

EVERY WEEK

JUNE 5, 1926

★ Western Story Magazine

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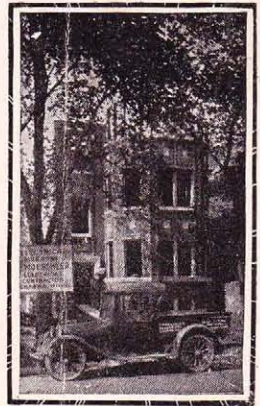
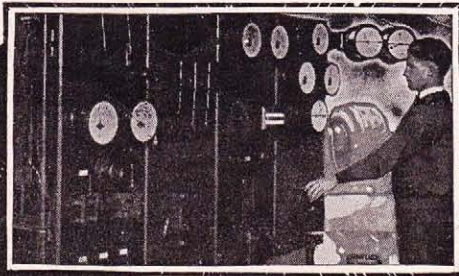
15 CTS.
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OF OUTDOOR LIFE

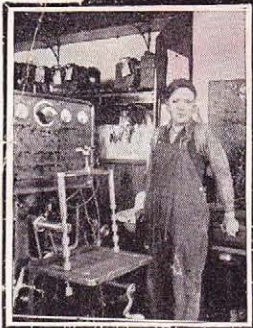


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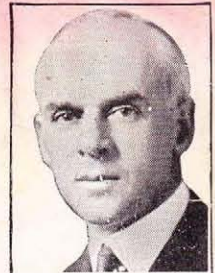
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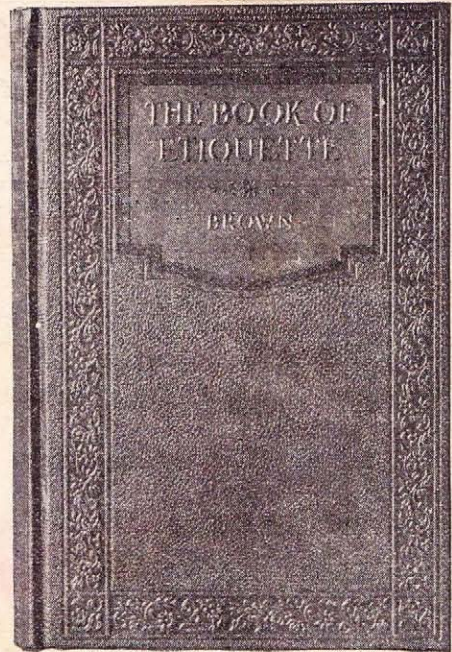
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STREET & SMITH CORP., 79 Seventh Ave., New York

Western Story Magazine

EVERY WEEK

Vol. LXI

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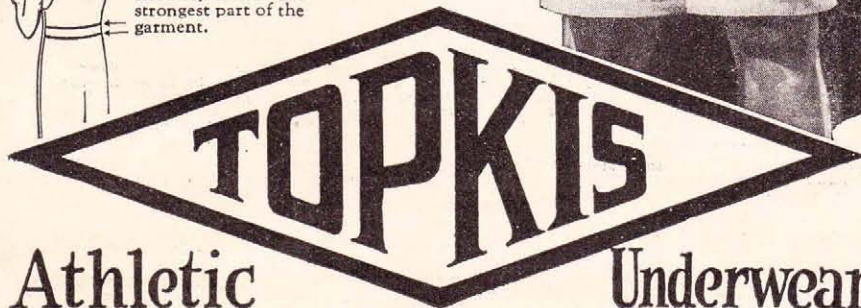
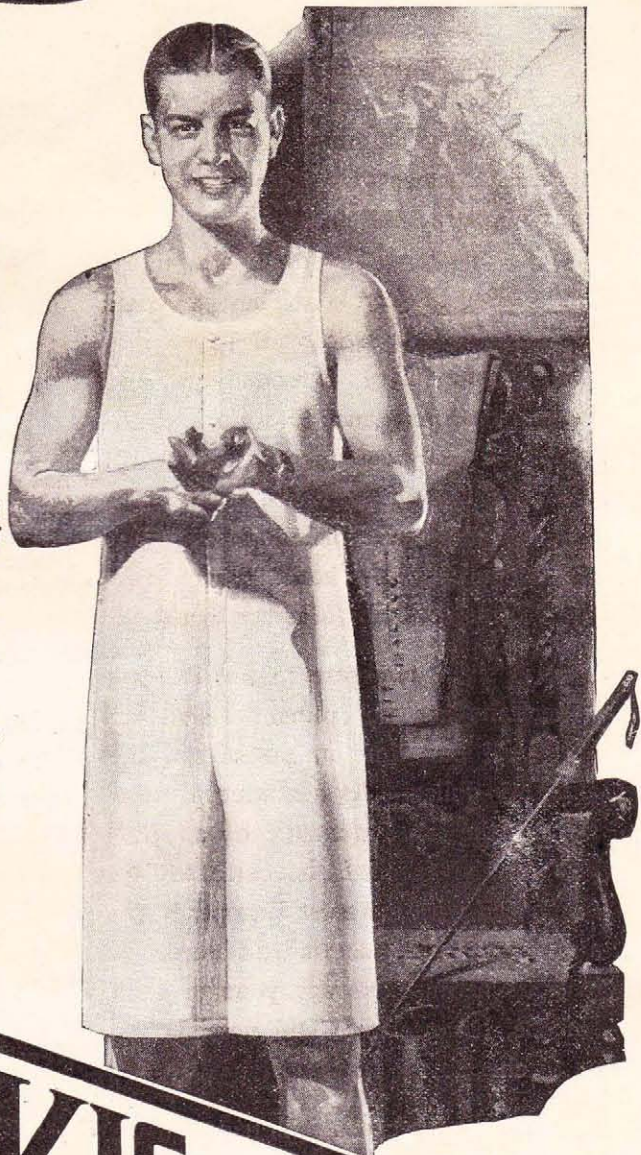
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"We novelists are the showmen of life," said a famous English writer once, putting in other words Shakespeare's comment on holding the mirror up to nature; and to be sure it is the writing people who show us how thrilling a thing life can be. They can come with their little words on paper into our commonplace surroundings and change drab existence into glorious adventure. They can take us away with them on desperate affairs, send us to face the most overwhelming odds, give us romance within book covers that transforms all our workaday world.

It is sheer nonsense to say that we Americans are not romantic, that we spend all our time in pursuit of the almighty dollar. As a matter of fact, we are the most romantic of all peoples on the face of the earth to-day. Compared with us, most Europeans are a skeptical, cold, materialistic breed. It may be because we are younger than Europe, because it is still possible for us to cherish the illusions of youth.

Whatever the cause, it is true that we sit at the feet of our story-tellers and listen to their romancing, just as little children gather round some beloved maker of magic.

This is nothing to be ashamed of. We have our achievements in the world of material things. We are unsurpassed in the matter of industry, of organization, of invention. Ours is the right, then, to dream a little, if we will, to find in good fiction escape from modern struggle and strife.

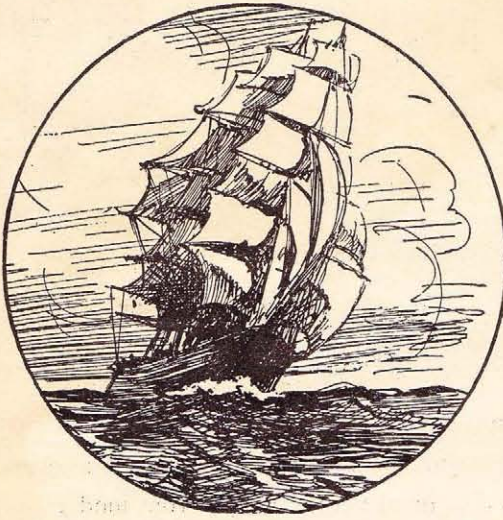
To meet the need that is in all of us for romance, a great publishing house has called on the best of the fiction writers of the day, giving them free play to let their fancy wander, asking that they tell us stories that will hold us in their spell.

Here are reviewed some of the most recent books which that house has published. They are books about the great West, books of mystery, fine, clean love stories. They are Chelsea House books, your guarantee of good reading. The four mentioned here may be had from any reputable bookseller in your neighborhood. Ask your dealer or write to Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, for a complete list of these books.



WANDA OF THE WHITE SAGE, by Roy Ulrich. Price 75 cents. Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City.

Continued on 2nd page following



The Cruise of the Colleen Bawn

By Frank
Carruthers

Author of
"Terror Island."

Shanghaied!

Certain big business interests wanted Sid Livingston out of the way for a while. That was how he came to be shanghaied on board the clipper-built schooner, *Colleen Bawn*, for a voyage to the Pribilof Islands, in Bering Sea.

As you follow Sid Livingston in his adventures, you have the sense of being at sea; you live with the scoundrelly crew of the *Colleen Bawn*; the tang of the ocean brine is in your nostrils; the spindrift lashes your face; you feel the heave and surge of the deck beneath your feet. You participate in Livingston's desperate perils and his attempt at escape—one of the most dramatic episodes in sea fiction.

Glorious Adventure

fills the pages of "The Cruise of the *Colleen Bawn*"—adventure that will make the blood run fast and cause the pulse to quicken, that will set the nerves atingle.

Readers who like a good sea yarn will be delighted with this work of Frank Carruthers. It has all the thrill of an old-time pirate romance, with the novelty of being laid at the present time. The story is filled with drama, action, and tense situations. Men are tested by the sea as by no other element. In its grip, weaklings rise to the heights of heroism, while physical giants quail before its terrors. Frank Carruthers has made a fine contribution to the literature of the sea in writing "The Cruise of the *Colleen Bawn*."

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Into a boarding house, where young Dan Chadwick was dreaming dreams of high adventure, walked a beautiful girl—a stranger to Dan, though she said she knew him.

Before they had spoken together for five minutes, she offered Dan a job that carried with it a retaining fee of \$25,000 a year and all the adventure he wanted. Then, before he could catch his breath, she bluntly informed him that part of the job was to marry her.

Mr. Ulrich in this fast-moving story whirls his readers into one amazing situation after another. If you like books with real pace and go to them, "Wanda of the White Sage" was written for you. It is a love and adventure story of the finest type, one that I have no hesitancy in recommending to the most "choosy" of my readers.



MR. CHANG OF SCOTLAND YARD, by A. E. Apple. Price 75 cents. Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City.

"A murder without a motive is the height of stupidity," thus spoke the remarkable Mr. Chang when finally his pursuers caught up with him. But there were many real motives behind certain of the strange deeds of Mr. Chang that were far from stupid. The story of the unraveling of these motives that set into action this debonair, quick-thinking Oriental is a fascinating one. How well Mr. Apple tells it! He leads you on from one exciting scene to another in masterly style. He makes you hate and admire and almost respect his outstanding character. For those whose appetite for detective stories has become a bit jaded, I recommend "Mr. Chang of Scotland Yard" as a first-class fillip.

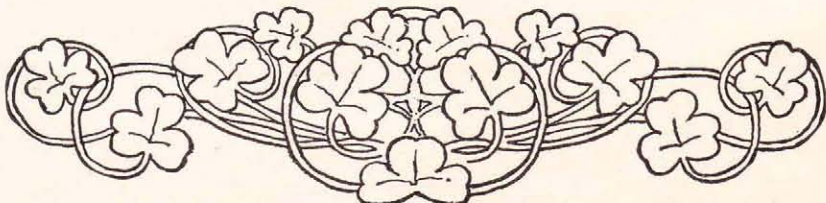
BACK OF BEYOND, an Adventure Story, by Ethel Smith Dorrance and James French Dorrance. Price 75 cents. Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City.

Do you know what a "chechahco" is? Not to keep you in suspense, it is the Yukon expression for tenderfoot; and Doctor Kirkland and his daughter were all of that. Otherwise, they would never have insisted on pushing on to Back of Beyond Valley in the middle of a raging Yukon winter. No one could dissuade them, however, and the adventures that befell them make a thrilling story of the great North, the sort of yarn that you like to read stretched out in comfort away from the heat of an approaching summer. The book is the tale of as intricate a crime as ever the Canadian Mounted were called on to solve. How well they did the job is for you to say. I think you will agree at the end that here is a smashing and unusual story of real folks in a real situation.



THE WAGON BOSS, a Western Story, by Emart Kinsburn. Price 75 cents. Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City.

Those who have read Emart Kinsburn's "Boss of Camp Four" will remember a certain delightful character in that book called Chet Fanning. Those who have never met Chet now have the chance to see him in very lively action. There's a conspiracy to ruin Chet's boss, the famous "Spookmule" Paxton, and Chet goes right after the conspirators. The result is a book that once more gives life and color to the picturesque scenes of the construction camps of the West. An unforgettable yarn that should be in your library.

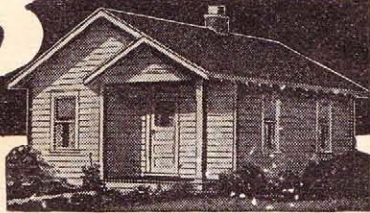


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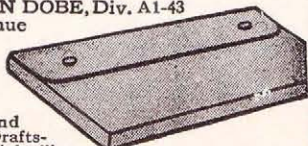
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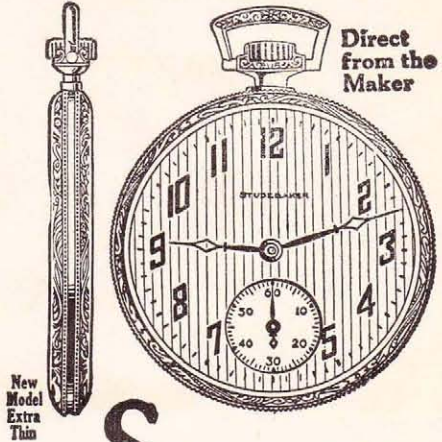
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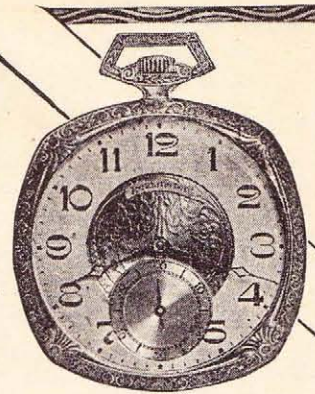


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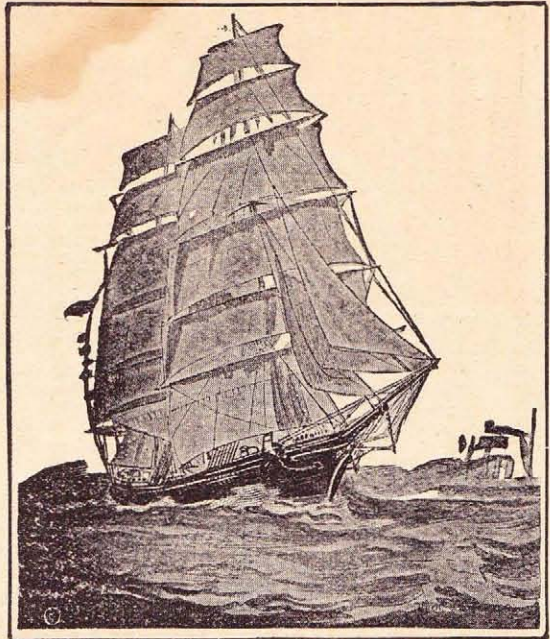
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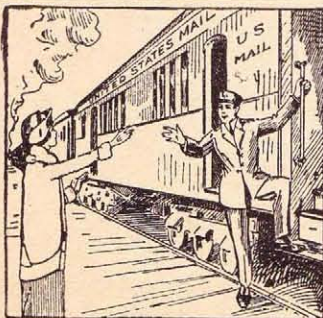
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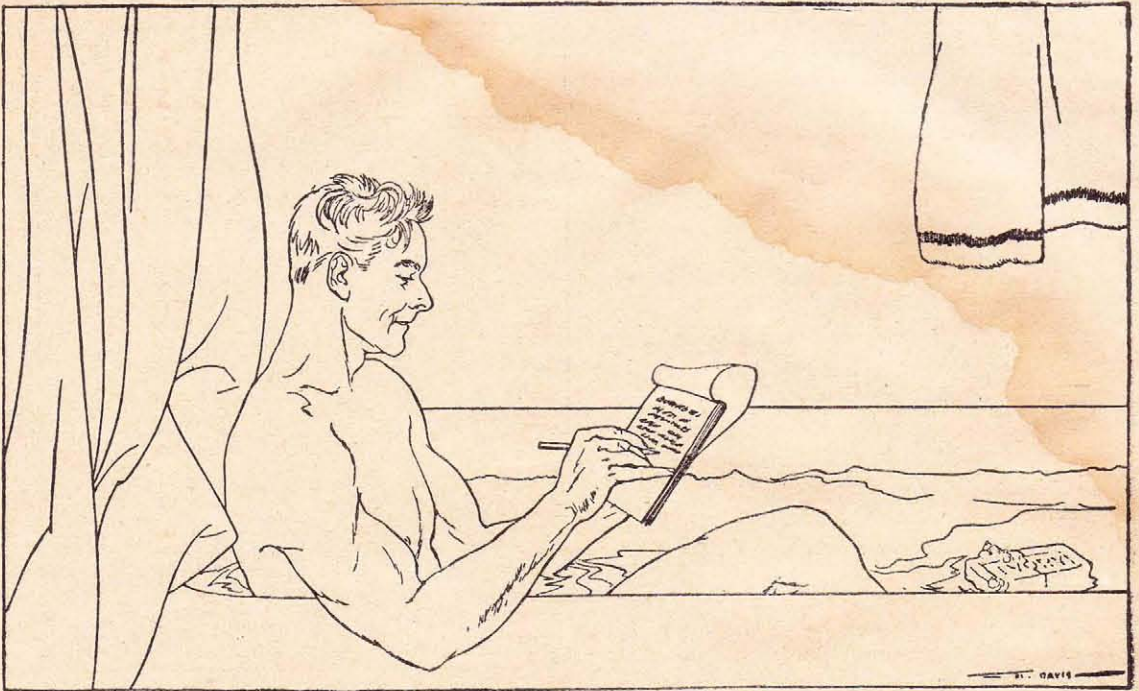
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2 One man sings while he bathes; another sputters in wrath. What soap does each use, and why?

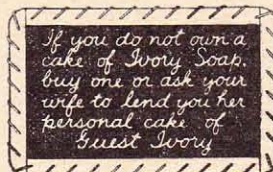
3 Of the 55 good reasons for using Ivory Soap in the bath, which comes next in importance after "It floats"?

4 Bathers for nearly fifty years have compared Ivory lather to (a) clouds, (b) foam, (c) whipped cream. Can you think of a better comparison? (A correct answer to this question insures a passing mark in the examination.)

5 If an airplane travels at the rate of 3 miles per minute, how much faster does Ivory lather rinse off?

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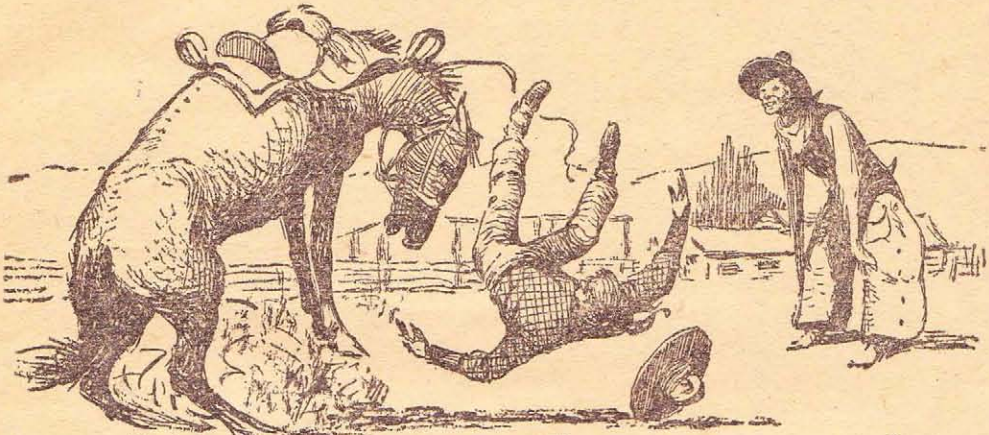
Western Story Magazine

EVERY WEEK

Vol. LXI

JUNE 5, 1926

No. 2



That's Funny!

A Peg Leg Garfield Story by F.R. Buckley

Author of "Peg Leg Fills the Jail," etc.

CHAPTER I.

A GOOD LAUGH.



FOR about three calendar weeks, circumstances had allowed me to revel in the opinion which I should like to hold permanently. It is—that after eight years in the Texas Rangers, followed by fifty as a sheriff, not to mention various long terms as proprietor of a general store, registrar of births and deaths, station master, telegraph operator, freight agent and newspaper correspondent at Three Pines, a man becomes sort of vaccinated against

unpleasant surprise. I don't mean that unpleasant events will cease to happen to him, even after he has accumulated seventy-eight years and a wooden leg. It is merely that, having heretofore been hit by every weapon in Fate's armory, he will be more or less used to whatever she hits him with next. Of course, such an idea is the bunk of apple sauce, to say nothing of banana oil. At the same time, I keep going back to it occasionally, regardless of the fact that it has always proved to be the forerunner of some trouble hitherto unknown in my experience.

Witness the afternoon on which I start the herewith narrative. Sitting on

the porch of my International Emporium and Sheriff's Office, smoking a cigarette, and surveying the landscape, I had run over in my mind all the possibilities of dirty work for the immediate future including the likelihood of my going bankrupt, at last. There could be an outbreak of rustling just when I was due for one of my rheumatic attacks; Jake Henson might quit the deputy-sheriff job as he'd recently threatened to do; et cetera, et cetera. I had come to the conclusion that, while any of these things might happen, neither they, nor anything else I could imagine, were capable of giving me that nasty feeling of shock, of having been taken unawares, which is the most unpleasant feature of man's battle with civilization.

Secure in this conviction, and a little chilly at the approach of evening, I had retired to the interior of my store. I was using the counter as a reading desk, in perusing the *mun to odd* volume of my encyclopedia, when a shadow fell across the sunset light from the doorway and then shut the light rather completely off my book.

Since there is a small window behind the counter, I moved the volume and, never for an instant doubting that this visitor was a cow-puncher desiring to swell his charge account with a can of pears, a bottle of ginger ale, or some such merchandise, I finished the article on the nervous system before giving the newcomer my attention. This took about fifteen or twenty minutes, it being a lamentable fact that the older a jasper grows in an administrative office like mine, the more he has to bust the book of etiquette in the eye if he is to maintain discipline in his bailiwick without too much shooting.

Well, finally I looked across the counter, and what did I behold? Was it "Pie-face" Lammermoor, Tom Lear, Marty O'Donnell, "Two-toes" Trotter, "Pee-wee" Nicholson, "Won't-wash"

Walter Cowen, "Excuse-me" Bradley, or any of the other fifty or sixty guys I might reasonably have expected to see?

No! Instead of any of these sufficiently disgusting objects, my gaze came to rest upon a tall, rangy jasper who, though handsome, appeared to have been run over by a stampede of two thousand seven hundred and fifty-eight cattle and who, in point of clothes, wore positively no more than one shoe and a shoulder holster. What interested and dismayed me more than anything, however, was the fact that, in spite of his condition and the way I had accidentally treated him, this here stranger was smiling with all his mutilated features. Indeed, he looked as though it wouldn't take much tickling to make him burst forth into a loud laugh.

Taking one thing with another, I perceived that he was certainly the victim of some crime requiring my attention; so I reached for my star, hat, and gun belt before indulging in any idle chat. Having got which appurtenances properly attached, I said briefly:

"Well, and what happened to you?"

Honest, I thought he was going to burst forth into yells of merriment; and from what I came to know of him later, I believe it was only the expression in my eye that held him back.

"I fell off the bluff," he replied, chuckling. "'Dismal' Danny Driggs is what they call me, on account——"

What did I care for his nickname, or the reasons for it?

"Fell off the bluff?" I asked, wondering whether his method of annoying me was by turning out to be a lunatic. "Fell off what bluff?"

"Well, I've only seen one," said he, "and you can bet I wish I hadn't seen——"

"You mean to tell me that you tumbled over the edge of that split rock near Gold Creek?"

"Well, it certainly was a rock and it sure——"

"Well, why didn't you go to Gold Creek for your medical attention, then? That's only a quarter of a mile, and you must have walked nearly ten to get here."

At this, he burst into a string of chuckles. "By Gosh, is that a fact?" he inquired. "Isn't that just my luck. Honest, that's a scream! There was I, all bruised up and tired out and full of bits of the Spanish bayonet I fell on, startin' out along the railway track in the wrong direction, an' walking—tee-hee! Haw! Ha-ha! Ho-ho-ho-ho-ho! I—tee-hee! Ha-ha——"

"Why didn't you look in the other direction, anyway?" I demanded, feeling surer and surer that Doc Brewer would have to come over and ask this guy how many blue beans made three. "You can see Gold Creek from that rock!"

He stopped laughing, of which I was glad.

"Well, you see, with these guys shooting at me," he said, "I didn't seem to have much time to look around. I just beat it down the railroad tracks, and it seems now that I—tee-hee——"

"What were they shooting at you for? Who——"

"That's funny, too. I was sittin' there laughin' over a comic strip an' positively payin' no attention to anybody or anythin', when suddenly one of these guys comes an' shakes me by the shoulder an' says: 'If you are a deaf and dummy, you put 'em up, too!' He shoves a great big .45 gun under my nose. Naturally, being startled, I jumped up and patted him one in the jaw. Well, at that, naturally all these buddies of his commenced shootin', an' I didn't dare fire back for fear of hittin' some of the women. Finally I jumped through the window——"

By this time, my brain was beginning to spin around on its axis so fast that

I was getting seasick. Windows and women and funny papers and split rocks and mutilation and mirth—they were beginning to make me feel I also was crazy. "Shut up!" I interrupted, inserting my fingers in my ears. And when he had ceased talking, I asked: "Who were these guys?"

"How should I know?" asks the victim. "I'm only just arrived here from Nev——"

"What did they look like, then?"

"Well, all I could see beyond their masks——"

"Masks?" I demanded, with a considerable sinking of the heart. "What were they wearing masks for?"

"It's quite the usual thing, when holding up a train," replied my informant, patting his face back into position.

I was all out of shrieks, so I just stared at his still smiling visage and, in a feeble voice, inquired what train had been held up, and where.

"It was the ten forty from Longhorn City," said Dismal Danny, "an' so far as I had time to notice, it stopped about a hundred yards the other side of this here split rock I fell off. Yeah, I'm sure about that, because it seemed two hundred and fifty years before I got to the edge of the precipice, and what seems two hundred and fifty years when you're being shot at is just about twenty-five seconds, and twenty-five seconds is just about my time for the hundred."

Well, I heaved a sigh of relief, and at once got a better opinion of the man's mental condition. If he could bring me such good news as this—namely, that the robbery hadn't taken place in my county at all but where it would annoy Ben Pokeson—obviously, he couldn't be entirely off his rocker. Nothing could have been more rational, in fact, than the way he said he was tired, reasoning out that a good remedy would be to sit down, or that his firmness in insisting that he should

pay for the bread, cheese, eggs, canned meat, peaches, sarsaparilla, coffee, and medical supplies which I now expended upon him. He was accustomed, it seemed, to carry his roll in the nose of his holster. His beautiful consideration for the women and children in the train having prevented him from shooting, had preserved his fortune of eleven dollars from being lost.

"As for the clothes," he said, while I got him the usual overalls and so on out of stock, "I can't pay you now, but the minute I've got a job, I'll be over."

"One moment," I said, taking the phone and calling old Simon Bridges of the Diamond B. "Yeah—Bill Garfield. Want to speak to Simon. Oh, hello, Alice. Yeah, your pa. Thanks."

Turning to the young man, I asked: "Have you ever punched cattle before?"

His mouth was full, but he nodded and made a sound like "Montana." So that was all right.

"Oh, Simon? Well, listen. I've got that new man for you, just the very one you were lookin' for. He's right here—only got into Three Pines today. He's a bit battered, but nothing—no, he hasn't got a horse. Yeah, if you want to send Alice with the buckboard. Say, bud"—I turned to Dismal Danny—"are you ready to take a job to-night, Diamond B, old friend of mine, forty and found?"

"Boofleitch!" he answered; which I translated as meaning that I might bet my life on it.

"All right," I told Simon, "he's hired. Say, about my commission—never mind it, old friend. Just give Alice seventeen dollars and a quarter for the clothes I've sold him, and you may deduct the amount from his wages. Don't mention it. Pleasure. Good night."

Feeling pleased with life in general and leaving the receiver off the hook,

so that Ben Pokeson wouldn't be able to call up and demand my help in the catching of his train robbers, I stumped over and sat down near the young newcomer.

"You haven't been punching cows lately, however," said I, having noticed that the remaining boot he had worn on arrival was hobnailed and lacked a high heel.

"No. Matter of fact," he answered, gathering up a last handful of crumbs and eating 'em, "I've been home-steading. Got the land hunger an' tried to eat the State of Nevada."

"And it gave you indigestion," I told him, having heard the same story before.

Well, would you believe it, he lay back in his chair and chuckled! "Honest, it was too funny," said this peculiar guy. "You know, I worked like a dog for two years, gettin' the land fit to plant. An' then when I'd planted it twice over, owin' to not havin' known how to do it the first time, the jack rabbits got away with the crop before it was two inches high out of the ground. The calm way they'd walk up an' eat themselves fat—I nearly died laughing."

While I stared at him with my eyes popping, he chuckled some more. I never saw such a guy. And he wasn't being brave, either, with this amusement over his own misfortunes. He simply couldn't help it.

"Well, after I'd spent about two hundred bucks on traps an' poison an' ammunition, gettin' rid of the jacks, an' planted the whole layout over again," he went on in a rollicking manner, "what do you think happened, then? Honest, it sounds too funny to be true, but I swear I tell you no lie. There wasn't a drop of rain all summer, an' every blade of everything I had planted burned up to a crisp!"

I couldn't sit there dumb as a jug, and the way he was smiling didn't in-

vite any condolences, so I took a chance and gave a titter.

"He-he-hee!" I giggled insincerely.

He laid his hand on my knee. "Yeah, but wait a minute," he said eagerly. "I got right to work with a couple of borrowed mules—I'd filed on the flood waters already—and I got to work, all alone except for the broomies. I built a dam fifty yards long, six feet thick, an' about ten feet high; all stone, mortared, an' put together as nice as you please. Took me eight months, workin' fourteen hours a day. Well, what do you think happened then?"

Well, gents, I couldn't titter any more; I just sat and looked at him.

"After I'd got all my crops in an' comin' up grand, there was a fierce rainstorm in the mountains, an' the floods came down like old boots, an' the dog-gone dam gave about four cracks an' a pop, an' away she went, lettin' the water loose to wash all my seed away! After all my trouble—I'd actually laid stones by lantern light! Gosh, when I imagine what my face must 'a' looked like, I could split my sides. Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! Oh-ho-ho-ho-ho-ho! Woooof ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!"

The point I wish to make is that he wasn't faking all this cachinnation. In fact, after he'd kept this particular burst up for about twelve minutes, he was evidently in great pain with his ribs and the muscles of his face. The only effect of my efforts to sober him by rapping his knuckles with the stove poker was to increase the spasms, owing to my accidentally missing him once and hitting my own thumb.

After a little, I retired to the porch and spent my time pitying him and looking for the Diamond B buckboard. It didn't come for twenty minutes more, by which time Dismal Danny had kind of got over his amusement.

Alice Bridges entered the Emporium just in time to interrupt his laughable account of how he sold his homestead

to a neighbor for two hundred bucks, of which he actually got fifty.

"Good-by—and thanks, Mr. Garfield," said Mr. Driggs, after I had performed the necessary introductions, and Alice had remarked that she had to hurry back home. "Anything I can ever do for you in return, why let me know."

Miss Bridges having given me the seventeen dollars and twenty-five cents, I felt inspired to put forth merely my standard request to new arrivals.

"Be a good boy, and don't give me any official trouble," I begged of him.

"On the contrary, I'll save you some, if I can," said he prophetically. With these blessed words he shoved off, leaving me alone and somewhat apprehensive.

I couldn't figure out, at first, what gave me this feeling of approaching trouble, but at last the explanation began to dawn. Old Simon Bridges was a nice old guy in many ways, though foolish in many others. But on one point he was as fixed as death on a dead Indian.

He wasn't going to have his little Alice pulling off any of these here ranch romances, and wedding one of the help. He had decided and announced that she was to marry a ranch owner like her pa, and he stood ready to enforce this rule with anything up to a shotgun.

Whereas I now realized that, though Alice Bridges was herself a merry soul, ready both to take part in any diversion that was going, and to invent occasions for mirth herself—her appearance and my introduction of her to Mr. Dismal Danny Driggs, had been the signal for that gentleman to can his perennial smile and adopt the facial expression of a calf with the indigestion. Which obviously indicated—now I had time to think about it—the beginning of love.

I didn't sleep that night.

CHAPTER II.

A LITTLE SUNSTROKE.

THE next afternoon, hot though the day turned out to be, badly as my store stock, freight receipts, and vital statistics needed arrangement, and threatening as had become the rheumatic twinges in my various working parts, my fears forced me to put on my working clothes, my peg leg with the iron ferule, saddle up, and go over to Bridges'. Had Simon been a Texan born and bred, or this new hand of his one of those young men that seem to be manufactured by the dozen lot and supplied through a mail-order house, I might have taken my precautionary measures by telephone. But considering that the old man had spent most of his life ranching in Oregon, where things are different, while the new employee had a habit of pasting folks in the jaw while they held revolver muzzles under his nose, I thought it advisable to have a few explanatory words with both Simon and Dismal Danny, each in the presence of the other.

This was not to be; first because, when I reached the Diamond B, the new hand was out somewhere on the range; and secondly because, according to "Si" Bridges, nothing needed explanation on either side, except Bridges' astonishing good luck in hiring such a mixture of all the virtues.

"I can't thank you enough, Bill," said Simon, patting me on the back until we stood in a cloud of dust. "If I wasn't well acquainted with your sturdy independence of spirit, I should ask you to accept a ten-dollar bill as a recognition of your finding Danny for me. But as it is," he went on hastily, "I can only express my gratitude. Honest, I didn't know there were any punchers like him, outside of Oregon. What you figure needs explaining about him, is more than I can tell."

"Well," said I, "he kind of laughs a lot, for one thing."

"Is that a drawback?" protested old Bridges, too wrapped up in his subject even to notice that we were standing in the full glare of the sun, and me with my throat as dry as a lime-burner's wig. "Bill, if you'd had as much experience as I have with punchers who look down their noses if you ask 'em to do some little extra thing, such as riding over to Longhorn City in an evening, or getting up an hour or two early to dig a drainage ditch that's badly needed, you'd appreciate having a guy around that grinned a bit. He——"

"Another thing," I interrupted, looking yearningly at the veranda where Alice was rocking in a wicker chair and drinking iced lemonade through a straw, "I forgot to mention to him your ideas about—er—your opinions concerning—aw——"

"Not another word," says Simon, nodding and winking at me mysteriously. "I understand. But he's not the kind of jasper to spend his time dangling after the boss' daughter when he ain't wanted. Alice is a sensible girl, and what's more to the point, Bill—well, we'll see about that in time. All I'll say now is, that Driggs is the kind of puncher that makes a man change his opinions about punchers. Imagine a new hand turnin' up an' before he's been here twenty minutes, fixin' to save me hundreds an' hundreds of dollars on ditch diggin' alone."

"How?"

"Dynamite," said Simon, "used in a way I never heard of, though he says it's well known. Then again, you know as well as anybody how I been laughed at for tryin' to protect my cattle against this here hollow-horn disease."

He had indeed, there being, as everybody knows, no such disease in existence. Up in the Northwest, cattle quite commonly get their horns frozen dur-

ing the winter and shed them in the spring—these relics being taken by folks that don't even know all horns are hollow, as a symptom of some new scourge. In Texas, where we don't go in much for ten-below-zero weather, of course the evidence is lacking, except when a beef breaks a horn off in a fight. And you can bet your life that the Diamond B men weren't in the habit of reporting any of these dejected members that they did happen to find, however strict old Bridges' orders on the subject might be. Naturally enough, they didn't want to go scouring the range on a false alarm, roping perfectly peppy cows and giving 'em pills or what not.

"Well," continued the poor old enthusiast, "this boy didn't laugh at me—no, sir! He knew too much. Seen the ravages of the plague himself, workin' cows up in Montana. He says to me, he says——"

"Here he comes now, if I'm not mistaken," I interrupted, still with one eye on the veranda.

After a moment, however, the optic which was fixed upon the approaching Mr. Driggs hogged all my attention and drew its brother to join it; so obviously did his method of riding indicate something radically wrong. It was, as I have remarked, a hot day. Nevertheless, Dismal Danny had come into sight, plying his spurs in an effort to reach the ranch house sooner than possible. He looked so desperate, and the clouds of dust around him was so big, that for a second or two, I absent-mindedly thought of Indians.

At a range of about fifty yards, he saw us, wrenched his pony to the left so hard that its rear legs absolutely slipped and, as he galloped down on us, raised his left arm, brandishing something in the air. I couldn't see what it was, and neither could Bridges, until, having done a flying dismount—after which his poor horse lay down

and rolled—the messenger flung the object at our feet. Then we perceived that if you talk of the devil, he certainly will appear. The trophy was none other than a steer's horn, evidently detached from the animal's head and, naturally, hollow all the way up.

"I—found it—other side—Blue Creek," gasped Dismal Danny Driggs.

Simon, staring at this sign of death to his herds and ruination for himself, gave what I can only describe as a bass shriek. I myself should have regarded this as sufficient reaction to the news, but Mr. Bridges didn't stop there. I must explain at this point, that he is a gentleman bountifully equipped by nature with white hair and whiskers. He is the only person I ever met whose hair would literally stand on end. In the days before those "Scary Mary" toys came into the market, and when all of us boys around Three Pines were younger and less dignified, we used to have a lot of fun with Simon, telling him some frightful news, such as that the country was going dry, and watching his thatch defy the force of gravity. He used not to have any whiskers in those days, and I have got to confess that the stunt he now pulled off with their assistance, nearly keeled me over, hardened as I was.

His hair started to stand up from the crown of his head forward—that was all right, and I regarded the phenomenon with interest, but without surprise. When, however, his goatee arose and stuck out like a bowsprit, and his side whiskers raised themselves into a position that would have got him first prize at a Persian cat show, even I had to grin. As for Dismal Danny Driggs, he gazed at his employer for some seconds as though hypnotized, gave a kind of choking sound, fell flat down on the grass, and literally began to writhe.

"The sun's been too much for the poor lad," said Bridges, in a dazed tone. "You look after him, Bill. Take

him into the house. I've gotta—— Hi, you-all in the bunk house! You, 'Reddy!' You, Jones! What do you think you're doin', you bow-legged lot of food destroyers?"

Naturally enough, the spectacle of Danny's flying arrival had wakened the six or seven punchers that were off duty, and they were now standing in the doorway of the house. Old Simon advanced toward them at a run, wringing his hands and calling them names.

