's O. K."

"Well, hole on a minit till I see wat my pard sez."

"Right—but say!"

"Wot?"

"You an' your pard hev got ter light outen these diggins an' never kim back. Our promise'll keep good jest twenty-four hours, an' arter thet it'll be bad around here fur yer health—ketch on?"

The voices ceased and there lapsed a long interval of silence, during which none of the men spoke.

Everybody felt the anxiety which Jack strove hard to conceal, but which he but ill succeeded in doing.

At last all were startled by hearing Black Harry's voice from the cave shouting to Long Tom.

"Say," he said, "ef we'll agree to yer terms so far es givin' up thet boy is concerned, will ye 'low us to keep him es far es the mouth o' thet canyon as a hostage?"

"No," replied Tom promptly. "You hev heard our terms an' they air all we've got ter offer. Wake 'em or leave 'em, as you've a mind ter."

"Waal, we accept then!"

"Oh, ye does, eh?"

"Yes."

"Then send thet boy out so's we kin hev a look at him."

"All right, he's a-comin'."

Long Tom stepped out in full view and waited, and presently the figure of Como appeared walking slowly, and evidently in great pain caused by the wounded arm.

As soon as he reached Long Tom that kind-hearted frontiersman stepped forward and said:

"Ain't got much gimp left in ye hev ye? Arm busted, too. Jest sling yer good one around my neck an' I'll carry ye to the others."

Como was not slow to obey, and Long Tom quickly raised him from the ground.

"Air ye all right?" he asked. "Hev they hurt ye in any way?"

"No," replied Como in a weak voice, "they have been very careful of me."

"Ah!"

Tom said no more, but hurried with his burden to where Jack was eagerly awaiting them.

But the burden he carried grew limp in his arms, and when he put Como down, he saw that unconsciousness had become the result of the last few hours of hardship and suffering.

Jack hastened to a spring near by and brought water, with which he bathed Como's face, forcing a little between the white lips.

Presently a long sigh escaped the supposed Indian boy. The brilliant black eyes opened wide with wonder, and looked around amazedly.

"Where am I," were the first words which escaped almost inaudibly from between the lips, now burning with fever.

"You are safe," said Jack, in reply, bending over still farther and whispering the words tenderly.

"Safe?" murmured Como. "safe from what? Why should I be safe when Jack is in danger?"

"But Jack is safe also. Don't you know me? I am Jack."
 "No, you are not Jack; I do not know you. Jack is in danger—save him—save him—save him!"

The last words ended in a loud cry, and as soon as they were uttered Como again lapsed into unconsciousness.

Jack had seen enough to know that a fever was imminent, and he knew that no time must be lost in rendering his charge as comfortable as possible.

But first he must have a word with Black Harry himself. With hasty but decided steps, he passed up the canyon until he stood before the mouth of the cave.

Black Harry could have shot him down without mercy, but he did not fear.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CONCLUSION.

"Harry," he called, "I have one thing to say. We are going to leave here now, and in half an hour you must be gone. You will not be molested in departing, but if you ever set foot in No Man's Land again you will not live an hour. I am king here, and I mean what I say."

Turning without waiting for a reply, he returned to the others.

Long Tom assisted him in carrying Como, while Sawed-off hobbled along behind, evidently in great pain.

The mesa was reached, and the entire party set to work rendering the adobe hut habitable, and it very soon presented the appearance of a hospital more than of an outlaw's camp.

Como was made comfortable in a farther corner of the hut, and there Jack was sitting, holding the little hand in his.

It was strange, he thought, that he had never noticed how small and delicate it was before, and he regretted many a harsh word he had spoken, and many a difficult task he had given the tender muscles to perform.

Suddenly Como's eyes opened and looked up at Jack, startled, somewhat wild, but full of understanding.

Consciousness had returned; the delirium had gone.

"Jack," she said (we will use the proper pronoun in referring to her now), "Jack, where am I?"

"Safe, Como, safe, thank God!"

"But why do you care so much about my fate, Jack?" she asked.

"Did I not always care, Como?"

"Yes, always; but you look differently now, somehow, Jack. Jack, do you know who I really am?"

Jack turned away his head before replying.

"No," he said truthfully, "I do not."

"But—but—Jack, you know that—that I am a—a——"

Jack interrupted her.

"Yes, Como," he said, "I know that you are not what you said you were; I know that you are not an Indian."

"Ah! but you know that I am not even a boy, do you not?" she asked, gaining courage.

"I suspect it, Como; is it true?"

She lowered her eyes, and for reply said:

"Please do not tell the others. You shall hear my story as soon as I can tell it. Won't you let me be alone and think now?"

Our hero rose without a word, and left her side. Left her to think, as she had requested.

* * * * *

A month has passed; they are all back again at Wasp's Nest—in Jack's house.

Como's arm is nearly well, and in a couple of weeks more she can begin to use it again.

Her story, as she told it to Jack, told more briefly, was as follows:

Her father had made a fortune in cattle, and five years before had returned to the East to live.

There she had developed into a beautiful young lady, and being an heiress, was much sought after for being reared in the Southwest, she had become a young lady in society before her years warranted it.

But the development of her mind was precocious as well as her body, and when her father, who was a stern, hard man, sought to compel her to wed a man many years her senior she bitterly rebelled.

Suddenly she remembered a family of Apaches who had lived on the ranch with them in New Mexico, who were

more than usually civilized and in whose hearts she knew she could find both affection and protection.

She flew to them and they were glad to receive her. But there misfortune followed her, and in just a year from the time when she had joined them, she lost them.

An epidemic disease had deprived her of her friends. She had wandered as far as Wasp's Nest when the circumstances happened which united her with Jack's fortunes, and it is needless to say that she had learned to love him devotedly.

Jack could hardly describe his own feelings in the matter, until one day she said to him:

"Jack, in a short time I will be well, and I have been thinking that I must return to my father."

"You shall remain, Como," cried Jack vehemently; "you shall not go, or if you do I will go with you. I can't let you go away now, for I, who have never known any one of my own kind to love, love you, Como. Let us go together if you must. Go as my wife. We are young, but what does that matter since we know how to depend upon ourselves and upon each other. We will go East if you will, and then we will return here to our home. Shall it be so, Como?"

It is unnecessary to record her reply. It came from her heart and went straight to his.

A happy way out of the difficulty.

With Sawed-off Sam the way was not to be all smooth and even, henceforth, for the rough usage which his wound had received, and the lack of care during the trip to the foothills aggravated it to such an extent that the leg had to be amputated just above the knee.

"I'm sawed-off fur sartin," he said, when the job was done; "thar's no jokin' about it this time, but then I've found Jack an' he'll see me through till ther last deal goes 'round. He's my boyee, an' I'm ther only one man he's got, so I guess we're squar. Then, thar's Como; he—no, she is a daisy, an' I guess ef I do hev ter stump it, it won't be very hard work an' so I'm satisfied."

Black Harry had disappeared; nothing more was heard of him or his band of outlaws. Jack had made No Man's Land too hot for them, and they one and all know that if they should venture into the region again, short work would be made of them.

The wasps had lost their stings; the nest had become silent, and the people began to think seriously of giving the settlement a more high-sounding name.

Before departing on his trip to the East, Jack gleaned all the information from Sawed-off Sam that he possibly could regarding himself and his parentage. He jotted everything down, determined upon thorough inquiry and research while upon his journey.

The old borderman was only too glad to give him all the information in his power, but it was very meager, and as Jack feared, he could find no traces of his family.

"I will never know who I am," he said to his wife (whom he still called by the name he had always known her by, Como), one day when they were on their way back to Wasp's Nest, after having visited and been forgiven by Como's father; "but, on the whole, I am rather glad than otherwise. I have my own destiny to map out—my own future to carve. There are no blots upon my family record; nothing for which to droop my head; no sorrow to bear for myself or for others; no ties to break. I have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

"You, Como, are my all. The affection which I would feel for a father, a mother, for sisters and for brothers, is all centered in you. Can you bear the burden, think you?"

She looked up at him with her lustrous eyes swimming in tears of happiness and joy.

"Oh, Jack," she said, "the roughest roads oftentimes lead to the pleasantest retreats, and it is so with me."

* * * * *

Let us leave them in their home in Wasps' Nest, where any evening they can be seen seated upon the porch when the sun is setting, and near them always Sawed-off Sam, who is inordinately proud of his "guerrel an' boyee."

Next week's issue will contain "GUN-BOAT DICK; OR, DEATH BEFORE DISHONOR."

* * * * *

SEND POSTAL FOR OUR FREE CATALOGUE

FACTS WORTH READING

WOLVES NEAR ROCHESTER.