"Get your horses!" he cried, jumping back and forth in his indecision as to whether to punch them all first, or get the veterinary supplies and hit them afterward. "You, Trotter—fork your mule and beat it over to Longhorn City for Doc Smith! O'Donnell—ride around and get every hand on the place, an' tell 'em to meet me at Blue Creek! Hop to it, you lot of paralytics, you——"

Honestly, he held me fascinated for three minutes, at the end of which time there was nothing to be seen of him but a dust cloud, rapidly receding to the south with five men, while Two-toes and Marty O'Donnell receded with equal rapidity to the north and east. The thermometer was at a hundred in the shade; the atmosphere had been made a good deal warmer by the remarks of the boys as they saddled up. Nevertheless, I stood there like an asbestos statue, until Dismal Danny Driggs began to make gasping noises and to tap me on the ankle.

"Help me—into—house," said he faintly. "I'll fry—if I—stay here."

The way he'd laughed had probably jarred all his pores open; so I picked him up and commenced to assist him toward the bunk house. In the doorway sat Tom Lear, exempted from duty by a sprained ankle, but obviously ready to murder Mr. Driggs for old sake's sake. The body would, no doubt, have been a nice present for the rest of the boys on their return; but it was not

so to be. Before we were halfway there, Mr. Driggs still making small gurgles and snorting noises as I shoved him along, there was a rustle of silks. Alice came flying off the porch.

"Where are you taking him?" she demanded. "He's to come into the house. He can lie down on daddy's bed. I'm *so* sorry. It's perfectly terrible. Oh dear, how do you feel now, Mr. Driggs?"

If he had, as I confidently expected, greeted this inquiry with a shriek of laughter, this story would come to an end right here. I was sure that, after the way old Simon had affected him, the mere sight of a member of the same family would be enough to touch him off again. However, there descended upon Dismal Danny's features that sweetly solemn expression which had kept me awake all night.

"I feel—weak, Miss Bridges," said he in a faltering voice. Immediately she took him under the other arm, and Tom Lear literally got up and danced on his sprained leg. "I feel—kind of—weak and sick."

"I don't wonder," said Alice. "Look out for that gopher hole. Lean right on me. Mr. Garfield, would you mind running ahead and asking Maria to feel under the bookcase in the living room, and get out the bottle she'll find there? There's just one drink left. Lean heavily on me, Mr. Driggs; do, please."

"There's nothing so bad for sun-stroke," I said, "as alcohol."

Danny turned a real vicious eye on me. "I don't believe this is the sun," he gasped pitifully. "I think—it's just—exhaustion."

"Hurry, hurry!" cried Alice, as the poor invalid tripped on a blade of grass and staggered hither and yon.

Well, that was that. And there was a lot more to it besides, such as Dismal Danny's being commanded—after he had lain down for fifteen minutes—to take the easiest chair on the porch,

and to ask for more ice in his lemonade any time he felt it getting too warm.

I don't propose to go into the horrors of what he got away with, myself, because it might be thought that I was prejudiced on account of having been made to play gooseberry and thus compelled to start for home long before I was ready. Instead, let me describe Tom Lear's view of the afternoon's incidents, as evidenced by his actions.

Concerning this, I will state that, when I dropped into the bunk house en route for my nag, Mr. Lear was not in the doorway, not sitting on a chair, not even upon the floor. He had, in fact, taken off all his clothes and gone to bed; furthermore piling himself up with blankets—despite the temperature—until nothing was visible of him but his nose.

"Go away!" he mumbled, upon hearing my footstep. "Go away, Bill Garfield! It's no use!"

"Poor boy! I sympathized with him.

"What's no use?" I asked, in the tone I generally keep for the very best local funerals.

"It's no use your comin' around," shrieked Tom Lear, flinging off the covers and sitting up in a high state of rage and perspiration, "lookin' the way you do, with your sideburns and your benevolent expression, an' tryin' to make me believe you're Santa Claus!"

At this, his strength seemed to leave him, and he sank down on his elbow, gazing at me in a haggard manner.

"There ain't none," said Tom hollowly.

CHAPTER III.

"GOOD-BY!"

DESPITE cow-punchers' reputation for changing their minds every five minutes, the prevailing opinion of Tom Lear and the whole Diamond B bunch when they came over to my store two days later, to spend Saturday afternoon eating canned fruit, was that Kris

Kringle was dead. Dismal Danny Driggs had murdered him.

"Though whatever anybody ever called him 'Dismal' for," said McTavish Graham, who is a Scotsman and very literal minded, "I dunno. He reminds me more of a laughing jackass than anything else."

"You've got no kick comin'," said Tom Lear. "He got the saddle on your hawse for you this mornin', when you couldn't do it yourself. Now——"

"'T'wasn't my hawse—it was that new mustang Bridges got the other day," shouted Graham in a voice that made me reach for the stove poker; "A wild, ragin' man-killer. An' if he did get the saddle on him, what did he do when the nag gave me a little spill? Why, he leaned up against the corral railin' an' laughed at me until I darn near went up an' punched him in the jaw."

"Well, why didn't you?" I inquired, knowing that nothing saves so much ammunition as a good fist fight.

"I would of," said McTavish, looking kind of hot and uncomfortable, "only that—er—only that——"

"You didn't dare," said Two-toes Trotter, who doesn't love Graham too much.

"Ouch!" yelled the insulted party, suddenly putting all the fingers of his right hand into his mouth.

After which, tossing the poker lightly from hand to hand to show my agility with it in case everybody hadn't seen me swipe Graham over the knuckles, I myself took charge of the meeting.

"With your permission, gents," I informed the assembly, "we will totally refrain from rising and hurling ourselves at each other's throats, not so much on account of the possible damage to our persons, which are of no value to anybody, but out of consideration for the furnishings of this International Emporium and Sheriff's Office, which belong to W. Garfield, a just man but

a stern one. Instead, we will behave like little gentlemen, and if we have any accusations against our absent friend D. Driggs, Esquire, we will cough them up in auntie's hand. What's he ever done to you, for instance, you Marty O'Donnell?"

"Didn't he get us all sent out ridin' around in a blast furnace two days ago?" demanded Marty, dropping a whole apricot on the floor and getting so hot under the collar that he forgot to pick it up again.

"He did indeed," said I, "but that's ancient history. If you were goin' to kill him for that, why didn't you do it right away?"

"Well——" replied Marty, trying to hide considerable embarrassment behind a new apricot, "I—er——"

Evidently, Mr. Driggs was appearing even more of a bear cat, on closer acquaintance, than he had seemed to me. I was just rejoicing in this, because it made my chances of having to step in and protect him so much the less, when a sinister voice from a corner broke up the happy dream.

"Why should we slaughter the gigin' hyena," growled Pie-face Lammermoor, "when we can get it done for us?"

"Sssssh!" whispered a dozen other citizens.

One of the things which has kept me alive up to the present date in spite of my early birth on July 14, 1847, is my remarkable ability to take a hint, however small. "So," I inquired, bringing the stove poker to rest—save for a slight shaking movement—in my right hand. "And who, if I may make so bold as to put such a question, is the obligin' thug in the case?"

"Suppose you mind your own business!" said Two-toes Trotter, putting all his knuckles where I couldn't get at them, but entirely forgetting his kneecaps. "Oh, curse your silly soul, Bill Garfield, you've crippled me!"

"Only for the moment," I reassured him, taking a firm grip of Pie-face's left ear. "Now, come, Mr. Lammermoor. Just the name of the gentleman that's to deal with Mr. Driggs for you. If you want to add the date and place of the proposed felony, of course, I'll stop twisting even sooner. But don't," I added, using the poker a little, "try to bite my wrist, *please*."

"It's Aubrey Bleachmantle!" shrieked Pie-face suddenly. "This afternoon—at the Diamond B. Oh, Bill——"

He didn't need to plead with me; astonishment had forced me to relinquish my grasp.

"Do you mean to tell me," said I, surveying the whole gang, much to their discomfiture, "that a son of the Bleachmantle family, a disrespected ranch owner in his own right, is thinking of so far demeaning himself as to fight with a mere cow hand? It cannot was!"

"Oh, can't it?" answered McTavish Graham. "Well, unless I miss my guess, it not only can was, but by this time it probably has should! What the blazes do you expect, when a big fightin' guy like Bleachmantle has been hangin' around a girl for three months, and then finds her ridin' around an' sittin' on the porch an' so on with a guy that hasn't been in the country more'n five or ten minutes? I wouldn't be surprised if he dotted old Bridges one in the snoot, either, first sayin' nobody had a chance but a ranch owner, an' then the next thing you know——"

"Well, *I* should be surprised," I informed him, putting on my gun belt, star, and hat as usual, "very much surprised *and* pained *and* angry, if anybody has so far forgotten himself as to dot anybody on the nose without my permission. Come on. Take your cans along with you and hurry to get outside."

"Where are you goin', Bill?" A wail arose.

"The Diamond B."

"But you yourself asked us why we hadn't pasted him one!"

"Quite—when you had reason to. Bleachmantle's got no reason to, except that Miss Bridges don't like him any more, seemingly, an' for my part, I don't see how she could ever have seemed to, a great hulking bully like that. He aims to pick a fight, and a picked fight generally means a gun fight, an' gun fights are my meat. Outside, now, an' let me get this door locked."

"We'll go over to Timsy Geogehan's, then," said Tom Lear sulkily.

Since it is no use to mention my business rivals to me when I am on the path of duty, and since I knew that Timsy wouldn't charge more than a dollar's worth of fruit per man per afternoon, I brightly told them to go ahead. Then I mounted Tony and started for the Bridges' ranch.

Of my journey over there, I will merely report that the day was even hotter and dustier than Thursday had been. My arrival is sufficiently described by the statement that no murders had yet occurred, though it didn't require any psychic gifts to see several floating around in the atmosphere. Bleachmantle and Dismal Danny Driggs and Alice and old Simon Bridges were all on the porch, and every one was glad to see me except Bleachmantle. As to their states of mind, I would state that Bleachmantle was obviously ready to bite holes in corrugated iron roofing; Alice and her father were so nervous that they had respectively gone pale and started to play snowstorms with bits of paper. Dismal Danny was perfectly, perfectly calm, though not grinning as usual.

"It's a pity," said Bleachmantle, after some idle conversation between the five of us, "that your face is all plowed up by that nasty purple scar, Mr. Driggs. You'd be real pretty, if it wasn't for that."

I hadn't noticed the scar when Danny had called at my store, owing to his having so many other brighter colored and newer than the one to which Bleachmantle alluded. However, I noticed it now—a sort of two-inch dent over his left eye.

"Driggs is the name," said Danny mildly. "D for dumb-bell, Mr. Bleachmantle. Yeah, that scar does sort of wreck my beauty. Funny coincidence—it was a criminal that made it, only *he* didn't have time to make any remarks about its appearance."

"Did you—did you—arrest him?" stammered Alice, trying to stall off calamity.

"No, miss," said Danny.

"Oh, he—er—he—er——"

"Got away?" sneered Bleachmantle.

"No, miss," said Danny, addressing himself entirely to the starter of the question, and letting the thing go at that.

I found out later that he'd served two years as deputy to old "Eat-'em-alive" Watkins, near Bishop City, and only left because Watty couldn't stand being laughed at when shot.

After this, there was kind of a sickening silence which was frazzling even my nerves, and which was evidently reducing Alice Bridges and her pa to a condition of positive idiocy. Neither Simon nor Danny had a gun on, whereas a bulge under Bleachmantle's left arm announced that he had one anyhow; and while I was plentifully armed, the veranda provided nothing under which the noncombatants could crawl.

"Let's go for a walk!" cried Alice suddenly, thus proving her state of mind to be far nearer lunacy than I had thought.

With the bright idea of cooling us off by means of a stroll through the one-hundred-and-ten degree sunshine, she jumped up from her chair. Her leap was kind of unstudied and hasty,

not to say careless, the result being that she caught some tuck, frill, fold, plait, ruffle, hem, gusset or gather of her dress on a curlicue of the chair, and ripped the whole back panel out of the thing, from her neck to her knees. Luckily, she had her back to her pa and me, who have both been married men with grown-up daughters, even if I haven't seen mine for thirty-eight years. The accident seemed to embarrass her a whole lot, nevertheless. She backed off the porch into the house with a face as red as a barn, and we heard her go rushing upstairs to put something else on. Then, without a moment's warning, Dismal Danny Driggs grabbed hold of a veranda pillar and began to laugh.

I thought I'd heard him throw off a chuckle or two before that time. Now I realized that, comparatively speaking, I'd never met him except when he was sunk in the lowest depths of gloom. I figure that on this occasion he was made worse by the nervous strain he'd been standing all afternoon, and also by the ghastly efforts he was making to hold himself in. Every once in a while, noticing Simon and Bleachmantle and me looking at him disapprovingly—and also knowing that Alice's room had a window right above the porch roof—the poor fellow would clap one of his hands across his mouth and hold it there with the other until the pressure became too great. Then he'd blow up with a yell you could hear in Salt Lake City, Utah. There wasn't any doubt that he wanted to stop laughing. I distinctly saw him pull a pin out of his lapel, and sink it in his leg to a depth of half an inch. But it was no good, this here sense of humor of his was too strong for him. Finally, he gave up all attempts at control, and just hung to the porch railing, bellowing his head off.

Father!" cried Alice from the head of the stairs inside.

It has always been my personal rule, when hearing a woman use that exact tone, to start singing "I Want to Be Happy" at the top of my voice—and go visit some other section of the county. Old Simon couldn't very well do that, having no official business elsewhere. So he ducked humbly through the entrance door.

After a little while, he came out, looking palish and with his hair about half elevated. He hummed and hawed in the doorway for about thirty seconds; then he walked over and laid his hand on Danny's shoulder.

"I'm sorry, my boy," he said affectionately, "but—er—but—my daughter—aw—my daughter—er—she—m'm is—"

"Probably has a headache," suggested Bleachmantle nastily, as if it was only to be expected after the bombardment. "Well, as for me, I'll push off. Good—"

"No!" said old Bridges. "Not you, Bleachmantle. Please stay. I want you to join us—me—in a cup of tea."

Did any reader ever witness the spectacle of a man looking perfectly heart-broken, and at the same time giggling and chuckling to such an extent that he couldn't speak? I never had, up to then, and if asked I would have bet next year's reward money to a Jefferson Davis nickel, that the feat could not be accomplished. However, it can, so if anybody offers to lay money, don't take it. Dismal Danny Driggs pulled off the double event with ease. I may say in passing, that I never want to see it done again. Though accustomed to sad events, such as hangings and the arrest of gentlemen with large families, I haven't been so harrowed up in a long time as I was by the sight of that poor boy. His afternoon ruined, all his hopes nipped in the bud, and his rival watching him, he went to the deserted bunk house, still gurgling and holding his ribs as he walked.

"Will you—er—will you stay for tea, too, Bill?" asked old Bridges, evidently craving company.

"I thank you, no. I never drink anything stronger than whisky in the afternoon, and besides," I continued, turning my back to Bleachmantle and using my lowest tone, "it seems to me you might have done a bit more pleading for that boy, if you're as stuck on his abilities as all that."

"I did, Bill," said the poor guy, wringing his hands and drawing up his lip in dislike of Bleachmantle, "but she——"

"And anyhow," I concluded, hearing Bleachmantle's triumphant footsteps at my back, "all I disturbed myself for was to see no—that nothing occurred around these parts, as you might say. The cause of anything that might have occurred being now removed, I will go home and take my harness off. Good afternoon, Simon; say the same to Alice, will ya? Good afternoon, Mr. Bleachmantle."

This is not the place to detail my griefs against this latter gentleman. Suffice it to say that in my opinion, as in that of most other inhabitants of Three Pines, he is a pale-pink son of a gun. Accordingly, he doesn't like me, either personally or officially.

"By," he answered with his back to me.

"Good-by what?" I queried, having a reputation to maintain.

Do you know, he swung around as though intending to be even ruder. Only something seemed to check him and change his mind; I can't think what—unless it was the gun I happened to be holding in my hand.

"Good-by," said Bleachmantle, staring at this.

"And the rest?"

"Garfield!"

"But didn't I say *Mister* Bleachmantle?"

"*Mister* Garfield, then!"

"And the whole lot, in a nice polite voice?"

"Good-by, Mr. Garfield."

"Splendid!" said I, replacing my gun as Alice suddenly appeared in the doorway.

"Well, good afternoon, Miss Bridges. Good luck!"

And so I went home.

CHAPTER IV.

A PICNIC.

FOR the next five days, that is until the following Thursday, I enjoyed peace and quiet, enlivened only by a rather acrid correspondence with Ben Pokeson concerning train robbers. It appeared, from Ben's remarks by telephone, telegraph, and picture post card, illustrating the Longhorn City Free Library, that though No. 18 had been tickled practically within the Gold Creek city limits on the occasion of Danny Driggs' adventure, the ticklers hadn't seen fit to await Ben's arrival or give him a decent chance of meeting them subsequently. They had, in fact, taken to the Hurst County Hills, among which Ben, being somewhat of a fat-head despite his remarkable talents in a free-for-all, had been totally unable to find them.

It was his view that, under the circumstances, it was my duty to raise a posse, replacing the one that had called him names and gone home. I should place myself, rheumatism and all, at the head of this organization; in short, muck in and do his job for him. When I remarked that I didn't myself personally just seem to figure the thing out exactly that way, his behavior and his language over the phone became perfectly scandalous. Finally I had to send Jake Henson, my deputy, over to Gold Creek, either to conciliate Mr. Pokeson or knock his block off, but in any case to put a stop to his custom

of calling me up at three a. m. and insulting me.

Jake returned at eleven o'clock Thursday morning, having succeeded by the second method. "However," said he, sitting down on the counter and drinking ginger ale, "it seems to me that we'd better be throwing one of our extra eyes around our own county about now, Bill."

"Why?"

"Well, you remember that general-alarm sheet we got from Idaho a month since—the one we laughed over, because there was no photographs of the wanted guys, no finger prints, and no description except of their clothes?"

"I've got it tacked up in the kitchen," I told him, "to remind me that hope springs eternal in the human chest. What of it?"

"Well, of course it's just a chance," said Jake, taking a long drag at his cigarette, "but Ben Pokeson had that sheet laid out on his office table when I dropped in, and he seemed all-fired anxious I shouldn't get a slant at it."

"Why so?"

"Five thousand reward for two of the guys, and one thousand each for two others. Murder and robbing the mails. And what I could gather in Gold Creek sort of tallied with what the sheet said, Bill. Trainmen seemed to remember two strange guys ridin' back an' forth on No. 18, a week before she was held up. This bunch is supposed to spy out the land very thoroughly before actin', which is why they ain't ever been caught. Then again, they were masked from hat to chin—holes cut in the handkerchiefs—an' they wore gloves so their hands couldn't be recognized. The Idaho sheet mentions that, too. An'—"

"Well?" I groaned. "What are we goin' to do, then?"

Jake looked down his nose. "I figure this ticklin' of No. 18 was just a tryout of local conditions," said he.

"The sheet says they've done similar before. What they're after's most likely the pay car for the construction works at Dead Man's Gulch."

"Shut up!" I told him. "The walls have ears."

"Well, anyhow," said Jake, "I thought it wouldn't do any harm to sort of absent myself from your side, Bill, and more or less mooch around, lookin' for strangers with a taste for train ridin' hither an' yon. How about it?"

"Fine!" I exclaimed.

"You meanwhile stayin' here," added Jake, getting off the counter and wiping his mouth, "giving your well-known impersonation of a genteel old gentleman who really has no suspicions of anybody."

"'Tis well."

"Then pip-pip," said my deputy, leaving. "Take care of the rheumatics, Bill."

It was a warm day again, and all this consideration on Jake's part had filled me with loving kindness toward my fellow man. Otherwise, having promised to watch my health at all costs, I should not have acted as I did half an hour later, when a horse came to a disgusted halt outside the store, and the miserable-looking figure of old Simon Bridges entered, dressed in its best clothes.

"Hello, Bill," said Simon, sort of shrinking.

"Well?" said I briefly, being still disgusted at his actions the Saturday before.

"I want a dozen cans of sardines, please, Bill," Mr. Bridges suggested, "an'—an' a little sympathy, for Pete's sake."

"What for?" I demanded, though inwardly sorry for the guy.

"My daughter's goin' to marry that Bleachmantle." Simon moaned. "Bill, he sat on my porch last night till all hours, flatly tellin' me that if I thought

there was such a disease as hollow horn, I was a——”

“Your family affairs don't interest me,” I told him, “since it became obvious that your daughter runs 'em. I asked you what you wanted the *sardines* for, so I can know whether to give you the small silvery morsels of deliciousness at fifteen cents, or the big he-man's fish, price a quarter.”

“I dunno. They're for a picnic,” said Simon, abandoning all pretense of manhood, and burying his face in his hands, “at which I'm listed to get up an' tell the assembled punchers about Alice's engagement. Look at my fancy vest if you don't believe me.”

I stared at his bowed head for some seconds.

“Will Danny Driggs be present?” I inquired.

“No,” replied the anguished father. “All the other boys got the day off and an invitation to the picnic, except him. He's out somewhere diggin' ditches this patent way of his, the poor boy! Oh, dear! Oh, dear!”

I slapped down twelve cans of the largest sprats in stock and, in silence, took three dollars out of five.

“Anything more?”

“Bill!” exclaimed old Simon in a heartfelt manner.

“What now?”

“Bill!”

“Yeah?”

“Bill,” he repeated for the third time, “don't let me down. You had a mother once, and if you weren't bald, you'd have snowy locks like mine. Bill, don't leave me alone with a daughter that's goin' to marry a whangdoodle, with the whangdoodle aforesaid, an' with a lot of holiday-makin' help that knows I've had somethin' put over on me.”

“What can I do about it?”

“You can put a coat on,” said the poor parent, pawing my sleeve desperately, “an' I'll put the saddle on your

hawse for you, Bill, an' shine your boots up for you. An' then you can come on over an' sort of hold my hand at the picnic.”

“No!”

“Bill!”

“No!”

Because I am a poor, old, good-natured fool, I went and stayed, although I found the picnic being held in the absolute dampest, most rheumatic part of the Diamond B, a kind of rich green basin on the shores of Blue Creek. It was always flooded in the wintertime, and in the summer gave off what you might call a cold steam. But it had picturesque trees around it, and Alice had never had a day's sickness in her life, so that was the spot selected. Simon and I came into it without attracting any attention, save a dirty look from Bleachmantle, and seated ourselves on two live-oak stumps, while Alice and some eighteen helpers, each possessing two left hands, got busy laying the cloth.

Simon regarded this much as I have seen guys watch other guys putting up gallows. “They're gonna start eatin' now,” said he hoarsely, “an' it's after the sardine course that I've got to do my bit. Bill, do you think, it'd be any use pretendin' that I'm not her father at all, an' that you are, me havin' adopted her to cheer up the lonely ranch, an' you make the speech?”

Evidently, the guy was losing his grip, not to say his reason.

“Brace up,” said I sternly. “Look around you. Stop perspiring. This is your ranch. These trees, that creek, this swamp we're sittin' in, are all your property. You——”

“I'm goin' to have it drained, if Driggs'll stay with me after this,” said Simon, striving gallantly to follow my lead and get his feet down to earth. “Honest, Bill, the way that boy digs ditches——”

“What's his method?” I asked

brightly, seeing his eyes begin to glaze again.

"Why, he takes a crowbar, first havin' laid out the line of where he wants the ditch," said Simon, "an' he goes all along this line makin' holes about eighteen inches deep, an' about two feet apart, or it might be three, or something. Then he puts a chunk of dynamite in each hole without any fuse to it, an' tamps the earth down thoroughly. Then he lays out the line of where he wants the ditch to go an' he takes a crowbar an' he——"

"What, again?" I asked.

Simon passed his hand over his brow. "Excuse me," he said, "I don't feel so good. No, after he's got all the holes filled with dynamite, he goes off to the end of the line an' fires the last stick in the usual way. That sets off the one next to it, and that one fires the next, an' so on all down the line."

"Dad!" called Alice from the center of the valley.

"Yes, my dear?"

"All ready! Come and sit down!"

Needless to say, I would sooner have remained on that comparatively dry stump, even at the cost of missing the indigestibles, but I couldn't resist old Bridges' piteous look as he obeyed. I stumped over, my peg leg sinking deep into the soft earth at every step, and took my place beside him.

We were just like one big, blithering family. Alice had brought out the biggest tablecloth from the ranch house and laid it on a nice level spot. The party was seated around it about six to a side, Alice and Bleachmantle opposite from Simon and me. From the way merry badinage flew hither and yon, you'd have sworn those punchers were delighted to find themselves actually eating in the open air: The first thing on the bill was salted nuts, which neither Simon nor me could touch, our teeth being too far apart; the second was ham sandwiches, which might have

been useful for looking at eclipses through, but which were incapable of supplying nutriment in lots of less than one thousand. The third item was deviled eggs, and I can only say that Simon's language must have made 'em feel at home, his doctor having forbidden him pepper, and Alice having deprived him of his lunch that day, probably to make his voice clearer. The sardines were due to come next, but neither of us was going to eat them; I—because I knew how long they'd been in stock, and Simon—because I nudged him.

Meanwhile, ginger ale was passed in foaming beakers. To see the assemblage quaffing, and calling out "*Skoll!*" "*Santy!*" "*Saluda!*" "*Prosit!*" and all those sacred words over a mess like that made me feel worse than the eggs had.

"Bill!" said Simon in a low tone, balancing his glass on his palm and watching Alice start to serve the fatal fish.

"Yeah?"

"Sssssh. Could you do with a stick in this?"

"A what?" asked I, joy making me incredulous.

"A bone," said Mr. Bridges." A fish. Two fingers of Bourbon. I've got a flask."

I put my glass down where he could reach it conveniently, pulled up the tablecloth before me so as to form some kind of protection from spies on one side, leaned forward to block off inquisitiveness from the other, and told my dear old friend not to waste time on foolish talk, but to go ahead and pour.

He was just reaching for his hip pocket, when, having eaten her first sardine, Alice spoke:

"Father!"

The poor guy paused in midreach, paralyzed. "Yes, darling?" said he, in a feeble voice.

The girl made no further speech but

confined herself to a motion of the hand. The motion was upward, and the order it conveyed was that Simon should forthright rise to his feet and announce.

"Hooray!" said Tom Lear, sticking a sandwich in his mouth like a pirate's dagger, and starting the applause. "Fpeef f'om Mifter Vrizes! Fpeef! Fpeef!"

"Speech!" yelled all the other asses.

Slowly and wearily, the wretched gentleman hoisted himself into a perpendicular situation. "Gents," said he—and stopped.

Of course, he aimed to go on again; the stop was merely temporary, his emotions having proved too much for him, or his Adam's apple having come loose and dropped into his lungs, or some such thing. What I want to point out is that the accidental stop saved the day, turned defeat into victory and generally was a darned good thing for everybody. This teaches us always to stop before we say anything and, if possible, not to start again.

Simon never started again—at least, not on the subject of his daughter's engagement to Mr. Aubrey Bleachmantle. Before he could get his vocal machinery back into order, something happened to distract the thoughts of all present from such worldlinesses as marrying and giving in marriage. I will not ask the reader to guess what it was, because though I was right on the spot, and more or less thinking about such matters, it was some fractions of a second before I myself could diagnose what was happening.

CHAPTER V.

THE INTERRUPTION.

THE demonstration started with a most peculiar muffled thump some distance away—a half mile at least, as it turned out, over the lip of the valley and behind several thickets of trees.

Following the thump there was a sharp popping noise, several times repeated; then a couple more thuds, slighter than the first; then a sort of heavy, tearing sound, which appeared to be getting nearer and nearer.

Simon was already on his feet, of course. At this, according to my rule when startled, I scrambled up myself. Side by side, we turned and looked toward the source of these peculiar noises and within the space of ten seconds witnessed a sight more peculiar than the sounds. Simon's hair abandoned all pretense of dignity and stood bolt upright instantly. I felt my own heart bump, for lo and behold, over the lip of the valley with a loud roar, there shot a three-foot wide furrow in the green grass; which furrow extended itself, as though driven by an invisible express plow, straight toward the spot where the picnic cloth was laid.

"Look out!" I cried, leaping about six yards sidewise.

"I'd scarcely uttered the words when cloth, food, ginger ale, and everything shot up into the air. Clods of turf also ascended; so did rocks, hats, gun belts that had been laid aside, coats, neckerchiefs, and all sorts of personal property. Where these articles had been, there yawned before our astonished eyes a trench about two feet deep, extending to the edge of Blue Creek.

"Dynamite!" shrieked old Simon Bridges, in a high, hysterical voice.

And at that moment, Danny Driggs rode cheerfully into the valley to see whether his drainage ditch had dug itself all right. Of course, the boy was perfectly innocent; he had discussed the drainage of that very spot with Simon several days before. Not being invited to the party, he hadn't been told where it was to be held.

Being a sane, sensible sort of lad when not laughing, I don't suppose he'd ever thought that folks might go ahead and eat in a marsh, no matter how green

its grass was, or how tall its trees. He had spent all morning boring his crowbar holes and putting in his dynamite; he'd gone off and had his lunch, and then he'd returned and touched off the end stick as per schedule. If in the meantime somebody had gone and camped right on his blasting line, it was no fault of his.

I could see this quite clearly; but then, I hadn't happened to be standing in a miscellaneous shower of foodstuffs, the way old Simon Bridges had. If there is one thing that makes for hasty injustice more than another, it is the receipt of a can or two of sardines and tomato sauce right on top of the head. Various other members of the betrothal party had got in the way of the falling viands, but Simon, as if to make up for his failure to eat, had come out 'way ahead of everybody else. There was a long, lithe pickled cucumber perched behind his right ear like a pen. The concussion had smashed his pocket flask, so that he smelled like a barroom. A pound or so of deviled eggs had been plastered on his waistcoat like a bouquet of dahlias; his hair was full of tomatoes, and his face was one solid mass of fish scales, while a sardine's backbone drooped gracefully over his right eye. It was impossible that within three seconds of the catastrophe, he should have had time to take a complete inventory of how foolish he looked, but he was as mad as he could be, anyhow. In fact, when Danny Driggs arrived and dismounted before him, he gave the only perfect imitation of a cougar I have ever really heard from any human throat.

"I'm—I'm terribly sorry," said Dismal Danny, opening his mouth slightly and sinking his fine white teeth into his lower lip.

"Sorry?" screamed old Simon, satisfied with the correctness of his cougar call. "Sorry?"

It was a great mistake for Danny

to have tried to answer, because he had to stop biting his lip.

"Yes," said he—and gave a chuckle.

He made a brave attempt to chew himself some more, but by this time, his mouth was wide open, and try as he would, he couldn't get it shut. He started to laugh; he commenced to bellow; he howled, and he roared. And in the middle of that circle of his would-be murderers, he continued to laugh, bellow, howl, and roar until Mr. Aubrey Bleachmantle, tearing off an oath which I personally didn't consider nice with a lady present, walked over and gave him a forceful and resounding kick.

"Take that," said Mr. Bleachmantle, "you blank, blank, giggling asterisk, you."

Even so, Dismal Danny's convulsions didn't entirely come to an end. He turned deadly white and he stopped laughing in the proper sense of the word. But as he turned to face Bleachmantle, he was still making queer sounds, and his shoulders were shaking.

"You and your blankety dynamite, you fool!" cried out Aubrey, getting his feet ready for an encore."

"Don't you—do that—again," gasped Dismal Danny.

"No? And why not, huh?"

"Because I'll kill you stone dead if you do!" Mr. Driggs chortled. "Ladies or no ladies present—tee-hee! Ho-hoo!"

Instantly, a revolver appeared in Bleachmantle's hand, which was very bad form, first because nobody had made as though to pull on him; secondly because he must have sat down to table armed, which isn't done by gentlemen. I was getting ready to shoot him neatly through the wrist the moment he carried out his evident intention of kicking Danny again at the gun's point, but I was saved the trouble.

Alice Bridges suddenly sprang forward, smacked her almost-affianced a

ringer on each cheek, tore the gun out of his hand, and, before anybody really knew what had happened, flung the weapon into the creek.

"There, you miserable cowardly bully!" she exclaimed, turning white and red by turns. "Now turn around and get out of here, and never let me see your face again. That's the way you act when you think you're top dog, is it? Get out! You gun-toting black-guard, get out!"

"Alice——" began Bleachmantle, looking fairly sick.

"Get out!" ordered the girl, obviously looking around for a quirt.

The gentleman seemed to think it might be well to obey her. It was as well, too, because I stood ready to arrest him for the unwarranted display of a deadly weapon and to hold him at least four days without bail—the place of detention being the Three Pines railroad tool house, which lacks cushions. This solace was denied me. He knew only too well when he was licked. With a speaking glance at Simon, who was too furious to notice it, he left the circle, got his horse from behind a copse, and rode away.

"And now," cried old Bridges as though suddenly uncorked, "you get your nag, young man, and get out likewise."

"Father!" cried Alice, stamping her foot. "It was only an accident; it wasn't Mr. Driggs' fault."

"Was it an accident he stood there and screamed with laughter at me—his boss—his employer?" shouted Simon, tearing the sprat's backbone off his eyebrow and hurling it on the ground. "Was that an accident?"

"You know he can't help his sense of humor," cried the girl. "You saw what happened when I tore my dress the other day, and——"

"Nemmine what happened! Nemmine the other day! Let him take his hawse and get off my land while he's

safe! I don't want any killin' or any unpleasantness whatever. Let him get out quick."

"Father!" Her tone was the identical one that had subdued the old man on many a previous occasion, but this time he was impervious to anything short of more dynamite.

"Silence, girl!" he commanded, actually as though he expected to be obeyed. "You, feller, take your hawse in place of any salary I owe you, an' be out of here before I count ten, or I'll have you thrown off. One, two, three——"

He'd have had a job of getting the throwing done, unless he was ready to do it himself, because by the time he'd got as far as five, all the surrounding punchers had sort of slipped away into the bushes, where they appeared to be lying down and trying to look like dead leaves. But his bluff wasn't called.

"Thank you, Miss Alice," said Dismal Danny, looking at her sadly, "but never mind. I'll go. Hope I'll see you again soon."

"I think she said 'yes,' but I can't be sure, on account of old Simon's having abandoned his counting to cry:

"You try it, that's all! Get out, I tell you! Get out!"

"All right," said Mr. Driggs, still gazing at Miss Bridges.

With that, as they say in the movies, he swung lightly to the saddle of his faithful pinto and took his lonely trail toward the setting sun.

However, he never got there, being overtaken by night, a cold wind, a rain-storm, and other vagaries of the Texas climate just when he was in sight of the illuminated windows of Tanglefoot Ranch, of which he had never heard.

The real name of the place was not Tanglefoot Ranch at all, but the Hogpen Q, meaning Quinlan—old Thaddeus M. Quinlan, its owner. The nickname merely referred to the fact that every square foot of the several thousand

acres was overgrown with loco weed, cactus, and similar evidences of neglect, coyly mingled with wire from the fallen fences.

Thaddeus, in addition to being a millionaire several times over owing to his purchase of oil-bearing cattle lands in Sonora, was what might be called eccentric. He had quarreled with everybody in the neighborhood, including his millionaire son, now living in Chicago. For the last ten years he had lived all alone on this beautiful ranch of his, refusing either to raise beeves himself or to sell the land to somebody that would. Once, when asked why he paid taxes on half a county since half an acre was more than he needed to live on, he had replied that some day he might feel like taking a long horseback ride or something and he could do it on his own land.

That was the kind of hairpin impersonated by T. M. Quinlan, Esquire. I don't suppose that, until Dismal Danny Driggs knocked on his front door, he had had a visitor in ten years, barring book agents new to the territory. It was so long since I'd heard of the old man or thought of him either, that, when Danny mentioned his name on the Tuesday following the picnic, it took me several seconds to recollect any such person. I must admit, however, that my mind was somewhat distracted at the time by the acute rheumatism which confined me to my chair, and by speculations as to what Danny might be doing, all dolled up in a swallowtail coat and desirous of buying a ticket to Lone Star.

"Mr. Quinlan lent it to me," said the transmogrified exile. "He said it would make a better impression at the bank."

"What," I inquired of him, "are you aiming to do with a bank, anyhow?"

"Ah, that," said Danny, taking off the swallowtail, folding it neatly, and sitting down near me, "is a long story, Mr. Garfield, which, with your permis-

sion, I will narrate while I massage your aching joints. I've got fifteen minutes before train time. I should have thought your deputy might have dropped in to help you."

"He's out on—er—business," said I, wondering whether Jake had caught the train robbers or whether they had caught him. "But if you insist on being so kind, there's a bottle of Bortlecog's Royal Indian Anti-pain Specific on the second shelf up. That's it. Aaaaaaah!"

"That's right—just lie back and luxuriate," said Dismal Danny, with a tenderness I should never have expected from anybody capable of his laugh. "Well, Mr. Garfield, no doubt you've been wondering where I've been at these last few days. I half figured you'd be draggin' the local rivers for my corpse an' I don't mind admittin' I was in a low frame of mind when I left the Diamond B that day."

The memory of that wet grass made me groan.

"Yeah," said Dismal Dan soothingly, "that's just how I felt until about eleven o'clock that same night, ridin' all the time without carin' where I got to. Then I found myself all hungry an' wet an' cold, an' the hawse likewise, just as a lighted window appeared on the horizon. Well, Mr. Garfield, I made a line for that window, an' I knocked on the door, an' when this Mr. Thaddeus Quinlan opened it for me I asked him if he could oblige a poor wanderer with some coffee and a place to sleep.

"Well, Mr. Garfield, what do you think happened next? The old gentleman says: 'Come in,' kind of sulkylike. And right then and there, while I stood in the middle of his livin' room and dripped, he looked me in the middle of the eyeball and says: 'It seems that once upon a time there were two Irishmen, named Pat and Mike——' If you'll believe me, before he put the coffee on or asked me to run my nag into the

corral, he went ahead and told me that joke about the two harps that got on the train."

"I know—I know!" I protested. "Don't tell me that chestnut again."

"It *is* kind of ancient," said Dismal Danny, "but do you know, Mr. Garfield, the idea of him startin' off to tell stories under the circumstances, me soaked to the skin an' shiverin', an' a total stranger, it struck me so funny that I had to laugh. I didn't want to, especially in view of the misfortunes it brought down upon me in the past, but I couldn't help it. I just stood there an' shrieked. The old jasper stared at me so kind of astonished and pleased, that he made me laugh harder than before. Finally, he got sort of worried and told me to stop it, but I couldn't. Then he seemed to get an idea I was kiddin' him, an' made as though to turn me out into the night. But you know how I am when I'm started."

"You bet I do."

"Well," said Dismal Danny, sort of calmed down by my tone of voice, "to make a long story short, me and the old gentleman got real chummy before the night was over. We had a fire built up, an' my pony was filled with oats, an' we had five or six pots of coffee and some egg sandwiches, an' in the intervals of humor, we talked about pretty near everything under the sun, includin' my griefs over at the Diamond B. I never knew a guy so sympathetic. Finally, as we were goin' to bed, he laid his hand on my shoulder, and he says:

"'My boy, the first thing for you to do is to get to see that girl—quick. If she thinks you're obeyin' her father's order to stay away, she'll never forgive you.' So, to make a long story short, Mr. Garfield, I rode over the next night about twelve thirty or one, an' threw gravel on Alice's window until she opened it, and we had a nice little talk. Though I wished she hadn't

been so high up in the air. I had to talk kind of loud, and that woke up her dad."

"What happened?" I demanded.

"Why, nothing," said Dismal Danny, "except that he thought I was somewhere I wasn't an' fired both barrels of a ten-bore into his chicken coop. Honest, Bill, I was sorry, considerin' the pride he takes in them blue-ribbon birds, but as I rode away, I had to laugh."

"I'll bet you did. Well, what next?"

"Well, Alice had told me, before this here unpleasant interruption, that the peg her pa was hangin' all this wrath an' tarnation on, was my bein' a plain common or ordinary cow hand. She said he refused to admit that he hadn't liked the sardines, but that he'd always said his girl should marry——"

"It's true, too."

"Yeah. Well, of course Mr. Quinlan was sittin' up when I got back, an' he wanted to know all about what had happened. When I told him, addin' this about Mr. Bridges' alleged objection to me, what do you think he up and said?"

"Probably 'Tag, you're it,'" I replied, having no taste for conundrums.

"No," said Dismal Danny, "he just looked at me and he said: 'Well, if that's all that's bitin' the old fool, we'll soon make a ranch owner out of you. You just give me ten thousand bucks, an' I'll give you title to this place, an' you can pay me the rest as you earn it.'"

"Whaaat?" I cried, waking up suddenly, for the Hogpen Q, on such terms as that, was a gift for the gods.

"Yeah," said Dismal Danny, "that's what I said, too. Then I remembered that I didn't have any ten thousand, or any means of gettin' it. So I told him, but he says, 'Oh, tush! any banker in Lone Star will lend you the money when he knows what you're goin' to get with it. Run into town to-morrow, dressed up like a scarecrow in some of my go-to-meetin' clothes. They'll

slather money on you.' "Well, Bill—Mr. Garfield—that's where I'm goin' now. An' if I'm not mistaken, there's the train, whistlin' for Geogehan's crossing."

"B-b-b-but," I stammered, kind of dazed by this story, "what's gonna become of old Thaddeus?"

"Why, he's goin' to live with his son in Chicago," replied Mr. Driggs, putting on his coat. "He said the boy'd been writin' him to come for a long time past, but that he'd got kind of soured on humanity on account of never meetin' anybody with a sense of humor. He mentioned you, Mr. Garfield, sayin' that you'd fired a revolver at him in 1907, for askin' you that wheeze about what animal is it that starts on four legs, continues on two, and ends up on three."

"It may be so," I muttered, having been sixty in the year mentioned, and sensitive on the subject. "But say, listen, Danny——"

"Yes?" said he, taking his ticket from the rack, paying for it, and giving himself change.

"Have you ever had any doings with bankers?"

"No, but——"

"Well, I have an' I want to tell you somethin', boy. You don't want to reckon a banker as an ordinary human bein'. They're different. You mark my words, even if you do miss the train. This unfortunate habit of yours, now—laughin'. You've got by with it pretty well around here, because most of us crack an occasional chuckle ourselves, an' we know what it feels like. But you try it on a banker, an' you're goin' to get into trouble. Bankers never laugh. Anybody above the rank of cashier caught smilin' durin' business hours is at once arrested on suspicion of embezzlement, an' the bank is closed by order of the State inspector. Are you listenin' to me? Now, you've got

the bang-tailed coat. Mind you live up to it."

"But how?" gasped the applicant for a loan, staring at me in horror.

"If you can't do anythin' else," I said, as the train clanked into the station and stopped, "pretend that whoever it is you love best is dead, dead, dead, an' that you're wearin' the coat to her funeral."

He turned white as a ghost but said he would do just that. Then he bolted from the store and just swung aboard the last car as it departed.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE TRAIN.

I REGRET very much that, not having been in Laredo that day, I can't give an eyewitness' account of what happened. I aim to do the next best thing, however, by quoting verbatim from the *Lone Star Longhorn*:

MADMAN RUNS AMUCK IN FINANCIAL INSTITUTION

Cow-puncher Crowns Crowley, Kicks
Klingenthal, and Wallops
Williams

Fire Brigade Out

Main Street, corner of Stockade, was the scene, Tuesday afternoon, of a disgraceful fracas as a result of which Mr. Samuel Crowley, genial President of the Hoof and Horn Third National Bank, city, is confined at his home with a severe headache; J. D. Williams, able paying teller of the same well-known institution, is at work suffering from bites; James "Bull" Klingenthal, the stalwart door-keeper of the bank, is exhibiting to his intimate friends a large bruise of blue-green coloration, four and a quarter inches in diameter, and seventeen other citizens are nursing cuts, scratches, and lacerations.

A statement issued by the bank recounts that about 1.30 p. m., shortly after Mr. Crowley had returned from his lunch, his office was entered by a tall and powerfully built individual wearing an old-fashioned swallow-tail coat, but marked by his bowlegs as a cowman. He had a scar over one eye and was noticeable for his expression of extreme

melancholy. Seating himself at Mr. Crowley's desk and introducing himself by a name which the genial president permitted to slip his mind in the ensuing excitement, the stranger asked for a loan of ten thousand dollars, stating that if convenient he would take the money with him at once. Questioned further by Mr. Crowley, who at once began to entertain suspicions of the visitor's sanity, the man told a confused story about the purchase of a ranch in Hurst County; and stated that if Mr. Crowley would have the cash brought at once, he would be able to catch the two twenty train home.

Convinced by this time that he had to do with a dangerous maniac, the courageous financier pretended to be in deep thought, and, as is his habit during periods of perplexity, began to draw his right forefinger across the bridge of his nose as though playing the violin. A few seconds later, he observed that the stranger was apparently on the verge of a burst of unreasonable laughter; but before he could say anything to take advantage of this condition, the man laid his head down upon Mr. Crowley's genuine mahogany desk and commenced to weep.

Keeping his head in spite of these remarkable events, the local financial genius pressed the push button connecting him with the bank's watchman, James Bull Klingenthal, and upon arrival of this well-known and justly popular and respected officer, indicated that the unwelcome visitor should be thrown out. However, by this time the maniac had recovered from his emotional crisis, and when Mr. Klingenthal inserted hands in his coat collar and waist band as a means of inducing him to leave, he turned and administered a severe kick to the officer, causing the latter to fall down.

Turning to Mr. Crowley, the madman then commenced a speech to the effect that he would take his custom to another bank, but, noticing that the president had drawn a twenty-five caliber automatic pistol from his desk drawer, he instantly sprang forward and struck him over the head with a plate-glass fountain-pen stand, as advertised on page 7 of this week's *Longhorn*, which had been presented to Mr. Crowley by a maiden aunt the previous Christmas. Falling on the floor, the genial financier attracted the attention of Paying Teller Williams and twelve or fourteen depositors who happened to be in the bank at the time. All rushed gallantly at the stranger, who was now standing in the middle of the office, breathing heavily through his nose. No detailed account is available of the *mêlée* which followed; but according to the statement of Elmer Krack, 24, 409 Eighth Street, city,

when picked up on the other side of the road suffering from nasal hemorrhage and shock, the stranger's method of dealing with his adversaries was to pick them up and pelt one with the other.

After some minutes of this, a telephone call was sent in for the fire brigade, this call being passed through the city exchange at 2.11 by Operator Dorothy Hatchberry, who, as many of our readers will remember, won the first prize for local beauty at the recent livestock show. The gallant boys in buttons had scarcely received the call to duty before they arrived at the bank building with hose ready for immediate action, but by this time the pugnacious stranger had left the bank and made good his escape. He has not yet been apprehended, though when seen by a *Longhorn* representative yesterday, Sam Bonney, city marshal, stated that he was in possession of a clew.

Before returning to its barracks, the fire brigade gave an exhibition of its prowess with the hand engine, the maximum length of jet attained being 188 feet 6½ inches.

Well, the "mysterious stranger" had made good his escape by the very simple process of rushing down to the depot and boarding the two twenty train, which he'd told that bank president he wanted to catch in the first place. He got in to Three Pines on this train at 4.34 p. m., according to schedule, and—

Now I'm up a creek again; for the reason that a long lifetime of collecting, giving, and acting upon evidence has made me wary of stating anything I didn't actually witness myself. Being, of course, pinned by rheumatism in my chair at Three Pines while Dismal Danny was on the two twenty from Lone Star, I wasn't present during most of the next and concluding act of this drama. I guess it will be necessary to carry on the yarn by writing here what Danny told me later.

This same two twenty—but on Saturdays only, whereas this was Tuesday—had the honor of hauling the pay car to the Dead Man's Gulch construction workers. On other days, such as this, it consisted of one locomotive, one tender, one baggage car, and about three

day coaches; and it stopped at every place imaginable by the mind of man. Even I, never in any hurry to get to Lone Star when I have to go there, or back to Three Pines either—I really find that train almost too much for my nerves.

As the *Lone Star Longhorn* has so clearly hinted, Danny Driggs didn't have time to do any shopping for books, or even to buy a magazine from the butcher, who knows better than to accompany the train. So naturally, with all this excitement and disappointment fresh in his mind the boy began to fidget. According to his own statement, he held out pretty good until the train had been on its way half an hour, covering twelve miles and making seven stops, most of them seemingly in the midst of the boundless prairie; then he had a drink of water. He put the window down; then he put it up again; tried the blind in several different positions; changed his seat; started conversation with some guy, and finally started to walk up and down the train from one end to the other. Dismal Danny was wondering how they let a homicidal lunatic like Crowley be president of a bank, and brooding over the problem of saving ten thousand bills out of a maximum earning capacity of forty a month.

He was wrestling with this question in a corner of one of the vestibules, when he observed that he wasn't alone in the corridor-walker's club. Two other jaspers were tramping around, scowling at the scenery as it crawled past, asking the conductor the names of the various stops and how far to the next, examining the air-brake valves, et cetera, et cetera, as though similarly bored to death.

It struck Danny that a little conversation might be good for the current ailment. When one of these individuals approached where he was standing he piped up and observed that the

weather looked like continuing fine, provided that it didn't rain. It was a harmless remark, as anybody can see, and one that has frequently led to the most pleasant of relations, as well as marriage.

The jasper addressed, however, didn't seem to care for it. According to Dan he said something that might have been yes, no, or words even more impolite, and at once walked right away to the other end of the car. As for the other guy, Mr. Driggs took one good slant at him and decided not even to try the opening of negotiations. Like so many of the folks one sees on accommodation trains, the man looked like he'd been born with a grievance against humanity. Unlike most, he also looked ready and able to work the grievance off on any sample of the race that peeped. Dan looked at the fellow with respect but without eagerness; as he stated to me, he was feeling kind of low in his mind, and besides, he had had enough fighting for one day.

Of course, it had to be this identical savage-looking person, specially selected from among the two hundred and thirty-five men, women, children, and dogs on that train, who while walking through Danny's vestibule should catch his foot on the flexible metal strip between cars, make a wild grab at the air, and fall down on the steel floor. In falling he brought his right eye violently into contact with the toe of Mr. Driggs' boot, which seemed to improve neither his appearance nor his temper. The effect of this latter was in fact so bad, that for some seconds after getting to his feet, the injured guy stood perfectly speechless, glaring at Danny with one eye while he held the other tenderly with his hand. It was obvious that he wanted to pin blame for this outrage on somebody other than himself, and after an interval of silence, he got to work doing it.

"What the blazes do you think you're

playin' at," he demanded, in a loud, hoarse voice, "puttin' your feet where I'm liable to bump into 'em and fall? Huh?"

"Agh?" gasped Danny, slightly taken aback.

"You heard what I said," said the gentleman, taking the hand down from his eye and rolling it up into a knobby fist. "What you mean——"

Mr. Driggs was all for peace, being low in his mind and no hog for personal combat. But the question of what soft answer to return was taken out of his hands, because at this point he felt himself starting to laugh. He described the sensation as resembling the rising of an elevator in the throat, and says that in this particular case, what touched him off was the thought of this great two-hundred-pound jasper crawling cautiously around floors, looking for a boot to knock his eye against.

Dismal Danny gave one long hoot and, at the same instant, had the good sense to move sidewise. Thus the fist of the jasper with the grievance, instead of knocking the laugh back where it came from, merely thudded harmlessly against the wall of the car—harmlessly to Danny, that is. This seemed to cause the peevish citizen both pain and annoyance. The other surly guy, having heard the disturbance, was running down the car crying: "Hey, lay off that stuff, Jim, you dog-gone fool!" But his plea was of no avail. Jim gave a low roar and launched himself at Mr. Driggs; whereupon Danny found no course open to him but the hitting of Jim on the jawbone, and the lifting of him to the other side of the coach.

This punch missed the button. The fallen James drew a large Colt from his jacket pocket and, without troubling to rise or even roll over, fired three shots at Danny's calves, none of which took effect. This was lucky, because

it is not to be supposed that with even one .45 bullet in the leg, my young friend would have taken the pleasure he now did in jumping upward and onward and landing with both his feet in the firer's middle.

Danny supposed, and rightly, that this would be the end of Jim for the time being. He also supposed, wrongly, that it was the end of the fight. But on turning around, he found that the other jasper, who the instant before had been counseling peace and quietness, was now himself in possession of a gun, and acting as though he intended to shoot Mr. Driggs in the back! Only the poor lad's swinging around so suddenly and getting a good kick home on the man's kneecap, made the shot go wide. It smashed a glass window, valued by the railroad company at four dollars and thirty-five cents. Before another could follow it, the gun had been pretty completely confiscated and thrown through the broken pane onto the tracks.

Arthur, his new jasper, was a much better fist fighter than Jim had ever been; also cooler, and in possession of both his eyes. Within fifteen seconds, he had turned this into a real advantage by closing one of Danny's eyes, after successively pasting him one on each cheekbone, another flush on the end of the nose, and two roosters to the lower ribs. Staggering back from these latter, Danny tripped on the fallen James; went to his knees, and was only brought back to life and love by the realization that this wasn't any exhibition bout, but a regular scrap in which the loser was extremely liable to be knifed, shot, or strangled to death. This, I need scarcely say, is not usual in Texas any more, especially in Three Pines County, of which I have the honor to be sheriff, and through whose peaceful pastures the train was now tearing at fourteen miles an hour, while the engineer blew his whistle loudly for the police.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PRISONER.

IT'S funny, you know, but after it was all over, I remembered hearing those whistles and paying no attention to them, so interesting was the conversation of Alice Bridges, and so soothing the effect of her rubbing my wrists with Anti-pain Specific. As a general thing, ladies don't much care for this great medicine, perhaps owing to its ability to raise blisters on skins not used to it, including those of horses; but on hearing that Dismal Danny Driggs had anointed me with the stuff, Alice could not be prevented from doing likewise.

"Do you think he'll be back on the two twenty, by any chance, Uncle Bill?" asked the girl, abandoning all pretense of having come over to see me, and bending my little finger double in her eagerness.

"Tush, tush, girl," I told her indulgently when the excitement had died down, "you little know the ways of high finance. Probably he won't be back for days. Do you think people walk into banks and walk out again taking what they happen to need along with them in a truck? Not so. Far from it."

"Well, I did think so," replied Alice defiantly.

"You are but a child," I murmured, drifting pleasantly toward dreamland.

"Well, child or no child, I'll bet I know more about banks than Danny Driggs does," she said. "I don't believe he's ever been in one before today. Oh, dear, I do hope he doesn't get into any trouble, just when I've got such wonderful news for him!"

"He won't get into any trouble," I said soothingly, and in the complete confidence that I was telling her the truth. "Certainly he won't get into any trouble. What trouble is there he could get into?"

"I don't know," said Alice.

"Well, then," I asked, settling myself comfortably for massage of the left wrist, "what's the good news?"

She chuckled.

"Father's back."

"Back? Has he been away?"

"No. When I say back," remarked Alice judiciously, "I mean back *under*."

I had to open one eye. "Under?"

"Under here," said the innocent girl, exhibiting a very pretty pink thumb. "You know he got out, Uncle Bill, and acted perfectly awful. It was two days before he would even stop talking when I told him to. It was only this morning that I made him say that Danny could come up and visit at the ranch house whenever he feels like it—that's the good news. But even so, he sticks to saying we can't be married until Danny's owner of a ranch, and I don't believe I can get him to change his mind."

"I should hope not," said I, being in the father class myself, to put it mildly. "And if you do, I'll ride over and change it back for him. The idea!"

There was a silence, while she gently rubbed Bortlecog's into my trigger finger.

"Well," she said softly at last, "I hope Danny gets the ten thousand dollars soon."

Simultaneously, the two twenty got into the station—which is immediately in back of my store, there being no other buildings within miles—and honestly, I don't see how we could have failed to hear her coming three quarters of a mile away. The engine was blowing its whistle fit to wake the dead; every passenger, that could shout, was doing it, and those that couldn't were having a nice long scream. Car doors were banging, windows were being let down, and over the whole racket the voice of "Bud" Blenkinsop, the conductor, was roaring for me to come out and do my duty.

"Can't!" I roared back. "Bring it in to me!"

Bud's a nice boy, and he knows me, in addition to being an acquaintance. So he obeyed, though the job was evidently distasteful to him. For some reason, though he has been on the local line for years, he still thinks punctuality is a virtue, and whenever the two twenty is late, he takes it as a personal insult. Nevertheless, he very properly escorted whatever it was, that he had in his charge, to the middle of my store floor, stood it there right end up, and gave me the necessary particulars about it. On examining it carefully, I perceived it to be Dismal Danny Driggs.

"Prisoner for you," said Bud. "Double murder. Well, we're three minutes late now. Good-by."

Just as he hurried out, the sharp eyes of love made out what I'd discovered some thirty seconds before, and Alice Bridges gave a piercing shriek.

"Danny!" she cried, hurling herself upon it.

He extended his arms and gathered her to him. I don't know where she found a dry spot to kiss, or whether there was one; anyhow, they seemed to me to go ahead and kiss each other for the better part of five minutes. It got perfectly monotonous, and you can bet I was glad when finally Mr. Driggs disengaged himself.

"And now," said he, "it's time for you to run along home. No place for little girls. I've got a couple of men outside that are much worse chewed than I am, an' I don't want you to see such things. I'm responsible for you from now on, you know, sweetheart. You must do as I say."

"Y-y-yes, Danny," said old man Bridges' boss. "B-b-but—did you get the ten thousand?"

The poor kids! He'd been so sure of getting it, and she'd been so sure he would. I tell you, when I saw him

swallow a lump in his throat before answering, by golly, I had one with him!

"N-no," replied Danny, "not exactly. But it'll be all right."

"And now you're arrested!" she wailed.

"It was self-defense," said Danny, "and besides, Alice, I told you to go. I'll be right over and see you as soon as I can. Now, it's all right. Just get your pony and be off. And *don't* look behind the store."

She shuddered. "I'll bet they deserved all they got—and more!" she cried fiercely—at me, mind you.

"Never you mind about that," said Danny, leading her to the door and kissing her again. "It'll be all right, and the first thing you know we'll be all cozy in the Hogpen Q, raisin' prize Herefords or somep'n. Good-by."

"Good-by!"

"Good-by!"

"Good-by!"

Finally they got through with it, and Mr. Driggs got down to the serious business of his interview with me.

"Well?" I asked him sternly.

"Well," said Danny, kind of breathlessly. "It ain't a double murder, at all events. They ain't dead. And if they had of been——"

"Bring 'em in," said I.

He looked at me much in the fashion of a naughty schoolboy and obeyed. First he went out and brought in one gentleman and laid him on the floor; and then he went out and brought in the other gentleman, and laid him on the floor.

"Is this all?" I inquired.

"Yes, Mr. Garfield."

"Then explain," said I, leaning back and closing my eyes.

Of course, I haven't any right to hold inquests and preliminary examinations of criminals and so on, but I generally hold 'em for all that, and they have saved me a lot of grief. Look at this one, for instance. I ought to have

locked Danny in the tool shed on the conductor's complaint and given the victims free board and medical attention until they could appear against him themselves.

Ha-ha!

He had scarcely mentioned the jaspers' interest in the vacuum valves before I got an inkling of something wrong; it grew stronger at the description of the gun pulling; and when he chanced to tell me how the second guy had shouted to the other to lay off, I took the liberty of interrupting his narrative.

"Did you leave any pockets on these gentlemen?" I asked, without opening my eyes.

"What do you think I was doing?" he demanded quite hotly. "Robbing them?"

"If so," said I, disregarding his impetuosity, "would you be so extremely obliging as to look through the pockets in question, reporting to me the nature of any objects found?"

"You want me to frisk them?"

"Even so." And I heard him fumbling.

"Here's a jackknife," said he, "and a packet of tobacco and two folders of brown papers and a silver watch. Here's a notebook——"

"Ah, yes," said I. "And what's in the notebook?"

"Papers," said he. "Time-table of the railroad. Somebody's marked the two twenty in pencil, and written 'Sat' by it. Here's a map."

"We grow warm," said I. "What's the map of?"

"Looks like—yes, by gum, it's right around here. Here's Lone Star marked, an' here's Three Pines, with a star by it——"

"That's me," I informed him.

"What is?"

"The star. I wear one."

There was silence while he thought this over; then he went on in a kind

of awed voice: "The map ends at a place marked DMG. What's that?"

"Dead Man's Gulch."

After this, I paused, and let the suspense ferment a bit, as it were. "Dead Man's Gulch," I added pleasantly, "is the destination of the pay car."

There was another silence, after which he suddenly took such a grip of my most inflamed knee that I had to yell. Being averse to the waste of breath, I put the yell to a good use.

"Go into the kitchen, you dog-gone mass of mud and muscles," I shrieked, "and read the poster that's stuck up on the wall!"

I heard him lumber across the floor and shove the door open, also noticing the alteration of his breathing as he read the concluding lines of the poster, stating the amount of the reward and where to apply for it. Then I took a firm grip of both arms of my chair, thanked Heaven I hadn't had new glass put in the windows yet, and waited for him to start laughing.

Honest, the situation was such that I could almost have given a gurgle myself. Here was this nice boy, after all the troubles he'd had, apparently landed in one afternoon with two regular knockouts—a failure to raise the money he needed so badly, and an arrest for assault and mayhem. And here it was turning out that the very thing that had set all his troubles on him—this here unbridled laughter—had caused him to earn the money outright by bringing to justice the very train robbers that had chased him off No. 18 in the beginning! Whether they'd recognized him, and that was why Jim Champollion wanted to lay him out, or whether it was just pure accident, I never got to know. Whichever it was, I expected some little old burst of jubilation and merry laughter, believe me.

Seconds passed, and there was no howl of mirth from the kitchen; more seconds passed. Dismal Danny's foot-

steps returned and stopped by my chair; there were still no chortles. Finally I opened my eyes—to find him standing there staring down at the two unconscious bandits. He wasn't unconscious himself, of course; but aside from that, there wasn't much to choose between his condition and his adversaries'.

"You think they're the two five-thousand-dollar ones?" asked Danny slowly.

"No harm in hopin' so, anyway," I told him cheerfully.

As it turned out, they actually were—mail robbers and murderers several times over.

Still he didn't burst forth into one of his well-known explosions, though

the facts of the case were quite as well known to him as to me, and better. He didn't give a chuckle, even. And when at last he did make a sound, can you imagine what it was?

Standing there triumphant and victorious with the Hogpen Q as good as his, worth a quarter of a million if a penny; with Alice Bridges as good as his, likewise, and worth a whole lot more than any ranch that ever was; and with all the amusing circumstances that had made them his, fresh in his humorous mind, he looked down at the faces of the fellows whose capture had brought him all these things, and said:

"Poor guys!"



WILD ANIMALS OF NORTH AMERICA

The Fisher

THE swift and agile fisher or pekan is a deadly foe to fish, toads, frogs, snakes, birds, and small forest creatures such as rabbits and chipmunks. He is very much at home in trees and leaps nimbly from one to another to capture squirrels; he will even pursue and kill his relative, the marten.

A fisher has the characteristic long body and short legs of the weasel family to which he belongs. His coat varies in color from dark brown to black. Sometimes there will be gray or grayish-white markings on the animal's head, neck and underparts.

Although he is so fond of trees that he usually has his den in a hollow one, the fisher likes to roam through dense forests near the water or, especially in winter, along wooded ridges. He will hunt out traps and eat both bait and captured animal. And despite the quills of the porcupine he does not hesitate to attack this animal, which he finds very palatable.

Like that of most wild animals, the range of the fisher is no longer so extensive as once it was, but he may still be found in the mountains of New York State, Vermont, and Maine, westward from Maine and southern Labrador to the Pacific coast, and north to the Great Slave Lake.

The young of the fisher, which as a rule numbers two or three, are born in spring, and early in life begin to accompany their mother in her perambulations, depending on her protection until they are almost adult. A large-sized pekan will sometimes weigh eighteen or twenty pounds and be from three to three and a half feet long, but the average animal is much smaller than this.



Trail of the Stone-that-shines

By Peter Henry Morland

Author of "The White Cheyenne," etc.

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters

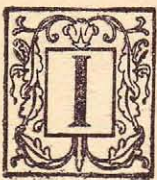
DUE to being ruined at the race track, Dick Rutherford, The Colonel, leaves Virginia to seek his fortunes in the West. He breaks his engagement to Martha Farnsworth, though both still love each other, and takes leave of his slaves with misery in his heart.

With him on the overland-horseback tour is Christy Deever, a twelve-year-old boy, whose knowledge of horses and loyalty has endeared him to the young colonel.

After their encounter with bears, the boy feels the presence of some unseen person. A rifle shot eventually proclaims the presence of an Indian at whom The Colonel shoots.

CHAPTER VII.

A GREAT IDEA.



IHAD loaded my own rifle again, by this time, but I didn't want to waste any time punching holes in desert air while there was such a marksman as The Colonel along. I swung my gray mare, Kitty, alongside his horse and passed him my loaded gun, while I took his emptied one. He gave me a nod, and we drove in at that Indian from different sides.

The Indian was hurt by the bullet, and more than half stunned by the fall from his horse. He had hardly done rolling head over heels when we were at him, and I suppose that his head

must have been spinning like a top. But he wasn't ready to call quits. His rifle was lost in the grass; so he had pulled out a knife and staggering around on his hurt leg, he waved the knife and seemed ready to fight until he dropped.

If I had been The Colonel, I should have fired the loaded rifle into the rascal, but The Colonel's way was not mine. When he came up close to the Indian he leveled his rifle; then he waited until the redskin's head had cleared enough to understand what was happening. That required only a moment. Then the brave drew himself up to his height and resigned himself. It was plain that he expected to have the shot sent home through his heart or his brain.

"Plenty of nerve, eh?" said The Colonel.

"He shot at us from behind," said I. "And what wrong had we ever done him?"

"How do we know what other whites have done to him, however?" asked The Colonel. "And these fellows put us all under one blanket, as I understand it. Make a sign to him to put down that knife and surrender."

I did it as clearly as I could after which the redskin shook his head so that a ripple ran down through his long hair. By gesture he told us that if he gave up his knife and surrendered, we would promptly cut his throat. At this, The Colonel tapped his rifle significantly, and the Indian nodded, as much as to say: "I am at your mercy. I deserve nothing else. I expect nothing else!"

"What am I to do with the fool?" asked The Colonel, greatly exasperated. "He won't surrender, and I can't butcher him like this!"

"Put a slug of lead through his head," I suggested. "That would be the best way for everybody, Colonel. It's what he has coming to him!"

"I don't want to appear on the plains as a destroyer," said The Colonel. "Besides, what would we get out of this man? Nothing, Christy. Not even information, because we couldn't talk to him in his language."

"Very well," said I, "it looks as though he'll bleed to death."

The Colonel was a great deal moved. "Curse him!" said he. "He'll stand there like a Roman and die. Won't trust himself to us and won't surrender. Christy, we can't go through with this. He's human under his red skin, after all! Open up the pack and get some bandages."

I did it, and The Colonel made me open a roll of cloth and show the brave how it would be used to wrap around his leg and stanch the crimson flow.

Then Mr. Rutherford drew back, waved to the copper-faced man, and started off across the plains in our original direction. I was too staggered to even argue about the thing. All I could say was that he had now a double reason for wanting to trail us and kill us.

"If he were a wolf and not a man," said The Colonel, "he might do as you say, but they're human, these people. I have always found that a 'bad' dog has been made bad by stupid treatment. And a 'bad' horse is generally owned by a brute or a fool. Give them half a chance and they turn out well. And so, Christy, we're going to give this Indian *his* chance."

"You're giving him *two* chances," said I, "and I suppose he'll have both of them hanging at his belt before another day has gone by."

The Colonel laughed at this, but he wouldn't change his mind and, as we jogged along through the wilderness, I began to wonder what would come of us—a boy of twelve and a madman like The Colonel, thrown out on the prairies together!

He said to me a little later: "Now that we're getting well into the Indian country, we have to decide what we're to do, Christy."

I admitted that that was true and I said that I had been wondering for a long time just what his plans were. He took my breath by replying:

"Plans? Haven't a plan in the world, my boy. Not a plan in the world. I know what I have to do, but I haven't the slightest idea of how to go about it. You understand why I'm out here. Christy?"

"I know that you have to make enough money to go back and marry Miss Farnsworth," said I.

"Exactly," responded The Colonel. "That's what I have to do. And I know that in a borderland like this, there is always a good chance for a fellow with a few wits and steady

nerves. My wits aren't the best in the world, Christy, but my nerves are specially healthy. So here we are. Only I began to wish that some money-making opportunities would show themselves! Martha can't wait for me forever!"

I have written down these words, I believe, exactly as he uttered them, and I believe that this speech should be carved into stone, to stand as an imperishable monument of thoughtlessness. Idiots and madmen may have done such things, but I don't think that any other human with brains ever took a two-thousand-mile journey with no better idea of what he would do at the end of it. For my part, I would not walk across a street without a clearer purpose. However, The Colonel was The Colonel, though it strains even my credulity, when I reflect on some of the things which he did and said.

He watched me with a good deal of anxiety, saying: "Christy, you don't seem to approve!"

"I was only thinking it over, sir," said I.

"But," said he, "you *must* approve, you know, because you are the practical head in this party. Would never have dreamed of starting out to make a fortune, Christy, without having you along to show me how to manage the thing. You *must* agree with me, Christy!"

Well, what could I do? Matter of fact, I wanted to cry like a nervous girl but I simply said: "There's a lot of money out here. There isn't any doubt about that. Buffalo hides, and such things. All we have to do is to get the hang of the business."

"Gold, too," said The Colonel, "billions in gold out here in the plains and the hills. Eh?"

"I suppose so," said I.

"That's it," said The Colonel. "Rich land, too! Could make money, farming this land, Christy. Take all we

wanted to; inclose a hundred miles square; raise wheat. Confound it, this soil can grow such grass that it would have to do well with wheat! Get twenty bushels to the acre without any trouble—twenty bushels to the acre. Six hundred and forty acres to the square mile. Let's see, that's more than seven thousand—call it seven thousand bushels even to the square mile. Say that we work only a hundred square miles. A hundred times seven thousand—seven hundred thousand bushels. Take in more land. Make it an even million bushels of first-rate wheat every year. Let's see—how much money would that bring in at present prices."

"A whopping big fortune, sir," said I. "You'd have to ship that crop out, though."

"Build rafts. Float it down the river. Right down the river, Christy. That's the thing. Wait a minute! Why not run up some flour mills along some of the fast streams? Yes, sir, that's it!"

He clapped his hands together and could hardly sit on his horse, he was so excited. "Think of that, Christy! Gad, but I'm glad that that idea popped into my mind. Plain inspiration! We'll run up the flour mills and grind our own wheat. Turn out the finest brand of flour that you ever saw. Old George knows all about milling flour, and what do you say that we send for him?"

I didn't laugh. No, I remembered that I was out on the prairies with this man, and I felt a long distance from laughing, I can tell you.

"Well, sir," said I, "you'd have to fence in your ground first, before you sent for George."

"Why fences?" asked he. "The Indians can't be kept out by fences!"

"Maybe the buffaloes can't, either," said I. "But we'd have to try."

"Buffaloes, of course!" said he. "Well, I'm glad that I have you along to remember the little things for me,

Christy! But the fences are fixed. I'll build strong fences around the whole hundred square miles, eh? That's the thing for us!"

"We'll have to buy the posts and the boards some other place and ship them here. That would cost a good many thousands," I told him.

His face fell a good deal. "True," said he. "But we'd manage that. Can you think of anything else?"

"It would cost a good deal to bring men out here for farm work. You'd have to pay them for working on a farm and fighting Indians, and that sort of wages comes pretty high, you know! Then there'd be the cost of buying plows and harrows and scythes and timber for barns and seed wheat; and after that, you can double the price for the cost of shipping it out here."

The Colonel looked so sad that I felt as though I had stabbed him in the back.

"Money is the first necessity," said he at last. "One can see that. We'll have to rustle about and get us some money—through the gold mines—buffalo robes—or some such thing. When we've made a handsome stake we'll turn it all into our land development project, eh? Would you agree to that, Christy?"

"Certainly, sir," said I.

"Looks absolutely feasible to you?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Matter of fact, Christy, it's a great idea, and you'll admit it."

"Certainly, sir."

"It came on me out of nothing at all. Plain inspiration," said The Colonel. "Write this day down in red, Christy, because it's the foundation of our fortune! Why, lad, we'll be so rich that you'll never regret the years of your life that I've stolen so selfishly."

"Stolen, sir?"

"Do you think that I'm not aware, every moment," went on The Colonel, "that these are years when you ought

to be in school? But here I keep you slaving for me. I am ashamed, Christy! Bitterly ashamed! But from the day that I took you by the neck, and you ran a knife into me—from that day, my dear lad, I knew that I would have to buckle you to me with hoops of steel! I knew that you had the stuff of which the poet spoke, if only I could bring it to light. And I *have* brought it to light, Christy—so much that I keep putting off the day when I must let you go!"

CHAPTER VIII.

IN EXCHANGE.

AT a time like that, it was foolish to argue with him, because when he had fixed his mind on a subject, nothing would put him off. No one could explain matters or alter his ideas. I could not say that I hadn't the least wish to let him go to school—that I didn't have the money to go to school, unless he sent me—that simply to live with him was a grand education—that he had found me a little gutter rat and made me into a self-respecting youngster. I couldn't say any of those things, because he had his head firmly fixed among the clouds. So I made no attempt—and he went on working himself into a fine misery until evening, when we found a little creek and camped on the bank of it, building our fire down close to the water, where the blaze of it couldn't be seen at any distance.

After supper, I sat at my watch and enjoyed the crispness of the pure prairie air and listened to the wind humming through the grasses on the plains, the water at my feet bubbling and singing. It was all *too* pleasant. I remember putting my head on my knees for a moment, to close my eyes and rest them a breathing space.

When I looked up, the fire was almost out, and I was stiff from my cramped position. Besides, I was no longer sit-

ting alone at that fire. There was a shadow on the farther side of it, and now that my wits all rushed back upon me, I reached for the rifle with a gasp. For it was an Indian, hooded in a buffalo robe, and looking at me with a face of stone. Nothing stirred about him except the feathers in his hair, bending a little in the breeze.

I thought, as first, that his calm was caused by one of two things: Either a dozen other braves had surrounded us and we were in their hands, or else this fellow had already cut the throat of The Colonel and made no account of a boy like me.

Turning my head, I gave one swift glance at The Colonel. No, there he was with his fine face faintly lighted from the fire, sleeping with a smile, like a child. When I looked back to the Indian, he raised a hand from beneath his robe and greeted me with a "How!"—so soft that it could not possibly reach the ears of The Colonel and disturb his sleep.

I was badly shaken as to nerves, I can tell you! I managed to raise my own hand and whisper: "How!" in return—since that seemed to be the polite thing in the best Indian circles, for the moment. Then I pushed a bit of brush onto the fire, and as the flames leaped, I saw that this chap out of the night was none other than the very brave who had attempted to take our scalps that same day.

He saw that I was filled with wonder, and he smiled a little at me. Then he laid a finger on his lips and pointed to The Colonel, as much as to say that he would explain everything if he could, but not when his voice might awaken the white man. His smile had a strange effect upon me, because his features did not seem made for gentle expression.

But however much he did not wish to disturb The Colonel, I distinctly felt that this was a time when my com-

panion should be alert. All seemed well, but there might be mischief which a boy's mind could not understand. So I spoke a word that brought Mr. Ruth-erford to his feet.

You will understand that The Colonel was generally so very well poised and at ease that one rarely saw him startled beyond control, and I hoped that the sight of the brave might shock him half as much as it had shocked me. Well, it was another disappointment for me. As he had said earlier in that same day, his nerves were fairly strong, and you would have thought that the warrior was an old friend whom he really expected to find beside his fire when he opened his eyes.

He stepped forward with his hand extended, saying: "Friend!" A man from Mars could have understood that word from the gesture and the smile that went along with it. And the brave took the hand of The Colonel with such energy that I could see the long muscles quiver and jump along his arm. And how his eyes flashed!

This red warrior was no ordinary man. For, copper skin or white skin, there are degrees of manhood, and this fellow was a hero among his kind and a person of importance, as any one could tell with half an eye. He had a collar of grizzly-bear claws, and I had seen enough of those huge brutes to respect a fighter who decorated himself with such gear. His clothes were of the finest deerskin, fringed as fine as silk at the leg and arm seams, and the bead work on his moccasins alone must have cost the labor of a woman through a whole winter season. His horse, which was now in the background, was one of the usual dumpy, hairy beasts which the Indians rode, though it might have possessed extraordinary qualities, for all that we could tell. In addition, there was his rifle, which was new and of a good make. What was more, it was well-kept. And this was an ex-

traordinary feature with an Indian, as even such greenhorns as we could tell.

However, in spite of such dignity as this man possessed, it warmed my heart to see the way in which he conducted himself around The Colonel. In the first place, he caught the word "Friend," and kept on repeating it over and over again, hitting a little bit closer to the correct pronunciation each time. When he had managed that, all the while smiling and nodding at the big white man, he got busy in another way.

He went down the edge of the stream to the pony which he had been riding, and he came back carrying the saddle which was an extraordinarily good one. Out of the saddlebags he brought a shirt which he had apparently taken along with him to make himself gaudy in case of a great occasion arriving while he was wandering across the prairie. He had some other trinkets, together with a hatchet with an edge as murderously sharp as a razor, an old-fashioned double-barreled pistol which had a rusted lock that could not possibly be fired, but which he handled with the greatest reverence and fear, and an excellent hunting knife.

All of this stuff he laid out before us, first throwing plenty of fresh brush on our fire, so that we could have sufficient light to know what he was doing. And if he was a bit grandiloquent in this, he could be forgiven. For at the root of his nature, every Indian is half a child.

This was not all. When he had gathered everything he possessed, except for a little rope which was twisted around the head of his pony, he stripped himself of all of his finery. By this time he had reduced himself to the horse, the rope, and a little pouchlike affair made of the skin of a rabbit, and which we were too ignorant to know was his medicine bag.

Here he rested content, but not until he had made gestures to show that

he would have given the horse to us, also, except that he had a long distance to go to his home, and his leg was crippled with a wound. However, the rest went to The Colonel, with the blessings of the donor, so far as we could make out.