James Cook, while driving home from the Locke insulator factory at Victor, N. Y., the other night, was attacked by two large wolves. The animals sprang for the horses' heads, but were beaten off. Cook drove back to the village.

These are the first wolves seen in this part of Ontario County, although they have been reported in other sections. A pack of wolves was seen last Sunday morning on the Ryan farm, near Mertensia. An alarm was given, and twenty hunters set out to kill them, but the snow covered the tracks of the animals and the chase was abandoned.

\$51,396,593 FOR FORTS.

The Fortifications Bill, reported to the House by Representative Sherley, calls for the appropriation of \$51,396,593 for 1918, and in addition authorizes contracts aggregating \$9,459,000, the total of direct appropriations being \$22,849,043 greater than that authorized at the last session of Congress.

For the first time the bill carries items of \$3,600,000 for the purchase and maintenance of squadrons of hydro-aeroplanes. It asks for \$7,310,000 to purchase field artillery ammunition and \$10,940,000 for ammunition of sea coast guns. An item of \$1,700,000 for "movable railway armament" is included, presumably to build armored cars that can be transported to any part of the coast threatened by attack.

LARGEST AMERICAN CATS.

The jaguar or "el tigre," as it is generally known throughout Spanish America, is the largest and handsomest of American cats. Its size and deep yellow color, profusely marked with black spots and rosettes, give it a close resemblance to the African leopard. It is, however, a heavier and more powerful animal. In parts of the dense tropical forest of South America coal-black jaguars occur, and while representing merely a color phase, they are supposed to be much fiercer than the ordinary animal. Although so large and powerful, the jaguar has none of the truculent ferocity of the African leopard. During the years I spent in its country, mainly in the open, writes E. W. Nelson in the National Geographic Magazine, I made a careful inquiry without hearing of a single case where one had attacked human beings.

In one locality on the Pacific Coast of Guerrero I found that the hardier natives had an interesting method of hunting the "Tigre" during the mating period. At such times the male has the habit of leaving its lair near the head of a small canyon in the foothills early in the evening and following down the canyon for some distance, at intervals ut-

tering a subdued roar. On moonlight nights at this time the hunter places an expert native with a short wooden trumpet near the mouth of the canyon to imitate the "tigre's" call as soon as it is heard and to repeat the cry at proper intervals. After placing the caller, the hunter ascends the canyon several hundred yards, and, gun in hand, awaits the approach of the animal. The natives have many amusing tales of the sudden exit of untried hunters when the approaching animal unexpectedly uttered its roar at close quarters.

DECAYED CITIES OF THE EAST.

On the east bank of the Tigris, some twenty miles below Bagdad, stands the remains of Ctesiphon, the scene of a recent battle in Mesopotamia. In ancient times it was one of the greatest of the now dead and buried cities of Chaldea that once flourished along the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates.

There is now practically only a large village on the site, but in olden days Ctesiphon was renowned for its splendor, and there the Parthian kings had their magnificent winter residence. Of its past glories some great relics remain, notably the gigantic vaulted hall of the "Throne of Khorsu, sometimes known as Solomon's Porch," though it has nothing to do with Solomon. Near it is the tomb of Mahomet's barber, Sulciman.

During the wars between the Roman and Persian empires, Ctesiphon was a prize well worth contending for, and many a combat was waged for the possession of what, though now only a solitary mound of ruins rising out of the Mesopotamian desert, was once a thriving city. The city's decay dates from the Seventh Century, says the Philadelphia Inquirer, when it was plundered by the Arabs, its fall from glory corresponding with the rise to fame of Bagdad and Basra. Its irrigation system, which was the source of its wealth and prosperity, was allowed to fall in ruin, and when the water left, life practically went out of the city. It has always been so in Mesopotamia.

On the other side of the Tigris from Ctesiphon are the extensive ruins of another great city of the past—Seleucia, where the Greeks once held sway over half a million inhabitants. Seleucia was built to drain the life from Babylon, forty miles distant on the Euphrates, and succeeded. In the days of Pliny it was reckoned the most populous and wealthy city of Western Asia, and was for long a stronghold of Greek and Macedonian culture as opposed to that of the Parthians on the other side of the river. It was burnt by the Roman Emperor Trajan, and now scarcely a trace of it remains above the desert.

SIMPLE SAM

THE POOR BOY

—OR—

Not So Green As He Looked

BY J. P. RICHARDS

(A Serial Story)

CHAPTER XIX (Continued).

"Well, we won't talk about it, Sam. I won't take seven hundred dollars for it." The owner was worried about it.

Sam talked to his mother about it and suggested if he come to see her that she should leave it to him.

The owner well knew that if Mrs. Bradbury, who had lived there for fifteen years, should leave, it would probably be left on his hands with no income from it whatever.

Nearly a month had passed, and he met Sam one day, and asked him if he had bought a home yet.

"No, sir; but I'm on the lookout for one."

"Well, don't you buy, Sam, till you see me."

"All right; but I tell you now, don't you expect to get a penny more than seven hundred dollars from me for it."

A couple of weeks later the man met Mrs. Bradbury, and asked her if she wanted to buy the place where she lived.

She remembered what Sam had said to her about it, and she remarked that she was tired of paying rent, and that Sam had earned money enough to buy her a home, and she would leave the matter entirely in his hands.

"My lease will expire at the end of the year, and I would like very much to either buy or stay where I am, or move to some other place, where I won't have to pay rent."

"You don't wish to move, do you?"

"No, sir; I've been living so long where I am that I should really dislike to move into a strange house; but I'm going to be guided in the matter entirely by Sam, as he wishes to buy and pay for a house."

"Well, I told him that he could have the place for eight hundred dollars. You know I've been asking nine hundred for it."

"I will be satisfied with whatever price Sam pays, but I believe I heard you say that he wouldn't give a penny over seven hundred dollars for the place. He insists that that is every penny it is worth. He is able to pay more, for he has been lucky in trading, but when he makes up his mind about anything, it seems that nothing on earth can change it."

That was a pointer for the owner of the property.

Sam never went after him any more, but one day, while he was at the livery stable talking with the liveryman, the man came up to him, and asked him if he had yet bought a place.

"No, sir, not yet; but I am looking at two places, and it is very likely that I will take one of them."

"Well, look here, Sam, there's only a hundred dollars' difference between us on the place where you now live. Suppose we split the difference, and you take it at seven-fifty."

Sam slowly shook his head, and said:

"No, sir; seven hundred is every cent that I will pay for the place, and if you are willing to take that, just come over to the bank, and sign the papers, and I'll turn the cash over to you on the spot."

The man was very much afraid that Sam would buy another place for less money; so he suggested that he show a little bit of liberal spirit and make it seven hundred and twenty-five.

"No, sir; I'm not a liberal chap in a trade. I go in to get the most possible for my money. When I want to sell, I'm perfectly willing for the other fellow to be liberal."

"Yes; that's very plain. You are like the fellow who wanted to divide the game with the Indian hunter. They killed a turkey and a buzzard. The white hunter wanted to toss up, and he said: 'Heads, I win, and tails, you lose.' Come over to the bank, and I'll meet you there with the title deeds inside of half an hour."

"All right; does it go at seven hundred?"

"Yes."

"All right, then, I'll be there."

That evening when Sam went home, he threw an envelope into his mother's lap, and said: "Here, Marm, is a present for you."

She opened it, and looked over the old deeds, the chain of titles running back many years. She was wondering what it was all about, and she was the happiest woman in Sussex when she saw that the home in which she had lived so long was her own property.

She jumped up and threw her arms around his neck, and kissed him all over his face.

"Oh, you great, faithful boy!" said she, "you have relieved my heart of a great fear, for we can always manage to make a living when there is no rent to pay."

"That's right; I'm going to make that dear old garden fairly spout vegetables next season. When I make a little more money I'm going to buy the lot on the other side of the garden, which is just the same size."

"Well, it never hurts to buy land, Sam."

"I know that, marm. Now I intend to buy some lumber, and build a little barn and cow house. I've got my eye on a splendid cow that I can get cheap."

"Why, Sam, don't you know how expensive it is to keep a cow during the winter season?"

"Yes, Marm, but that cow will give four gallons of milk a day, and you and I are so fond of milk, and out of that we can sell enough butter not only to feed the cow, but almost enough to feed ourselves."

(To be continued.)

FROM ALL POINTS

PIGEONS MAKE CLOCK SLOW.

A saloon keeper, taken to Police Headquarters at Cornersville, Ind., to explain why he kept his bar open five minutes later than the other bars, defended himself by an appeal to the city clock. It was found to be five minutes behind standard time. Pigeons which roost in the Court House tower are believed to have roosted on the minute hand of the old timepiece and held it down till it showed five minutes behind the right time.

A HANDY MONEYSMAKER.