I kept waiting for The Colonel to gather in this loot. It was a great thing to see him standing up there, the most magnificent man that ever walked this earth, as far as my eyes have ever seen. He had his arms folded and his big head thrown back a little. His face was quite impassive, except for a little glint at the corners of his eyes by which I knew that he was tremendously pleased. Well he might be, I thought, for here was almost enough stuff to open a museum. He could go back East and travel with lectures on this one batch, if he wanted to, and make a great deal more money than he was ever apt to gather by his visionary Western farm.

However, I was wrong again. He was a confounded man to decipher. Usually he jumped the way that I didn't expect. He waited until the brave was finished and was about to leave us. Then The Colonel picked up the saddle and carried it to the side of the pony. After that, he fetched the stuff that went into the saddlebags. Finally, he pointed to the clothes of the red man and indicated that the night was cold. More than that, he indicated the fire, the water flowing gleaming by our little camp, the tall, romantic banks of the stream, the darkness of the night, and the glitter of the stars beyond. And having included the whole universe in his meaning, he took the hand of the redskin and repeated the word: "Friend!" And his gesture waved away the rest of creation and made it of infinitely less value.

I can feel in my old heart now an echo, as it were, of the thrill of excitement that jumped in me at that moment. The Indian could barely contain

himself; there were bright tears in his eyes. His whole body trembled, and his broad breast rose and fell as though he were in pain.

So far as he was concerned, as the bowlers say, it was a ten-strike. He took back his goods and he gave The Colonel his soul in exchange.

CHAPTER IX.

"FRIEND!"

YOU and I could have given back the Indian's loot just as well, but we could never have done it as The Colonel did. Before he ended, the material universe was simply banished, and nothing but human relations remained to be worth a candle.

After that, the warrior sat down by our fire and we got his name out of him, which was Sanjakakokah—with a meaning which we were to learn later. The Colonel then introduced himself and me, and when the poor Indian had tried to stagger through our appellations a few times and failed miserably, Mr. Rutherford suggested the title of Colonel for himself, and Christy for me. He shortened the name of the brave to Sanja without perceptibly hurting his feelings.

We found out next that he was hungry—which we could have guessed by the flatness of his stomach, without the gestures by which he indicated that the sun had gone around the world twice since he had eaten. The Colonel put me to work cooking, and for his part, he looked to the wound of our new friend. The red man had done a very poor job in bandaging, and the wound was very sore and inflamed, but The Colonel was a past master at first aid, and he fixed up the hurt as comfortable as you please in no time at all.

Then we sat back and watched Sanja eat, and by the time he had finished, the sky was beginning to turn gray. That didn't bother Sanja, for when his

stomach was filled, he wrapped himself in his robe and was sound asleep before you could count ten.

I whispered to The Colonel and asked him what the upshot of this would be. He hardly understood what I meant, but I told him that this man was certain to ask us to go along with him to his tribe, wherever that might be, and that then we must accompany him. The Colonel didn't like the idea. He declared that it would spoil everything to make use of Sanja, but that this little affair should remain simply a pleasant memory with no other material results.

That, of course, was what one could expect from The Colonel, but I pointed out that we had no better destination. If he wanted to make money out of the prairies, he would have to learn prairie ways and prairie people, and that this was a Heaven-given opportunity for us. Finally, he agreed with me, though I had a hard time of it convincing him. In the end, he decided that we would surely accept the invitation, if we got one.

The sun was well up, by this time, and Sanja suddenly stood up and stretched. The air was icy cold, and the black water of the creek in the shadow looked just a bit icier, but that didn't deter Sanja. He stripped off his clothes, tied up his long black hair in a handy knot—ridiculously as a white woman might have done—and then dived into that stream, bandaged leg, and all.

He disappeared while we stood shivering, and he came up halfway across the stream with a shout. Then he turned and came back toward us, frolicking like a child in that cold bath. When he had had enough of it, he climbed out, whipped the water from his body, and dressed for the ride. As for his wounded leg, you would have thought that he had never had any trouble with it in his life, and The

Colonel had to force him to stop for a new bandage.

After that came the thing which I had foretold. He rode out a little in front of us, and with many gestures persuaded us to ride, repeating: "Friend! Friend!" He indicated a great number of people, as much as to say that he would take us to a place where every one would be a friend to us.

"You are a rascally little prophet," said The Colonel to me, with a smile, "and I suppose that we'll really have to go along to make this fine fellow happy."

So off we went, and there was a load off my mind. For I felt that now we were about to make a beginning of some sort and with The Colonel's talents, if he wished to make money, he would soon succeed with half a chance to work his way on the prairies. We went along at a good clip. I think we were traveling for a matter of four or five days before we came in sight of the Indian town. The Colonel was much impressed. He pointed out to me that civilized men would not wander this distance from their homes, through hostile country, equipped with only a rifle and a horse to make their living as they went along, and I presume that he was right. Here was Sanjakakokah cruising about on the plains a hundred and fifty miles from his base of supplies, but simply hungering for any sort of adventure, and most of all for scalps.

There couldn't have been a better way to learn the Indian language. Sanja was perfectly willing to try to speak our tongue, but we insisted on being pupils while he was the teacher. As a teacher, he was the best in the world. His gravity was so colossal that nothing could shake it for an instant, and our most ridiculous attempts to pronounce after him some of his gutturals and consonantal sounds never made him so much as smile. He was

always encouraging us and telling us that we spoke so well he could hardly believe that this was the first time. In fact, he was a prime good fellow, this Sanja.

He was hungry to talk, and we were hungry to talk. He had a thousand things to say, and we had talked to no one except ourselves for weeks together. So we chattered away all day long as we crossed the prairie, while Sanja enlarged our vocabularies by leaps and bounds. I was never able, in after years, to make such progress with an Indian tongue. But then our minds were fresh. The first writing of the prairies was inscribed upon us by Sanjo, as upon a slate, and we really made a remarkable bit of progress.

We learned that Sanja was a Mandan; that his nation had once been great in war and in numbers, and that they were still as brave as any people on the plains. Their enemies—who were all the other neighboring redskins—were constantly pressing back the Mandans and thinning their ranks, until finally the Mandans were no longer of a sufficient strength to rove across the prairies, with men, women, and children on the march. They could only send out small war parties, or single scouts like himself, to do what deeds came in their way.

In the meantime, the rest of the nation was cooped up in a little city which they had built on the edge of a cliff beside the river, where the water and the rock covered two sides of their homes, and a strong wall guarded the rest. Here, constantly on their guard, like a cornered wolf which the dogs dare not close on, they kept the Sioux and the rest of the prairie dwellers at a safe distance. They planted corn—he showed us a handful of the dried seed, much smaller than any corn which I had seen before—and they gathered berries, sallying out to hunt buffalo, when chance brought a herd within

striking distance of their town. On the whole they lived very happily, though it was plain that Sanjakakokah yearned to be out with his men ranging across the plains as free as any Sioux chief to hunt down enemies and increase the number of scalps that hung in his tepee.

He talked to us about many other things, too, and as our vocabularies swelled, we could understand most of what he said, though in a fragmentary way. It seems that he had seen us a full three or four days before he had finally attacked us. And the second day of his trailing of us, he had almost tried his hand in picking me off when I lagged behind, in the hope that at the sound of the shot, the big white man might come hurrying back and be a victim to a second bullet. That was the day, indeed, when I had received the fright. We questioned him closely. He swore that I could not have seen him. Therefore it must have been a pure matter of telepathy, though not a very strained one, I suppose.

We asked Sanja why he had planned to attack men who had done him no harm, and his answer was beautifully illuminating to people who were not yet accustomed to the Indian manner of thought. A long time before—how many years we could not find out, since Indians are apt to be a bit inexact in their chronology—five Mandans were paddling a big canoe down the river when a sudden burst of rifle fire from the bank filled the craft with dead and wounded. A party of whites—rascals, no doubt, of the blackest kind—had taken the Mandans by surprise. But one of the party, a cousin of Sanjakakokah's, had managed to dive overboard and swim to the farther shore in spite of a bullet through his body. He reached the Mandan town and gave an account of everything that had happened, before he died. Therefore, as Sanja cheerfully told us, since that

moment he had known that it was his duty to send to the happy hunting grounds every white man who fell into his hands. This he had done to the best of his ability, having accumulated two handsome scalps, as he assured us.

Before he had finished this narrative, I looked upon him as merely a cheerful murderer, but The Colonel seemed to have no such feeling toward him. He regarded Sanjakakokah with a calm smile and told him that he understood the exact feeling of the chief.

This was not all. Sanja went on to declare that he had hoped with all his heart to take both our scalps, and that he had followed us for many days, full of this desire. He apologized for his lack of success and he assured The Colonel that ordinarily he would not have delayed so long had it not been that the Great Spirit who governs all things had held back his hand against his own will.

Of course, that was simply another way of saying that he had never been able to come upon an opportunity which exactly fitted his sense of safety. However, The Colonel seemed to swallow the entire yarn, and rode on as full of friendship as ever until, in the distance, we made out the Mandan village on the bluff and saw that this stage of our wanderings had come almost to an end.

CHAPTER X.

THE VILLAGE.

WHEN we stood there on the top of the rise from which we had our first view of the Mandan town, Sanjakakokah stopped his pony for a moment and laughed softly to himself.

"You are happy, brother," said The Colonel.

"How can I be anything other than happy?" said the Indian. "I see my city again. It is the most beautiful and wonderful city in the world. Other peoples build their dwellings with the

skin of buffalo raised on poles, but our houses are so big and so strong that a hundred men could stand on the top of one of them, and yet the house will not fall down. And the Mandans are not great in numbers, it is true, but they are great wits and they are near to the spirits of the earth and the air."

I wanted to break out laughing at this silly speech, but The Colonel gave me a side glance that ripped down to the quick and sobered me thoroughly.

He said: "Sanja, these things that you tell me come from the mouth of a man who speaks the truth. But I wish to know more. I have heard that the Dakotas and the Pawnees and the Cheyennes are very great nations."

I repeat the answer of Sanjakakokah as nearly as we could make it out, from our imperfect knowledge of the language at that time.

He said: "It is very true that the Dakotas, Pawnees, and Cheyennes are great peoples. And the Comanches in the south are wonderful with their horses. The Crows are a mighty people, also. Their beautiful hair hangs to the ground, and the tips of it trail when a chief walks out. All of these are brave and wise nations. They are no braver in battle than the Mandans. For the Mandans will not become slaves. We will not join one of the great tribes and become swallowed up in their numbers, because we are proud.

"I shall tell you the reason of our pride. When the first man was made, and the first woman, they were Mandans. All the other nations of the Indians came from that first Mandan. And he had a son who had a black skin. That son was the father of all the negroes. He had another son with a pale skin, and that son was the father of all the white men in the world. Therefore, because we were the first people in the world, you will see that we could not let ourselves be taken into another tribe and lose our names. Be-

cause the Great Spirit would be angry with us."

The Colonel listened to all this nonsense with a face as grave as though he were hearing the gospel preached. But he said at last: "I have heard that the Pawnees also say that they were the first people to be made, and the Dakotas say the same thing. Do they not claim it, Sanja?"

Sanja nodded and smiled with some contempt. "These peoples," said he, "because they have many braves on the warpath, and because they take many scalps, also flatter themselves with lies as you say. But I shall give you this proof that the Mandans are the first people in the world and the nearest to the spirits of the air and the earth and the underwater people, also. This is my proof, which all men know.

"When the buffalo leave these hills and pass far away, we might starve for the lack of meat, because we cannot go out and hunt at a great distance as the other nations do, for our enemies would come on us like rivers in the spring floods, and wash us away. But since we cannot chase the buffalo at a distance, we call them back to us with the buffalo dance. Sometimes it is very hard. We must make big medicine, and I have seen the dance last for fifty days and nights, but in the end, the buffalo always come!" He said it with a childish smile of triumph.

"It is a great thing," said The Colonel. "I know of no other people who could do such a thing."

"But we can do a greater thing than this," said the Mandan serenely. "There are times when it does not rain for many weeks. Then the ground becomes dry. See—it is dry now. And the roots of the corn may wither and die of thirst. Then one of our young men goes and stands on the top of a house and makes his medicine all day, and if the rain does not come, then the next day another young man goes to

the roof and makes his medicine. I have seen this work kept up for twenty days, but in the end, the medicine of some one among the young braves is strong enough. We see a cloud blow in from the edge of the sky and, after that, the rain falls, the corn drinks, and the harvest is saved. Since the ground is so dry, it will be strange if they are not making medicine to bring the rain to us even now!"

There was a certain amount of very strong logic in all of this, even though I had to choke to keep from laughter. For if people could dance long enough, the buffalo were sure to return to the grass which they had left. And if the young men of the village could make "medicine" long enough, one day it was sure to rain. However, even I could see that it would have been very foolish to attempt to point this out to the chief. He was perfectly satisfied with his reasoning and the reasoning of his tribe. As for The Colonel, he showed nothing but interest. He really looked as though he believed this stuff, and then we started on toward the town.

In the swale beneath the village, we came to the cornfields. There were half a dozen Indian women and their daughters laboring, and every stroke of their hoes, made out of the broad shoulder bones of buffalo, raised the dust. They were all white and powdered with the dust, also. When they saw us they came as fast as they could run. It was a sight partly horrible and partly amusing to see one fat old squaw hobbling along as fast as our horses trotted, shouting questions at Sanja. He paid no more attention to these women and their girls than he might have paid to the blowing dust which they raised. He simply twitched his horse to a new course, and brought it into a gallop.

While we were heading toward the village, I crowded Kitty close to Sir Turpin and called quietly to The

Colonel: "Are we going right in with him now, sir? Wouldn't it be better to stay at a little distance and have a parley with the head chief, before we go into what may be a trap?"

"Every man has to take a few chances," said The Colonel carelessly. "So we'll ride right on in, Christy. Mind that Sanja doesn't see you talking to me like this, or he'll think that we don't trust him, and I wouldn't hurt his feelings for the world!"

So we made our entrance into the town. We were sighted from the wall before we got near the gate, and there was already a fair-sized crowd gathered as we rode in with Sanjakakokah. Women and girls and boys rattled questions at us like hail on a roof as we pushed our horses through the gang, but Sanja kept on, now and then raising his hand and hailing some friend among the warriors. They stood here and there, and each of them gave a start of curiosity when they saw the two whites. But they wouldn't demean themselves by babbling questions like children.

I was busy taking stock of this village. Certainly Sanja had been right when he called their dwellings houses, and not tepees, because these were great round structures which might house a dozen families at a time. And on one of them, just as Sanja had prophesied, there was a brave making his medicine to bring the rain. He had had quite a crowd around him, too, but they showed him their backs when we approached. However, this fellow had worked himself into such a lather that he did not seem to see us, even when Sanja stopped and hailed him as The Beaver and wished him good luck in his medicine making.

The Beaver went right on. He was dressed in the white skins of mountain sheep, fringed with black scalp locks, a very flashy costume and a fiendishly hot one, I suppose, for a man standing

on the roof of a house under such a broiling sun as this was. Heat couldn't stop him, however. He had a lance in one hand and a shield, covered with gaudy daubs of color, was in the other. He kept brandishing one or the other of these at the sky and spouting out a speech of which we heard a cross section. I don't think that there was much else to it. He merely stood up there and repeated the same idea over and over again, all the long day. And the only thing that he varied was his emphasis, which was screaming one moment and soft as a whisper the next. While the crowd stood about and drank this talk down like wine.

"Sun," said he, "I am The Beaver. I must have water to drink and water to swim in. Therefore, do not dry up the earth. Do not melt the clouds out of the sky. I know you, sun! You are trying to keep back the wind which is my friend. The kind wind has heard the voice of my medicine. It is trying to blow a good rain to us that will turn the ground to mud and make the river as yellow as paint. But you, sun, will not let it. You keep it back with your heat. However, you will see that the wind and my medicine are stronger than you to-day. The rain is coming! The rain is coming! I can taste it in my throat; I can smell the big drops hitting the dust. I hear the corn drinking. My medicine is not a liar. It is a true medicine, and the rain will come. Listen to The Beaver, sun. Listen to me, wind!"

Very silly stuff, but not so silly to me, as I sat my horse in the dust cloud of that street and watched the enthusiasm of that fellow on the roof. He was a grown man, a strapping big one, too. He had killed his enemies in battle—witness the scalp locks with which he decorated his very clothes. And as I watched him broiling and shouting and groaning at the sun and the wind, I began to feel that perhaps

we *had* come to a place where men could hold a conversation with the elements. I didn't have long to watch this scene, for Sanja pressed ahead and was suddenly mobbed by three women and a couple of children.

CHAPTER XI.

THE QUAIL.

IT was his family. The three women were his wives, and the two children—a boy and a girl—were his offspring. He had been away from them more than two months on his long hunt, and I know that he must have been wild to sit down and talk with them. However, that was exactly what he would not let himself do.

His son—eight or nine years old—came with a flying leap, boosted himself, using his father's foot, and sat laughing and shouting on the horse in front of him. It must have made the heart of Sanja jump. But he merely took the youngster by the hair of the head, held him squealing and dangling, and dropped him into the dust, almost under the hoofs of my mare. The mother scooped up her fallen boy with a scream of fear and shook her fist at me as I rode past. But that example was enough to hold the others back.

Sanja was asking some one if Ompah, the head chief, was then in the village. A middle-aged man with a good deal of dignity listened to this question, but before he answered it, he ran his eyes over us. That glance lingered on me just the split part of a second—about as long, say, as it takes a hunting knife to drive to the handle. Then his eye wandered on to The Colonel and began to flame while he surveyed him. There wasn't any doubt about what he would do to us, if he had the ghost of a chance. This gloomy chap answered our guide: "Do you know where the house of Harratta may be found? Go there. For Harratta

has a daughter, The Quail. Harratta is gone on the warpath, and Ompah makes himself a fool and a woman, waiting for Harratta to come back, that he may ask the girl for his wife."

"Tell me, Rain-by-night," said Sanja, "is it true that Ompah has at last decided to take a wife?"

"It is true," said Rain-by-night, that Ompah will be found making himself a thing that even the children in the city laugh at—waugh!"

With a grunt of rage and disgust, he threw an edge of his fine buffalo robe over his head, as though in mourning, and strode past us, with a sidewise thrust from his eyes that glided between my ribs to my heart, once more. He was a gloomy fellow, this Rain-by-night, and I was glad to be away from him. After he was gone, Sanjakakokah said:

"This is a thing more wonderful than the absence of rain from the Mandans. You have heard what Rain-by-night told me. Now I tell you that Ompah is a great chief. There was never a greater warrior among the Mandans than this Elk. He had never taken a wife. He would have nothing to do with women, and other men's wives and daughters cooked for him and made his clothes and his robes. But he never had much. He is a poor man except in horses, of which he has a great herd for himself. He could have bought the most beautiful girls in the village to have for his wives, but he would not take them. He wanted a life of peace when he was in the city, he would say, and he preferred doing his fighting from the back of a horse and against an enemy of the whole nation. However, now it seems that he has lost his heart. I am sorry for Ompah but I am glad for the Mandans that we may have a son to such a great man!"

It was doubly impressive to hear such talk about a chief from another leader of the tribe. As a rule, an In-

dian prefers to talk about himself, and he can usually manage to expand his own exploits to a sufficient volume to fill the ears of every auditor that he can gather. But when he talks about another man to praise him, it means that that other man is big medicine, you may be sure.

As we went on down the street, Sanjakakokah told us that The Quail was the daughter of a hardy old warrior—Harratta, The Wolf. She was the prettiest woman that ever was seen on the prairies, and therefore it might be that Ompah had never taken a wife before, because he had not been able to find one who filled his mind as a man's wife should.

Here we turned through a winding of the narrow alley, and we saw in front of us one of the queerest pictures that I ever hope to see in this world. In the entrance to a lodge sat an Indian girl who was, just as Sanja had said, the most beautiful thing that ever stepped upon the prairie. Just in front of her sat a middle-aged warrior engaged in painting her face. His own face was made up in a wild combination of yellows and reds and grisly blues, so as to make himself attractive in the eyes of his lady love, I suppose. And now he was improving The Quail, as fast as he could.

This was the final touch in his work of decorating her. In the dust beside him lay three or four lengths of clothes of various colors which he had evidently tried on her but had not liked. The one which he had finally selected and gathered around her was yellow with a blue design and border, and rather a fetching thing, it seemed to me. He had put her in this. Then he had put half a dozen necklaces around her throat. He had wound pounds of gaudy beads around her arms, and he had woven quantities of the finest feathers into her hair.

When we came closer and he turned

his face to us I saw one of the harshest visages ever created. He could have posed for the central figure in a child's dream of an Indian raid. But this monster was so far lost in love that he actually did not see us. We were simply dim figures moving through the mist that obsessed him. And he turned his head back to the girl.

She, however, took more interest in us. A white man was a white man, after all, and I suppose that she had not happened to come across many whites like The Colonel. As a matter of fact, he was almost as much of an exception among white men as she was among Indians, but not quite. Because the daughter of The Wolf was not only an oddity among Indian women—she would have been an oddity among any set of women in the world.

"Christy," said The Colonel, "what a wonderful golden girl she is—if she'd only wipe the old fool's paint off her face!"

That was the word for her—golden! I never could find out just what blood was in her, because I never could learn any details about her mother. It may be that The Quail was not of the Mandan blood at all, but carried off from some border town in a raid. It may be that her mother belonged to the tribe and had strange blood in her. It may be that she was simply a freak of nature, though of course I cannot help doubting this.

At any rate, her hair and eyes were very dark, but they were not black. They were simply a dusky shade, like the evening. And her skin was as far from copper as it was from white. Perhaps you've seen some of the Madonnas which the Italians painted when they were half mad with color? Well, this girl was like one of those golden-skinned Madonnas, except that her color was a bit more shadowy than anything an Italian would put down on the canvas. Somewhere I've picked up

the theory that the Indians may be descended from the Chinese, or an antetypal race from which both the Chinaman and the red man may have evolved. I never could take much stock in that theory, although it might do to explain the unusual complexion of this girl. She might have been a throwback to a type that was gone an unknown span of centuries before.

These big, dusky, almond-shaped eyes looked at us with as calm a stare as any barbarian queen could have delivered from a throne. Then she deliberately wiped the streaks of paint from her face and gave us our first chance to really see her. For my part, I saw enough to understand why Ompah had lost his wits about her.

Sanja said: "Go into your house, Quail. I have to speak to Ompah."

"Speak to him, then," said this impertinent girl. "Or do I make Sanjakakokah dumb?"

There was a great deal about Indians and their ways that I did not know, but I *did* understand that Indian women do what they are told to do, and it chilled my blood a bit to hear the girl talk in this manner. Sanja was so enraged that he even lifted the whip in his hand as though he was about to strike her. But I suppose that the presence of the big chief stopped him. At any rate, the main thing was that the girl remained sitting there, staring at The Colonel.

And The Colonel stared back at her. In the meantime, Ompah pulled himself together a little and stood up, drawing his robe around him—a whale of a man he was when he stood up. But his eyes still had a dazed expression as he faced us. He asked what it was that Sanja wanted, and finally he seemed to make out what had happened. Sanja was talking four or five times faster than I could follow with my abbreviated understanding of the Mandan language, at that time. But

I understood enough single words and gestures to make out that the chief was telling the great war leader how he had trailed us and tried to lift our scalps, and how he had been followed, shot down, and then turned loose with a gift by this odd giant of a white man.

By degrees, the big chief recovered from his trance and began to understand, and when he understood and came wholly to himself, he did all that we could have asked of him. He came to The Colonel and shook hands with him. He said that Sanjakakokah was his brother, and that having spared the life of Sanja, we had spared his own.

Then he led the way to his own lodge, pointed out that there was vacant room around its walls, and begged us to stay there with him. Here Sanja put in to the effect that he could not allow us to go anywhere except to the house where he himself lived. So that Ompah could only wind up with offering us the freedom of the town, so to speak, and hoping that we would make them happy by forgetting to leave their nation. After that, he began picking up stuff to give us as a present, but The Colonel managed to extricate us, and we went off with Sanja sure of one thing, at least, that with the protection of the war chief around us, no Mandan would dare to handle us lightly.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MUSIC OF THE NIGHT.

WE found ourselves that night in a great hut with a fifty-foot diameter, with a pair of beds assigned to us, and plenty of time to stare around at the strange furnishings of that house. There was a whole circle of these little bed chambers, each fenced in with elk and buffalo skins, and in the four or five foot space between the beds there stood a post on which the belongings of the warrior hung his war club, his ax, his headdress, his spear, his quiver,

bow, and arrows, his strong shield, his medicine bag, and, top of the post in every case, the head and horns of a buffalo with a pendant strip of skin and the tail sweeping the floor. Those buffalo masks stared at me with their hollow eyes that night like a circle of devils.

For half the night I could not dream of sleeping. It wasn't the strangeness of the place alone that kept me awake, but my ears were not yet accustomed to the noise of an Indian village. I had always imagined Indian towns as places of majestic silence in the midst of the prairies, but I was a thousand times wrong. If there had been nothing else than the dogs, the town of the Mandans would have made a good study for the noises of Hades. For in every family there seemed to be a score of wolfish, starving, skulking brutes, and every now and then a dog in a far corner of the town would discover something in the wind, or scratch up a buried bone, or get into a fight that would attract the attention of every other dog in the place. The whole canine population started with a yelp and tried to pile over to the center of attraction in two jumps. Then there was a grand turmoil of snarling, screeching, and howling, as twenty fights started. But before those fights were settled, something was sure to happen in another corner of the camp, and the whole mob scooted in that direction.

The dogs were not alone as noise makers, however. Half a dozen young men felt inclined to have a concert that evening, and unluckily they selected the roof of the house next to ours for their show. It was a grand affair. Each of the young men took turns in singing the lead. The rest of them sat about beating drums or rattling bones and moaning out a burden while the fellow who was elected to relieve his spirits for the time being screeched

like a wild cat with a knot tied in its tail. When his throat began to show signs of wear—another pair of lungs of brass took up the good work where he left off.

I kept looking about our own house to see how long the grave and staid warriors would stand for this nonsense, but they paid no attention to it at all. Finally, The Colonel said to Sanja:

"The young men have strong voices, Sanja."

Sanja looked up and appeared to be hearing that vocal maelstrom for the first time, saying: "That is White Buffalo and some of his friends, and they are singing because they are to go on the warpath at the first favorable time of the moon. It is a pleasant thing to hear the brave young men of the Mandans telling how they will destroy their enemies and bring home scalps."

Even The Colonel was a bit staggered by this. It sent him off to his bed, and I retired to mine, as I've said before, only to lie staring out through the entrance gap at the leap and glow of the fire which smoked or burned in the center of the house. I say smoked or burned, advisedly. Sometimes the flames jumped up happily toward the big hole in the center of the roof which was supposed to serve as a chimney. Most of the time it *didn't* serve as a chimney at all; it wasn't even a partial excuse for one. And when the wind puffed from a certain quarter, great white billows of that smoke rolled down and back and curled into the obscurest corners of the house—including my lungs as I lay there coughing and trying to breathe. It was not pleasant-smelling smoke, either, for anything that can be made to burn is good enough for a Mandan's fire. I only thank Heaven that they had not discovered rubber up to that time!

After a while, the sextet on the adjoining roof got a bit hoarse and went

off to bed. But just as I was beginning to give thanks, a young brave came walking into our own lodge, helped himself to a handful of buffalo meat from the pot that steamed night and day above the fire, and, when he had fortified himself with that, broke into a little impromptu dance, circling around the room, hooting and screeching in such a key that a pain settled in my brain and began to throb with every beat of my heart. This temporarily insane young man was merely telling how he had had a good evening gambling, and how he had won two horses and an old shirt from Old Pipestem in the course of the night. He yelled himself out of the house, at last, and went off through the town, still whooping it up, leaving an echo and an ache in my mind. I actually prayed for the next dog chorus to begin and drown out the "song" of this young gambler.

Now, however, matters quieted down to such an extent that I could hear the crying of the baby in our house. You may have noticed that a baby will usually make itself heard. Yes, time and patience may be required, but a baby has oceans of both qualifications, and a little noise-making art of its own. I have often looked with wonder at a baby. It is a standing proof of the old doctrine that only a poor workman casts blame upon his tools. For here is a mite of humanity whose lungs cannot possibly hold more than a handful of air, and yet which can handle that bit of air so deftly that it rivals the best and longest-winded piper that ever called down the eagles in a highland glen.

It is not mere volume; it is the way a baby does it, that counts. First it establishes a regular rhythm, and that rhythm of crying sinks in on your brain. You adjust yourself to the beat of the tune, as it were, and get your nerves fortified and composed. But just as that happens, the baby shifts to an up-

per register and charges on your attention with an entirely new harmonic scheme of things. Take it all in all, a thunderstorm can be a considerable disturbance, but I would back any three-months baby against the most ripping thunder that ever deafened the mountains and shook loose the upper pinnacles of rock.

A thunderstorm has a comparatively small register. Also, it cannot help being rather grand and soul expanding. But the crying of a baby is simply mean and wicked and acid. It wears out the heart like water dropping on a stone.

Well, as I said before, there was a crying baby in that lodge. I didn't think much of it while the sextet was performing on the near-by roofs, or while the young gambler was telling the world about his good luck. But after those disturbances died away and the camp reverted to the comparative silence of the dog fights, the snoring warriors, the talking women, the crackling fires, and the sneezing of smoke-irritated lungs, the baby began to assert itself. It had simply been getting in voice during the first part of the evening. Now it tuned up in earnest and in another ten minutes, I was sitting up and gasping and wondering what could be done to keep the poor mite from choking to death. Or would it not be wiser to put a merciful end to its misery?

Just then the squaw shifted her position and brought herself into view of me. She was squatting by the fire with a year-old boy in her lap. That youngster was the one who was using its voice on the rest of the world. It gave its mother the full benefit of hands and feet. It kicked her, beat her, yanked her hair, and screamed most loudly when she dared to remove its grip from her nose, which the boy was extra fond of pulling. The manner in which the poor squaw absorbed this

punishment and kept on dandling and stroking and cooing to the youngster was an amazing thing. I was twelve, at that time, but I then made a surmise which I have repeated many times since—that a mother must be almost equal parts of fool and saint.

Presently, a buffalo robe was thrust aside, and a tall brave appeared.

"Now," thought I to myself, "the boy will get the first spanking of his young life. How I hope that the strong right arm of that warrior doesn't grow tired too soon!"

No, I was entirely wrong. This fellow who looked ugly enough to slaughter a sleeping city, merely squatted on his heels and looked at the little thing with much painful attention and affection. He seemed delighted when the boy stopped crying in order to get a good hold on his father's ear with one hand and whack him in the face with his other fist.

"You see," said this red-skinned idiot," that even before he can speak, my son knows his father, and this father knows his son. He is hungry. That is why he makes such noise!"

He reached into the pot of buffalo meat and gave the baby a whole handful. The child had no sooner swallowed it than he piped up again a little louder than before. But there sat the pair of them—father and mother—dandling that devil-inspired youngster for another hour until it grew tired of pommeling them, at last, and fell asleep in the middle of a screech. The mother was asleep, too—poor tired thing—with her body sagged against one of the posts which supported the meat kettle. But even in her sleep she was smiling, as though to placate that yelling and wonderful son of hers.

After that, I managed to get to sleep in my turn, and I dreamed that I was an Indian father with a whole flock of children. It was a rare bad one, even for a nightmare!

CHAPTER XIII.

A DANDY.

PERHAPS I have allowed you to have the impression that this was an exceptional pair of Indian parents, but they were the ordinary thing among the Mandans and among all the other tribes, so far as I was ever able to learn. A child is considered to have its own privileges, and these are, first and foremost, the right to yell when it feels so inclined. An Indian would never dream of kicking a dog merely because it was yelling at the moon. Neither would he dream of punishing a child for crying.

In the morning, I was a bit groggy, and even the magnificent nerves of The Colonel seemed to have been a bit strained by the ordeal of the night before—not that I intend to infer that the day was much quieter. The dogs were tireless. Day or night made no difference to them. Their lungs were simply equal to any and all demands that could be made upon them. The children were screeching all day long, too, and every now and then, one of the braves would be inspired to break into a dance, for no particular reason, prancing around in a circle, like a rooster courting a hen, and yelling or chanting at the top of his lungs.

This comparison struck me that morning—that Indians are like school-boys who are enjoying a recess. The difference being that the Indians never go to school and always are enjoying the recess.

Sanja was on hand as soon as we turned out. He showed us the best way down to the river, where we all had a swim, and The Colonel did his shaving in the cold water. That did not bother him, however, for small matters never weighted on his spirits. We climbed back to the plain above in time to see an odd performance going on among the hills.

All the boys who were old enough to run at a decent clip and keep it up for any time, were drawn out of the town and split into two parties, with a wise old warrior at the head of each band. They had play bows and rush arrows, together with wooden knives in their belts, and each youngster had a little tuft of dried grass on top of his head, to represent a scalp lock. After that, they were led through all manner of maneuvers. The two warriors got their bands into good, defensive positions among the hills, and then they started the two gangs for one another.

They went through all the work of sham attacks and feints and retreats, setting off the fine points of Indian tactics and, in the meantime, giving those boys enough running to kill off most grown white men. Finally, the two lines closed; that is to say, they came to close range and began to shoot off their arrows. The moment that an arrow struck a vital place, the victim had to drop "dead," while the lucky fellow who had shot the arrow ran up and "scalped" the dead boy with his wooden knife. The scalp was the tuft of dead grass, which was put into the belt of the victor, and then the youngster ran back to help his party as before.

I thought, altogether, that it was the most exhausting game that I could have imagined, and it made me ache to think of going through such maneuvers. Then, when the battle was ended, the whole party trooped back into the town, and we entered with them.

It was a great sight to see the boys carry on. They whooped it up for a while as though they had really done great things, and what amazed me was that the grown men stood around and seemed perfectly serious when they heard the boys boasting about what they had done.

The reason for that seriousness was partly to encourage the boys to fight,

and partly to encourage them to talk. For an Indian who cannot boast, is not apt to be much considered. You must not think that boasting and lying are practically synonymous among Indians, as they are among whites. When an Indian boasts there is always a grain of truth at the bottom of what he has to say. The art of the speaker is in making that grain of truth color all his chatter. And the art of the listener is to be able to tell by the color of the boast the amount of real fact that is contained in it. So you would see the older braves listening to these screeching youngsters in turn, and going from the windy ones to those who had actually done something.

After all, this part of the celebration was only a "warming up" for what followed. The boys who had taken scalps then stepped forward and began a scalp dance that was fairly blood-curdling. For half an hour that dance had the city ringing. Then it subsided. The excitement vanished completely. But I could realize in what a manner the ferocity of these people was trained and encouraged from their infancy.

After the games of the boys had ended, The Colonel and I consulted about our next best moves, and we had a considerable talk on the subject. When he asked my advice I admitted frankly that I had no idea how we could get into a prosperous business by the means of people like these. Neither had The Colonel a thought of how to commence. But I felt that this connection we had made with the Mandans was a foothold of some sort and I suggested that we simply wait here in the town for a time—until we saw the Mandans a bit tired of our company, or until we had a chance to do something worth while for ourselves.

He agreed to this, but he seemed rather anxious. "I dreamed all night about Martha Farnsworth," said The Colonel. "Confound it, Christy, I

haven't sent her a letter for a month or even for more than that. And it is a weight on my mind. Suppose that she gives me up for dead and picks up another man, like young Gilmore—that sleek-faced young puppy! I worry about it. And we have to turn a trick of some sort. Have to get something out of this. Money or reputation, Christy! So look around you and see what there is ahead of us, will you? Wake your wits up, Christy. You're always able to find *something!*"

Sometimes it seemed to me a little unfair that The Colonel should put burdens of this nature and this weight on my mind. But I was fairly used to it. He always came to me when he was in a corner, and I was accustomed to thinking for the pair of us. Though how we were to make capital out of a lot of poor red-skinned beggars who had nothing worth while except runt horses and buffalo skins, I could not tell.

We went down the street together, and Sanja came along with us. He proposed that it would be a good idea to go listen to the medicine that was being made that day to bring the rain. He said that there was no doubt that the rain would come. The Mandan young men *always* made medicine which brought the storm clouds, but this time it seemed an extraordinary hard job. They had used up a great many of their young men in a vain effort, but none had developed a medicine great enough to make any impression on the sky—strange to say!

Now he understood that a youthful brave named Stone-that-shines had that day taken post on the roof of the medicine lodge and he had heard that the brave was making a really heroic effort to bring down the rain. So that it might be worth our while to go listen to him and give him our good wishes—and what could be better than the good prayers of such a hero as The Colonel?

We went along with Sanja until our way was blocked by a young man who rode a horse very slowly before us, and who seemed to me the most beautiful picture of an Indian that I had ever seen or even dreamed of. It was a piebald horse, in the first place, and a perfect beauty, with its colors rubbed up and set off to perfection. The rider sat on a saddle of beautifully white mountain-sheep skins. Saddle and bridle were a mass of jingling little brass bells, all burnished until they shone as brightly as they tinkled. He had an elaborate headdress of feathers, and his clothes consisted of a tightly fitted suit of shining white skins, all covered with beautiful beadwork. His long black hair hung down beneath his stirrups and as he rode along, he cooled himself by waving a fan of feathers.

"What great man is this?" asked The Colonel softly of Sanja.

"Great man? Great man?" said Sanjakakokah, his lips curling with disgust. "Ah, my friend, this is no great man, but a shadow and a disgrace to the Mandan people. His father was a worthy man, and my friend. If he were living now, he would first use his knife to stab that rascal in the heart and let the crows eat his flesh. There is no greatness about him. You see that he has fine clothes and a pretty appearance. But that is his whole work. He does not ride to battle with the Mandans. He does not work to gather game for the meat pots. All that he performs is to make himself beautiful and to whisper lies to the women as they are working, so that they may make beadwork for him and give him food when he comes begging like the coward and the villain that he is!"

"A dandy!" said The Colonel to me with a smile. "Nothing to do but to make himself fine! Oh, Christy, how I wish that some of the dressy young men in Virginia could be on hand here

to listen to what Sanjakakokah has to say of dandies and dandyism! It does me good to hear him! But there's another dandy on the roof of the medicine lodge!"

It looked like another beau, as a matter of fact. But when we came a little closer and mingled with the crowd which was listening to the shouting of this youth, we could see that there was a difference.

For instance, the burnished necklet which he wore was made of the narrow, deadly claws of a mountain lion, which this brave must have killed in battle. His shield was beautifully whitened, to be sure, but it was so ponderously made of the thickest hide of the buffalo's back joined together in layers, that it looked capable of turning a rifle bullet. And at the end of his lance, streamed the scalps of three enemies.

This was very apparently a young man, but it was certain that he was an important man already, in spite of his youth.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MEDICINE BAG.

THIS warrior on the roof of the medicine lodge was capering and dancing and shouting and crooning a good deal as the man of yesterday had done. Yet there was a difference which struck even inexperienced eyes like those of The Colonel and myself. This brave had made himself fine, because he was going to stand the eye of his nation and of his God. Furthermore, he knew that the corn was dying in the fields and that a famine might follow. He was not only excited, he was desperate, and religion seemed to give him a drunken enthusiasm.

He said: "Hear me, wind of the southeast; hear me, clouds of mist which are filled with cold water in rivers; I demand that you hear me and I am worthy of being heard. Because

I stand here to make a sacrifice. Others have offered you their best buffalo robes. Others have killed for your sake their favorite dog, or even their fastest horse. But I shall do something more than this. Hear me, wind and cloud, and all my dear people—unless the rain falls on our city this day, I shall sacrifice myself! And this is how the thing shall be done. Unless the rain fall this day, I shall take off this shield. I shall throw away my medicine bag. I shall throw down my rifle and my spear and my knife. I shall creep away and never raise my head where the warriors boast again. I shall burn my three scalps in honor of the Great Father. And I shall live among the women and the dogs! This I shall do unless I draw down the rain. But I shall draw it down. I feel the coolness of the shadow of the clouds coming upon my heart. Do not fear, women who hoe the dust of the cornfield. I shall bring down the cold showers of the rain this day. Or else I shall be a sacrifice!"

This was his speech, repeated over and over with a very few variations, throughout the entire day. But his audience didn't mind repetition. They listened with silent enthusiasm and awe, for the thing which the young Stone-that-shines was offering to do was a good deal more than a threat to commit suicide. He declared that he would condemn himself to a life among the women and the dogs, giving up his standing as a warrior, if he failed to bring the rain this day. The danger in which he stood, from the Indian's point of view, was that of a sort of living death.

It impressed the Mandans terribly. They grew positively pale when they heard of this dreadful sacrifice which the youngster was offering to make. Sanja, for instance, could not look on the picture after a single glance, but he turned away, saying that it made him

sick and weak to think of such a thing—and such a useful warrior lost to the not over-thick ranks of the Mandan fighters!

Here there was a general murmur of applause, for young Stone-that-shines, in the midst of a frantic capering across the roof, suddenly opened his medicine bag and took out its contents. Now, a medicine bag is a sort of a secondary soul to an Indian. He first goes out, when he is on the verge of manhood and, sleeping in the midst of the prairie or on some dangerous buffalo trail, he dreams of an animal which is then sacred to him. It may be a mouse or a beaver or a toad or a rabbit. When he wakes up from his dream, he kills the first specimen that he can find of the creature which had appeared to him in his sleep, and with its cured skin he makes his medicine bag. Sometimes it is a huge affair and great inconvenience for a warrior to carry about with him. Sometimes it is a tiny skin of a young frog which can be tucked away out of sight and never noticed, except in the most careful search of the person of a fallen warrior.

Such searches are always made when a warrior drops a foeman. If he can come out of battle carrying his own and his enemy's medicine bags, it is not only a curiously interesting battle trophy but also a double soul equipment, as one might say. It doubles a man's importance on earth and it doubles his importance in the shadowy life hereafter.

Once a medicine bag is lost or stolen or taken in battle, it can never be replaced. The greatest chief in the whole tribe would not dare to fabricate a new medicine bag to take the place of one which had been disposed of. But if he can lay hands upon the medicine bag of an enemy, then he is saved again, and he is able to lift his head without shame among his fellows.

I have enlarged on the theme of the

medicine bag so much and so long because I want it to be understood that an Indian fighter would almost as soon open his heart as open his medicine bag before the eyes of the world. Usually the bag is stuffed with dead, dried moss, or some other stuff which is very light, but gives the bag a living shape. In addition, it of course holds some mysterious element of the spirit world. That is its great importance!

However, Stone-that-shines opened his medicine bag before the entire crowd, and with a groan of wonder at his daring courage and recklessness passed over the host that watched him, he extended above his head in one hand what looked to me like a ball of living yellow fire. It looked like a segment of the blazing sun itself, which now poured down from the center of the sky.

I looked at The Colonel and I saw in his eyes a faint reflection of that same yellow fire which blazed in the hand of the warrior. It was perfectly easy to understand how the brave had acquired his name. He had actually found a stone that shone. But my thought was The Colonel's thought, and The Colonel's thought was mine. Who could tell if the Indian might not have discovered some wonderful outcropping of diamonds on the prairies or among the hills that bordered it?

We crowded as close as we could and strained our eyes, but the instant that Stone-that-shines had finished prancing in his first direction along the roof of the medicine lodge, and had turned back toward his first position, the blazing fire died out of the stone which he held, and all that was bright in it was a few glittering, dazzling eyes of fire. Whatever it might be, it was certain that it was no jewel—no diamond, at the least!

The Colonel, having stared his fill at it, suddenly turned around and drew me out of the crowd, asking: "Christy, what can the thing be?"

"Wouldn't I give my eyeteeth to have a look at it?" said I. "But I can't tell what it is, any more than you can. It looked very much like fire to me, at first!"

"Christy," said he, "you may laugh, I know, but I tell you that we have our first sight of the treasure which I'm going to find and to take back to Virginia with me, where I'll marry Martha Farnsworth, and send you away to school."

He was beginning to have this dream right out in the middle of the day, which wouldn't do. It didn't seem healthy at all.

I said: "Colonel, that's no diamond. Looked to me like a big chunk of glass—and that's all!"

"What?" cried The Colonel. "There was something that glittered in that glass, though!"

"Yes, some sort of coloring," said I. "They used to make balls of glass with sparkling stuff in it, when I was back in Virginia. You've seen them, too. And what that brave has in his hand is simply a chunk of one of those broken balls, I think."

This took down The Colonel a good deal. He complained: "How could a grown man be such a fool over a piece of broken glass, Christy? Will you tell me that?"

"Why," I said, "the Indians never go by the price of a thing. Beads are just as good to them as emeralds and rubies. It's just the first flash of a thing that counts with them. And so this Stone-that-shines has turned a little broken glass into big medicine."

"And now," growled The Colonel, "he stands on the roof like a perfect fool and tells the sun to notice the part of itself which he is holding in his hand. And he is pointing out to the rest of the tribe that the bit of sun which he holds does not burn him, although it is hot enough to shine. What rot, Christy! And if there's nothing in the

thing, why don't the Mandans make a laughingstock of him?"

"Because partly they're too polite," said I, "and partly they really like to believe in wonderful things."

I think that The Colonel's feelings were really badly hurt because I refused to allow him to make anything wonderful out of this glittering handful which Stone-that-shines had in his medicine bag.

It was about time for eating, we thought, so we stepped into the first lodge that we came to and helped ourselves from the pot of buffalo meat. That was the rule for a stranger. It didn't make much difference whether he was a guest of one man or of another. As long as he was a friend of the tribe's, he could go to any man's food supply and take what he wanted—and welcome, too! The squaws didn't scowl at us for invading their larder. They came up, grinning, and nodding,

and a wrinkled old hag reached into the meat pot almost elbow deep until she found a sizable and tender chunk, which she handed to me.

I couldn't refuse. I think that I would have, if it hadn't been for The Colonel's eye, fixed steadily on me with a good deal of danger in it. I had to take that meat and thank the old squaw, and eat it in front of her eyes. Otherwise, she would have been insulted, which would have meant an insult to the lodge, which would have been an insult to every warrior living in that lodge. Which gives you an idea of how Indian courtesy worked forward and backward, from high to low, and big to little!

We were getting out of that lodge when a bit of misfortune came my way in the shape of a brave who was just balancing between boyishness and manliness, with nothing much to give either way.

To be continued in the next issue of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE.



RIVALS PEG-LEG GARFIELD

SILVER BOW COUNTY, MONTANA, has a deputy sheriff who, in some respects rivals the famous fictional sheriff so well known to readers of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE as "Peg-leg" Garfield. The Montana peace officer is Elias Sperling, eighty-six years old, and he is on duty every day in his capacity as deputy sheriff of Silver Bow County. He does not have the wooden leg and other properties of the picturesque Peg-leg, but he is every bit as spry in other ways, notwithstanding his advanced age.

Mr. Sperling has many interesting reminiscences both of the old and the new West. He recalls hearing a debate at Buffalo, New York, between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas, in their political campaign of 1860. He turned to the West in 1872, first going to the western part of Texas, but later making Montana his objective. He made the trip from Texas to St. Louis partly by stage and partly by rail. From St. Louis he journeyed by rail to Corrin, Utah, and from there, he made a long trip by stage to Bozeman, Montana. In those days, Bozeman was a thriving little town of about a thousand inhabitants, and the region round about was a mecca for pioneers, cowboys, fortune seekers, and others attracted by the tales of the wealth that the new country offered.



When Chucklin' Kid Didn't Chuckle

By **W. D. Hoffman**

Author of "Shorty Inherits a Ranch," etc.



ALTHOUGH Sam Canutt would not have won a movie contract for looks—his ears stuck out, and his nose was long; his hands were huge, and his feet oversize—in the saddle he was almost graceful. His bowlegs fitted his broncho like a glove, and his short, wiry little figure swayed with the movement of his mount as though grown there. Born to the cow country, one would have told at a glance. Now, as he rode into Ticote, his face was solemn, almost sad, save for the droll expression about the wide mouth, the only hint that he was the little puncher from Dry River known in his own bailiwick as "Chucklin' Kid."

A total stranger in Ticote, the wild, volcanic barrens of northern Arizona,

Chucklin' Kid Canutt was none the less the bearer of a letter that would introduce him to Judge Lamison, the Ticote lawyer, as an individual of importance. Sam had ridden for ten hours westward from Dry River through sharp-rock country; he was hungry, and his mount was tired and footsore. Hence he looked first after his horse, dismounting at the town corrals, leaving instructions for feeding. Then he hied himself into the Chinese restaurant next door.

He ordered a pair of chicken dinners, radishes, olives, celery, two pieces of apple pie, and ice cream. For the first time in his life he felt rich. But that did not lighten his blues.

"I feel discouraged, and me a heir!" he muttered, settling back in his chair. "I knowed plumb well I didn't like

this country—nothin' but rocks and lava! My dream is blasted. Down in Dry River they's at least *some* grass. I wouldn't stick here if I inherited the whole country, let alone a little thousand-acre ranch of rocks. I reckon I'm homesick for the boys!"

And he was. For a month he had been in Kansas City settling up his uncle's estate. He had landed in Dry River just long enough to cache his city-visiting dude clothes and start north to claim his ranch. The letter he carried was from the legal firm in Kansas City to Judge Lamison, anent the cowboy heir and the Bar T Dot property.

His spirits rose somewhat as he finished the meal. He walked out and up the dusty street to the weather-beaten building from which hung the shingle: "Judge T. I. Lamison, Attorney at Law."

The judge—whose title was purely honorary—sat at his desk playing solitaire; he was a lanky, alkali-dusty individual in faded shirt, suspenders, boots, and spurs, one who rode daily to and from his ranch place eighteen miles out of Ticote. Beneath shaggy, gray brows a pair of mild-brown eyes twinkled genially. Chucklin' Kid Canutt liked his appearance; he looked honest. Sam extended the letter and watched the lawyer's eyes widen as he read it. Judge Lamison's gaze swept to the cowboy, appraising him critically.

"We-all thought the new owner was a city man—a tenderfoot." The judge scratched his head. "Gil Crawford will be surprised, so will 'Bowie' Kurtz and the whole Frying Pan outfit."

Sam Canutt chuckled. "They the ones that's offered me twenty thousand, ain't they? Well, I'm goin' to take it, sight unseen, without even travelin' up to look her over. The stock's about worth that, and I wouldn't give a Mex nickel for this whole blamed so-called range!"

The judge smiled. "It'll save you a mite of trouble to do that, Mr. Canutt—to sell, I mean!"

"Yea-uh? Huh? How?" Sam slowly manufactured a cigarette.

"It'll save Gil Crawford and the syndicate a lot of fuss, *forcing you to sell*. That's what they planned to do."

"Yea-uh!" The Chucklin' Kid's protruding ears seemed to jerk forward, and his chaps-incased legs whipped up under the chair. "How come?"

"Syndicate—the Frying Pan—has been swallowing up everything gradually. Got some tough hombres working for them. Of course, I don't want to discourage you—seein' you're a cowman. I had made up my mind to advise you to sell, thinking you were a tenderfoot, and would not have a chance. Even as it is, you'll have a hard time bucking the big Frying Pan outfit. They fought your uncle for years, drove off his stock, and mavericked his calves. Of late years he stayed away, as you know, leaving a foreman here named Gillis to run things—and 'Cross-eye' Gillis, between us, is a tool of Gil Crawford and the syndicate!"

"Whe-ee!" Sam Canutt whistled, and a throaty chuckle came from him. "This is plumb inter-restin'! Glad I come!" He showed a row of glistening teeth. "Resume!"

"Not much to add." Judge Lamison shook his head. "They offered the twenty thousand—not a bad figure—and I communicated the offer to the K. C. firm. Bowie Kurtz, Crawford's foreman, came down Monday, and asked me to mention to the new owner what happened to another stranger, H. H. Blair, who tried to run cattle up on the Cougar."

The Chucklin' Kid looked solemn as an owl. "What happened to Mister Blair, jedge?"

"They burned him out and ran his

beef over the cliffs into Cougar Cañon."

"Oh, that all?" remarked Sam disappointedly. "They didn't do him any bodily harm—personal?"

"He got out too fast."

The Kid breathed a sigh of relief. "Then they's a chance for me. Yea-uh! They'll burn me out—the sin-dy-kate will and run my beef over them Cougar cliffs? You mean, judge, they'll jest natcherly ruin me, in a business way, if I don't sign on the dotted line?"

"That's about it—or try to," the lawyer affirmed seriously. "You *might* get along, being a cowman, if you'd hire a hundred hands that liked a scrap. Then it would be doubtful. The Frying Pan Syndicate has a million behind it. Crawford, their agent and Kurtz, foreman, have instructions to bust all the little outfits. As your attorney, I might suggest waiting until the syndicate makes trouble, then putting Crawford and Kurtz under bond. But the Frying Pan has money enough to fight even that. Frankly, I'd advise you to sell, as I intended to do when I thought you were a tenderfoot."

Chucklin' Kid Canutt scratched his curly head. "That shore is inter-restin'. Here I come up here b'ilin' mad at this whole rock-lava country, cussin' a region where there wasn't enough grass for sheep, decidin' I'd close the deal and sting them suckers that offered me the twenty thousand. It *did* look most discouragin'. And now you spring this promise uh trouble, robbery, arson, and mebbe murder, temptin' me to stay right here where my new ranch is located at! Dang me, now I gotta stick!" Sam kicked at his war bag disgustedly.

Judge Lamison's jaw fell. "You mean you're going to run the ranch yourself, just because of some of their threats?"

"Uh huh. Judge, where is this Crawford person, as is agent for said sin-dy-kate?"

"The bank here is his headquarters; he's out of town now but will be back this afternoon, ready to conclude the deal."

"He shore kind of counted on me sellin', didn't he, judge?"

"Yes, he did, knowing I would present the facts—and thinking you an Eastern dude."

The Chucklin' Kid rolled his big, blue eyes. "Judge, if I was a pore, ignorant tenderfoot, I reckon them butcher birds would jest about treat me real rough, wouldn't they?"

"They would."

"And how do I get over to the Bar T Dot, my precious new holdin's?"

"I was to take you over on the two fifteen train. Your ranch lies west forty-odd miles. The Santa Fe stop is Cougar Station."

Sam Canutt chuckled. "You wait here a few minutes, judge!"

He hustled out of the office, made for the general store across the street, went to the rear of the long storeroom, and picked out, with some difficulty, a suit of clothes, salt-and-pepper check material; a summery cream-silk shirt, purple tie, hose to match, tan oxford shoes, and a light crush hat—such an outfit as was infrequently sold to cowboys for the monthly, pay-day town dance.

When he eased himself into Judge Lamison's office half an hour later, the judge blinked at him uncertainly.

"Don't you know me?" Sam chuckled. "Yea-uh, I'm him! The new dude owner of the Bar T Dot!"

The transformed cow-puncher strutted about the little room, hands thrust deep into the pockets of his black-and-gray check trousers. "Pants is about wide enough, crease and all, to hide my bandy laigs. Take care of my war bag, will you?" He gestured to the corner where he had dropped the bundle containing his range apparel. "And look after my hoss."

"Gosh-a-me. I *didn't* know you!

You want me to go with you in that outfit? Train is due in just forty minutes."

"No, jedge, I reckon I'd better go alone. Say, jedge, you're a stranger to me—but I reckon I can count on you." Chucklin' Kid Canutt's owlish eyes were serious. "Ain't no danger you're a friend of this here sin-dy-kate outfit, too—is there?"

"No danger," Lamison laughed. "Fact is, Crawford and I don't hit it. Besides, I'm not employed by you, direct, Mr. Canutt; I'm only an agent for Laird & Baker, the K. C. firm. If you're determined to fight Crawford, more power to you——" He cut off short. "There's Crawford now!"

"Call him right in here, jedge!" Sam hastily slid into a chair, produced a "tailor-made" cigarette, lit it, and puffed tranquilly while the lawyer hurried out. A moment later, the latter returned with a tall, lean personage, wearing range boots and a five-gallon hat. Sam made quick appraisal of the cattleman-banker as of the rule-or-ruin type of cow-country czar, none too scrupulous, not at all merciful. His crafty, close-set eyes told that.

"Mr. Crawford, shake hands with Mr. Canutt, new owner of the Bar T Dot!"

A slow grin came to the face of the syndicate agent as he fixed his gaze on the nattily attired young man and reached out a gaunt, callous hand. Crawford was no office capitalist.

"Mighty glad to meet yuh, Mist' Canutt. When yuh get in?"

"Who—me?" The Chucklin' Kid crossed his brightly clad legs, uncrossed them, flecked the ashes of his snow-white cigarette with a ladylike twist of the wrist. "Oh, sir, I jest arrove from little ole K. C.!"

Gil Crawford eyed him amusedly. "Mighty glad yuh're here," he said blithely. "Reckon Laird & Baker communicated my offer. Now we can draw

up the papers right here, before the judge."

Sam Canutt's eyes opened wide. "But, sir, I ain't decided to sell," he said innocently.

"What?" The syndicate man laughed easily, slowly drew up a chair. "Yuh're not figuring to operate the Bar T Dot yuhrself?" His eyes roved over the dude, from purple tie to socks to match.

"Yes, sir, that's jest about what I figured I'd do!" The Chucklin' Kid reached for the feather duster on Lamison's desk, brushed the tips of his shining tan oxfords. "You see, sir," he added plaintively, "I want to learn to be a cowboy."

Crawford grinned. "Of course yuh're joking, Mist' Canutt."

"If I am, I ain't heard tell of it."

There was a long moment of silence, during which Gil Crawford turned questioning eyes on the judge. His voice suddenly changed from genial good nature to tones of silky menace. "Yes, yuh must be joking, Mist' Canutt, assuming to go into the cow business yuhr own self, being a tenderfoot. Only reason I can see is that yuh don't savvy how rough this country is. Why, yuh wouldn't last any longer on Ticote Range than a celluloid jack rabbit being chased by an asbestos coyote through Hades—if yuh'll excuse me talking plain."

"I'll excuse you, sir, if you mean I'm said jack rabbit and you're that said coyote. Now——"

"Look here, young fellow!" The range boss thrust his lean, gaunt face forward, and his small, intent eyes gleamed with sinister meaning. "Don't yuh come any of that city-gangster stuff on *me*! Yuh ain't the usual type of tenderfoot—yuh think yuh're tough, don't yuh? Yuh ain't even educated! I reckon yuh don't know yuh're in Arizona!" His gaze bored into that of the Dry River puncher. "If yuh did,

you'd know who Gil Crawford happened to be! Now I'll tell yuh something!" The syndicate czar tapped the desk with his oaken-hued knuckles.

"I was in Cougar Station this morning—just rode overland from the Frying Pan," he went on slowly. "There's a big bunch of rustlers hanging around in the hills, and from what I heard over there, they calculate the Bar T Dot will be easy picking. The fact is, there are rumors yuhr foreman, Cross-eye Gillis, is working in cahoots with the rustlers. Gillis has got yuhr cattle all bunched on the mesa right over Cougar Cañon. Yuh're a tenderfoot and won't hardly understand; but if I know anything, the only way you can save yuhr stock is to take our money now, and let the Frying Pan punchers take charge of yuhr herd. Rustlers won't dare make a move, with my boys and 'Bowie' Kurtz as guardians of the herd. Do yuh savvy what I'm talking about?"

Chucklin' Kid Canutt looked decidedly sad and downcast. "Oh, sir, you think the rustlers, whatever they are, will come down and do something to my cows if I, being a tenderfoot, go in there to take charge? And you take pity on me and want to save my cattle by buyin' them out, so's your boys can take charge—is that it, Mr. Crawford?"

"Yuh hit the target, son, with both barrels."

"But them villains wouldn't do anything mean right off, sir, immediate, would they?"

"Rumors said they would likely strike to-night, son, while Cross-eye has yuhr stock bunched. That's why I wanted to close this deal now, so I could take the two fifteen train back and place the Frying Pan boys on guard." Gil Crawford rose. "It's up to yuh, son. Yuh take the twenty thousand?"

"You couldn't make it twenty-five, Mr. Crawford, could you?" queried Sam anxiously, lighting a fresh white smoke.

"Not a cent over twenty. That price is liberal. The syndicate ain't a piker, son, in buying in what it wants."

"No, really, I don't think I'll sell then, sir," said Sam, rising and running his hand smoothly about the crown of his new light hat. "Somehow I've always wanted to be a cowboy. I'd jest love to fight rustlers—and everything!"

"Yuh'll likely have no herd left by to-morrow, Canutt."

"But don't you think them rustler fellers would hold off a day, say—if I should come back to-morrow noon, *ready to close*?" Sam chuckled silently as he met the swiftly narrowing gaze of the syndicate man.

"What do yuh mean?" snapped Crawford. Yuh insinuating I have anything to do with those rustlers?"

"Oh, goodness gracious, no, sir! Sech a wicked thought never entered my cranium!" Chucklin' Kid's expression was very sad and reproachful.

"Look here, Canutt. You don't run any blazer on Gil Crawford. Sabe? Now I'll tell yuh! I'll send a rider over there to-night, telling my boys to guard yuhr herd—this one night. If yuh think yuh might change yuhr mind and come back to-morrow——"

"I'd kinda like your permission to look over my property—jest once," said the tenderfoot meekly, "if you don't mind, sir. Then if I decide to sell, would you have the cash?"

"I reckon my bank could raise the money," asserted the range boss stiffly. "I'll give yuh till to-morrow noon—and then the deal's off! After that, my boys won't protect yuhr stock. Now I got to be going." Gil Crawford turned hastily and strode out to the street.

Chucklin' Kid Canutt grinned up at Judge Lamison. "A nice, perlite way he has, of tellin' me he'll assassinate my herd, if I don't take his kind offer! Now give me some writin' paper, and you fix yourself out a power of attor-

ney." Sam sat down at the desk. He scribbled hastily and in three minutes handed the lawyer a sealed envelope. "Your instructions. Open her to-morrow if I don't get back here before noon. Now I got to ketch the train."

He straightened his legs, smoothed his trousers, and struck out toward the depot, a low adobe building boasting a lone telegraph operator-ticket agent and a squint-eyed Indian squaw, who sold pottery on the rare occasions when trains stopped on flag. When the two fifteen departed, Chucklin' Kid departed with it. An hour and ten minutes later he climbed down from the dusty day coach at Cougar Station, consisting of one building and many cattle pens and shipping chutes.

He walked a few steps, halted, drew out his snowy silk handkerchief, and mopped his brow. Then he struck a pose, gazing about in bewildered fashion as he had often seen Eastern tourists do. Mouth agape, he seemed awed at the queer sights, the odd-looking characters loading cattle on a siding, in flapping bat wing chaps, bearskin, goat-skin, calfskin. One of these sidled down from the seat of a buckboard and strode toward the stranger. This was probably the puncher who had come to meet Judge Lamison and the new owner. He was a study in range ornateness, in huge green felt hat, robin's-egg silk shirt, speckled fawnskin vest, flaming red neckerchief, gay ribbon "dust rags" about the sleeves, and scroll-leather peaked boots.

"Name's 'Buck' Hanniford." The cowboy surveyed the newcomer with poker-face composure. "Yuh're Mister Canutt. Where's the jedge?"

"He was took sick, suddent, sir," returned Chucklin' Kid plaintively.

"I come to drive yuh out." Buck Hanniford's eye roved up and down the dude's outfit. He grunted negatively as Sam tendered him a store cigarette.

"So this is Cougar Crick Range," commented Sam in an awed tone. "The real West at last; Arizony, cowboys, cows 'n' everything! Bad man Bowie Kurtz and all. Jest like a movie play."

Buck Hanniford scowled. "Aimin' to stay here for chuck?" He gestured to the lone building. "Or go to the ranch and put on the nose bag?"

"Give her the gas for the ranch!" commanded Chucklin' Kid. He climbed into the warped old buckboard, and they were on the way.

"You calc'late on stayin' on?" asked Buck.

"Why not?"

"Kind of bad country for a short-horn. Yuh heered tell of Bowie Kurtz, ain't yuh?"

"That's the guy that runs this cactus league, ain't he?"

"He'll shore make it interestin' for yuh, if yuh stay, pilgrim!"

"His villain act is drivin' off other folks' dairies, I hear."

The puncher started slightly. "Jedge has been tellin' yuh things, has he?"

"Oh, no, sir. It was a party named Gil Crawford. Gil and Bowie was goin' to be real meanlike and make me sell out. Rustlers was hoverin' around, threatenin' to hurt my cows, Gil said, if Bowie's pals didn't defend 'em."

The Bar T Dot rider laughed softly. "Time'll tell. Yuhr cows is bunched on the mesa right over Cougar Cañon, for yuh to look 'em over. Rustlers has given out word if yuh decide to stick yuhr cattle will be stampeded next few nights."

"Why does them rustlers stampede cows, sir?" asked Sam curiously. "I allus read they would *steal* cows."

"That's *how* they steal 'em," said Hanniford. "Yuh're due to be eddicated."

"Oh, that will be grand, sir!" said the tenderfoot rapturously, and the Bar T Dot puncher turned quickly and shot him a look.

"Don't git fresh, hombre!" said Hanniford. "Wait till yuh meet yuhr foreman; he'll tell yuh some things."

"That's real encouragin'," murmured the Dry River man. "I want to learn to be a cowboy, which is why I'm goin' to stick. You look like a real good one. Do you give lessons?"

"Yuh'll git lessons enough," growled Buck.

"I'm hopin' so."

They rode on in silence. After forty-five minutes they reached the old weather-beaten ranch house, more of a ruin than a dwelling. A few corrals and two miserable sheds near a windmill completed the improvements of the Bar T Dot's thousand acres of precarious grazing range.

The place was deserted, save for eight or nine bronchos in the horse corral, and Ling, the ranch flunky and cook. At Sam's suggestion, Hanniford drove the buckboard to a rise beyond the house. "Now," said the new proprietor, "which is the boundaries of my holdin's?"

The puncher motioned south and east. "Yuh see the line uh that dry crick? Well, it jumps from there to them three buttes southward. Then the foothills is the boundary, breakin' into Cougar Crick again. There's the boys, and I reckon chuck is waitin'."

Five horsemen had trailed in from the cañon side of the ranch. When Buck had got back with his passenger they found supper ready in the dilapidated mess hall of the old house. Four glum and silent hands were seating themselves around the oilcloth when Sam's dude figure loomed in the doorway. They gave him a single look, hung their heads down low to their granite-ware plates, and rudely rammed their boot heels down on each other's toes.

"Boys," said Buck Hanniford, suddenly cheerful as he strode in, "this is the new owner, Mister Sam-u-el Canutt

of Missouri—K. C., Missouri. He calc'lates if this country is wild and woolly, he has got to be showed! He wants to take lessons in cowboyin'. Where's the boss?" He wheeled quickly, at sound of thudding boots. "Mister Gillis, shake the hand uh Mister Canutt, of K. C., Missouri, that's got to be showed, that's decided to stick, and wants to take lessons in cowboyin'!"

Cross-eye Gillis had come to a sudden stop. He backed away a step and rubbed his eyes. "Are yuh joshin' me?" he snarled at Hanniford, and strode quickly forward and pinched the dude's arm, then pinched himself.

Sam Canutt reached out languidly and yanked the foreman's long, red mustache. "Yes, sir," he said dolefully, "we're all awake. I'm the new owner. I got to be showed. And I don't intend to let go of sech a promisin' property as this here Bar T Dot, till I've learned to be a cowboy!" He slid into a chair by the table, spread out his snowy handkerchief for a napkin, buttoned his check coat, and sat back erect, hands folded. "Do you gentlemen estimate I'll make a success of it?"

"Oh, yeh. Oh, yeh!" Cross-eye Gillis, dipped into the seat farthest removed, nudged Buck Hanniford. "Yuh'll do elegant."

The Bar T Dot bunch ate swiftly, in silence, save for the continuous smack of lips, munch of teeth and frequent growls at the obsequious Chinese cook. Chucklin' Kid Canutt caught their furtive exchange of glances with one another, but he tackled the broiled steaks and fried spuds with solemn earnestness, saying nothing.

Suddenly Cross-eye Gillis slammed down his fist and rose. It was a signal for a general scramble for the rickety gallery. "We got to hustle," cried Gillis, "to show the new proprietor his herd afore dark!"

Sam Canutt leisurely lit one of his tailor-mades, rose, brushed his light

crush hat with his sleeve, adjusted it on the back of his head, and followed.

"Kin you ride a hoss?" cried Gillis, fixing Sam with a stare that crossed him both ways.

"Oh, yes, sir, I think so, if it's a nice tame horse," asserted the dude readily. "If you boys will put on the saddle."

"They's a nice tame anemile already saddled," said the foreman, grinning and raising a hand toward the corral. He led the way toward the inclosure. A moment later the riders were swinging up to their own mounts. Two of the bronchos, Sam noted, bore Frying Pan brands; the others were labeled with the Bar T Dot. But the Dry River puncher was more interested in the sleepy-looking, hammer-headed pony that stood tied to the top pole of the corral, at the lower end, *already saddled*. Chucklin' Kid had seen such sleepy-looking buckers before; he surmised that Cross-eye Gillis had sighted the buckboard and the new arrival on the hillside and had got the broncho rigged, probably with difficulty, for a special purpose.

The riders walked their mounts toward the lower end of the corral, while Gillis motioned to the new owner to follow. Before the sleepy broncho they halted.

"That's yuhr pony, Mist' Canutt," informed Gillis gravely. "Jest climb aboard." He turned his own mount, and the other riders spread out about the tame-looking outlaw horse.

"Are you sure he's a nice, easy-ridin' mare?" asked the tenderfoot, approaching the animal timidly.

"*He is*," asserted Cross-eye solemnly. "Ain't he the tamest mare on the ranch?" He gestured to the hard-faced crew who were watching the scene with shifty, averted eyes.

"He's as gentle as a kitten," affirmed one, "and if yuh listen real clost, yuh kin hear him pur."

"I don't know whether you boys is jokin' me or not," said the new proprietor meekly. "But I don't guess he can kick any harder than a Missouri mule." He sidled up toward the broncho, lids narrowing at the wall-eyed stare of the broomtail. Intentionally he approached from the off side. "Which is the proper stirrup for climbin' up onto these here Western ponies, anyway?"

"Whoa-a there, hombre!" warned the alarmed Buck Hanniford. "You better git on his left, becawse even a dead hoss is techy if yuh fuss with his right——"

"Jumpin' *frijoles!*" It was the awesome yelp of Cross-eye Gillis. The dude had yanked loose the slip knot of the tie rope, and with a sudden grotesque jump, in which he hit and left the ground like a rubber ball, Sam's pepper-and-salt figure shot upward and astraddle the prize buckler of the Ticote Range. His well-pressed trousers widened and closed like a pair of scissors, and his tan oxford shoes fitted into the stirrups. Chucklin' Kid half closed his eyes and winced; he expected to be pitched and made ready for the spill, in the art of which he was adept. He was bootless and spurless, unprepared to battle a sun-fishing son of a gun such as he knew the outlaw to be. He waited for the inevitable pin wheel of the broncho's legs and the ferris-wheel skyrocket of his back.

Then, while Cross-eye Gillis, Buck Hanniford, and the Bar T Dot hands leaned forward in their saddles with sagging jaws, the outlaw horse trotted down the line like an old cow, carrying the strange creature in dude clothes as though they had been friends for life. Whether it was the absence of the spur, or through mere horse amazement at the audacity of the leap and the queer looks of the rider, Sam did not know—or care. He suppressed the chuckle that welled deep in his throat, shook his

shoulders to simulate the jogging of a green man in the saddle, made sure that the broncho had no notion to perform; then drew up and waited for the bunch who sat glued to their saddles a hundred yards back.

When Cross-eye Gillis finally jogged slowly up in the van of the gaping riders, he swept his hand across his eyes, squinted painfully in the sunlight at the meek outlaw sniffing at a wisp of dry grass, oblivious to the doleful figure astride him. Gillis' lips moved, but no sound came from them. Chucklin' Kid Canutt looked surprised.

"I thought you boys was in a hurry," he said. "This here mare is tame and slow enough; but he certainly is a faster pacer than them ponies of yours. Or was I goin' the wrong direction?"

"Yuh was headed correct," said Gillis hoarsely, looking from one to the other of his men.

"Well, then, let's hustle, and you ride alongside of me, Mister Foreman!"

Sam turned his mount and set the pace, while the amazed Cross-eye loped at his side, gaze fixed on every move of horse and man. Presently where the mesa yucca and Spanish bayonet grew denser, Cross-eye broke into a slow jog.

"Mist' Canutt, was yuh ever c'nnected with a circus 'or anythin' like that?" he queried.

"No, sir, I can't say I ever was," asserted Sam gravely.

"Yuh never had no dealin's with handlin' anemiles—lions, tigers, pant'ers, and sech?"

"Only anemiles I mostly ever had anything to do with was bulls and bears—playin' the stocks," said Sam humbly. "Why?"

"Oh, I was jest wonderin'."

They rode west in the face of the setting sun. "Where is this here Fryin' Pan Ranch I hear Gil Crawford tellin' about?" queried Sam after a time.

Cross-eye Gillis halted. "Yuh was talkin' to Gil, eh?" He pointed to the

purple-shadowed foothills. "The Fryin' Pan lays agin' that granite slope, where yuh see that patch o' white."

The new owner looked puzzled. "How do cows live on sech a waste of sand and rock and cactus?" he demanded. "This thousand acres ain't worth a lot, is it, Mr. Gillis?"

The foreman laughed. "Yuh kin git a thousand like it for nothin' easy. Yuhr cows is grazed on forest range, fer a fee, except about two months, when there is a leetle grass after the rains. Yuhr holdin's is chiefly cattle and the buildin's, and yuh're foolish if yuh don't snap up the offer of the syndicate, pronto, Mist' Canutt!"

"But I want to learn to be a cowboy," protested Sam. "I want to learn to ride on them wild horses you read about and throw a lariat and shoot a pistol. Gosh, I wish there really *was* rustlers, like Jedge Lamison and Gil Crawford tells about!"

"There shore *is* rustlers, aplenty," enlightened Cross-eye. "Right up in them hills," gesturing beyond the Fryin' Pan. "They're itchin' to grab yuhr herd any minute now!"

"But Gil Crawford said he'd send a rider so's the Fryin' Pan would guard my herd. How long would it take a man to reach here from Ticote?"

"Three hours, takin' the short cut through the Cougar Pass."

"That's encouragin'," affirmed Sam. "By to-morrow I'll have all you boys organized to fight the rustlers myself!"

Cross-eye Gillis swore softly. "Not me," he said. "I won't be led to no slaughter by no tenderfoot."

"Then you're fired."

The foreman gulped. "I don't mean I won't foller orders, Mist' Canutt. I was on'y sayin' you better let a experienced cowman like me, that knows rustlers, do the guardin'."

Cougar Cañon was in sight and Cross-eye swerved over to a little rise.

"Them is yuhr cattle on the aidge uh

that mesa," he informed brusquely. "Them beef is prime for this range. See that gray stretch down there? That's where the cliffs lies—where the rustlers aims to run off yuhr herd. Most uh the beef would be killed outright. I reckon yuh'd lose fifteen thousand dollars, if them thousand-odd head went over that bluff, Mist' Canutt."

"Kind of a mean cuss this rustler captain and his men. You think they might be workin' for Bowie Kurtz and Gil Crawford of the sin-dy-kate?"

Gillis stiffened. "Not any! They're after the Fryin' Pan cows, too."

"Kinda funny Gil told me he'd let the rustlers take my stock if I didn't inform him I'd sell by noon to-morrow. You know what I think, Mister Gillis? I got a hunch Gil Crawford is hirin' them rustlers!"

The foreman's eyes bulged. He glanced narrowly toward Buck Hanniford. "It's easy to see yuh're a tender-foot," he growled huskily. "Lookee there! Fryin' Pan boys is comin' now!"

In the fading daylight a bunch of seven or eight riders were rounding the rim of the mesa. They came on, while the Bar T Dot contingent waited.

Five minutes later Chucklin' Kid Canutt was introduced to the bearded leader of the Frying Pan punchers, Bowie Kurtz. Sam marked him down instantly as a man not to be trusted in any outfit's corral. He was broad and short, shifty-eyed and profane in every sentence. With amused glances toward the dude owner of the Bar T Dot, he talked of signs of rustlers.

"Don't swear so cussed much. I don't like it, mister!" protested Sam solemnly. "I ain't used to it, bein' new to the West."

"Yuh'll git used to it," replied Kurtz, withholding an oath. "Boys, let's all turn in fer the night!"

Chucklin' Kid meekly followed the example of the others in dismounting, asked Buck Hanniford to show him

how to remove bridle and saddle, which Buck did with cautious movements about the now placid outlaw horse. Sam let Cross-eye Gillis help him spread his bed roll, and was the first to turn in, under the early stars. The hour was a ridiculous one for a bunch of cow-punchers to go to bed, Sam knew, especially if a raid was expected. He watched Gillis pass around a bottle, post two guards, and order no fire, no loud talking, no poker, no lighted cigarettes.

"We want to ketch 'em red-handed," explained the foreman.

"Gimme another lick at that redeye!" muttered a puncher. "My couridge is oozin'." He broke into song:

"Yeah, my couridge is oozin',
I got to go boozin',
I ought to be snoozin',
This dog-gone battle I'll be sure to be losin'!"

He let out a yelp as one of the squatting punchers hurled a boot.

When Cross-eye Gillis, Kurtz, and Hanniford began to talk in whispers—loud enough for Sam to hear—the Dry River cowboy chuckled silently. He suspected what was in store—an introduction to "rustlers." More than once in his own speckled career on the range he had indulged the sport of tender-foot baiting.

"They was armed to the teeth," he overheard Bowie Kurtz declare. "It was shore lucky fer this here dude that Gil Crawford sent us waddies out to guard the herd."

"Yuh shore they aim to strike to-night?" Gillis asked in a hoarse whisper.

"They shore do—but they's enough uh us to give 'em all the lead they kin tote!"

Out of one eye Chucklin' Kid watched their preparations for a surprise reception of the rustlers. It was significant that camp had been made a safe distance from the bedded cattle, where they would not take flight and go over

the cliff. Gil Crawford was not yet ready to destroy the herd.

Sam's surmise was accurate to a detail. Around ten o'clock, while guards stood with six-shooters ready, and while Cross-eye Gillis, Kurtz, and a dozen others feigned slumber with loud snores, one of the guards came running and shook the Bar T Dot foreman.