Whenever Jerome Armstrong, of Kent, Putnam county, New York, has been a little short of ready funds his right arm has responded nobly and got the money for him. Three times in the last eleven years the arm has received serious injuries in accidents, and in every case damages have been recovered in court.

Only the other day in the Supreme Court he settled a suit for \$1,250 which was begun two years ago as a result of an automobile accident. The first time the arm came to Armstrong's financial aid was in 1906, when as foreman papermaker he burned the arm on a hot plate, and an accident insurance company allowed him \$500. Then, in 1911, a ladder was knocked from under him in the Eureka Glazed Paper Company's plant in Stockport and he suffered a broken arm. A jury awarded him \$3,700.

Finally came the automobile accident. A car owned by Reginald F. Ewing of Ashland struck Armstrong, and the arm was broken again.

TO FLY TO NORTH POLE.

Captain Roald Amundsen, discoverer of the south pole, sailed for Liverpool recently on the American liner Philadelphia on his way to Christiania to make final preparations for his aerial trip to the north pole. He expects to return to this country once before making the flight to purchase the most highly developed aeroplane for the attempt.

Captain Amundsen will witness the launching of his new polar ship at Christiania. The equipment which he has been gathering together in this country will be placed on the ship and the explorer will then return to the United States to procure the aeroplane in which he will make his final dash.

The new polar ship will force its way through the ice to a position in the Arctic situated at 89 degrees north latitude. This base is sixty-nine miles from the pole. From here the explorer will fly toward the pole with the expectation of reaching it in less than an hour of flight. The aeroplane which Captain Amundsen will use will be capable of 150 miles an hour, the explorer hopes. With him in the final flight will be an observer.

"Ideal conditions for flying prevail at the north

pole," Captain Amundsen said enthusiastically yesterday. "The atmosphere is clear and still. Many people think of the north pole as extremely cold, but it is much warmer in the summer time, seemingly, than it is at present on the deck of this ship. Only when the winds are high does one suffer from cold near the pole, and fortunately there is little wind around the pole.

"There are no air pockets to disturb the balance of the aeroplane. The atmosphere is uniform in weight and it is so clear that the human eye is like the lens of a telescope.

"I hope to fly all around the north pole, with my observer taking notes all the while. The trip is being made solely for scientific reasons."

CHRIST'S BIRTHDAY.

It is a remarkable fact that nothing certain is known as to the actual date of the birth of Christ, the 25th of December being only a tradition, adopted by the Church about the middle of the Fourth Century. Lupi, a learned Jesuit of the Eighteenth Century, says: "There is not a single month in the year to which the Nativity has not been assigned by some writer or other."

In the earliest periods of which we have any record we find this feast was observed at various periods, the 1st and 6th of January being the dates on which a portion of the Christians celebrated it; others doing so on March 29, the time of the "Jewish Passover," while yet others selected September 29, that being "The Feast of the Tabernacles." There were those also who observed it on April 20, and yet another class who thought it occurred on May 20, while SS. Epiphanius and Cassian state that in Egypt Christ was believed to have been born on January 6. For a long time the Greeks celebrated our Lord's birth on the Feast of Epiphany.

The earliest celebration of Christmas on the 25th of December appears to have been held in Rome in the Fourth Century, being first mentioned in a Roman document, the "Philocalian Calendar," dating from the year 354, but containing an older record, referring to the year 336. Christmas was brought to England by St. Augustine, and kept in 598, but it would appear that it was not established in Germany until 813, and in Norway about the middle of the Tenth Century, by King Hakon the Good.

The Romans of the Empire used to celebrate the birth of the Unconquered Sun on the 25th of December, according to the Julian Calendar the Winter Solstice, when the sun began to rise in new vigor, after his autumnal decline. Therefore, the reason for the choice of the 25th of December for Christmas would seem to have been symbolical—as is the case with respect to Easter.

TIMELY TOPICS

BASEBALL GAMES AT 2 CENTS EACH.

Patrons of the South Bend Central League club will be enabled to witness baseball games during the 1917 season at a cost of three cents each, under plans announced by the Chamber of Commerce of South Bend, Ind.

The plans propose the sale of 10,000 season books, good for fifty games, at \$1.50 each. The \$15,000 so derived would pay the expenses of the team and the grand stand income would take care of the percentages to be paid visiting clubs at a rate of 12½ cents for each person entering the gate.

KILLS WOLF AND IS HERO.

Abe Tellier of Newark, N. Y., is considered a hero by the women of the village because he shot a big timber wolf the other afternoon near there. The animal was five feet over all and was in good condition, as it had evidently been preying on poultry in the neighborhood. It was one of a pack of five seen frequently during the past two days. Tellier was one of a party of twenty hunters who followed the tracks of the pack.

At Phelps a pack of wolves were seen and followed by hunters until their trail was obliterated by the snow. A pack of gray wolves were seen yesterday in Seneca County, near Seneca Falls, and another near Groveland station in Livingston County. Much stock has been killed by the animals and all district schools have been closed.

ST. LOUIS FUR SALE OPENS.

"Sir Roger," a pedigreed silver fox, was sold for \$500 the other day at the opening of the fur auction. The 300 buyers present represented about 95 per cent. of the fur-buying capital in the world. The purchaser of the live silver fox announced that the animal would be presented to the St. Louis Zoological Park.

In the first thirty minutes of the auction more than 2,000 sealskins, dressed and dyed, were sold for the United States Government. This lot brought about \$80,000. Wart T. Boyer, chief Government agriculture agent for the Alaska fisheries service, said the prices paid for the silver fox skins were 20 per cent. higher than paid at the auction here last September. Among the buyers were representatives of eight English firms, one Dutch firm, one Russian, five German, and two Austrian. It is estimated that pelts offered at auction this week will bring more than \$3,000,000.

The sales amounted to \$500,000, which dealers said was the highest record for one day's selling in any market. Silver foxes brought a total of \$105,000. New York dealers purchased some of the

finest and rarest skins at fancy prices. A matched pair brought \$1,650. The highest price paid for a single skin was \$910.

NOT A SOU FOUND IN BANK.

An alleged swindle, estimated by different newspapers amounting from \$600,000 to \$2,000,000, has been disclosed by the arrest of Philippe Simeoni, of Italian origin, and Prince Henri de Broglie-Revel.

Simeoni was accused in 1912 of cheating Prince Friedrich Carl zu Hohenlohe-Oehringen out of \$100,000. The case was settled out of court, but Simeoni was sentenced to six months' imprisonment for fraudulent bankruptcy. Afterward, he founded the Comptoir des Valeurs Industrielle, a stock broking bank. Prince Henri de Broglie-Revel was made President, Simeoni taking the title of manager.

When the war began customers demanded their money. Simeoni pleaded the moratorium and put the bank into liquidation, provoking many complaints, one of which alone alleges a claim of 1,600,000 francs (\$320,000). The police report they found not a sou in the bank and only a hundred francs in notes in the possession of Simeoni at his home.

WAGNER DUE FOR CUT IN SALARY.

True enough these be rather tough days for the baseball magnate, and without doubt retrenchments may be advisable if not indeed absolutely necessary in many cases. However, there is a rather unpleasant taste attached to the announcement from Pittsburg that Barney Dreyfuss will cut a slice from the salary check of the veteran Hans Wagner. Barney is bent on pruning the salary list of the Pirates and Honus is due to fall beneath the ax.

As a purely business proposition of course Wagner is a logical subject for a bit of surgery on the pay envelope, since the Dutchman without doubt is the highest salaried player on the Pirate roster. But even so, Hans Wagner is something more than shortstop on the Pittsburg club. At least he is to Pittsburg fans, if not to Barney Dreyfuss. Surely if Barney has wandered along to that stage where he draws pleasant reveries in coming back over the days of pennants and success of the club, he must associate Wagner with these dreams in a highly prominent role.

Comiskey carried Ed Walsh for three years after he was no use whatever to the club. The Browns kept Bobby Wallace on hand just as long as Bobby wanted to stay. Even after he tried out as an umpire he was taken back again. Yet Wagner, who is still counted as a valuable man to his club in a playing way, is to suffer a salary cut.

MAKING IT PAY

—OR—

The Boy Who Bought a Newspaper

BY WILLIAM WADE

(A Serial Story)

CHAPTER XXII (Continued).

Glancing toward the dam, he uttered a surprised exclamation and then hurried toward the little bridge and crossed half-way to the other side.

Caught at the very edge of the dam, and evidently held there by its roots and branches, was a large tree which had been washed down-stream and now only waited to be broken up before going over.

"There's my tree," he said, "and it is likely that the island has gone, too. Well, we said it would go before long, and so it has. I wonder how long it will stay there? I must get out to it before it goes over, for, once it breaks up, there will be no chance of recovering the money in case Dunlap did hide it there."

It would be a dangerous undertaking to endeavor to go out to the tree at this time, as a boat would be carried over the falls, even if the tree were not.

It was likely that the water would go down before long, however, and then with proper precautions a boat could be got out to the tree and one could investigate.

"I'll watch it," mused the young fellow, "and then, just as soon as it is safe, I'll go out there. If I did not feel so strongly that the money is there I would not bother with it, but I can't get over the thought, and I'll never be satisfied till I prove one thing or other.

"Three times I have been on the point of investigating it, and something has prevented. Only the other day I had my arm up to the elbow in the hollow, when Jack raised an alarm and I had to abandon the search."

That morning it was learned that the mysterious robber had been on his rounds again, and that three or four fresh victims had been added to his list.

Judge Gilson and Mr. Edgewood both offered rewards for the capture of the thief, and Dick smiled when he heard the senior proprietor of the Times utter tirades against the man in front of the post-office while waiting for his mail.

"I could tell him something," he thought, "but would it do any good? If he believed me he would say it was done for spite, and it is a question if he would believe it. Some men are so obstinate that they won't believe anything. It is unlikely that Percy will return, and if the robberies are discontinued, it is just as well to say nothing."

In the early afternoon Dick got a boat and went some distance up the river, the current being still quite strong, but not what it was in the morning.

The island was gone, sure enough, and great rav-

ages had been made in the bank at other places, the force of the storm being easily seen by the rise in the river.

Going ashore in the neighborhood of the old quarry, Dick fastened his boat and then walked along, noting the devastations the storm had made.

He entered the quarry, noticing deep pools of water, where before there had been bare stones, and made his way cautiously for some distance, not knowing at what moment rocks or trees or loose earth from the bank above might come tumbling down upon him.

He was about to return, thinking that he had seen enough, when he thought he heard some one breathing, and shot a glance around him, expecting to see a tramp hidden away in some corner, the place being somewhat dark.

He heard a shuffling sound and then saw a foot hastily drawn back, and presently distinguished a man partly hidden behind a mass of loose stones and coarse grass.

"Oh, you needn't be afraid," he said. "I've not come here to rout out any poor wretches. Come out if you like. I'm not going to harm you."

As he finished, a shabby looking man crawled out and Percy Edgewood stood revealed.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ON A PERILOUS MISSION.

"So, so, you're hunting me down still, are you?" hissed the fugitive.

"No, I am not. I came here to see what damage the storm had done."

"I was going away," said the other, "but I got a bad sprain last night. Things were so slippery I fell. What are you doing here; how did you know I was here? What are you following me for? To give me up, I suppose?"

"No, but it would be better for you to do so than go on in the life you are leading. You must know how it will end. When you went away, why didn't you try and do better and not go on from bad to worse?"

"A fellow has to live, hasn't he?" growled Percy. "I couldn't starve."

"One can always get work if he looks for it. It may not be the easiest way or the best paid, but it can always be had. No one need starve."

"I wasn't brought up to work," muttered Percy, doggedly.

"So much the worse for you. If you are hurt, go to a hospital where you can be cared for. It will be better to get in jail even than to hobble around the country like this."

"I'm going away as soon as I can. I'll have to, now that you know I am here. You'd give me up to get square on the old man."

(To be continued.)

ARTICLES OF ALL KINDS

NEGRO BOY SAVES GIRL.

Water Parrot, a fifteen-year-old negro boy, is the hero of Cranford, N. J.

Constance West, 12 years old, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Harry D. West, 39 Eighth street, Cranford, started across the Cranford River the other day, thinking the ice was strong. A short distance from shore the ice broke and she was plunged into water over her head.

Parrot heard her screams and ran to her rescue. He was able to drag her to safety with difficulty and only after breaking through the ice several times. Parrot is receiving much praise for his heroism.

MRS. WAR EAGLE AND HER SISTER BECOME RICH.

Mrs. War Eagle, of Otoe, Okla., and her younger unmarried sister had to work hard at one time. The younger woman did it because she liked bright-colored shawls and shining trinkets. Mrs. War Eagle did it because she was compelled to in order to support her lord and master "in the style to which he had been accustomed."

Then one day War Eagle the Indian became involved in a "scrap." A gang of cattle rustlers was captured and War Eagle was found in the bunch. His board bill now costs him nothing.

The few acres of rock land belonging to the family would not have supported a dozen healthy grasshoppers had it been planted to grain. But game and fish were plentiful, and Mrs. War Eagle, greatly relieved at the exit of her chief, took life a bit easier.

Then some men came along and finally made her understand that they "wanted to punch a few holes" in the solid rock of the hills on her ground. She made out that they might pay her for this privilege. They did and are still paying her.

Two of the first few holes bored brought oil gushers. In short, Mrs. War Eagle and her sister have obtained something over \$10,000 each in royalties, and that is only the beginning. The two squaws have deserted their old teepee and now live in a 12x16 shack. But the result of their prosperity shows in their gorgeous raiment, the colors of which put the rainbow to shame.

THE MODERN MILITARY RIFLE.

It will shoot from "machine rest" or the hands of a skilled rifle shot into a 2-foot circle at 1,000 yards. It has put, in the hands of an American marksman, 14 bullets out of 15 into a 3-foot circle at 1,200 yards, with the one remaining shot in the next adjoining ring, 9 inches wide. It is powerful enough

to kill cleanly at a mile. Fired at a mark 500 yards distant, or 60 yards more than a quarter-mile, its bullet rises in its flight less than two feet above the line of sight; so it would, in its travel, hit a kneeling man anywhere from muzzle to mark.

All this is what the modern rifle can do. What it does do is this:

The highest fighting record it can show in modern wars between large bodies of troops, was made in the first attempt of the British to cross the Tugela river in the Boer War. Firing from comfortable trenches, over ground previously measured and over which the ranges were known and spotted to the last inch, and firing at troops advancing in semi-close order in open country, the Boers scored one hit for every 700 shots fired. There may be record of higher scoring in the war now going on, but if so it has not been reported.

The worst shooting the world ever saw is said to be that of regular Moroccan troops in an attack on the stronghold of Raisuli, the bandit. The troops fired 80,000 rounds and didn't score a hit.

The German theory of fire discounts any idea of individual accuracy; it treats of zones and spraying positions with rifle fire as one would spray a spot on the lawn with a hose. Sometimes this is all that can be done when the other chaps are in cover, and there is nothing at which to fire but a spot on the landscape. When the Germans make their attacks, however, there is no lack of things at which to shoot, and the highly trained British regulars, in the eventful days of 1914, took full advantage of the chance.

Even with things at which to aim, and with the problem uncomplicated by the distracting influence of the other fellows shooting back, space has a large and powerful attraction for the bullets; and there is plenty of space around the largest of marks.

Several years ago a war strength battalion of American regular infantry, 400 men, gave a field firing demonstration on targets arranged to simulate what in those pre-war days they believed an enemy would be to the eye. They advanced in normal order from 1,200 yards and they fired on a line of figure targets, on lines of disappearing targets, on lines of flanking targets suddenly appearing on either side, and finally on running targets, arranged craftily on a sledge hauled by a cable. The total score up to about 400 yards, where the advance ceased, was just 10 per cent of hits, one hit every ten shots; and this was by highly trained, cool, regular infantrymen under skilled officers, with nobody shooting back, with no high explosive shells bellowing and throwing rocks upon their immediate front—in a word, with nothing to distract or disturb them.

CURRENT NEWS

The number of Japanese slain in the war between Russia and Japan was seventy-two thousand, four hundred and fifty, of whom forty-eight thousand, one hundred and eighty were killed outright in battle, ten thousand, nine hundred and seventy died of wounds and fifteen thousand, three hundred died of disease.

John Haug, a man of mystery in Greenwich, Conn., and a figure of interest to the members of the summer colony for many years, was burned to death when his bungalow at the edge of the town was destroyed by fire. Haug always seemed to have enough money on which to subsist, although he never did any work except just what was necessary to keep his home in order.

A Tacoma merchant went into his warehouse early one morning, and hearing a peculiar sound in one corner, investigated it, and found that a clam had caught a rat. The rodent had invaded a box of clams, and in an attempt to pull one out of its shell with his forefoot, had been made a prisoner by the clam shutting down on the foot. The firmly-attached pair were exhibited in the merchant's show window for a short time, and then the rat was drowned.

A disease of cattle prevalent in Utah is known popularly as "oak poisoning" or "summer sickness," and has been ascribed to scrub oak, which grows in great abundance over certain parts of the ranges. Other regions of the West and Southwest report heavy losses of cattle from oak poisoning. The Bureau of Animal Industry, after a careful and thorough investigation, has undertaken elaborate feeding experiments to determine how much truth there is in the idea that oaks are poisonous to cattle.