"They're comin'!" he exclaimed huskily.

Gillis and Kurtz were on their feet, barking orders, shouting loudly: "Saddle up!"

Suddenly a shot snarled from the brush, and a cavalcade of riders bore down on the camp. Another shot and another stabbed the darkness with jets of flame. Yells and yelps of pain punctuated the tattoo of pistols and rifles. The Frying Pan and Bar T Dot punchers made for their horses. Chucklin' Kid lay very still; he saw riders topple backward from their mounts and groan and lie motionless. He heard the wild shout of Bowie Kurtz:

"Hey, yuh, Canutt! Git onto yuhr hoss and run fer yuhr life! The rustlers is too many!"

Cross-eye Gillis and Buck Hanniford sprinted for the blanket bed of the dude owner, seized the snoring form, and shook him. Sam yawned loudly and opened his eyes. "What's all the fuss?" he demanded sleepily.

"Rustlers! They're killin' our men. Lookit the dead!" Gillis waved an arm. "Git up and run fer yuhr life! We halted 'em on the first charge, but they outnumber us ten to one—and we got to git!"

Sam sat up. "You're fired, if you run, sir!" he cried. "Rally the boys! Oh, joy, this is glorious—wunderful! What I was prayin' for! Real, honest-to-gracious, skunkin', sneakin', robbin', murderin' rustlers. Boys, rally around your leader! We'll capture and shoot and burn and skelp and torture and ex-

terminate these outlaws to a man!" Chucklin' Kid pulled on his shoes, rose, stretched his arms, brushed his trousers, and demanded the location of the attacking army.

"They're right over in them shadders!" cried Cross-eye, motioning to a dark splotch on the sky line, where horses were faintly visible. "They're gittin' ready to charge ag'in!"

"Good!" Chucklin' Kid shook his legs and sauntered forward. "How many dead on our side?"

"They must be six-seven."

"That ain't so bad. Will one of you gentlemen kindly lend me your gun?"

"We need our guns for self-pertection!" cried the foreman.

"Gimme your pistol or you're fired!" snapped the tenderfoot. He reached and had the weapon in hand. "Now get me somethin' white."

"Somethin' white?" exclaimed Bowie Kurtz. "What's that fer?"

"A flag of truce, sir. Has anybody got somethin' white? Oh, well"—Chucklin' Kid slowly pulled off his shirt—"this'll do!" He reached for Kurtz's rifle.

"No, you don't git that gun," snarled the Frying Pan foreman.

Chucklin' Kid thrust out his borrowed .45, let the barrel weave recklessly, amateurishly, on the person of the protesting cowman. Kurtz held out the rifle hastily.

Cross-eye Gillis was swearing lustily; he watched the dude tie the loose arms of the silk shirt to the muzzle end of the rifle. "What's the idee of a flag o' truce?" he questioned angrily.

"To trick 'em! Betray 'em, double cross 'em! Villains that would shoot down our men don't deserve to live! We'll bluff 'em into thinkin' we're goin' to hold a parley; then shoot 'em down in cold blood! You boys jest follow along!" He strode forward, climbed onto one of the hastily saddled horses and loped toward the faintly visible

riders, his cream-colored shirt held aloft on its rifle mast.

Sam had not been blind to the swift departure of one of the punchers a brief minute before; he had observed the galloping rider round the bend of a near-by draw and guessed his purpose—to notify the others of the syndicate outfit that the tenderfoot was on the way, armed with a Colt .45 and a rifle—and fool enough to use them!

Shirtless, bare arms bobbing, his undergarment billowing in the wind, the make-believe tenderfoot increased his speed, cutting a figure that gave the staring punchers pause. Dead men jumped to their feet, gaping at the hazy, vanishing figure and the fluttering flag of truce he bore.

"Well, I'll be cursed!" blurted out Bowie Kurtz.

"And he's got my six-shooter with four cartridges in her," growled Cross-eye Gillis. "He's fool enough to shoot, and I sent Buck to warn 'em. They'll beat it, shore, and the next best thing we kin do is to sneak home and go to bed! Gimme another shot of redeye."

"Yuh've had too much a'ready!" Bowie Kurtz assumed charge. "Git home, the bunch uh yuh!" he snarled. "I'm goin' to stick an' se this thing through!" He mounted swiftly and started in pursuit.

"Ho hum!" Sam Canutt chuckled as he saw the milling rustlers turn and dart away in the near shadows. "Now I got to risk a exhibition of horsemanship."

He sank the heels of his low oxfords into the flanks of his mount, knew from his experience with horses that he was astride an animal that could run with the best. From his meager knowledge of the lay of the country, he guessed that the fleeing punchers were heading for the Frying Pan, at the base of the distant foothills.

He yanked down the rifle flagstaff, bent forward, and galloped straight for

them. They were streaking through the mesquite and cactus of the mesa. He was gaining. As he neared, he could see their moving heads as they turned to watch him, and guessed with a long-drawn-out chuckle that they were an amazed and half-scared bunch of cowboys.

Looking back, he saw but one rider in his wake and unerringly surmised that the rest would not be there when he returned, dead men included. Who was in pursuit, he did not know. The forward bunch reached a deep arroyo, were forced to slacken speed to cross it, and Chucklin' Kid struck the near bank in time to sight the colorful Buck Hanniford among eight others. He hoisted the rifle flag and yelled shrilly:

"Halt, you villains, or I'll wipe out the bunch!" He sent a .45 ball spinning near the ear of Buck Hanniford.

The nearest five wheeled and faced him; four raced madly away, risking fire. Sam was satisfied at that. "What are you robbin', murderin' cutthroats runnin' for?" he demanded with a show of anger. "Ain't you ever heard tell of a flag of truce?"

There were low grunts of disgust, and Buck Hanniford swore softly. "If yuh're a tenderfoot, Canutt," he shot out suddenly, "where did yuh learn to ride?"

"I ain't a tenderfoot; you gents have plumb broke me into ridin'," returned Sam cheerfully. "Now who are you scoundrelly rascals anyway, and what's one of my own hired men doin' here with a bunch of cow-burglarin' assassins like you! I'm a dude from Missouri, but if you ain't a bunch of low-down sin-dy-kate, Fryin' Pan Range yeggs, you've got to show me!" He turned as the pursuing horseman drew up sharply, recognizing the bearded Bowie Kurtz. "I'm goin' to practice up bein' a cowboy dead shot right here—*now!*" He yanked the six-shooter from his belt.

"Hey, yuh, Canutt! Put up that gun

or I'll drill yuh!" Bowie Kurtz, lunging forward after slipping from the saddle, halted in his tracks, as the dude's Colt belched and a bullet ripped off his hat. Sam's shrill words broke the succeeding stillness.

"Now, you thievin' highbinders, ride, and don't let me ever ketch you tryin' to burglarize a gentleman's honest cows again!" He sent the three remaining bullets over the riders' heads, very close, and they did not wait. Bowie Kurtz darted in and seized the empty gun.

"Come along, Buck!" he snarled, for Buck alone had held his ground. "Lookie here, Canutt! On'y thing saved yuh from bein' potted was because they didn't dast shoot a tenderfoot! Now I reckon is time to lay our cyards on the table!" He thrust his bearded face forward. "We're the syndicate. Sabe? And we run this range. There ain't any room for the Bar T Dot, lessen it's part of the Fryin' Pan. Understand?"

"My goodness!" gasped Chucklin' Kid. "I'm relieved to know how things stands. Buckie and Bowie, will you escort me home?"

"I ain't escortin' yuh home," flared Kurtz. "I'm on'y pausin' to tell yuh. Git clear of Ticote Range, pronto, like Gil Crawford told yuh to. If yuh're here to-morrer night, you won't have a hoof uh stock left."

"That's too darned bad," said Sam sadly. "Rustlers will clean me out to-morrow night sure, won't they? Oh, well—Buck, will you show me how to get home?"

"Yeah." The tall cowboy and Chucklin' Kid rode back to the Bar T Dot. Buck Hanniford waxed confidential. "I like yuhr style, mister. Say the word, and I'll stick with yuh, and he'p yuh hold yuhr property."

"Much obliged," returned Sam dolefully. "I might call on you because I'm sure goin' to stick."

In the morning at breakfast Sam found a glum and silent trio of Bar T Dot employees watching him narrowly. They were uncommunicative about the raid, all the humor gone out of them.

"I thought some of you boys was dead," Sam drawled, and no one answered. Cross-eye Gillis was fidgety, ill-tempered.

"Who is bringin' in the dead men?" pursued Sam. Cross-eye admitted that the two missing Bar T Dot hands were out riding herd. "It was jest Bowie's little joke," he said.

"You boys meant well, and it was sure entertainin'," affirmed Sam.

"I reckon I got to make a trip over to the Fryin' Pan, on business, to see Bowie about the fence he's puttin' around the mesa water hole," muttered Cross-eye a little later.

"They fencin' a water hole?" demanded the tenderfoot quickly—almost too quickly.

The foreman started. "Talkin' about it," he evaded.

"Oh, well. Hurry back; I might need you."

"You goin' to stick?" Gillis eyed the dude owner crookedly.

"You bet. No need for you to tell Bowie. He knows!"

The foreman shrugged, mounted, and rode off. He had not gone far when Chucklin' Kid saw the Frying Pan foreman loping toward the Bar T Dot. The two conspirators came together; they halted, talked a while, then started back to the Bar T Dot.

Bowie Kurtz's bearded countenance wore a frown as he dismounted before Sam. He looked at his watch. "Noon train into Ticote leaves Cougar Station in a hour and a half," he said. "Gil Crawford is expectin' yuh then."

"Let him expect. Deal is off. Nothin' I'm fonder of than this cowboy life, fightin' rustlers, and all."

Kurtz and Cross-eye Gillis stuck

around. Sam busied himself within the old house, moving the rickety remains of furniture about, arranging an office room from which to direct the affairs of the ranch. Kurtz grew more uneasy as he watched these activities. As train time neared he could stand it no longer. "Yuh're a plumb fool, if yuh don't take the syndicate's twenty thousand, Cannutt! To-night yuh won't be able to sell all yuh got left for a thousand!"

"If your rustlers ain't any worse than them last night, I ain't worryin' none," said Sam, grinning as he called in Buck Hanniford to help him patch up broken windows.

When time for catching the train had passed, Bowie Kurtz mounted and rode swiftly south. Cross-eye Gillis continued to hang around with his men. As the afternoon wore on, storm clouds gathered in the northern sky. Sam and Buck Hanniford chatted as they worked in the dilapidated old house.

"Yuh ain't no tenderfoot," murmured Buck finally.

"No?"

"No. What's yuhr game?"

"Fightin' rustlers, I reckon. You say there's only one trail to the Bar T Dot, through the pass?"

"Yeah."

"No more trains in to-day," mused the Dry River man. "How'd you like to make yourself a hundred dollars?"

"Middlin'!"

"Ease yourself off to that pass, then, and if any rider comes through this afternoon, hog tie him, or hold him any way you want to. Don't let Gillis see you go."

It was arranged. Sam busied himself making plans for permanent occupancy, knowing the cross-eyed foreman was watching these activities narrowly. Gillis asked where Buck had gone.

"Mebbe I sent him to help ride herd," replied Sam evasively.

"Fryin' Pan will act swift to-night," said Cross-eye. "It looks like a norther

was blowin' up. Couldn't be a better night, while them beef is bunched over Cougar Cañon."

"Didn't ever occur to you to move that herd, did it, Mister Gillis?"

"Nobody give me orders."

"You bunched 'em without orders—unless you got 'em from Kurtz. Oh, well, get the boys together now, and we'll ride over. I'm goin' to test you out. See how well you will scrap rustlers. If you don't fight 'em, you're fired."

The cross-eyed foreman grinned as though the threat worried him none. "It's plumb early yet," he drawled.

"Get goin', sir, immediate!" Chucklin' Kid was a bit irritable.

Since the departure of Buck Hanniford he had been doing a lot of serious thinking. He wished now he had not sent Buck. He was worried about the cattle, and his conscience began to trouble him. The meanness of the syndicate hirelings in planning to maim and destroy the dumb beasts became more apparent to him. But his own part in the situation plagued him most.

He had already sold that herd with the ranch!

The instructions to Judge Lamison, in the sealed envelope, had been explicit, to close the deal if Sam did *not* come back.

Now Buck Hanniford would halt any messenger from Gil Crawford bearing news of the deal, and the destruction of the herd would go on apace. It would be sweet revenge on the syndicate—but—

Chucklin' Kid looked genuinely sad and downcast as he trudged toward the corral. As a clean, square-shooting cowman he must prevent destruction of the cattle, even if Gil Crawford deserved to lose them through his own manipulations. Then, too, Sam wanted to look more thoroughly into the water-hole matter mentioned by Cross-eye Gillis. Chucklin' Kid mounted the wall-

eyed broncho he had ridden the night before, and the bunch set off for the mesa and the cañon.

On the way Sam insisted on veering southward to look at the earthen "tanks" that had been thrown up around the water hole. To his amazement, his practiced eye told him the origin of the water supply was artesian—and the spring was on Bar T Dot's ground. There was no sign of fencing, as yet; but all was clear to the Dry River man. The syndicate desired that spring, above everything else; hence the apparently liberal offer for stock and land.

The Bar T Dot had been worth double the price Judge Lamison had been authorized to accept!

Gloomily, Chucklin' Kid turned back with Cross-eye Gillis toward the herd. The two punchers who had been left in charge had already got the cattle huddled together close to the rim of the cañon, after satisfying their thirst. The fact was significant.

The wind rose. The night fell black, starless, chill, with a hint of snow. Sam Canutt and his four employees joined the other two riders at the trench-fire camp where the mesa fell off into Cougar Cañon.

Scarcely a word was spoken, for Chucklin' Kid was in no mood for levity. His own reflections had never been so tinged with melancholy.

"Gosh, but I feel miser'ble," he confessed to himself. "Here, Gil Crawford is steppin' right plumb into his own trap, with his mean, orn'ry hirelin's ready to bust up the herd he's bought and paid for in cash! And I can't see it done, thinkin' of them pore, crippled dumb beasts at the bottom uh that gorge!"

He stared vacantly into the blackness beyond the camp fire. "I'm plumb discouraged! Plumb outgeneraled! Judge Lamison has sold my inheritance, with the on'y water hole in fifty mile, and

Gil Crawford and Bowie will be laughin' up their sleeves at the way they handled the little tenderfoot Canutt! And me powerless to see 'em trap themselves with their own deviltry! It sure is sickenin'. I never was so discouraged at anythin'." He squatted on the ground, heedless of the punchers about him, and his head sagged low to his knees.

"Hey, Canutt!" whispered Cross-eye Gillis suddenly.

"Huh?" Sam looked up listlessly.

"Rustlers is here! I see 'em in the mesquite. They got their hosses picketed over yonder." He gestured ahead. "A night like this a waggin' tail or a tumbleweed might start the herd to heavin'!"

Chucklin' Kid's jaw hardened. "Cross-eye," he muttered grimly, "you and Bowie are mean enough to kill and maim these cattle, to draw your pay from Gil Crawford, ain't you?"

The traitorous foreman stared and gulped. "I begun to suspect yuhr dude lingo was all put on, an' yuh was no tenderfoot, Canutt! Yuh're a broncho peeler! We'll do what we kin but we can't save the herd a night like this."

Chucklin' Kid looked him squarely in the eye by the firelight. "You're all hooked up with this crooked sin-dy-kate outfit, ain't yuh, waddy?"

"Don't be makin' charges," flared the truculent foreman, "or I'll drill yuh!"

"Jest when?" Sam Canutt pressed the muzzle of his .45 against Gillis' middle. "I aim to see you and Bowie Kurtz and the whole Fryin' Pan bunch take charge of this herd, *and ride on the cañon side*. If there's a stampede, the cattle won't go into that gorge, Sabe?"

Gillis' eyes popped. "I ain't got any power to halt Bowie. He's doin' this!"

"Listen to me!" snapped the Dry River man. "If this herd goes over, you're fired! Not by me—you ex-

pected that! Fired by Bowie and Gil Crawford." He sheathed his weapon. "I sold this bunch of stock and the ranch to-day—to the sin-dy-kate. I left instructions with Jedge Lamison to close the deal, *if I didn't come back!*"

"What!" Gillis staggered sideways.

"And I sent Buck to the pass to halt any news of the deal gettin' through, so's you boys could go ahead and pull this dirty trick. Sabe? But I got cold feet, account them pore dumb beasts. Now hustle over and tell Bowie Kurtz how things stands!"

Cross-eye Gillis' countenance grew ghastly in the light of the trench fire. He suddenly turned, mounted, and rode through the darkness toward the silent forms of the waiting Frying Pan conspirators.

Ten minutes later a dozen riders were on duty along the rim of the cañon. Chucklin' Kid rode with them through the night. Others of the syndicate outfit went home to bed.

In the morning at the Bar T Dot ranch house Buck Hanniford was waiting.

"I halted *two* riders," said the tall puncher. "I brung 'em along, and they're both in there now." He motioned to the bolted door of a back room.

Chucklin' Kid Canutt unbolted the

door. A sour-faced cowboy admitted that he was bringing word from Gil Crawford to Bowie Kurtz that the Bar T Dot had not been sold.

"What's that?" yelled Sam, and his wide ears jerked forward. "Not sold!"

"Yeah." The cowboy glared.

"And what's your story?" Sam Canutt whirled on the other prisoner, a mild-eyed youth in his 'teens.

"He locked me in," exclaimed the boy heatedly, indicating Hanniford, "even after I told him I was sent to see you. Judge Lamison told me to deliver this."

He extended a folded paper. Chucklin' Kid's fingers trembled slightly as he took the sheet; he read the note:

DEAR MR. CANUTT: Anent your instructions to sell if you didn't come back, I couldn't swing the deal because Crawford was suspicious, learning you had changed to dude clothes in the general store. So I followed your orders, in event I failed, and wired your cowboy friends in Dry River to take the next train. Regards,

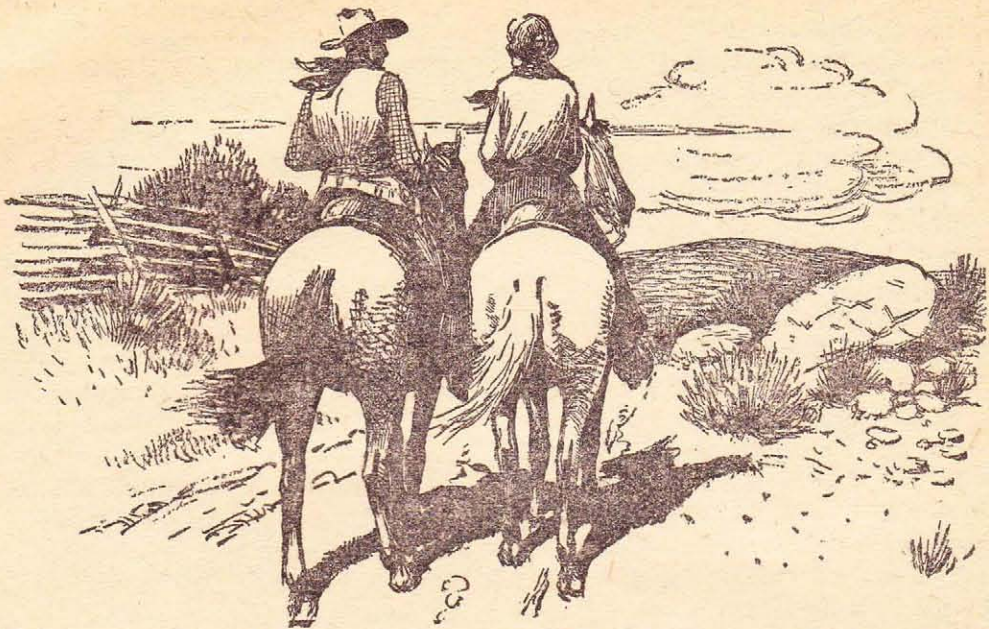
LAMISON.

Chucklin' Kid Canutt folded the paper and thrust it into his pocket. "Buck, let's you and me go drive in that herd! Now we *shore* got to stick. But the boys will be here pronto." His eyes twinkled and a chuckle escaped his lips. "I reckon Cross-eye and Bowie both stand fired before the day is out for what they didn't do to my cows!"



COLORADANS OPPOSED TO PERPETUAL GRAZING PERMITS

THE granting of permanent grazing permits on public lands in Colorado is opposed by many prominent citizens and organizations in that State. One of the most important of these organizations is the Colorado Mountain Club. It is pointed out that the granting of such grazing permits would tend to keep out homesteaders and delay development in much area of the State, making grazing rights practically superior to forest, water, recreation, hydroelectric and wild-life preservation in national forest reservations.



Homely Hunter of Ghost River

By Clem Yore

Author of "The Ride-em-slick Kid," etc.

CHAPTER XV.

THE RACE.

QUT on the desert the mighty silence was broken only by the thunder of pounding hoofs—hoofs that rose and fell with an unbelievable beat. On swept the two moving things. A mounted route guard waved a hat; another was trying to quiet his nervous pony as the racers flew by. The pinto was ahead. Annabel Lee was leading by three full lengths, and the man on her back was bending low over his horse's neck, taking a backward squint frequently at the rushing form following him.

The second mile was passed. Annabel Lee was holding her own. On she galloped like a fantastical creature of color. Up and down moved her mag-

nificent legs with a steady pound which took the very heart's blood out of Buck Tedford as he watched them. The hills came. Here was the first test—the Broken Axle Hills, laden with grease-wood and covered with mesquite—through which wound the thin lurid line of dangling red flannel markers. This up-and-down going would kill a lung-weak animal.

At the very first rise the paint pony showed her mettle. Over that low slope she bounded like a deer. The voice of the man above her was soft and musical in her ears. These moved back and forth, as the coaxing tones drove a sense of comradeship home to the mare. The crest was topped, and here Connemara Boy drew up on a dead level with the pinto.

Homely, his face wet with perspiration, turned, and stared brazenly into the popping eyes of Buck Tedford.

"Have you got me graded?" he shouted.

"All the time and all ways!" yelled Buck. "And the finish of this romp will be the finish of you."

"You think it's Amarillo for mine, eh?"

"Amarillo the devil! It's in this sand right here and now!"

Connemara lurched. There was a jerk on the bridle rein; then a long-shanked spur bit into his side. The great racing machine swung at Annabel Lee while Buck Tedford's loaded quirt end came down on Homely's neck. But the enormous, heavily starched collar broke the force of the blow, and before Tedford could take advantage of half a victory, Connemara Boy, now furious at the touch of the spur, was pulling away from Annabel Lee and running at tremendous speed for a thick brush cover.

Just after Buck had stung the high-natured horse with the dig of the rowel, a man appeared on a slight rise directly ahead.

Buck Tedford was frantically trying to control his horse and signal the man at the same time. Homely watched with amazement.

Then came a loud, coarse shout. "Drop him as he rides by!" The voice was Buck's.

The being now directly ahead stared into Homely's face. Homely's mouth opened; his jaws sagged, and a ludicrous stupefaction filled his features. Yet in the fleeting look as he dashed past, Homely knew the man. It was Menifee, and in his hands was held a carbine.

Jerking Annabel's head to one side and dropping his upper body over her shoulder, he pulled her into a thorn thicket as a gun cracked and a bullet whined above him. The spines of the cacti cut into his flesh, and twice he was nearly pulled from the saddle; but he guided the pinto back into the trail

and fled after Connemara Boy with an even and tremendous gait.

Now the thoroughbred was out of sight.

A small hill crest lay between the pinto and the larger racer. When this eminence was reached Homely caught a fleeting vision of Buck laying back on his mount and trying to slow it down. Then he vanished.

Buck again appeared—this time beside a guard, a mounted man. They seemed to speak, these two, as they rode. A dust cloud arose, and when it settled both men had disappeared.

"That's funny," mused Homely. "Where'd that second fellow get?"

Out in a bare spot on the trail and higher up on the hill Connemara Boy shot and dissolved into another thicket.

Then as Homely sped between two heavy clusters of greasewood there flashed a sudden, twisting, streak of white along the earth. The youth closed his eyes. He knew what that meant. A rope! A lariat had been strung across that trail.

Already he could feel the crashing impact of the fall, the biting contact with the earth. But it did not come. The saddle reared beneath his body, and a delightful arch came into Annabel Lee's neck. He felt the mare's powerful hind quarters gather in a mighty effort. Then the constant clippety-clap of those beating hoofs ceased to ring.

The beat of the feet was broken. Homely reacted with the swift cunning of his riding nature. Instantly, he re-adjusted his position and took the air with the flying pinto, settling himself for the shock of those alighting feet. It came. Annabel Lee resumed her tireless and road-eating gallop.

"Thata girl!" yelled Homely. "You sure seen that bear loop, didn't you, honey? Now let's go. There can't be no more of 'em!"

Then he looked back. The rope was being pulled into a bush, and as it flew

along small spirals of dust arose from the jerking honda at its end. Homely wiped his face, and a streak of black grease paint covered his crimson neckerchief.

The thought of how he would look at the finish brought to his lips a pitiful smile. Without being conscious of the act he attempted to cleanse his face of the black coating which covered it.

Then somehow he felt the mare settle herself into the long, deep stride which told of her second phase of racing. Far ahead, so far, in fact, that he could only see Buck's highly colored shirt, ran the great Connemara. The timbered hills offered a broken vision of the road, but the red flannel markers were so placed that even a child could have followed the route. Out came the horse ahead on a treeless tract where the road circled in a wide arch which Homely knew to be the last bend on the return to the track. Clayton loomed ahead.

Annabel Lee was cutting down the lead of Connemara Boy.

Ahead of Tedford a horseman showed who paid no attention to Buck and his mount, but seemed engrossed in the vision of the running pinto. This abstraction evidently intrigued Buck, for he bent low and took a backward glance at Homely. When he arose Hunter saw him gently prod Connemara with a left spur. The act was electrical in its results. Connemara leaped, side fell, arose, leaped again and, then, rearing, attempted to throw his great bulk backward.

On ran Annabel Lee. On went the vague pantomime ahead and every act of the great descendant of that other Connemara, that wonderful sire of polo ponies, brought a tense thrill of delight to Homely Hunter. He knew what had happened. Connemara had lost his temper. He had forgotten to run, was oblivious to the rushing hoofs back of him, and was fighting his rider.

Annabel Lee reached a point not twenty feet behind Connemara before the distracted horse settled himself. The fury of Connemara's mind gave way before a stampede of eagerness to get free from that hurrying sound back of him. The nobility of his Irish and American ancestry came with a rush. And as the mare flashed by Connemara, he emitted a wild squeal like that of a maddened mustang stallion.

Homely sensed what that meant, knowing that a horse is of a single-track mind; one emotion at a time is all the animal is capable of. Now Connemara was filled with an intense madness to place his body ahead of that flying thing before him. His heart was in the work. His entire anatomy gave over to the one business before him. Again came the thud of those great hoofs as Homely took a new position in his saddle and laid his head and shoulders along Annabel Lee's neck.

His voice murmured crooning words into the flattened ears of the mare; once or twice his hand gently tapped in an affectionate manner the long, slick neck now wet with perspiration. Somehow this fondling of the pinto suggested Molly Mary—as he had last seen her; as he had seen her once in that shaft of silver moonlight in the door of her father's house. He saw Molly Mary in her riding attire, before the screaming people jammed into the grand stand. Closing his eyes, Homely became another creature and no longer heard the savage whistle of the wind past his ears, nor felt the tension of the mare's running effort. He only saw a girl.

That fancy gave way before a vague hopelessness. A soddenness of spirit it was—chill, dank, and weakening. His heart beat furiously. Some quality went out of his mind. The spirit of the race was jerked away from his consciousness.

The rushing road, the wraithlike cacti

and mesquite and prickly pear approached him, jeered, pointed with its suggestive arms, receded, and was gone. The gray color overhead, the scream of the wind, the drab and racing earth under him—all these were, it seemed to him, accompaniments to some destined event, soon to occur. And he was rushing into it, blind, dogged, unafraid.

Unafraid? No, he was afraid! He didn't want to lose Molly Mary; he didn't want to lose the sight, the sound, the smell of that marvelous desert.

But the thing at hand now was to win with this pinto; this gallant little animal running free and on its nerve, alone.

"Come on, honey!" he screamed into Annabel Lee's ears.

Connemara Boy was heard at his side. The great nostrils were just out there and a bit back of him; but the sound of the horse's rushing breath held for Homely a strange and irksome note. He didn't glance at Buck; he paid not a whit of attention to the animal at his stirrup. He was staring ahead at a streak of color now dangling in a vagrant wind, at a rolling line of red—the little flannel flags which led in a gentle curve to a great and gaping hole in a white and high fence. The fair grounds were almost before him. The top of the stand was alive with fluttering ribbons of red and white and blue. Beneath it was a motley of garish shades—people! The wind was up, and the streamers and flags and bunting were calling to him.

Connemara Boy moved ahead. Annabel Lee showed her first signs of vexation. But the leather bands which joined her foaming mouth to Homely's hands gave forth ever so little pressure, stilling the eagerness which fled to the mare's heart.

Now Connemara was half a length—then a full length ahead.

The gate of the track was jammed with men. These gave way and a wide

hole appeared and in this the white posts and top-boards of the track fence. Homely loosed his grip on the reins and stroked Annabel's throat. "Come on, baby, now's your time!" As though a gift of great delight had surged into the resolute body of the mare, she tore to the side of Connemara Boy just as Buck Tedford turned his head and stared open-mouthed into Homely's eyes.

"Now, Buck," cried Homely, "here's where we begins to ride a horse."

The pole arch of the gate flashed overhead, and both horses tore upon the track, in as even a position as one could imagine.

From the stands came a multitude of shrieking voices, evoking some strange and unfathomable sound. The noise seemed to strike the air a blow and be hurled back by the somber sky above in a hideous echo which magnified the beat of the sound with a deafening crash.

The fence posts flashed by like mobile and living objects.

Buck stared into Homely's eyes, but made no reply to the taunt. Connemara was forging ahead; now his flaming and pulsing and rigid nostrils were in front of the finely shaped head of the mare; now his shoulder was opposite Annabel Lee's muzzle.

The first section of the grand stand was approached, and as the horses rushed into full view of the frenzied people, the military band burst into a wild and exultant music. Homely was riding now so low upon his horse that he could see her forefeet as they rose and fell and seemed to touch the earth. He stared at the flashing boxes; he peered at the running row of people; he strained to catch a sight of just one familiar face. Then he saw Jeffries—Molly Mary.

The girl was leaning far over the rail of her box, her face set in wild and beautiful excitement. She caught that

look. In that vision, blind to her surroundings, her finger tips went to her lips, and she sent the symbol of a kiss to him across that dirty, flat surface of the track.

Homely was fast approaching the point of exhaustion; the race was telling on him; the pound of the saddle, the tug of the pace, the beat of the pumping heart, all these had worked at his vital forces until now he was at the border land of his endurance. His face, streaked with black grease and perspiration, was twisted with exhaustion; his eyes were narrowed and grim behind puckered and twitching lids, and his teeth had sunk into his lower lip as though by this act he was enabled to hold on.

But he had to do more than hold on. That thought boomed in him. The track had to be circled; the finish was to be on that streak before him; that white streak—when it flashed and appeared the second time.

The thought of Molly Mary's act went hurtling into his brain as though a rocket had burst there and showered him with sweet and ineffable delights. She had flung him a kiss! Grimly Homely drew back his swollen lips and laughed in answer to the girl's greeting. Then he was gone.

Dixie was being played by the band. Oh! it's a way down South in the land of cotton.

Hurrah! Hurrah!

Lead away! Lead away!

The maddened music seemed an exultation, a command. Lead away! "Now," cried Homely, "you've got it all honey!"

He freed the bridle control and pressed Annabel Lee's sides with a gentle touch of both spurs. A cry hit the air as the mare leaped even with Connemara. The quarter-mile mark flashed like a vague mass of gray into the receding line of white posts. The back stretch seemed so close to Homely

that he thought it was racing ahead of him. Then he entered it; he was counting now.

Another post went by. A hundred feet—and the noses of the two horses were level. Buck tried to swerve Connemara into Annabel Lee, for the mare was on the rail. But the furious pace of the great horse permitted no attention to the tug on the rein. It ran in great leaps, straight as a die, three feet off the side of the pinto.

The riding position of the two men was in some respects similar, the only difference being that Buck leaned down on the left side of his mount and Homely on the right. As they rode, each man could stare directly into the face of the other. Buck was watching Annabel Lee's head and stealthily peering for some leg weakness which would permit him to lurch his mount against her and throw her off her stride. Homely knew what was transpiring in Buck's mind and jeered into his face. "She's just too much rooster, old hand!" he cried. "And she's a-going to win with daylight between her tail and your nose."

"I'll kill you for this! As sure as I meet up with you anywhere, when this is done, I start smoking you on sight!" shrieked Buck.

"You're killed this minute, old centipede!" answered Homely. "You've shot your bolt and you ain't got no stinger left!"

Then came the straightaway and that dim, intangible shade across the track. Buck saw it! Homely fixed his eyes upon it. Then Annabel Lee seemed to inflate, to fill with an abundance of something which pulsed and upheaved under the legs of her rider. Homely caught the red nostrils of Connemara, saw the horse's raw and bulging eyes. Then these were gone. Annabel Lee was out in front.

A roar came from the stands. Homely turned his head and saw Buck

using the quirt in a cruel and unbelievably swift punishment. Then he could no longer see the horse back of him. It was two lengths behind. The whip had jarred Connemara Boy out of the thought of winning! He became torn by a frenzy to fight the thing on his back.

There, before the maddened people, the high-strung racer gave as true an exhibition of resentment as was ever evidenced by man. He quit, he quit cold! Annabel Lee, with Homely riding high, wide, and handsome, and sitting erect and holding with all his strength to the reins, flashed across the whitewashed line a winner, by at least eight lengths.

The earth seemed to leap, to jump, to fling itself up at him, as Homely jogged Annabel down the track, an eighth, circled her, and rode slowly up to the judges' stand.

Amid a bedlam of sound, he leaned down and stared into the upturned face of Molly Mary. He felt hands striking his back; saw himself surrounded by mounted men. Old Jeffries was there, and in his gray eyes a dull and working smoky fire played. He was watching a man of medium build walking slowly across the track. Then came a tall man and back of him ten other men, the sheriff, Big Bill Walton and his deputies!

Homely stepped out of his saddle, and as he struck the earth, Molly Mary grasped his hand; one of her arms went around his waist. "Oh!" she gasped. "Oh, Homely, Homely, it was grand!"

Somebody was placing something about Homely's middle. He abandoned the beauty of Molly Mary's eyes to stare at the grim width of a gun belt. Quick fingers buckled it.

"Your gun!" said a voice. Homely grinned into the face of the foreman of the Lazy Shield Bar. "We're kinda fearin' trouble!"

Then came another voice. It was

that of a man of medium build whom Jeffries had been watching, the Amarillo deputy sheriff.

"I arrest you, Homely Hunter," the man was saying, "for the murder of the marshal of Amarillo."

"Don't lay a hand on that boy!" echoed the dull tones of Hampton Jeffries.

Then up stepped Big Bill Walton, the sheriff. "That's right," he said. "If you was to start away with this kid, these people would make sausage out of you. Get out! Jeffries, I parole Homely in your custody. Understand? You'll guard him and deliver him to me upon proper credentials!"

"I sure will," answered Jeffries. "But Texas has got a real scrap on her hands before she takes this kid. Braid that in your cigarette," he added to the officer from Texas.

A tall figure strode beside Homely. A voice said: "And that goes just two ways, all across the board."

Homely swung about and stared into the working features of Jerry Quigley. "Boy!" was all the old man could say. "Boy! my boy!"

Then after a moment's silence Jerry raised his head and looked with kindly eyes into the face of Hampton Jeffries.

"Darn my soul, Jeff," he cried in a strange voice, "I've been trying to stop loving you for over thirty years. I've been a very old fool. But this Homely showed me the way!"

Jeffries leaped from his horse. And two old men stood with heads on the shoulders of each and hands gripping hands until the knuckles showed white. Molly Mary turned away, her eyes swimming tears, her tiny, polished boot toe digging a hole in the earth.

"I've been the fool, Jerry," muttered Jeffries. "But it's all right right now! Gosh, I'm tickled, old friend."

"Come on!" yelled Big Bill Walton. "Here comes Buck and his men. If a gun cracks in this arena, there'll be a

hundred people hurt. Get him out of here, all you men!"

Slowly the little cluster of Lazy Shield Bar cowmen formed a circle about Annabel Lee, Homely, and the rest, as slowly working this circle out of the press of the people, toward the Jeffries stable at the far end of the field.

The band was playing a martial air; the voice of the announcer was proclaiming the opening of the bronc riding, and out in the open space a cowboy clown was provoking the crowd to a loud mirth by grotesque antics with a trained mule.

Buck Tedford took one look at the slowly moving clot of horsemen, then turned toward his stable. Connemara Boy was streaked with lather, trembling in every fiber. Buck's men were stupefied.

Tedford rode slowly away, alone. As he passed the grand stand a hullabaloo of catcalls greeted him, then hisses and jeers. Buck lowered his head and laid both hands over the horn of his saddle. When he reached the stable no handler met him. Silently he unsaddled and blanketed the racer, washed out its nostrils and mouth, and with a halter led it outside, walking it up and down for the "cooling out."

And as he walked a great tumult raged in his heart. A grim decision came to him—murder!

CHAPTER XVI.

A WOULD-BE LYNCHING.

IN the closed surrey, Homely, Jerry Quigley, Molly Mary, and Jeffries hurried away from the grounds. As they were issuing from a side gate, Fancy Frank and Jim Kearney signaled the driver who stopped the team as Jeffries stuck out his head.

"We was a-wanting to say a word with Homely, sir," said Jim. "The two of us is friends of his."

Homely flung back a curtain. "You plumb old worthless hounds, what's a-gnawing at you—gambling? I'll be downtown directly, as soon as I gets washed up and my overalls on."

"We wasn't wanting nothing but to tell you that we seen Smoky Evans drop a flag on the stand and we figgers that's some sort of signal. Was any roughing handed you on that run out there?"

Homely told of the attempts made on his life.

"You get that gossip to the sheriff right away, Fancy," ordered Jerry Quigley, "and have him pick up Menifee as soon as he comes in out of that brush. The other fellow I don't know; but by the time I gets through with Menifee, he'll sure tell all he knows front, back and sideways."

"Where'll you be, Aristotle," mocked Jim Kearney, "in say one, two or three hours? Howdy, Miss Molly Mary, won't you let us slap him down, for a little while, around five o'clock?"

"Of course, boys"—she lowered her voice—"but we've got him now, you know!"

"And that ain't the first verse, ma'am." Kearney laughed. "You ain't said the half of it. When it comes to that, why——"

Homely closed the curtain. "Drive on, bo," he cried, "these hombres ain't got even a shade of shame."

Up at the Golden Sand Hotel, Homely washed and dressed himself while Molly Mary, her father, and Jerry Quigley sat in a room and talked, talked over topics which were dear to the hearts of them all.