Speaking recently at Edinburgh, Scotland, on aircraft policy, Lord Montagu of Beaulieu said that when peace came the British air service must be the last to be reduced. A naval invasion might not come; but by means of 100 airships it might come on a scale infinitely greater, which it would need all the British aircraft forces to repel. Of 2,000 miles of coastline, at least 1,000 would have to be defended by aircraft. If in the country a permanent force of 20,000 aeroplanes existed, the cost would not be more than \$75,000,000.

According to the figures compiled at Ellis Island, the total inward movement of oversea passengers at the Port of New York for 1916 was 259,367, as compared with 216,274 passengers brought in 1915 and 735,741 passengers in 1914. The increase during

1916 as compared with 1915 is found mainly in steerage passengers, the gain being from 95,467 to 137,126. At the same time there was an increase from 59,797 to 66,741 in the number of first cabin passengers and a decline in the number of second cabin passengers from 61,010 to 54,500.

"Saved by a necktie" would be an appropriate title for a tale told by William H. Nichols of Glasgow, who arrived here on the Anchor liner Saxonia. He was on board the small Greek steamship Lycurgus, which was sunk in the Mediterranean. After swimming about half an hour, Nichols said, he came across a Frenchman clinging to a spar. Nichols was so exhausted that he could not hold on to the stick and the Frenchman tore off his necktie and tied Nichols' right arm to the timber. They were rescued by an Italian destroyer.

Another big gas well has been struck in Versailles Township, Pa., where, two weeks ago, an immense well of the Speigle farm excited the country. The latest well was brought in the other day on the Bert D. McClure Farm, on Lincoln Way, half a mile from Bryn Mawr and two miles from the Speigle well. The roar of the gas can be heard a mile away, farmers and others residing in the vicinity declare. It has been impossible to take pressure tests, but it is said that the well is yielding from 20,000,000 to 30,000,000 feet a day.

The gold fever persists at Oneida, Kansas. Mrs. G.W. Potts found a gold nugget weighing 2½ grains in the craw of a duck which she was dressing. Frank Wikoff also found a nugget in the craw of a duck which he had purchased at the Oneida cream station. Several other big nuggets have been found. These finds have convinced many of the people that the old story of a miner who was carrying \$50,000 worth of gold dust and who lost his life in the creek near here is after all true and that there is a great quantity of gold to be found somewhere in this vicinity.

Brig. Gen. Samuel I. Johnson, commanding the National Guard of Hawaii, is credited with making the highest score on record in the United States in rifle shooting. General Johnson, shooting over the "expert course" at the National Guard target range, near Honolulu, made a score of 286 out of a possible 300 points. That was three points better than the previous record high mark of 283, made recently by Serg. James H. Burns, of Company A, 25th U. S. Infantry. In practice shooting General Johnson several times exceeded 290, but those scores were not accepted as official.

PLUCK AND LUCK

NEW YORK, MARCH 7, 1917.

TERMS TO SUBSCRIBERS

Single Copies06 Cents
One Copy Three Months75 Cents
One Copy Six Months	1.50
One Copy One Year	3.00

POSTAGE FREE

HOW TO SEND MONEY—At our risk send P. O. Money Order. Check or Registered Letter; remittances in any other way are at your risk. We accept Postage Stamps the same as cash. When sending silver wrap the Coin in a separate piece of paper to avoid cutting the envelope. Write your name and address plainly. Address letters to

Harry E. Wolff, Pres. } **FRANK TOUSEY, Publisher**
 N. Hastings Wolff, Treas. }
 Charles E. Nylander, Sec. } 168 West 23d St., N. Y.

Good Current News Articles

Colonel William F. Cody (Buffalo Bill) left an estate valued at about \$63,000, according to Judge Wells of Cody, Wyo., the scout's legal adviser. The property consists of three ranches near Cody and an equity in a hotel there.

A relief map of Europe's war zone is being prepared at Howell's microcosm in Washington, D. C. It is modelled on a true section of the globe which if continued would make a sphere over ninety feet in diameter. Whenever the map is used in a lecture each of the important cities can be illuminated by a tiny incandescent lamp and an electric enunciator can be used to assist in locating the different places referred to. When finished it will be the largest map of Europe that has ever been made, it is said.

The glass eye crop comes from Thuringia, Germany. As Newfoundlanders are fishermen or as Cubans are tobacco growers so the typical Thuringian is a maker of glass eyes. Almost every Thuringian house is a little eye factory. Four men sit at a table each with a gas jet before him and the eyes are blown from plates and moulded into shape by hand. The colors are traced in with small needles, and as no set rule is observed in the coloring, no two eyes are exactly alike. Sometimes a one-eyed man or woman, coming, maybe, from a great distance, sits before one of these Thuringian tables posing for a glass orb, and the artisan, with his gas jet, his glass and his needle, looks up at his sitter and then down at his work, and altogether the scene suggests a portrait painter at work in his studio.

A meal of pancakes, hurriedly made and as hurriedly eaten, the other morning, caused the death of five members of the Meints family on a farm between Ashbum and Danforth, fifteen miles south of Kankakee, Ill.

The pancakes were made by Mrs. O. K. Meints, mother of four of the victims and grandmother of the fifth. Mrs. Meints is believed to have mixed the contents of a sack containing an arsenical preparation used by her husband in taxidermy with a prepared pancake flour, thinking the powder was flour.

The dead were Fred, twenty-eight; Theodore, twenty-six; Irvin, twenty-one; Mino, twenty-four, and Clarence Meints, the grandson.

The fatal meal was eaten in the morning, and before noon Fred was dead. Mino died at dawn the following day, the last of the five deaths.

O. K. Meints, the father, was somewhat ill and so did not eat any of the pancakes. Mrs. Meints tasted the pancakes after her sons had finished their breakfast, and noticing a peculiar flavor ate none.

Grins and Chuckles

Guest—Here, waiter! Take this chicken away, it's as tough as a paving stone! Waiter—Maybe it's a Plymouth Rock, sir.

"Bliggins has great faith in his own opinions." "Yes," answered the cold-blooded friend, "most of his hard luck is due to misplaced confidence."

She (setting the trap)—I heard yesterday that you are to be married in the spring. He (walking into it)—Help me to make the report true, won't you, dear?

"Don't your conscience sometimes trouble you about things you have to do in financial deals?" "A little," answered Mr. Dustin Stax. "What do you do in such a case?" "I send for a lawyer."

"My beau," said little Elsie, "is going to be an admiral." "Indeed?" replied the visitor. "A cadet at the Naval Academy now, I suppose?" "Oh, he hasn't got that far yet, but he's had an anchor tattooed on his arm."

"I wish you would tell me what the trouble is with this watch," said the customer, handing it to the jeweler. "The trouble," said the jeweler, looking at the number of the timepiece and referring to his ledger, "is that I haven't been paid yet for the cleaning I gave it two years ago."

A little girl stood for some time in a meat market waiting for some one to attend to her wants. Finally the proprietor, being at liberty, approached her and asked: "Is there anything you would like, little girl?" "Oh, yes, sir, please; I want a diamond ring and a sealskin sacque, a real foreign nobleman and a pug dog and a box at the opera, and oh, ever so many things; but all ma wants is a dime's worth of bologna sausage."

INTERESTING ARTICLES

GERMAN WOMEN FOR WAR.

In its "Germany Day by Day" column the London Daily Mail states that Germany has begun formally to organize the women of the country to help in the war. Each of the six chief army commands throughout the empire now has a woman attached to it as directress of the "division for women's services."

Hitherto, as in England, war work by women had been voluntary. The patriotic auxiliary service law is not compulsory as far as female labor is concerned. But German women having proclaimed that they regard themselves as liable for national service under the spirit if not the letter of the law, it has finally been decided to mobilize their services on a more systematic basis than in the past.

NEW KIND OF SHOE SOLES.

A new and recently patented method of manufacturing soles for shoes from scrap leather is described in a report made to the Department of Commerce by Consul H. M. Byington, Leeds, England. While he does not give details concerning the process, Mr. Byington says it is claimed that the soles thus produced are nonsuction, nonslipping, and waterproof, and can be made at a much lower cost than the ordinary leather sole. It is also possible to use the method in building heels.

"It is also claimed," Mr. Byington goes on, "that the novelty of the patent may be enhanced by an ingenious arrangement of strips of rubber attached to a thin layer of canvas, the rubber strips fitting into the interstices of the leather sections. This is said to give a pleasing resiliency to the step of the wearer and to do away with the aching of the feet, sometimes produced by purely rubber soles."

VEGETABLE IVORY AS A CATTLE FOOD.

The United States imports annually from tropical America about 10,000 tons of vegetable ivory nuts, costing \$1,500,000, for use principally in the manufacture of buttons. In the process of manufacture a considerable part of the nut is wasted in the form of sawdust, chips and turning. In foreign countries this waste has been mixed with other ingredients to be used as a cattle food. Indeed, it is said that in Germany vegetable ivory meal has been used as an adulterant in the manufacture of so-called concentrated feeds. With a view to finding a use for the meal in this country, Messrs. Beals and Lindsay, of the Massachusetts Agricultural Experiment Station, have made an extensive investigation of its chemical composition, digestibility and feeding value, the results of which are published in the Journal of Agricultural Research. They find that

the energy equivalent of this material ranks well with other carbohydrate foods, and it possesses a fuel value equal to one-half that of soft coal. Sheep ate the meal readily when it was mixed with other grains and digested it very thoroughly. Cows ate it when mixed with other food, without evidence of digestive disturbances. When fed as an addition to a basal ration, the increase in milk was sufficient to indicate positive value as a productive feed.

NEW MODEL PRISON.

A tract of 625 acres at Wingdale, Dutchess county, about seventy miles from New York on the Harlem branch of the New York Central, was selected by the State Prison Commission as the site for a new model prison designed to be the finest in the United States. Industrial and farm work will be provided for the prisoners and the housing conditions are to conform with the best in prison planning.

Mr. Pilcher, State architect, said that the plans allow for a large baseball field and adequate space for other outdoor sports. Dr. George W. Kirckwey, former warden at Sing Sing, asked if there were space for a gymnasium, and he was answered in the affirmative. He said if the State would appropriate enough money for this building funds could be obtained from outside sources for its equipment.

The State road, which runs through the property, will be diverted so that the trusty prisoners cannot be viewed by curious tourists.

MOTION PICTURES AND EYESTRAIN.

The effects of frequent attendance at the "movies" on eyesight have recently been discussed in some detail by Mr. Gordon L. Berry, acting secretary of the National Committee for the Prevention of Blindness. His principal conclusions are that (1) motion pictures with defects of photography, manufacture and projection may prove injurious to eyesight, and (2) eyestrain caused by viewing motion pictures may indicate a subnormal condition of the eyes which should demand immediate attention on the part of an oculist; in other words, such pictures, while not the chief source of the trouble, may reveal its existence. Some conditions favorable to the protection of the eyes are a plate glass screen, an auditorium as light as may be consistent with securing satisfactory detail in the pictures, and a seat in the center of the auditorium and never nearer to the screen than 20 feet (the further back the better). Without the best screens, films, projection, surrounding illumination, and seating arrangements, the "movies" are likely to prove a cause of serious eye troubles.

CUFF BUTTONS.
Gold plated, bright finished, assorted shapes, set with fine brilliants. Price 10c postpaid.
H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

MARBLE VASE.
A clever and puzzling effect, easy to do, the apparatus can be minutely examined. Effect: A marble can be made to pass from the hand into the closed vase, which a moment before was shown empty. This is a beautiful enamelled turned wood vase.
Price, 20c.
C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

The Bottle Imp.—The peculiarity of this little bottle is that it cannot be made to lie down, and yet by simply passing the hand over it, the performer causes it to do so. This trick affords great amusement, and is of convenient size to carry about. Price, 10c.
C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

THE ENK BLOT JOKER.
Fool Your Friends.—The greatest novelty of the age! Have a joke which makes everybody laugh. Mere run than any other novelty that has been shown in years. Place it on a desk, tablecloth, or any piece of furniture, as shown in the above cut, near some valuable papers, or on fine wearing apparel. Watch the result! Oh, Gee! Price, 10c, each, postpaid.
H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

THE SPIDER WEB PUZZLE.
A very interesting little puzzle. It consists of a heavily nickeled plate and brass ring. The object is to get the ring from the side to the center and back. This is very hard, but we give directions making it easy. Price, 10 cents each, by mail, postpaid.
FRANK SMITH, 383 Lenox Ave., N. Y.

THE SPOTTER CARD TRICK.
The performer exhibits a die. The ace of spades and five cards are now taken from a pack. The ace of spades is thoroughly shuffled with the other cards, which are then placed down in a row on the table. The die is now thrown, and as it embodied with superhuman intelligence, the exact position of the Ace is indicated. Without touching the die, the performer picks up the cards, gives them a complete shuffle and again spreads them out. The die is rolled as before by any person, and is seen to come to a stop with the locating number uppermost. The card is turned over and found to correspond in position. Price, 15c, postpaid.
H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

"KNOCK-OUT" CARD TRICK.—Five cards are shown, front and back, and there are no two cards alike. You place some of them in a handkerchief and ask any person to hold them by the corners in full view of the audience. You now take the remaining cards and request anyone to name any card shown. This done, you repeat the name of the card and state that you will cause it to invisibly leave your hand and pass into the handkerchief, where it will be found among the other cards. At the word "Go!" you show that the chosen card has vanished, leaving absolutely only two cards. The handkerchief is unfolded by any person, and in it is found the identical card. Recommended very highly. Price, 10c.
Wolf Novelty Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

NAIL PUZ.
Made linked folks & take the you know tions with Pr
Wolf Novelty Co., 168 W.

THE BUCULO CI
The most remarkable tri world. It smokes without to gets smaller. Anyone can fun with it, especially if yo presence of a person who of tobacco. It looks exactly fects, and the smoke is s bound to deceive the closes
Price, 15
FRANK SMITH, 383 Len

BLACK-EYE JO
New and amu victim is tol close to his eye all light from the to remove the tu appear in the ca to locate the picte saw the finest bl caw. We furnish blackening prepa tube, so the joke definitely. Those will be caught eve lutely harmless. Price by 2 for 25c.
C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., N

HAPPY JO
With this lapel of you make a d time. Com ber ball and 15c. by ma
H. F. 1815 Centre S

NEW SURPRISE NO
Foxy Gran a, Mr. Peewee and other ce nical faces artistically colored, to which is attached (a long rubber tube, connected with a rubber ball, which can be filled with water, the rubber ball being carried in the pocket, a slight pressure on the bulb causes a long stream. The result can easily be seen.
Price, 15c., Postpaid.
Wolf Novelty Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

LAUGHABLE EGG TRICK.
This is the funniest trick ever exhibited and always produces roars of laughter. The performer says to the audience that he requires some eggs for one of his experiments. As no spectator carries any, he calls his assistant, taps him on top of the head, he gags, and an egg comes out of his mouth. This is repeated until six eggs are produced. It is an easy trick to perform, once you know how, and always makes a hit. Directions given for working it. Price, 25 cents by mail, postpaid.
H. F. Lang, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

THE DEVIL'S CARD TRICK.—From three cards held in the hand anyone is asked to mentally select one. All three cards are placed in a hat and the performer removes first the two that the audience did not select and passing the hat to them their card has mysteriously vanished. A great climax; highly recommended. Price, 10c.
Wolf Novelty Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

slavery to cigars is reported by Chas. Ohnesorge, of Butte, who had been addicted 14 years and after trying various so-called cures in vain found just the in- nation he wanted in a book published and sent free to anybody by Edward J. Woods, 228 Z, Station E, New rk, N. Y. Thousands of persons, th sexes, who were addicted to cigarettes, pipe, chewing, snuff, etc., have been gladdened by this free book. Getting rid of tobacco habit means better health, longer life, greater earning efficiency, tranquility contentment and other benefits.

NEW GEM CIGARETTE ROLLER. Nickel silver case to carry in vest pocket. Makes a perfect cigarette at once. A 5-cent package tobacco makes 70 to 80 regular size cigarettes; less than 1 cent per dozen. Saves time, money and health. Price 15 cents by mail (stamps taken).
Boston Novelty Co., Dept. 3 Melrose, Mass.

Do You Like Real Fascinating
pictures, books, novelties, etc? We have the "niftiest" out. Just the kind you have been looking for. Send dime for good full-size samples and catalogue with nearly a hundred illustrations of beautiful girls in "Bewitching Poses," etc. You'll want more after seeing samples and catalogue.
WILLIAMS PUB. CO., Chicago, Ill.
4008-24 Indiana Ave.,

\$ 2 to \$500 EACH PAID for hundreds of old Coins. Keep ALL money dated before 1895 and send TEN cents for New Illustrated Coin Value Book, size 4x7. It may mean your Fortune. CLARK'S COIN Co., Box 95, Le Roy, N. Y.

O! How She Dances!
Step right up close boys and see "The wail, Maiden" do those wiggling Hazy dances that will open your eyes to the latest and niftiest match-out. Simple to operate, at once for "Fred. Send TWO dimes and treat your friend, Hula Dancer" and but don't let your some real fun—make big money; see it. Agents dozen.
Oriental Novelty Co., 4002-40 Indiana Ave., N. Y.