When Homely joined them his face was wreathed in smiles, a great light dwelt in his eyes. "If I was a angel I couldn't feel any happier than I does a-looking at you old-timers, a-sitting and a-grinning at each other. And if she just won't start a blow-off, I wants to hear about this here thing, this thing

what done busted you-all forty ways from a center," he said.

"You tell him, Jerry," said Jeffries.

"It's your part Jeff, seein' as how I was to blame."

"To keep peace in this family," said Molly Mary, "I'll tell it."

"No you won't!" cried Jerry. "I'll fill Homely's ear myself, plumb full, too. Jeff and me was a-courting the same gal, a while back, about thirty years. And what I means is, we was a-courting her. Well, sir, do you know, I was that stuck on myself, I done come to be concluded that she was in love with me. Then one day Jeff walks up to me, and he says:

"Jerry, Molly and me was married, last night!"

"What?" I says.

"Yep," he says, 'we was double spliced and now I've got her down on that little bittie ranch of mine a-fixing up the supper. She wants you to come over and eat with us.'

"And then I lost my fool head and walked away from him. When she died I wanted to come and say something to Jeff but by that time I was pride poisoned and filled full of fiend. I suffered. I tried to make Jeff mad all sorts of ways, so's he'd get to talking to me and give me a chance. And so we just dragged and dragged, further and further apart like a pair of locoed mares."

"And I," interpolated Jeffries, "I tried to hem you up in all sorts of cracks so's you'd go poverty poor and I could give it all back and show you which a way I was a-setting in regards to you."

"Yes, and I was low-down skunk enough to try to break you, too. Why, just a little while ago a old Mex—you know him, Jeff—old Andreo, he told me a cock-and-bull story about Ghost River eating a way under them big pine hills at the bend and cutting a course through ground what would water all that bot-

tom land of yours, yes, and run over mine into Mexico. I tried to verify that yarn in the hope that I could grab that land and carry you some grief what would make you bend and break my way. But it was all in my hate and in that old greaser's head."

"No, it wasn't!" cried Homely. "She sure is gnawing at them rocks. Here's the real low-down on that thing."

And while Jerry sat in a silent stupefaction, Homely told of his discovery. Jeffries recounted the letter he had received, and what he had found out about it in El Paso. Jerry's face blanched; his hands gripped his chair sides; he seemed to seethe with a vast and piercing inward emotion. At the close of the narrative, he looked at his watch.

"I'll be back for dinner," he announced. "But right this minute I've got a special thing or two to say to Buck Tedford and I wants to have it said before he thinks he can ride back to my ranch." He picked up his hat and fled.

Molly Mary looked from the window. "They're bringing in Menifee, dad!" she cried. "And another man, too. Do you know him, Homely?"

"I can't identify his face," said Homely, "but his nag sure looks like the bronc I seen just before Annabel Lee leaped that rope!"

"There's your two friends following along with them," said Jeffries, indicating Fancy Frank and Jim Kearney. "I reckon I better be sitting in on that confab. Them boys will have to have a place to sleep when they gets through telling what they know, and I don't want that Kearney locked up one single, little minute, if I can help it. Will you two be lonesome without me?"

"Dad!" Molly Mary pouted.

"You better stay here, Colonel." Homely laughed. "I sure feels myself a-slipping, and by the time you gets back, I'm liable to be all the way gone."

But Jeffries with a look of utter con-

tent had opened the door and walked from the room.

What Homely said and what Molly Mary answered was known only to themselves and the four rough walls of the small hotel. Time fled on winged feet before they were conscious of a deep rumble down the street.

There was something ominous in that profound tone of animal anger which filled the air. There was a quality which hit a peculiarly evil and repulsive chord. Molly Mary's face blanched, and her breath quickened. Then both of them rushed to the window.

"A mob!" exclaimed Molly Mary. "They've got Menifee and that other man in the lead. Yonder comes dad and Jerry and Big Bill Walton. Oh, Homely, they're going to lynch those men on that flag pole in front of this hotel!"

"I reckon somebody told somebody what they tried to do to Annabel and me. Here's where I get down and talk some, for them hombres," replied Homely, moving toward the door.

But Molly Mary clung to his arm. "Don't go," she implored. "I can't tell you what it is, but somehow I feel that you should not go out on the street, Homely. Please don't go! You can't do a thing; it's too late!"

Then a loud voice shouted: "Wait, you boys! Wait, I tell you!"

It was Big Bill Walton speaking. His voice arose out of the crowd now gathered about the flag pole in a mighty tone. It stilled the mutterings of the crowd; men paused and turned as they led Menifee and his companion to the platform.

Big Bill leaped beside Menifee and raised a hand. "Boys," he shouted in so loud a tone that his words carried all over the square, "you haven't heard it all! And I'm dead sure you ain't aiming none to pull off just half a job."

"Spill it, quick, Bill!" the leader of the mob cried.

"These men have confessed that they tried to kill Homely or cripple Annabel Lee because of a split they was to get in the money bet by Smoky Evans, Ike Witherspoon, Shorty Fanton, and Buck Tedford. If you fellows lynch them here and now, where's our evidence to hang a crime on these real bad ones? I promise you that these men will get everything that's coming to them. Let the law take its course, boys."

Molly Mary turned back into the room. But Homely was gone. Going to the window she saw him walking slowly across the street back of the mob. He elbowed a way to the sheriff, and she heard his clear and calm drawl as he stared into Big Bill's eyes.

"Can I mutter a word or two?" he asked.

A bellow of demand arose out of the crowd.

"I reckon boys," said Homely as he took a place beside Menifee and the sheriff, "if any man in this here bunch had oughta have a grudge, it's me. But what Big Bill says is dead right. It wasn't only to win this race that these hombres tried to knock me silent out on that sand! No! It was because of a killing what come off back in Amarillo. Three men, Ike Witherspoon, Shorty Fanton, and the marshal of Amarillo years ago killed my dad. Last summer I showed up in that town and rode broncs and generally tried to earn some easy-hard money. Them three saw me and planned to put me away as they did my dad, for they figured I was down out of Wyoming to get vengeance. The marshal led me down a dark street; he was joined in a quiet spot by Ike and Shorty, and then he tried to kill me. But I was too fast for the three of them. If you boys kills these men, then I stands trial for that murder, and Ike and Shorty are the witnesses what'll put me away for keeps. If we can hang this job of today on them, we've sure got something

to say to a Texas jury when they extradites me."

A murmur ran through the crowd.

"What he says is plumb true," yelled Menifee, now nothing but a blanched and trembling fear-stricken wretch. "Ike and Shorty said just that much to me, and Buck was wanting the kid put away, because Witherspoon is a kin to him. I'll sure tell what I knows, if you give me the chance."

Jim Kearney leaped beside Homely. His face was white, his eyes wild; a deep, nervous tremor racked his throat.

"Homely never shot that marshal!" he cried. "I shot him from behind a tree when I seen him about to pull his gun."

Then in a swift narrative he told of all that he had seen and heard in Amarillo; of his escape to the North; of the letter Fancy Frank had sent him and why he had come to Clayton to be of service to Homely. Then out of the hotel window there came a voice.

The mob swung about as one man and stared at the pale face of Molly Mary. Her lips moved; the throng grew still to catch her words.

"I know what these men say is true!" she exclaimed. "I was passing down a street in Amarillo on my way to the depot and I came to a place where three men were surrounding a fourth. One of the men lit a cigarette, and by its light I recognized Homely as the man whose bronc riding I had admired that same afternoon. I complimented him on his performance and passed around the corner. Midway in the block I heard a shot and an instant later a man I know to have been Jim Kearney passed me on the run. You mustn't lynch these prisoners. If you want to do a good deed for me and for Homely, let them live and all of you get out and find Ike Witherspoon, Shorty, and Buck Tedford. Unless something is done and done quick, Homely will have

to stand trial for a murder he never committed. Please, boys, please!"

A silence followed her appeal. Then the leader of the mob threw the rope that had been placed about Menifee's neck into Big Bill's hand and, turning to the crowd, cried, "Boys, I reckon she's all right as Big Bill says. What's your pleasure?"

"Get Buck!"

"Where's them other birds?" another shouted.

"Let's go!" cried a third.

The mob broke into small clusters and parted sufficiently for the sheriff to lead his prisoners safely down the street. As he rounded a corner a man ran to a hitch pole, leaped upon a horse, and darted away. The brand on the hip of that pony Molly Mary recognized as the Two Bar Slash Tumbling T.

Instinctively she knew that the rider was heading some place to warn the men whom the mob was now bent on capturing. She tried to scream, to catch the eye or the ear of Homely or her father; but the turmoil in the street, the rushing of men here and there, and the confusion incident to a new design held the mob in a distraction which prevented her from making her voice heard. When she saw Jerry Quigley, Homely, and Jeffries start for the hotel she dropped into a chair and gave way to tears.

When once more she looked from the window the street was deserted. Far away she heard the clatter of many running horses. The frenzy of a man hunt sounded in those galloping echoes; the turmoil of anger was in the sky; the earth itself gave forth the suggestion of some dreadful portent. Icy fingers seemed to chill the heart of the girl, and as Homely entered the room she threw herself upon his breast and clung to him as would a little child.

"There, now, honey," he said nervously, "if it ain't all right all ways, I

don't know a sure-enough sign of peace. Why, Molly Mary, trouble has disappeared from all of us—all just like a May morning. We're going to have rain, before a great while!"

Molly Mary raised her face and smiled through tears.

"We sure are," commented Jerry. "I heard a fellow say down the street that the railroad agent just got a telegram that it's raining cats and dogs up in the Big Yellow Hills. They've had three cloudbursts there already which washed out two bridges, and the water is heading down Ghost River in a wall eight feet high. Just look at them clouds a-rolling this way now."

A knock came on the door. When Jeffries opened it a Mexican boy gave a letter to him. The missive was addressed to Homely Hunter. Opening it Homely read the contents and with a laugh handed the letter to Jerry.

"What is it?" demanded Molly Mary.

"I reckon you better not know, honey!" replied Quigley.

"If it has to do with Homely I've got a right to know. Homely and I are to be married, Mister Quigley!"

"Then read it yourself," answered the old man and gave the letter into the girl's hand. "You might as well start early."

Slowly Molly Mary read aloud:

"Both you and I can't live in this country any more. She's too small for the two of us. Don't let the sun go down on you in Clayton! And I don't mean perhaps. I'll be in town and if I sees you on the street, I starts shooting at the first squint."

"Who sent that?" inquired Jeffries incisively.

"Buck Tedford," replied Molly Mary.

"By this time," remarked Jerry, "Buck is sure heading out somewheres with a real wholesale lot of trouble riding on his tail. Don't pay no attention to that thing, Molly. Let's go down to supper!"

CHAPTER XVII.

"DON'T GO!"

THE sun had set, and a wan twilight was in the air. It had been a "no-sun" day. Those who feasted at the expense of the town had now gone home. Clayton was deserted, save for a few old men and many eager and anxious women, a few storekeepers, saloon men, and loiterers. A wind sobbed; a wind before rain it was. It echoed in the hollow spaces between houses, it boomed in the heart of Molly Mary as she stood staring at the dim silhouette of hills where the hurrying posse had fled on the track of the escaped ruffians. Out there, where that grotesque mass of shapes cut the evening glow like a horde of repulsive beings, more than two hundred of the county's best horsemen were searching for Shorty, Ike, Smoky, and Buck.

Buck! If that were true! If only Buck were ahead of that sheriff's band. But she felt that he was not. Far off she saw a flash, another, then three more in an unbelievably quick succession. She knew—Apache fire signs!

"Dad! Mr. Quigley!" she cried. "Come here!"

The men ran to her side and stared from the window.

"Watch those signals!" she cried. "What are they?"

"Injun signs! No! my signs," said Jerry quickly. "And they reads: *We go south! Meet us!*"

"Buck?" asked the girl. "Is it Buck?"

"No, not Buck," responded Jerry. "It's my guess some hombre's making them signs for Buck. He don't putter around with his fire like them fellers. Buck's hiding out back this way. Maybe he's gone up in the cedar brakes back of town or out in the Broken Axle hills. But there's just one sure thing!"

"What?" asked the girl, staring at Homely's face, as he came into the

room from a meeting with Fancy Frank and Kearney.

"Them fellers will never get away from that posse, now!"

"Why?"

"Them's Rattlesnake Hills, and the west side of 'em drops right off into Mormon Cañon. That means them fellers is sure enough trapped—rat-trapped! What's the matter, honey?"

Molly Mary was scrutinizing the features of Homely. She did not hear Jerry's anxiety, nor did she feel the hand her father laid on her shoulder. She was staring at a shallow light in Hunter's eyes, at a peculiar twitch of the muscles of his left cheek.

"Leave us alone, dad," she said in a disconsolate tone. "I want to be alone with Homely."

"Come on, Jeff," said Jerry. "Of course, they wants to be alone. Let's you and me go down the street."

"No! Don't do that," said Homely in an ominous voice. "Don't either of you-all go out of this hotel to-night."

"Why?" asked Jeffries.

"Buck's in town," announced Homely, "and he's done a considerable amount of talking. I reckon he's leaping wild with liquor, by this time, too. I just wouldn't give him a chance."

"Come on," said Jerry. "We'll wait for you downstairs, boy," he added to Homely.

"What's wrong, dear?" asked Molly Mary. "What has happened to make your face look like it does?"

Homely stared at the door as it closed after the old men. "My face, my face?" he seemed to repeat the words like a man in a dream. "Oh, my face! Why, sometimes my face gets that a way. It's funny about my face! All sqee-geed with ugliness! Is that what you mean?"

"Tell me!" spoke Molly Mary in a voice which mocked the beauty of her eyes. "Tell me what has happened."

"Nothing, except Buck has been

down at the Magpie Saloon and he makes his brags that he's a-going to kill Jerry and me as soon as he sees us. He blames Jerry for everything that went wrong with the race. Buck's hiding out, nobody knows where!"

"But why don't some of the men in town catch him?"

"There ain't no men in town, to speak of, except that deputy from Amarillo, a few of our hands, and some of Buck's old friends. Looks like, now, as if—as if I gotta leave you!"

"No!" cried Molly Mary, throwing her arms about Homely's neck. "No, not that, Homely, not that, dear!"

"Why, Molly Mary," he replied, "you wouldn't go for to want me to stay cooped up like a setting hen when that fellow's prowling around and slinging all kinds of talk about your dad and me and Jerry, would you?"

"No, not that way!" she cried, oblivious to his question. "I don't want you on the street to-night. In the morning, dear, when the sheriff and his posse come back then we can go out and ride home. Nobody will know! Nobody would blame you, if you didn't go out to-night! Can't you see that you're not expected to hunt down this man? That's the sheriff's duty! Nobody will criticize you; nobody will ever know!"

"I'll know! And you'll know, honey!"

"All I want is you, Homely! You! I don't care what people say or what they think. Don't go; promise me you won't go!"

There was silence—save for the howl of the rising wind and the hollow echo of walking feet along the wooden sidewalks. These struck the ears of the girl with a ghastly resonance. She turned and stared at the window. Her lips moved. She seemed to grow livid and then to utterly blanch under the impelling suggestion of that sound from the street, that light and catlike tread.

"Promise me, dear!" she repeated through dry lips.

"I can't do that," he said. "I can't do that."

"Not for me?"

"Not for you or for me, either! I couldn't do that, Molly Mary. It's bigger than me, this thing!"

"You mean you want to get even with Buck? You mean you want to kill a man and come to me with his blood on your hands? Is that what you mean?" The girl had become overwrought, launching into a tirade of accusation. "Don't you know that this is the biggest instant of my life, my very life? Think of what it will mean to have murder and marriage mixed in the very same day, the same instant! Oh, Homely, don't go out, now."

She was clutching at him with her beautiful hands, fondling his cheeks, stroking his hair, employing a prayer, an appeal, a beseeching expression that swept all timidity from her face and eyes, using in her fingers a soothing movement which almost unmanned Hunter. Gently he took her hands and held them over his heart.

"Listen, honey," he said sweetly, and she closed her eyes at the sound of his voice, at the rush of anticipation she felt in his words, "I wouldn't any more cause you to worry like you is than I would think of sinking a knife in your heart. But this thing—everybody in town knows that Buck has beat that posse. He back-tracked Big Bill and he's come here to do dirt to Jerry and me. If I marries you, and God knows that's the big minute in my little life, I'd have to move away. No matter what else I would do afterwards, this here country would always remember I was afraid to walk on the street! Feared, skeered silly, of just one man on the street, after dark, too! I couldn't hold up my head, and after a little while this gaunt and ghostly *thing* would jump up and come a-tween I and

you. You'd look at me and see me slinking in this here room, my arms about you, sniveling like a little pup! Can't you see I gotta be true to my breeding? I gotta do what a man does, in a man's way, when a man's up agin' the real thing, in a young country like this; where's a fellow's grit and his honor is all that's left to him to throw away or hold up, so all men can see it's lily white and plumb clean. I gotta go and meet Fancy Frank and Jimmy. I told 'em I would."

Again came the sound of the walking feet over the hollow boards. Molly Mary stared at the window, motioning with a slight nod that she wanted Homely to see who was making the sound.

He strode to the window and peered from it boldly. Below, in the street, he saw Fancy Frank walking up and down, glancing this way and that, and staring occasionally at the entrance to the hotel. He saw the blanched face of a woman raised toward the window at which he stood; he caught a man in a store door looking hard at Fancy Frank. Then a vast revulsion swept him.

All the town was watching that hotel door, waiting for him to come out; watching the drama of his courage. His being seemed to grow numb. Then he saw Molly Mary's eyes; she had misunderstood what was raging in his heart.

"It was *him*?" She stated a fact as though it were a question. "Wasn't it Buck?"

"No!" he answered sharply. "It's Fancy Frank, and he's waiting out there, parading up and down and running a risk of getting pot shot just to give me a chance. Then I seen a woman's face peering from behind a curtain, and she saw me sneaking a look out of this window. And another fellow in a door was watching, too. Everybody waiting, honey, and now I gotta go. Will ya give a fellow a little kiss just to help him on his way?"

"If you go out that door, Norman"—she stumbled over his name, and then as though in palliation for the affront of this formal tone she added—"if you go out that door and leave me to suffer I'll never see you again. Never! Do you understand, Homely?"

His reply came to her like an echo. "Then I wants these words to keep a-ringing in your ears as long as you live. I couldn't be the sort of man you seem to see, if I was false to what I thinks is right. What you sees in me I don't know, and I been a-studying about that, too; but whatever it is, I know it's something mighty fine or you wouldn't go for to give your dear little self away to a pack rat like me, unless you seen me true blue. If I was yellow, I wouldn't be fit to be a husband to you, no, sir! You just remembers that I love you better'n my life but I couldn't keep off this street one minute, even if I knew I had to give you up. I ain't nothing but what the saddle pounded into me, and my riding has learned me, and the wind has drove under my skin. I'm just as I is and I can't sneak behind the prettiest thing in my life to hide away from the ugliest. I gotta meet it. Good-by, honey, for a little while. But don't you worry! I'll be back! I just know I'll be back; I got that hunch!"

"Homely!" Molly Mary screamed and rushing toward the boy raised her face and met his kiss with her lips.

And while he held her tightly to his slender shape he felt her suddenly wilt in his arms. He withdrew his lips and saw that she had swooned. Picking her up he laid her on the bed, loosened the neck of her waist, raised the window high, and then hurried downstairs where he met Jeffries.

"Molly Mary's fainted," he said. "You and Jerry go on up and keep her quiet. I'll be back, in a little while, if I'm coming back. If I don't, then you two always be kind, won't you?"

"Boy," said Jerry stepping to his side, "look out for a 'lady-gun' up Buck's sleeve, if you gets right close quarters. And watch him like a hawk. Watch his shift. He always moves a leg afore he pulls a gun."

Jeffries held out a hand which Homely grasped fervently and silently. Then quickly he ran up the stairs.

"I'm a-going with you," said Jerry.

"Colonel, you is needed up yonder right now! And if you wants to tickle me pink, you go up there and keep *her* from worrying. It'll be all over in a little while."

"You're a big sorta little fella, Homely!"

"You wouldn't have me do otherwise, wouldja?"

"I know! You're just perzactly my kinda hombre, boy! And all I gotta say is take care of yourself and shoot slow and low! Good-by!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

TEN MINUTES TO LIVE.

MEN stood about in the Magpie Saloon like automatons. They leaned against the side wall, where both doors could be readily seen. They waited; they lounged; they listened! Back of the bar stood the keeper of the resort, polishing glasses. Before him reclined Fancy Frank, Jim Kearney, and the Texas officer. There was a low hum of voices in a far corner. The gambling devices were stilled; the gamblers sat idly smoking about their tables.

Then every one became on the alert. Footsteps grated on the gravel of the street which was nothing more than a road. They pounded on the platform before the saloon.

The door opened, and in stalked Homely. His eyes swiftly roamed every face, and form, beneath that dimly lighted ceiling. And with a smile he walked firmly to the bar.

"It's sure my night to buy." He

laughed. "Step up here, all you sand-eating, cow-chasing, thirst carriers; it's my night to spill my money, and the winner pays! Everybody's welcome, and this mahogany feels like plush. Come on! A fella would think somebody had died!"

Men glanced at men; one laughed, and then all moved toward the bar. When the glasses had been filled a gambler proposed a toast.

"To one sure-enough hard-riding, decent-living, plumb-white cowboy!" he said. "Let's drink her down!"

A door was suddenly flung back and, as all eyes turned at the sound, Buck was seen standing just inside the room. He looked like a figure viewed in the little end of a telescope. Then came his voice.

"You-all knows the code of this land, don't you?"

Homely took two steps away from the men about him. "It's your move, fella," he said sharply, yet with no sign of anger or rancor in his words. "Start after your iron!"

Buck smiled, and that expression became a snarl. "I wasn't a-meaning just that, right now," he said. "I'm a-coming to that. What I means is—the law of this desert is that when a man drinks with a man, there won't be no shooting under that roof. Now I craves to take a drink with you, kid, a fare-thee-well gargle of red-hot lick. Does that go?"

"You're as welcome as if you had the smallpox," said Homely, smiling. "Pour your poison. It's race money what's paying for this séance. Drink hearty and stay a long time!"

A murmur ran throughout the men. Fancy Frank and Jim stood away from the others, and it was noticed that each of them loosened a belt that held a gun.

Buck approached the bar, where standing room was made for him and, without a word, filled his glass. This

he lifted and held high, as his eyes caught and fixed those of Homely.

"I heard what you spoke, 'Cincinnati,'" he said to the gambler who had proposed the toast. "And I'm sure a-swallowing this lick on top of them words. Here's to a game kid, maybe!"

Guffawing loudly he put glass to lip, and the whisky vanished down his throat in a single gulp. Other men drank; all but Homely whose lips barely touched the glass. The saloon man threw away the whisky.

"What's the game?" Hunter questioned Tedford.

"I'm a-craving to find out just how much nerve you've got. I've drunk your lick to a toast what I knows to be a lie," answered Buck. "I knows you're white-livered and low-down. But I wants all this town to know it. Here's my proposition. I'll be walking that street out there in just ten minutes. Ten minutes, does you hear? Ten minutes from the time I leave!"

"Go on!" Homely's face was a sight. "I ain't a-missing a word, or flicking a ear. And what's more, I'm watching that little old two-bit derringer you has got up that leather-vest sleeve. A man what carries a gun, where crooked gamblers carries a cold deck, can't say nothing what'll stampede my brains when it busts into my ears. Ten minutes, is a long, long time, sometimes. What about this ten minutes of yours?"

"In ten minutes, if I catches you on this street, I starts shooting. And you can do the same! Is that agreeable?"

From that street came the sound of voices, hushed voices.

"Friends of yours?" asked Homely, signifying with a nod that he had heard the men outside. "Are they waiting for you?"

"Yep! Just a few old podners who'll see I gets a fair shake on this last lap. To-morrow'll be another day, and maybe then no friends will do me much good. Now, I hankers for just one

whizzer with you. If I can't get that, I'll slide up and feed old Jerry what sure is his right medicine for ditching me!"

"I'll be out in ten minutes," replied Homely. "And I'll have a friend or two with me just for to match yours."

"My friends won't bother none," offered Buck. "They's just old-timers what believes a grudge ought to be fought out and not tried out in a courtroom."

"This kid will have friends, Buck," commented Cincinnati. "Just wrap that up and remember it. One of you boys open that door and tell them hombres outside that when this ten minutes is up there hadn't better be no man a-loading around this house. This kid gets away from the Magpie clean, and only one man takes a shot at him."

A faro dealer opened a door and spoke quietly to a group of men standing in the shadow of a blacksmith shop. There came a voice which Fancy Frank recognized. That voice assured the inmates of the Magpie that the men outside were there for no other purpose than to see that Buck was given a square deal. The door closed.

"That was 'Raton Harry,'" announced Fancy. "And you can tie to what he says. Set your watch with that there clock, Buck! We moves when the time's up. And she starts when you shuts that door!"

Buck examined his watch, adjusted it, replaced it in a pocket, backed toward the door, and vanished.

Some one gave vent to a click of laughter. It sounded like an affront, and every eye found the offender.

Jim Kearney dropped an elbow on the bar and moved a forefinger up and down the polished mahogany. Fancy Frank talked in a low tone to Cincinnati. Men moved away from the little cluster about Homely, and one or two sat down and rolled cigarettes. The sound of the saloon keeper washing glasses rang

with a silvery tone in the room. A windowpane rattled and the wind moaned.

"Old podner," said Kearney, "I just wish somehow you'd let me go on with this thing."

Homely heard; the look in his eye chilled Kearney.

"Oh, I knows!" exclaimed Jim. "Jerry told me all about it! Told me all about it after supper!"

"About what?" asked Homely absently.

"About you and Miss Jeffries. Now if anything was to happen to you, it'd well nigh break her heart. Don't you think just this once, you could let a buddy step up and shoot this thing out? Them fellers outside would agree to it and make Buck stand for it—if they knew about you and this here girl. Can't I?"

Homely waved a negative with his head. Then he smiled and dropped an arm about Kearney's shoulders. "You knew better'n to ask me that, Jim," he drawled. "You old hound, you knew better'n all that."

"I'll do it, then!" cried Cincinnati. "You ain't a-going to run no such risk, if there's a girl a-waiting for you. Let me do this, Homely! I'll be glad to turn a trick like this. Why"—the gamester smiled with thin, pallid lips, an exquisitely serene light dancing in his eyes—"doing such a thing as that might square a lot of mean stuff I've slung about in my life. I'd sure be obliged if you'd let me take your place. And I'm right fast, too!"

"Thank you, old pilgrim," said Homely. "But you see, Buck and I just didn't like each other from the first time we met. His hating me ain't because I beat him at that race, or because I wounded his skin. No, sir, it's deeper'n all that. When two men hates each other it's deeper'n acts and stronger than motives. It's bedded down in the brain and it's gnawing all the time at

a man. Buck's been mad at me, ever since I made a monkey outa him, when he tried to make a fool outa me. Boys, she's got to go as she lays! *Two minutes has gone by!*

"Now, if you-all don't mind, some of you spills along and sees that I have got a free street in front of me when the time's up. Please, Jimmy, you and Fancy and Cincinnati, and you, deputy, too, you fellows amble out and give me just ten feet clear space in front of this door. Now I wants to be alone a while."

Men poured from the saloon. The closing of the doors brought Homely up with a jerk. Only the ticking clock could be heard; this, and the faint puffing of a cigarette by the man back of the bar—the puffing of a cigarette which had gone out.

Homely was insensible to what was going on about him. All he could think of was the lifeless, colorless, lovely face of Molly Mary as he had seen it last. The saloon man spoke to him but he did not hear.

The glory of youth was in his eyes. And melancholy was in his heart—anguish. That hardened keeper of the saloon, who had seen death parade before his eyes many times, who had dealt death himself, on occasions, now quailed before the sight of Homely's face.

Somehow Hunter radiated some abhorrent quality. His shoulders twisted; his neck cords twitched; his nostrils whitened; his blue lips drew in at their corners. He looked like a pilloried soul, a spirit that was on the rack of some ugly and evil thought.

"Have you looked at your gun?" asked the saloon man.

"Huh?" queried Homely rousing and half pulling his six-gun from its sheath. "That's all right." He smiled. "I was thinking of something else—somebody else!"

His mouth became tasteless. His forehead worked, and a clammy damp

came upon it which he felt impelled to wipe away, rub away, cleanse away, as one would cleave off an evil and detestable smear. A flush made a pale crimson take the place of his facial tan. Then a shiver assailed him, a shiver which was more of a convulsion than anything one could have called it. He had a paroxysm of rebellion, as though a loathing had flooded his reason.

"Would a drink steady you?" asked the bar man.

"I don't drink," replied Homely, "and I wouldn't *now* under no case."

"I was glad when you set down that glass, a while ago," replied the resort proprietor. "You're all right, sticking sober!"

A gust of wind drove around a corner. Both men stared at the lighted street where the sifting sand, through the windows, appeared like visible wind.

"She's going to bust!" announced the saloon man. "Rain—and one whale of a lot of it, too! I knows rain signs."

"Yep!" answered Homely staring at the clock. "Them clouds, all day, sure meant a heap. *Five minutes!* Ain't that what you make it? Five minutes left?"

"Five minutes," the man back of the bar repeated, as he looked at the time-piece on the wall. "You got plenty of time. Now get all set and on your first sally pass up the street. And get that wind hitting you slantwise. Don't look into it! That is, don't look it plumb in the face. The flying sand might fill your eyes!"

"I reckon I gotta take the first thing Buck does to locate him," replied Homely. "I gotta let him crack down first; then build up whatever is on my mind after that."

There was an automatic phonograph on the bar. One of the old cylinder kind. "This new," asked Homely, "this talking machine? Seen one at Medicine Bow last year."

"Yep! Operates with a coin in that there slot. Wanna hear it?"

Homely grinned. The man dropped a nickel in the slot, and a loud rasping issued from the machine—then the strains of "Open Thy Lattice, Love!" Homely grew pale and seemed to totter.

"If I gets mine out there," he said weakly, "you look on this here do-ding-ess, and when you find the name of this song you write a note to Miss Molly Mary Jeffries and tell her that you and I was a-listening to the song just before I stepped out that door. Tell her——"

"Wanna write a note?"

"Nope! Just tell her I was a-thinking of her while the music was playing on. And you tell her, podner, that I was sure a-hating what I got to do. Tell her that! I reckon you knows I ain't a-shaking just because of what I thinks is going to hit me, does you? You knows I ain't skeered of Buck, don'tcha?"

"Yep! I knows all that but I sure wishes you'd kinda settle down and not do so much thinking. It might slow up your shooting some."

Homely straightened, stared at the clock, and, to the utter amazement of the saloon man, quieted to a calm which was as vast a change as his trepidation had been but a moment before.

"Adios!" He smiled, hitching up his belt. "She's eight minutes, and I reckon I better be on the move."

He pulled open the door and stepped through it silently. Leisurely he glanced about him. Not a human being could he see, nothing but the dim shadowy images of building fronts through the driving mists of the dust. Faintly, a lighted window caught and held his vision; then a curtain was pulled, and the illumination of the window was flecked away like magic.

Up the street he walked, slowly, doggedly, his hat brim flattened against the crown by the savagery of the air; the driving pellets of grit stinging his face in smarting jets of pain. The quiet

which dwelt in the body of that howling air had a loathsome quality about it. It was like an omen.

Now he was in the middle of the street.

A beating, powerful gust of wind hurled the sand into a cloud that rolled down upon him like some grotesque monster. Then, as he gained the opposite walk and was heading along it the dust lifted, was jerked aside as a stage curtain is parted. Before a lighted building, he saw Fancy Frank standing, watch in hand. His voice came.

"Forty-five seconds!"

Three menacing words—it was like the knell of doom. The tones of the voice held within themselves some note or quality which Homely did not associate with Frank. They seemed foreign even to any human voice.

Once more the wind shut out the vision of Fancy.

Then against the far swirl of sickish light at the corner, a shape appeared, a shambling, gray form like that of a pictured ghost. It appeared; it vanished; it came on and on and on! It grew at last into the slithering image of Buck's form. Suddenly it was blotted out.

And when the air cleared and a wan, but penetrative illumination spread everywhere, from the upflung curtains in a group of houses, Tedford was nowhere to be seen. Homely strolled on. His senses were alive! They hurt with their keenness; they dulled all functions but the quality of sight and the gnaw of strain. He became the heir of intuition!

"Now!" This time Homely recognized Fancy's voice.

Something jerked at Homely's hip where his ornamental leather belt hung about his waist. Then before his eyes a long streak of light flashed out of the smother of dust and those other lights cast from the lamps of houses. A bite of pain followed; it stabbed where the

leather belt hung. Homely gritted his teeth, and his right hand instinctively jerked at his Colt.

Even while his fingers pulled the heavy weapon from its long sheath, a thumb lifted its immense hammer; the muzzle tilted and swung to the spot where the flame had bit into the night. The men in the shadows watched in a charmed daze.

Once more a whining noise went past Homely's head. Then his gun spoke, and a long, wraithlike form leaped out of the mist and into the shaft of a struggling light. It was Buck Tedford! He tottered, caught his legs, stiffened, and once more fired. But the missile went wild. Slowly he began to settle, and even as he fell his gun barked. Homely spun upon a heel and would have fallen had not his agile left foot shot back to an unconscious propping position.

But the movement awoke a deathly agony in his waist; a sharp torture in the region of his shoulder. Cautiously, as he felt his faculties slipping from him, as though each infinitesimal beat of time were a treasure, he lifted his gun and steadied it against his thigh. From this angle, as he saw Buck's leg shift on the earth and caught the sheen of a metal object coming from out the mist, without obvious aim, he released the hammer of his gun. He saw Buck's form slump as though a log had been dropped on it, when he fired. Slowly walking toward the man in the dirt Homely saw Buck's fingers twitching, making ineffectual efforts to grasp the .45 which lay just beyond their reach. Then Buck's shoulder wrenched; a shiver ran throughout his frame, and a boot fell flat upon another boot. A hand was half hidden in a sleeve. For an instant Hunter stared at the figure below his eyes. Then he turned about where he had last seen Fancy.

"That's all, I reckon," he cried. "I hit the poor devil both times. Now I

guess I'll be moving up to the hotel. You boys better get all the names of any folks what seen this, hadn't you? I reckon I'll have to talk to the law!"

He was gone!

Jim Kearney, Fancy Frank, Cincinnati, the deputy sheriff from Amarillo, and a small clot of other men gathered about Buck Tedford. One of the men rolled him on his back and silently pointed to the spots in his shirt which were now changing from a garish color to a dull and dirty smudge.

Cincinnati muttered: "That kid! Some of you boys out that a way go and help him along. Look how he's dragging that leg!"

Homely had reached the porch of the hotel, by the aid of two men, when Molly Mary flung wide the door and ran toward him with outstretched arms.

"My Homely!" she cried. "My Homely!"

"I come back like I said I would, didn't I, honey?" he gasped.

Then he fell forward, Molly Mary's arms around him, two cowboys tenderly catching him and breaking the fall. A great booming rang in his ears, all sight was blotted out. The last memory he had was of that creaking, squawking talking machine grinding out: "Open Thy Lattice, Love." When they carried him to a room a smile had made a lovely shape out of his malformed face.

CHAPTER XIX.

ALL'S WELL.

DOWN the street Cincinnati was holding forth in loud harangue to a mob of women and children, aided in his narrative by the men who had witnessed the shooting.

"I reckon," concluded the gambler, turning to the sheriff's man from Texas, "that what you seen in this street was pretty much what took place back in your town when them fellows

tried to put the kid away. What you going to try to do, now? Take him back?"

"Swell chance!" exclaimed the deputy. "I seen what he done and I wants to tell you people here that if it hadn't been for a big drop of rain, Homely would be laying out there in the dust right now."

"A drop of rain?" some one asked.

"Yes! A big drop of rain. I was standing in that doorway and not fifteen feet from Buck when Fancy called 'Now!' And I seen Buck lift his gun what was ready in his hand. Just then a drop of rain smacked that hand right where the thumb and forefinger makes a valley. I seen it shimmer in a ray of lamplight and I seen Buck wince as though somebody had hit him from behind. That was the shot that hit Homely in the side. That drop of rain sure did a big, big trick. And speaking of rain, here she comes!"

The rain fell in blankets; it filled the air as the dust had filled the wind. Then the storm died, and nothing could be heard but the pitiless fall of the large drops hitting the earth like blows. It dropped all night; it fell all the early morning; it continued on into middle afternoon.

Then it stopped, and into town came the sheriff and his posse, bringing in Ike Witherspoon and Shorty as prisoners and Smoky Evans' body. The people were mad with joy. The town was a seething spot of wild, hysterical gossip, and the hotel in which lay Homely Hunter a center of deepest anxiety.

Throughout it all Homely Hunter lay in bed weak from his wounds. And by the bed sat Molly Mary, sat and watched and prayed. No persuasion, advice, or logic could close her eyes in rest or make her give up that immobile staring at the face that had now become beautiful to her.

Oregon Pete made the first "outsider" visit to Homely, and the old

horse trainer gabbled like a child. Molly Mary had met him in the hall, telling him that Homely could have a caller or two, but that the doctor had instructed her to prevent Hunter from an excess of conversation. So Oregon Pete talked in a veritable hysteria.

"That mare," he said just before he left, "Homely, she ran that distance in fourteen minutes and twelve seconds! Five watches caught her exact. Now I can lay down and die. I seen Norfolk, a four year old, with a hundred pounds up at Sacramento, California, September 23rd, 1865, do three miles in 5.27½ and in 5.29¼. And I seen Lady St. Clair to a wagon, pace five miles at Frisco December 11th, 1874, in 12.54¾. But I'm telling you that with you, at your weight and that saddle and blanket, and over this course in this heat, Annabel Lee can beat any living horse at that distance and in this altitude and climate. Ain't it a cryin' shame?"

"Whatta you mean—a shame?" asked Homely.

"That Jerry and Jeffries have buried the hatchet. That's the worst blow that horse racing in the Southwest ever had. It sure riles me to see them two hobnobbing around, makes me sick! Now I gotta go back to Oregon and spend a hundred days a year in the rain."

"Ah, Pete," said Homely, smiling, "that's all right. It's a dry spot of rain, though, plumb full of climate and health."

"Here comes some more. I better be moving!" said Pete.

The deputy from Amarillo, Big Bill Walton, Fancy Frank, Jim Kearney, and Cincinnati came into the room. The look on their faces was a marvelous thing. The solicitude and tenderness with which they regarded Homely was as expressive of love as that of any woman could have been.

"It might perk you up a bit, podner," said Jim, "to listen to what this loafing

sheriff man from Texas laid over to tell you."

"You bet I laid over." The deputy laughed. "Ike Witherspoon, Shorty Fanton and Menifee have sure told me a tale; and I've got it down in black and white.

"I'm taking Ike and Shorty back to Amarillo, and on the strength of this confession we're all ready to indict them for the killing of your dad. Ike and Shorty did the shooting while Jake, the marshal, lured your dad out on a lonely road. Menifee tied up all the missing links in that evidence which exonerates you and makes Jim's use of the gun a righteous act. They've quashed the indictment against you."

"How come them fellers to talk that a way?" asked Homely.