FACTORY-TO-RIDER SAVES YOU MONEY
Buy direct and save \$10 to \$20 on a bicycle. RANGER BICYCLES now come in 44 styles, colors and sizes. Greatly improved, prices reduced. Other reliable models \$14.75 up. WE DELIVER FREE to you on approval and 30 days trial and riding test. Our big FREE catalog shows everything new in bicycles and sundries. Write for it. TIRES, lamps, wheels, parts and supplies at half retail prices. Do not buy a bicycle, tires, or sundries until you get our wonderful new offers, low prices and liberal terms. A postal brings everything.
MEAD CYCLE COMPANY Dept. 218 Chicago

whole trick is
 mail, postpaid.
FRANK SMITH, 383 Le

THE FLAGGER THROUGH

Having borrowed your friend, push yo through the crown of is seen to move about. very amusing to others, the owner of does not see the joke, but thinks it m to destroy his hat; yet when it is retu s perfectly uninjured. Price, 10c, each by **WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St.,**

THE FOUNTAIN RING.

A handsome ring connected a rubber ball which is conce in the palm of the hand. A ge squeeze forces water or cologne the face of the victim while he examining it. The ball can be stantly filled by immersing ring water same as a fountain pen filler. Price by mail, postpaid, 12c, each. **H. J. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.**

PIGGY IN A COFFIN.

This is a wicked pig that died at an early age, and here he is in his coffin ready for burial. There will be a great many mourners at his funeral, for this coffin, pretty as it looks, is very tricky, and the man who gets it open will feel real grief. The coffin is made of metal, perfectly shaped and beautifully bequeered. The trick is to open it to see the pig. The man that tries it gets his fingers and piggy comes out to sad feelings hurt, and piggy comes out to grunt at his victims. The tubular end of the coffin, which everyone (in trying to open) presses inward, contains a needle which stabs the victim in his thumb or finger, every time. This is the latest and a very "impressive" trick. It can be opened easily by anyone in the secret, and as a neat catch-joke to save yourself from a bore is unsurpassed. Price, 10c.; 3 for 25c., postpaid; one dozen by express, 75c. **WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.**

DICE BOX.

The prettiest and most practical dice box that we have ever sold. By simply running the finger over the ratchet at side of box the three dice are spun rapidly around the box. It is hand-somely nickel plated, has glass front and a green base on which an imported article, made in y Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

OF GOLD HUNTERS.

Consists of matching cards. dd card. The unlucky one t ride the rest of the play- k around the room or side- unny. Price, five cents a

Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

OF AGE CARDS.

rds you can tell the age of w how much money he has ad do many other wonder- previous knowledge neces- s do the trick for you. The ds out. Price, five cents a

Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

USEMENT WHEEL.

This handsome wheel, 7 1/4 inches in circumference, contains concealed num- bers from 0 to 100. By spinning the wheel from the centerpost the numbers revolve rapidly, but only one appears at the circular opening when wheel stops spinning. It can be made to stop pressing the regulator at side, or bet on the number that e one getting the highest z. You might get 0, 5 or ents; 3 for 40 cents, mailed.

50 W. 62d Street, N. Y.

IMITATION OUT FINGER.

A cardboard finger, carefully bandaged with linen, and the side and end are blood-stained. When you slip it on your finger and show it to your friends, just give a groan or two, nurse it up, and pull a look of pain. You will get nothing but sympathy until you give them the laugh. Then duck! Price, 10 cents, postpaid. **WOLFF Novelty Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.**

STAR AND CRESCENT PUZZLE.



The puzzle is to separate the one star from the linked star and crescent without using force. Price, 10 cents; 3 for 25 cents, by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF Novelty Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

MAGIC MIRROR.



Fat and lean funny faces. By looking in these mirrors upright your features become narrow and elongated. Look into it sidewise and your phiz broadens out in the most comical manner. Size 3 1/2 x 2 1/4 inches, in a handsome imitation morocco case. Price, 10 cents each, postpaid. **FRANK SMITH, 383 Lenox Ave., N. Y.**

IMITATION FLIES.



Absolutely true to Nature! A dandy scarf-pin and a rattling good joke. It is impossible to do these pins justice with a description. You have to see them to understand how lifelike they are. When people see them on you they want to brush them off. They wonder "why that fly sticks to you" so persistently. This is the most realistic novelty ever put on the market. It is a distinct ornament for anybody's necktie, and a decided joke on those who try to chase it. Price, 10c, by mail, postpaid. **C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d Street, N. Y.**

READ THIS ONE!

"Moving Picture Stories"

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE DEVOTED TO PHOTOPLAYS AND PLAYERS

PRICE 6c PER COPY

PRICE 6c PER COPY

THE BEST FILM MAGAZINE ON EARTH

BUY A COPY!

ENJOY YOURSELF!

Magnificent Colored Cover Portraits of Prominent Performers!

32 PAGES OF READING

OUT EVERY FRIDAY

EACH NUMBER CONTAINS

- New Portraits and Biographies of Actors and Actresses
- Six Stories of the Best Films on the Screens
- Elegant Half-tone Scenes from the Plays
- Interesting Articles About Prominent People in the Films
- Doings of Actors and Actresses in the Studios and while Picture-making
- Lessons in Scenario Writing, and names of Companies who buy your plays
- Poems, J-kes, and every bright Feature of Interest in Making Moving Pictures

THIS LITTLE MAGAZINE GIVES YOU MORE FOR YOUR MONEY THAN ANY OTHER SIMILAR PUBLICATION ON THE MARKET!

Its authors are the very best that money can procure; its profuse illustrations are exquisite, and its special articles are by the greatest experts in their particular line. No amount of money is being spared to make this publication the very best of its kind in the world. Buy a copy NOW from your newsdealer, or send us 6 cents in money or postage-stamps, and we will mail you any number you desire.

MOVING PICTURE STORIES, Inc., 168 West 23d Street, New York City

D LUCK

- 975 Afloat With Captain Nemo; or, The Mystery of Whirpool Island. By Capt. Thos. H. Wilson.
 976 Two Boys' Trip to an Unknown Planet. By Richard R. Montgomery.
 977 The Two Diamonds; or, A Mystery of the South African Mines. By Howard Austin.
 978 Joe, the Gymnast; or, Three Years Among the Japs. By Allan Arnold.

For sale by all newsdealers, or will be sent to any address on receipt of price, 5 cents per copy, in money or postage stamps.

NOTICE—The following numbers **PRICE SIX CENTS.**

- 979 Jack Hawthorne, of No Man's Land; or, An Uncrowned King. By "Noname."
 980 Gunboat Dick; or, Death Before Dishonor. By Jas. C. Merritt.
 981 Fifty Riders in Black; or, The Ravens of Raven Forest. By Howard Austin.
 982 The Boy Rifle Rangers; or, Kit Carson's Three Young Scouts. By An Old Scout.

- 962 3,000 Years Hills. By Allyn.
 963 Lost in the Ice. By Howard.
 964 The Yellow Diamond; or, Grot Merritt.
 965 The Land of Gold; or, Yankee Australia. By Rich'd R. Mont.
 966 The Cavern of Fire; or, The Thru-sor Harcastle and Jack Merton.
 967 Water-Logged; or, Lost in the Sea. H. Wilson.
 968 Jack Wright, The Boy Inventor, Ex-netic Hurricane. By "Noname."
 969 Lot 77; or, Sold to the Highest Bidder gomery.
 970 The Boy Canoeist; or, Over 1,000 Mile C. Merritt.
 971 Captain Kidd, Jr.; or, The Treasure H By Allan Arnold.
 972 The Red Leather Bag. A Weird Sto By Howard Austin.
 973 The "Lone Star"; or, The Masked Ri Allyn Draper.
 974 A New York Boy Out With Stanley; or, Africa. By Jas. C. Merritt.

FRANK TOUSEY, Publisher,

168 West 23d St., N. Y.

IF YOU

of our weeklies and cannot procure them from your Order and send it to us with the price **POSTAGE STAMPS TAKEN THE SAME AS**
FRANK TOUSEY, Publisher

ANY BACK-NUMBERS

they can be obtained from this office direct. Write out and fill a you want and we will send them to you by return mail.

168 West 23d St., N. Y.

OUR TEN-CENT

No. 1. NAPOLEON'S ORACULUM AND DREAM BOOK.—Containing the great oracle of human destiny; also the true meaning of almost any kind of dreams, together with charms, ceremonies, and curious games of cards.

No. 2. HOW TO DO TRICKS.—The great book of magic and card tricks, containing full instruction on all the leading card tricks of the day, also the most popular magical illusions as performed by our leading magicians; every boy should obtain a copy of this book.

No. 3. HOW TO FLIRT.—The arts and wiles of flirtation are fully explained by this little book. Besides the various methods of handkerchief, fan, glove, parasol, window and hat flirtation, it contains a full list of the language and sentiment of flowers.

No. 4. HOW TO DANCE is the title of this little book. It contains full instructions in the art of dancing, etiquette in the ball-room and at parties, how to dress, and full directions for calling off in all popular square dances.

No. 5. HOW TO MAKE LOVE.—A complete guide to love, courtship and marriage, giving sensible advice, rules and etiquette to be observed, with many curious and interesting things not generally known.

No. 6. HOW TO BECOME AN ATHLETE.—Giving full instruction for the use of dumbbells, Indian clubs, parallel bars, horizontal bars and various other methods of developing a good, healthy muscle; containing over sixty illustrations.

No. 7. HOW TO KEEP BIRDS.—Handsomely illustrated and containing full instructions for the management and training of the canary, mockingbird, bobolink, blackbird, parakeet, parrot, etc.

No. 8. HOW TO BECOME A VENTRILOQUIST.—By Harry Kennedy. Every intelligent boy reading this book of instructions can master the art, and create any amount of fun for himself and friends. It is the greatest book ever published.

No. 10. HOW TO BOX.—The art of self-defense made easy. Containing over thirty illustrations of guards, blows, and the different position of a good boxer. Every boy should obtain one of these useful and instructive books, as it will teach you how to box without an instructor.

No. 11. HOW TO WRITE LOVE-LETTERS.—A most complete little book, containing full directions for writing love-letters, and when to use them, giving specimen letters for young and old.

No. 12. HOW TO WRITE LETTERS TO LADIES.—Giving complete instructions for writing letters to ladies on all subjects; also letters of introduction, notes and requests.

No. 13. HOW TO DO IT; OR, BOOK OF ETIQUETTE.—It is a great life secret, and one that every young man desires to know all about. There's happiness in it.

For sale by all newsdealers, or will be sent to any address on receipt of price, 10c. per copy,
FRANK TOUSEY, Publisher,

No. 14. COMPLETE HANDBOOK OF CANDY, ICE-CREAM, AND CONFECTIONERY.

No. 18. HOW TO BECOME A BODY BUILDER.—One of the little books every boy wishes to have, both simple and a

No. 20. HOW TO WIN PARTIES.—Games, sports, amusements, etc., so you can entertain the money this

No. 21. HOW TO BECOME A GUNNER.—The most complete ever published. About guns, bullets, and fishing, together with description of game and fish.

No. 22. HOW TO BECOME A MAGICIAN.—Heller's second assistant, explained by his former assistant, Fred Hunt, Jr. Explaining how the secret dialogues were carried on between the magician and the boy on the stage; also, explaining all the codes and signals.

No. 23. HOW TO EXPLAIN DREAMS.—This little book gives the explanation to all kinds of dreams, together with lucky and unlucky days.

No. 24. HOW TO WRITE LETTERS TO GENTLEMEN.—Containing full instructions for writing to gentlemen on all subjects.

No. 25. HOW TO BECOME A GYMNAST.—Containing full instructions for all kinds of gymnastic sports and athletic exercises. Embracing thirty-five illustrations. By Professor W. Macdonald.

No. 26. HOW TO ROW, SAIL AND BUILD A BOAT.—Fully illustrated. Full instructions are given in this little book, together with instructions on swimming and riding, companion sports to boating.

No. 27. HOW TO RECITE AND BOOK OF RECITATIONS.—Containing the most popular selections in use, comprising Dutch dialect, French dialect, Yankee and Irish dialect pieces, together with many standard readings.

No. 28. HOW TO TELL FORTUNES.—Everyone is desirous of knowing what his future life will bring forth, whether happiness or misery, wealth or poverty. You can tell by a glance at this little book. Buy one and be convinced.

No. 29. HOW TO BECOME AN INVENTOR.—Every boy should know how inventions originated. This book explains them all, giving examples in electricity, hydraulics, magnetism, optics, pneumatics, mechanics, etc.

No. 30. HOW TO COOK.—One of the most instructive books on cooking ever published. It contains recipes for cooking meats, fish, game, and oysters; also pies, puddings, cakes and all kinds of pastry, and a grand collection of recipes.

MAKE CANDY.—A complete making all kinds of pastries, essences, etc., etc.
HOW TO BECOME BEAUTIFUL.—The most valuable to the world. Every boy should become beautiful. The secret is simple.

HOW TO ENTERTAIN AN EVENING.—A complete compendium of amusements, comic recitations, parlor or drawing-room entertainments. It contains more for the book published.

HOW TO BECOME A FISHING MAN.—The complete guide to fishing. Contains full instructions on fishing, traps, trapping, etc., with description of game and fish.

HOW TO BECOME A MAGICIAN.—Heller's second assistant, explained by his former assistant, Fred Hunt, Jr. Explaining how the secret dialogues were carried on between the magician and the boy on the stage; also, explaining all the codes and signals.

HOW TO EXPLAIN DREAMS.—This little book gives the explanation to all kinds of dreams, together with lucky and unlucky days.

HOW TO WRITE LETTERS TO GENTLEMEN.—Containing full instructions for writing to gentlemen on all subjects.

HOW TO BECOME A GYMNAST.—Containing full instructions for all kinds of gymnastic sports and athletic exercises. Embracing thirty-five illustrations. By Professor W. Macdonald.

HOW TO ROW, SAIL AND BUILD A BOAT.—Fully illustrated. Full instructions are given in this little book, together with instructions on swimming and riding, companion sports to boating.

HOW TO RECITE AND BOOK OF RECITATIONS.—Containing the most popular selections in use, comprising Dutch dialect, French dialect, Yankee and Irish dialect pieces, together with many standard readings.

HOW TO TELL FORTUNES.—Everyone is desirous of knowing what his future life will bring forth, whether happiness or misery, wealth or poverty. You can tell by a glance at this little book. Buy one and be convinced.

HOW TO BECOME AN INVENTOR.—Every boy should know how inventions originated. This book explains them all, giving examples in electricity, hydraulics, magnetism, optics, pneumatics, mechanics, etc.

HOW TO COOK.—One of the most instructive books on cooking ever published. It contains recipes for cooking meats, fish, game, and oysters; also pies, puddings, cakes and all kinds of pastry, and a grand collection of recipes.

No. 31. HOW TO BECOME A SPEAKER.—Containing fourteen illustrations, giving the different positions requisite to become a good speaker, reader and elocutionist. Also containing gems from all the popular authors of prose and poetry.

No. 32. HOW TO RIDE A BICYCLE.—Containing instructions for beginners, choice of a machine, hints on training, etc. A complete book. Full of practical illustrations.

No. 35. HOW TO PLAY GAMES.—A complete and useful little book, containing the rules and regulations of billiards, bagatelle, backgammon, croquet, dominoes, etc.

No. 36. HOW TO SOLVE CONUNDRUMS.—Containing all the leading conundrums of the day, amusing riddles, curious catches and witty sayings.

No. 38. HOW TO BECOME YOUR OWN DOCTOR.—A wonderful book, containing useful and practical information in the treatment of ordinary diseases and ailments common to every family. Abounding in useful and effective recipes for general complaints.

No. 39. HOW TO RAISE DOGS, POULTRY, PIGEONS AND RABBITS.—A useful and instructive book. Handsomely illustrated.

No. 40. HOW TO MAKE AND SET TRAPS.—Including hints on how to catch moles, weasels, otter, rats, squirrels and birds. Also how to cure skins. Copiously illustrated.

No. 41. THE BOYS OF NEW YORK END MEN'S JOKE BOOK.—Containing a great variety of the latest jokes used by the most famous end men. No amateur minstrel is complete without this wonderful little book.

No. 42. THE BOYS OF NEW YORK STUMP SPEAKER.—Containing a varied assortment of stump speeches, Negro, Dutch and Irish. Also end men's jokes. Just the thing for home amusement and amateur shows.

No. 43. HOW TO BECOME A MAGICIAN.—Containing the grandest assortment of magical illusions ever placed before the public. Also tricks with cards, incantations, etc.

No. 44. HOW TO WRITE IN AN ALBUM.—A grand collection of Album Verses suitable for any time and occasion, embracing Lines of Love, Affection, Sentiment, Humor, Respect, and Condolence, also Verses Suitable for Valentines and Weddings.

No. 45. THE BOYS OF NEW YORK MINSTREL GUIDE AND JOKE BOOK.—Something new and very instructive. Every boy should obtain this book, as it contains full instructions for organizing an amateur minstrel troupe.

any address on receipt of price, 10c. per copy, or 3 for 25c., in money or postage stamps, by
FRANK TOUSEY, Publisher,

168 West 23d St., N. Y.