"The night we got in with them," spoke Big Bill Walton, "a mob of the boys helped us get that confession. It was—tell us a story or be fed out to that mob. I wish you could have seen them yellow hounds. They couldn't spread their talk fast enough."

"Did you get Smoky Evans?"

"Get him?" cried Big Bill. "I'll say we got him. One of my deputies dropped him with a .45-90 when he started to shoot at me when I walked forward to put the bracelets on Ike and Shorty. That saved, some place, a lot of money."

"Sure looks like what that old friend of mine told me was the plumb truth," remarked Homely reminiscently.

"Braid your loop, cowboy!" Fancy Frank smiled. "I'll bite! What did the old friend say?"

"You gotta hit the bottom before you starts to bounce!" replied Homely.

Then Molly Mary came into the room. "Boys!" she said kindly, "I know you-all love Homely; but you must go, now. He's had enough to make him do a lot of thinking. Tomorrow you can stay a little longer. In a week he'll be sitting in a chair."

"You see how it is, fellows, don't you?" said Homely, smiling. "I gotta boss now! And it won't be long afore I'll be branded and headed into a pew pen where I'll say: 'I do!' and 'I will!' and a long-faced, black-coated trail boss to heaven will pronounce the sentence I better start obeying. Good-by and good luck and for Pete's sake come back, all of you."

As the men filed from the room, Homely called the deputy from Amarillo to his bedside. "What will you fellows do with Ike and Shorty?" he asked.

"If you wants to push it, we'll hang 'em!"

"I don't want that," said Homely seeking Molly Mary's eyes. "I don't want to think of them things when I'm trying to make this little lady think that I'm something sane, when I ain't nothing but a crazy sorta canary, gone singing wild with love. Let 'em plead guilty and take a sentence in the pen. I won't be back to your town, man, and I don't want no hanging. I wanna forget."

"If they pleads," announced the deputy, "the judge will give them enough to last this life and lap over a little on the next.

Molly Mary's face beamed. "It's because of that quality in Homely that I love him so," she said. "Just that surprising sort of thing."

The deputy couldn't speak.

When the door was closed, and they were alone, Molly Mary laid her face beside Homely's cheek.

"Two weeks from to-day and we'll show you a sight," she said.

"What kinda sight?"

"Never mind! That's for you to find out and think about."

"If I could just have you over yonder, where I could feast my eyes on you and pinch myself at the same time, that's about all the sight I'll be craving."

Molly Mary, in mock petulance, arose from his side and pulled a rocking-chair before him.

Softly, quietly, in a bird-tweeting voice she crooned: "Open Thy Lattice, Love!" Homely closed his eyes. But at the completion of the ballad, he opened them and said: "Just afore I walked out of the Magpie——"

"Ssssh," whispered Molly Mary, "go to sleep! I know all about that. 'Lanky Hank,' the keeper of the Magpie, told me what you said to him as his old talking machine was grinding out that tune. I've got the cylinder wrapped up in tissue now. On our wedding day Lanky is going to present me with the contrivance to make the music."

"When is this said nuptials?" asked Homely, laughing.

"When a certain cowboy can fork his horse and do a ten-mile ride with me."

"Oh, oh, honey," said Homely, "now watch me get well!"

The wedding took place on horseback on the very edge of the precipice which overlooked the bow in the Letter S bend of Ghost River. The preacher was Jimmy Engles, the cowboy minister from Socorro, who made the trip to the Lazy Shield Bar in the saddle and was given a fee which would enable him to build a church among a tribe of Indians where he had long wanted to settle.

When the last of the words were spoken, and the congratulations of the crowd had been wildly given, Jeffries and Jerry moved their ponies to Homely's side. Jerry said: "Come on, I wanna show you something."

Through the trees went the crowd, following the bridegroom and the two old men, Molly Mary and the preacher

riding back of these. When the opposite side of the hill was reached Homely stopped his horse in complete consternation. There, below him, a wide and long and shimmering stretch of water met his gaze.

"Huh!" he cried. "Who did this?"

"Old Ghost River must of busted through this hill that night you was battling against Buck's .45 bullets," announced Jerry. "Jim Kearney and Fancy Frank, riding this way, had to make a detour of ten miles to get by the overflow. When the flood passed I and Jeff, we put a gang of men to work and dammed up the thing. Inside of two months and we'll have a first-class storage lake and a real cement spillway. Then we'll let the water out as you wants it!"

"As I wants?" queried Homely. "What's eating you, Jerry?"

"Yes, you!" cried Jeffries. "Jerry and I have thrown our two ranches into one, and you're boss from this time on. You can grow anything on that bottom now. Even little Homelys!"

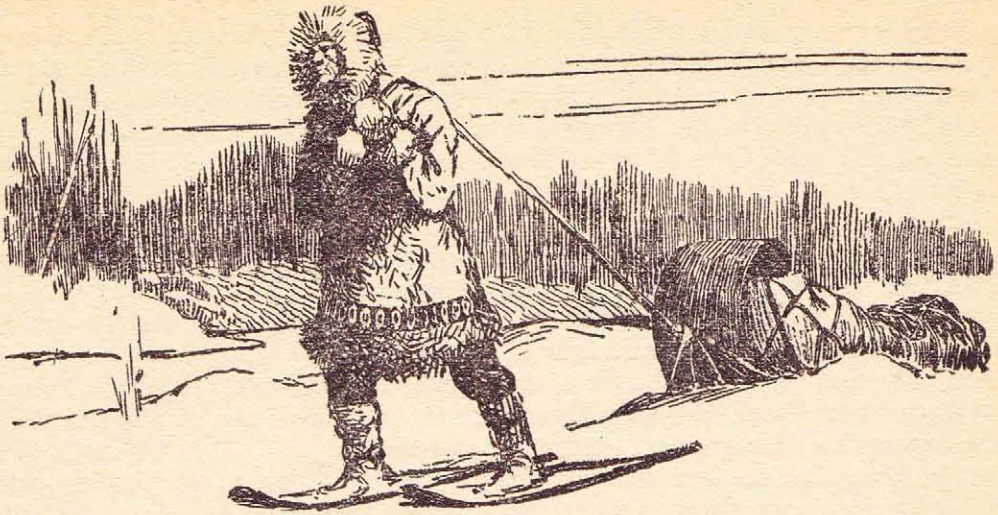
Homely couldn't speak. Tears welled into his eyes, and turning his horse about, he motioned Molly Mary to follow him. Behind a clump of juniper the girl patted his shoulder and restored his poise.

A Mexican orchestra burst into music. There came a rattle of pistol shots, and then Oregon Pete, Cincinnati, Fancy, and Jim Kearney rode up and escorted Molly Mary and Homely through the trees to a spot where a great barbecue was under way.

"Dog-gone, honey!" cried Homely, racing away with Molly Mary. "Come on! Let's show this crowd! It's just you and me from this time on! Just you and me—two against the world!"

THE END.





Greener than Spruce

By Herbert Farris

Author of "Plenty Grub an' Plenty Gold," etc.



AYBE greener men *have* hit Alaska—but I doubt it!"

The speaker, a rheumy-eyed, old veteran of the trails, spoke thus disparagingly of young Harris Benton. The old-timer's perpetual "sun-grin" expanded visibly as he watched Benton's parka-clad figure disappear around a bend in the river trail.

"Wonder how long he'll last," the old fellow speculated, turning to the group on the river bank. "I'll bet I've showed him a dozen times how to tie his snowshoes to his feet, an' I've told him little things about pitchin' his tent and makin' camp, till I'm black in the face. It'll be three-four weeks yet before mushin'll be any good, but I've got a right good notion to load up the old Yukon sled an' take out after that young chechahco."

"An' why?"

The old-timer had paused for that query. The question certainly gave pith and point to the clever thing on the

tip of his tongue. The remark would have lost its savor in the telling; the retort, however, was pungent.

"An' why?" he repeated. "I'll tell you for why. I've been snow-blind twice, so my eyes ain't what they used to be. Nowadays, when I ain't wearin' snow glasses—an' blast the dang things, I hate 'em!—I've got to keep my eyes clamped on the spruce.

"Spruce is dang restful to the eyes. It's restful because it's green, but to keep on lookin' at it, a man's got to twist his head from one side the river to the other, an' there's times when I think I'm li'ble to twist my head plum off—like a screech owl. Now, instead of takin' all that trouble, I *could* start out an' foller after this young Benton. Instead of lookin' at the spruce then, I could keep my eyes fastened straight ahead on *him*. He's greener than any spruce that ever growed."

If young Harris Benton could have heard this sarcastic speech, he would have been rudely made aware of the

withering contempt in which he was held by the general run of Alaskans with whom he had come in contact. Had he been aware of the feeling which existed, he would not have been offended in the least; he would have been amused. He was green but, unlike many greenhorns, he realized the fact and was anxious to learn. Moreover, he was willing to accept the hard knocks—a part of the curriculum of Alaska's trail school—and come up smiling. For Harris Benton, although he was probably the greenest chechahco in the North, had not been raised a pet.

At noon, young Benton hauled his sled to the river bank and, with considerable difficulty, dropped a dead spruce tree and built a small tea fire. After his noon meal he unloaded his Yukon sled, inverted it so that the steel-shod runners shone like twin mirrors in the rays of the sun; then—and this is almost past believing—he proceeded to smear the steel shoes of the sled runners with lubricating oil.

The dealer who had sold him the oil—either unscrupulous or a practical joker—had seriously informed him that “greased sled runners makes mighty easy slippin’ on the trail.” Harris Benton had innocently bought five gallons of the lubricant.

Where a musher pulls without dogs, as young Benton was doing, every pound of excess weight is an additional check to his progress. And besides the five gallons of lubricating oil, Harris Benton was hauling other nonessentials. He had more clothing than he really needed; about twenty pounds of books and old magazines, and the merchant from whom he had bought his outfit had sold him far too many cooking utensils. Benton's entire outfit weighed almost twelve hundred pounds, and, since at best he could haul but four hundred pounds on his Yukon sled, he was relaying. He would haul from three to four hundred pounds as far

up the river trail as he could possibly travel in a day, cache his load, and return to his camp with his empty sled.

Early in the month of May he reached the Kentna country. He had been on the trail four months, and he had arrived with pick, pan, and shovel, together with ample food to last him through the mining season. Also—as every old-timer in the Kentna country will testify—he had arrived with the ambition and energy of a half dozen men in spite of the grueling work on the trail.

Young Benton spent his first week after arriving at “the cricks,” in building a cache for his supplies. It was a simple box affair, built of logs, supported high in air by four posts. He was busily stowing his food and other supplies in the cache, when a voice at his elbow brought him about with a start. Looking up from his work, he saw the old-timer who had offered him many helpful suggestions back at the trading post. The old man was surveying him, his small stock of provisions, and his crude cache, with frank curiosity.

“Well, I see you landed here all right,” he remarked by way of greeting. “I’m camped just above here on Penny Ante Crick, an’ I ain’t got a thing to do till the snow goes off, so I thought I’d mush over an’ see how you’re gettin’ along. Staked yourself a claim yet?”

Benton admitted that he had not. “I didn’t know it was lawful to stake a claim unless you discover gold,” he added.

“Plenty of ‘em stakes first an’ find the gold afterward—if there’s any to be found.” The old man’s rheumy eyes were mildly disapproving. “I wouldn’t worry too much about makin’ my discovery, if I was you. Most any gravel you find around here carries *some* gold. Trouble is to find it in payin’ quantities. So hurry up an’ stake yourself

a claim or two, before some of these ground hogs comes in on the first boat this summer an' grabs it all. Us old-timers takes just what we can work to good advantage, but most green-horns'll wear out a pair of hobnail shoes just a-racin' over the country stakin'. You're lucky to be here among the first, so hurry up an' get busy."

"Thanks for the tip. I'll——"

"It's none of my business," the old-timer suddenly interrupted, "but what in thunder have you brought into the country in *that*?"

Benton had placed his five-gallon can of lubricating oil near the cache, and it was that which had elicited the question. He was somewhat puzzled.

"Why, that's my oil," he said. "How do you carry yours?"

The ancient sour dough had all he could do to keep a straight face. This green chechahco had actually brought kerosene into this wilderness!

"You won't have no use for a lamp," he said gently. "All summer you can read fine print right in your tent—any hour of the night, too. I thought ev'rybody knowed——"

"I have no lamp," young Benton interrupted impatiently. "I'm green but I'm not quite a fool—I hope. That isn't oil for a lamp; it's about four gallons of lubricating oil that I had left over from my winter's sledding."

"I see." The old man shifted his weight from one moccasined foot to the other, swallowing his Adam's apple twice before he once more found his voice. "I understand you but I don't know what you mean," he said. "How much of this oil did you use an' how did you use it?"

"Well, I used about a gallon." Young Benton was looking doubtfully at the old man. "I think I see what you're driving at now. I allowed that store-keeper to sell me five gallons when one was all that I needed."

The old-timer lifted his tufted eye-

brows. "An' you got through the winter with one gallon," he said softly, wonderingly.

"Why, I only used it in the morning and again at noon. Just when I—but maybe I didn't use it often enough. Still, the sled came along pretty well."

The old-timer barked apologetically in his mittened hand. At last he understood. It had been so many years since he had heard of the old joke of greasing sled runners that he had forgotten. But this boy was so very much in earnest, it wouldn't do to hurt his feelings. And besides, it might lead to serious trouble. This innocent youth had dragged this worthless stuff over the trail—pounds and pounds of it. Murder had been committed for less than a joke like that!

"The skinflint sold you too much, all right," he said, as he reached down and thoughtfully "hefted" the can. "But you've got it here—I reckon you might as well forget it. Anyhow, you won't have any more use for it. You're all through sleddin'. An' now I'd better be gettin' along, if you want anything this summer, you'll find me over on Penny Ante Crick. Number Five Above Discovery's the name of my claim."

Harris Benton was highly elated when he next saw the old-timer. Not only had he staked a claim on what he called Benton Gulch but he had actually discovered gold and he had found it in paying quantities. For a week he had panned the gravel on Benton Gulch, and he was now displaying his sample to the old-timer. The old man listened attentively to the boy's story, but did not enthuse over the sample.

"You've come clean over here to Penny Ante Crick to show me this, an' I'm right sorry to have to disappoint you." In spite of the old man's words, young Benton was grinning cheerfully. "It takes a whole lot to discourage a young rooster like you," he resumed, "but I'll soon show you why you've

got to leave that gulch alone. I don't doubt what you say. You got the gold here to prove it. But how're you goin' to work the ground? Answer me that."

Harris Benton still grinned. "I know why you think I can't work that ground," he said. "It's what you old-timers call a dry gulch. I know there won't be drinking water there this summer. What you overlooked is this. By digging a ditch less than a quarter mile in length I can get one of the best sluice heads in this country. Right over that shoulder at the head of my gulch is where I——"

"I know where you mean, all right," interrupted the old-timer. "But have you talked with Joe Murtry yet?"

"Haven't even seen him. But why should I talk to him? What has he to do with it?"

"Ev'rything. Joe Murtry owns ev'ry drop of water in Caribou Crick. He recorded it last spring a year ago."

Young Benton was on the point of interrupting, but the old-timer silenced him. "Now don't start to tell me that all you've got to do is to go over to Caribou Crick, an' get Joe Murtry to give you the right to take what water you want, for Joe ain't that kind. He ain't only the luckiest man in Alaska—he's the *meanest*. If he's worth a dime, he's worth a half million right now, but even so, he wouldn't give a man daylight in a dark cellar. You just forget you ever staked a claim on that little gulch an' start out prospectin' for something that'll do you some good."

Young Benton thanked the old man for his advice. "But," he added, "I'm not going to start out prospectin', when I've already discovered gold—unless I'm forced to do so. I'm going over to see Murtry at once."

"All right; but be ready to run if he comes at you. He's the meanest man in Alaska, bar none. Joe Murtry never done no man a favor, an' he never will. Mark what I tell you, son. He'll

chase you off his ground just as soon as you show up an' tell him what you want. You're just wastin' your time. But, then, that's the trouble with all chechahcos; they won't listen to an old-timer's advice."

Young Benton went at once to Caribou Creek. In spite of what he had heard of Joe Murtry, he was not convinced. There was an abundance of water in Caribou Creek, and surely no man would be mean enough to refuse to allow the use of the surplus. This line of reasoning gave him great confidence, but his first glimpse of Murtry caused his heart to sink.

Murtry was not tall, but he was as broad as two average-sized men. Yet he was not fat. His arms were unusually long, and, due to a slight stoop to his powerful shoulders, his huge hands hung slightly ahead of his knees. Young Benton looked at him and instantly thought of a gorilla. With two others, Murtry was setting up a string of sluice boxes.

Benton watched them for a time; twice, without waiting to be asked, he gave them a hand. Murtry, who had barely spoken, paused at last and sized up his caller. What he saw evidently satisfied him.

"Want a job?" he asked gruffly. "I'm taking one of these men upriver tomorrow, an' if you're lookin' for work, you can stay here an' help Sam. Do whatever he tells you."

Here was a golden opportunity. Surely if he favored Murtry, he might expect the big fellow to reciprocate. "I'm not looking for work for the season," he said, "but I'll be glad to help out for a few days—if that will do you any good."

Murtry grunted. "All I need," he said. "I've got a foreman an' fifteen men waitin' for me upriver. They mush in from the coast—their time starts the first of June whether they're

here or not. Hunderd an' fifty miles from here. I'm goin' up in my boat an' bring 'em down. You stay an' help Sam out till I come back with my men, an' I'll pay you the goin' wages—ten bucks an' grub."

Sam soon shuffled off to cook the evening meal, and Benton decided to say nothing about his sluice head of water until after they had eaten. Their pipes going, he thought it time to broach the subject.

"I didn't tell you that I was a neighbor of yours," he said by way of opening the conversation. "I spent the winter sledding in my outfit."

"That so?" Murtry said with a mild simulation of interest. "Where you camped?"

Benton indicated the direction. "Right over there," he said, "I've named it Benton Gulch."

"You ain't staked that little dry gulch?"

"Why, yes. You see, I believe there's a little gold there—I don't know how much—I've already done quite a bit of panning and I hope to——"

"You're a fool!" Murtry interrupted in a rage. "If you don't know that I own ev'ry drop of water in Caribou Crick, it's time you was learnin'. How do you aim to work that gulch without water?"

"That's what I came over to see you about," said Benton. "I heard that it was your water and I thought that you would be glad to spare me a sluice head." Benton was speaking calmly, in spite of the other's belligerent attitude. "Of course," he went on, "if the water in Caribou Crick should run low this summer or fall, I'd quit taking it out, but——"

"You'd quit takin' it out!" Murtry cried. "You're never goin' to *begin* takin' it out! If you ever start monkeyin' with Caribou Crick, I'll drill you so full of holes you'll look like——" Murtry's anger was intensified by his

failure to find the word he was seeking. "Say," he cried, "you get clean off this claim! Beat it quick, while you're all together!"

Benton was sitting at the rough table; he rose slowly. "Why certainly—if it's your claim—I'll leave." He was speaking hesitantly but he was not afraid of the glowering bully who had commanded him to leave. He was simply surprised at the man's unreasonable anger. "But even if I have no water, that gulch belongs to me, and I mean to hold it."

"Hold it as long as you want to!" Murtry was shouting after him. "Hold it till you get good an' tired of doing assessment work on it! Wait a minute till I tell you something you'd just as well know now as later!" Benton paused and Murtry continued. "There ain't any gold in that gulch, but even if there was, *you'd* never get to work it. I've got the water an' I aim to keep it!"

The old-timer was right. He was right about everything! He had said that Joe Murtry was the meanest man in Alaska: he had said that no matter how much gold the tiny gulch might carry, Murtry would never allow it to be worked. Benton considered the various things that the old-timer had told him until he reached his camp in Benton Gulch. Well, he decided, he would follow the old man's advice and quit the gulch on the following day.

Benton had been prospecting the gulch every day for more than a week. Through force of habit he took his pick, shovel and gold pan, and went to work in the narrow cut which he had been running into a shoulder of the hill near his tent. He was far from an expert with the gold pan, but he enjoyed the beginner's thrill, which always came when he "tailed off" the residue in the pan, and saw the streak of yellow trickling behind the black sand.

Young Benton extended his cut three feet into the hill. He was following

along the disintegrated slate bed rock; although he did not realize it, the bed-rock was totally different. Before it had been "slick," now it was rough and "rotten."

He filled his pan with gravel and carried it to a hole which he had dug in the gulch's channel. Now the hole was filled with water from the melting snows; in a week, perhaps, it would be dry. At least the old-timer had said that it would, and Benton was now a firm believer in the wisdom of the old man.

It is a maxim with old-timers that "many things are mistaken for gold, but gold is never mistaken for anything else." A greenhorn is often fooled, for example, by iron pyrites and "cube" iron, but when he discovers gold, the real thing, he knows. So it was with Benton. For a week he had been panning "pinhead stuff" that would "rattle in the pan." Now, as he "tailed off" the pan he had taken from the disintegrated bed rock, he saw that a half-dozen dull-yellow pieces of gold were in the bottom of the pan. Benton's old-timer would have pronounced them slugs.

Benton was excited. He held the slugs in the palm of his hand, while he attempted to estimate their value. The smallest of them, he decided, was fully twice as large as a five-dollar gold piece; the largest was surely worth more than twenty dollars. The six slugs would total almost a hundred dollars. Chechahco that he was, Benton still knew that he had uncovered bonanza dirt.

Young Benton went again to his cut. This time he worked feverishly for two hours. His pay streak was rich, extremely so, but there was a heavy overburden to handle. In other words, above the pay he had discovered on bed rock, lay ten, twenty, possibly as much as fifty feet of muck and gravel. Undoubtedly the ground was rich enough that he could take out hundreds of dol-

lars that summer without water, but if he could only manage to get that sluice-head from Caribou Creek, he could with a pressure hose, run that overburden off like so much soup. He *must* have that water! But how?

At five o'clock next morning young Benton was seated on the stump of a spruce where the clear waters of Caribou Creek gushed into the brown foam-flecked river. He looked at Murtry's river boat which was beached nearby. It rested on two fresh-peeled logs, and Benton saw that all preparations had been recently made to launch the vessel. At six o'clock, Murtry and one of his men put in an appearance. Benton had no time to lose; he spoke to Murtry at once.

"Murtry," he said, without rising from his stump, "I've been thinking the matter over and I wonder if you would consider *selling* me a sluice head of water from Caribou Crick. I'll pay you what it is worth."

Murtry paid him no attention. He and his man put their shoulders at the stern of the boat and skidded the vessel into the river. Murtry made a line fast to a convenient "dead man," while his man leaped into the stern of the boat and started the engine. No sooner did he have the engine purring rhythmically, than he shut it off.

"What's the matter?" Murtry, who was about to cast off and leap aboard, made the line fast again. "Anything wrong with that engine?"

"No, but——" The man was looking at Murtry in wide-eyed alarm. He was afraid to tell what was wrong, and yet he dared not remain silent. "Mr. Murtry," he said, speaking swiftly, as if anxious to break the news as quickly as possible, "there ain't a single drop of engine oil. I spoke to Sam about it last night after we'd loaded the other stuff aboard, an' he said there was plenty of oil here. But I just looked an' there's nothin' but gasoline. There's

more gasoline than we need, but there ain't a drop of——"

"You idiot!" Murtry exclaimed. "Chase right up to camp an' get some out of the cache an' hurry!"

Murtry's man leaped ashore, but stood hesitantly, shifting his feet as if in a quandary.

"Hurry! I don't want to wait here all day!"

"I'll go look again, but I looked last evenin' an' there wasn't any there. At least I didn't see it. That's why Sam was so sure there was plenty on the boat."

"Of course it's there. If you don't find it in the cache, look in the tool shed."

At this the man shuffled off. Young Benton was much pleased at Murtry's unexpected delay, but he was somewhat nettled at the manner in which he had been ignored. He decided to try again, and this time he would do his utmost to make Murtry answer him.

"I suppose you didn't hear me a bit ago," he began, "but——"

"I heard you the first time," Murtry interrupted with an oath. "Now shut your yap an' get out!"

Benton did not move. Seeing this, Murtry's great hamlike hands twisted about convulsively; his lips drew back against his uneven teeth, and with an enraged snarl he quickly rushed at the youth.

"I'll show you if you move or not!" he shouted. "Once I get a hold of you, I'll——"

Murtry suddenly brought up with a sharp exclamation. Ten feet from Benton, he had stopped with an expression of bewilderment on his broad face. He was gazing like a man fascinated into the barrel of an automatic.

"I came ready for you," said young Benton coolly. "I'm not on your claim and I don't see you or anybody else throwing me off of government land. And now, you can at least listen to

what I have to say, even if you don't care to——"

"I'll listen, you young pup," Murtry said, "but there's a day comin'. You'll wake up some day an' learn that what I say goes in this neck of the woods."

Murtry advanced a step as he said this. "And you," said Benton as he menaced Murtry with his weapon, "may *never* wake up, if you come another step in this direction. There, that's better," he went on as Murtry retreated a step. "From what I've been told, Murtry, you're a mighty rich man. It won't bother you in the least to sell—or give me, for that matter—some of your water. You've got your pile made. Now be decent and give me a chance to get out of this country with a little money for all the hardship I've gone through. Will you listen to a sensible proposition?"

"Rave on," said Murtry sullenly. "You've got me dead to rights. Talk away if it does you any good, but you'll get nothin' out of me."

"I'll give you a third of all the money I take out," said Benton, speaking slowly and distinctly. "If you'll give me the water to work the ground. Is it a go?"

Murtry opened his lips as if he intended to reply; then closed them tightly. A minute passed and he seemed to reconsider. "You might as well trot along," he said contemptuously. "Use your brains. Why *would* I take a third? If there's any money there, I can have it all after you starve out; an' if there ain't anything there, what's the idee of my takin' a third!"

Benton said nothing more. Argument seemed such a futile thing, so far as Murtry was concerned. Five minutes passed and Murtry's man appeared empty handed. His manner was apologetic.

"It ain't there," he said, whining. "An' there ain't any on the boat. Sam or some of the other boys must've used

it all up last fall before the boat was laid up. I don't know what to do unless I mush up there an' have the boys come down in a boat or on a raft."

For almost a minute, Murtry raved like a maniac. "An' ev'ry day that my men stay up there, it's costin' me a hunderd an' sixty-five dollars." He groaned. "Fifteen men at ten a day an' my foreman at fifteen a day. That's what comes of puttin' a man like you in charge of my boat. Say, how long do you think it'd take you to mush up there?"

"A hunderd an' fifty miles is a good ways—goin' through the brush like I'll have to do," the man said. "I'll do my best though to make it in ten days."

"Sixteen hunderd an' sixty-five dollars!" Again Murtry groaned. "An' maybe a whole lot more—if you *don't* make it in ten days. Well, what are you standin' there for? Get a move on!"

"Wait just a minute, Mr. Murtry. I've just thought about somethin' that may save you a whole lot of money, an' save me that long trip upriver on foot. An old-timer over on Penny Ante Crick has been tellin' all around that this young Benton sledged in nearly five gallons of oil last winter. He was laughin' about him usin' it to grease his sled runners, an' he's got upward of four gallons of it left. Now, if you could buy it off him——"

"Why, of course," Murtry interrupted briskly. "I heard about it a month ago. Just forgot it." He turned to Benton. "How much do you want for that oil?" he asked in a pleasant voice.

Young Benton was thinking fast. He, too, had forgotten all about the oil that he had bought to make slippin' easy. He had considered the stuff worthless, but now——

"I'll tell you, Mr. Murtry," he said thoughtfully, "I had a lot of work sledding that oil in here last winter.

I really hadn't thought about selling it, but since you need it, and I don't, I'll let you have it."

"You mean for nothin'?" Murtry asked incredulously.

"Of course not. I mean for a fair price."

Murtry became suspicious. "What do you call a fair price?" he countered. "It's worth nothin' whatever to you, an' I'll give you—let's see, I'll give you two dollars a gallon for it, an' allow you a dollar a pound for freightin' it into the country. Fair enough, ain't it?"

Benton grinned. "That's one way of looking at it," he said amiably, "but I really can't think of letting it go for what you offer. Two dollars a gallon is more than the oil is worth, but—the freightin' the stuff into this country. Man, that was the hardest work I ever did in my life!"

"I get you." Murtry spoke thickly. "You've got me where the wool's short an' you aim to gouge me. All right—tell you what I'll do—I'll give you a hundred dollars cash on the nail. How 'bout it?"

"That *would* be gouging, as you call it." Benton seemed to be considering the matter. "No," he said at last, "I can't take that much money. Four gallons of oil isn't worth a hundred dollars."

"Say, what in thunder are you drivin' at?" Murtry cried angrily. "Are you tryin' to kid somebody?"

"Not at all. You've made your offer, and now I'll make mine." Benton spoke slowly and distinctly. "As you said a moment ago, that oil is really worth nothing at all to me, so I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll just give you the oil, provided that you'll give me something that's worth nothing whatever to you. In case you don't know, I mean a sluice head of water from Caribou Creek. Are you on?"

Murtry was thinking hard. There was

not one chance in a thousand of this confident youngster finding gold on that little dry gulch. There was water to spare, lots of it going to waste, but oil—there was only four gallons of lubricating oil in the country! With a scowl, Murtry nodded his head in the affirmative.

It was a month later before the old-timer visited young Benton on his dry gulch. Fully a half dozen men were bustling about on the claim. Benton himself was closely watching two men who were holding the nozzle of a pressure hose trained against a bank of gravel. The old-timer stood aghast until Benton came over to greet him.

"Well, how in the name of Sam Hill," said the old man, "did you ever make a deal with Joe Murtry to get this water!"

For reply Benton fished a bit of paper

from his pocket, and passed it over. "Read it," he said with a grin.

The old-timer slowly spelled out the brief document.

In consideration of four gallons of engine oil, I hereby agree to sell, assign, and transfer to Harris Benton, a full sluice head of water to be taken from the waters of Caribou Creek, and I agree to allow him or his agents to go on my claim or claims to dig the necessary ditch to carry said water.

JOE MURTRY.

"You're the first man that ever got the best of Joe Murtry," gasped the old-timer. "How in thunder did you do it?"

Benton explained.

"And now," he went on, "I've got some good miners working for me, but—you're an old-timer—do they seem to be working the ground all right?"

"Listen, son," said the old-timer solemnly. "You don't need the advice of an old-timer."



NOTED INDIAN SCOUT PASSES ON

THERE recently died in Prescott, Arizona, the famous scout, sea captain, cattleman, Indian fighter, and pioneer, W. H. Wolfe, aged eighty-eight. At one time in his adventurous career, Wolfe was captain of a large sailing vessel. Later, he served as Indian scout under General Nelson A. Miles and General Crook. He was also one of the foremost cattlemen in the early days of Arizona.

One of his most notable exploits was the saving of the life of Buffalo Bill, when a desperado tried to shoot the latter in the back with a rifle. Wolfe kicked the rifle out of the would-be assassin's hands and floored him with a blow of his fist.

Wolfe was born in Detroit in 1838, and left home at the age of fourteen to be a sailor on the Great Lakes. From there, he went to San Francisco and spent eight years sailing the Pacific. Abandoning the sea, Wolfe next went to Arizona to take part in the government's war against the wily old Indian chieftain, Geronimo. He acted as a scout in these campaigns. He is said to have built the first cabin erected on the present site of Fort Apache, in partnership with another pioneer named Coole. From there, he went, in 1880, to Fort Grant, where he established the Fashion G cattle ranch, forty miles north of Willcox, in Graham County. The drought of 1891 caused him to lose several thousand head of his cattle, and shortly after this setback, the family moved to Prescott.



Your Dog

By David Post

Author of "The Field Spaniel," etc.

THE WELSH SPRINGER



THIS spaniel is very popular in the British Isles, but is almost unknown here. An old breed, originating in Wales, the Welsh springer has demonstrated its fitness as a bird dog abroad and probably will be seen at American bench shows within a few years. It is intelligent, active and thoroughly capable.

In England the Welsh springer is judged by the following standard:

Skull—Moderately long and broad, slightly rounded, and having a clearly indicated stop. A short, chubby head is objectionable.

Jaws—Straight, square, of medium length; narrow when looked at from above. The nostrils should be well developed, and flesh-colored or dark.

Eyes—Hazel or dark brown, of medium size, and intelligent in expression. They should be neither prominent nor sunken and they should not show the haw.

Ears—Comparatively small, set moderately low, hanging close to the cheeks, and covered with feather not longer than the ear.

Neck—Strong, muscular, with no throatiness.

Shoulders—Long and sloping.

Forelegs—Straight, of medium

length, they should have good bone and a moderate amount of feather.

Body—Strong, fairly deep, not long, and having well-sprung ribs. Length of body should be in good proportion to that of leg.

Loin—Muscular and strong, slightly arched, well coupled up and knit together.

Hind Quarters and Legs—Strong. The stifles should be moderately bent but not twisted in or out; hocks well let down; hind legs should not be feathered below the hocks.

Feet—Round, with thick pads.

Stern—Feathered and set low. It should be carried with a lively motion but never above the level of the back.

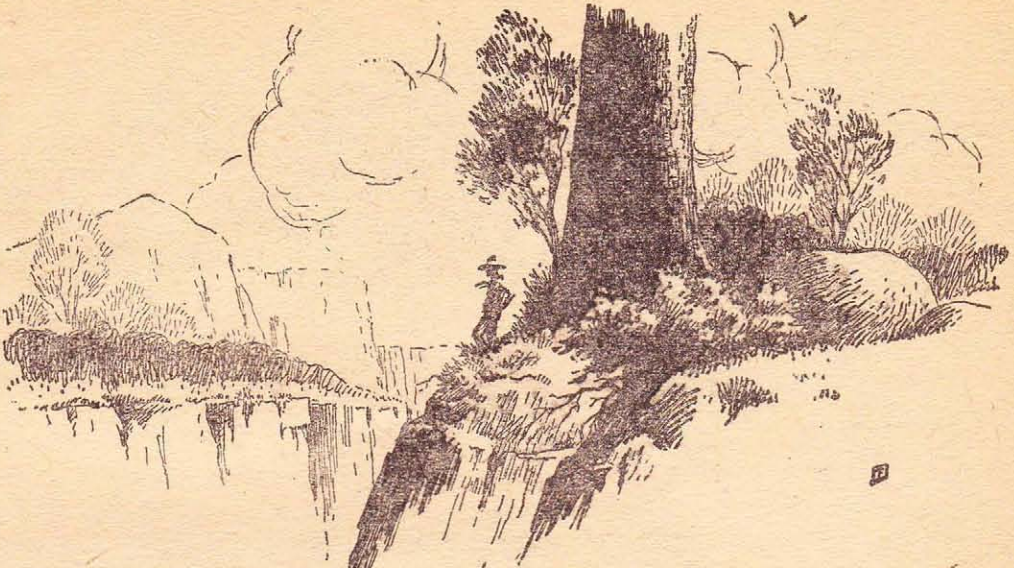
Coat—Straight or flat, and thick.

Color—Red and white, or orange and white; red and white preferred.

General Appearance—That of a strong, merry, active dog, symmetrical and compact; not stilty but built for activity and endurance.

Weight—Between thirty and forty-two pounds.

Probably all of you have seen and many of you have owned dogs of the breed famous for its tenacity. A forthcoming issue of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE will tell you more about the bulldog.



The Bridge Across the Canyon

By Austin Hall

Author of "A Bear's Catch," etc.



HEY called him "Johnnie Crosscut" for short—no doubt because his real name was John Crosscut. It may have been because he was a shake maker and a past master with a saw. At any rate, he had an occupation and a temper that suited the name. Crosscut was a man who insisted on having his own way. He didn't give a whoop for his old partner or anybody else. For days the two old partners had lived apart, except when there was a tree to fall. Just now old Crosscut was standing near the edge of a cliff, looking up at the top of a huge redwood. The tree was a giant of its kind, fully a thousand years old, standing not more than twenty feet from the brink of a precipice. That did not matter to old Johnnie Crosscut. "Splitstuff Bill," his partner, was standing by his side. Splitstuff had just taken his second consecutive bite of tobacco, and when old Splitstuff did that the wind was headed toward an argument.

"Of all the dang nonsense!" he was saying. "They ain't a bit o' sense in it. Only because you're so ornery and stubborn. That 'ere redwood, Crosscut, is one of the best shake trees on the claim. But if we falls her into the cañon, they ain't no earthly way you kin work her up, unlesen you get a balloon."

Old Johnnie Crosscut was sighting toward the other side of the cañon. A gray squirrel had run out on the tree above them and was announcing his defiance. As far as they could see, there was nothing but the everlasting green of the redwood forest.

"Yeah?" he answered. "Mebbe so. But if you had brains like I got, Splitstuff, and some of my vision, you'd know what it was for."

It was not the first argument between the two old men; they had been going at it for years, until they had reached the point where neither would tell the other what he had in mind, and where each regarded the other as just a little bit too old to have full possession of his faculties. They had been partners

so long that the name of Splitstuff & Crosscut had become a trade-mark. They made shakes, and inasmuch as they always picked the best trees, the stencil S & C had now become a standard.

At first they had had the freedom of the whole redwoods, but lately there had come rumors of sawmills; so the two old men had retired to Long Cañon. There they had purchased two hundred acres of a Spanish grant, the said two hundred acres being the finest stretch of redwoods in the whole belt—all level and abutting straight out to the precipitous sides of Long Cañon. There was one tree in particular, the giant of them all, that stood not twenty feet from the edge of the cliff. From where it grew, the cañon was not more than two hundred feet across, although in depth it was close onto a thousand feet. The claim was shake timber from beginning to end, and shake timber is the straightest-grained and the cleanest on earth.

All had gone well until the big lumber people had started looking over the mountains. The first thing that the timber buyers had spotted was that two-hundred-acre tract of shake trees. It was the core of the forest. They had to have it. They wanted it so bad that they offered the old men five thousand dollars for their rights. They might have bought it at that figure, too, had they had the foresight to get the two old men together before making the offer. That would have been putting the proposition straight up without showing preference. Besides, five thousand was more money than either man had seen in his lifetime. They did make the offer to Johnnie Crosscut, and the stubby old fellow had agreed to accept—providing they could persuade his partner. But old Splitstuff Billy could not see it. He was either slighted because he had been the second to be approached, or else he was

just downright stubborn. Anyway, he refused to sell.

"Why, you decrepit old knothole!" he had cried to his partner. "I allus did say that you was getting feeble. Me sell? I should say not. All's the matter with you, Johnnie, is that your brain is getting soft. It's our timber, ain't it? And it's mine, just as much as it's yourn. If them sawmills is a-coming in here, they'll have to have our land to log this cañon, and they'll give twenty thousand just as quick as they'll give five."

All of which happened to be true, because the man who had made the offer was a speculator and the worst kind of a rogue. The speculator was planning to get possession of the land before the real advance. He knew that the big lumber interests would pay far more than twenty thousand. Nevertheless, his coming had been the cause of the final split of the S & C shake concern.

There had been a bitter row. In the end, old Johnnie Crosscut had picked up his wedges and saws and saddled his pony. Then he had moved to the south end of the claim, where he built his own cabin and lived by himself. Henceforth each man had worked his own cuts and split his own shakes. They had only come together when there was a tree to fall, and they would not have done that but for the fact that it takes two good men to lay down a giant redwood. That was what had brought them together to-day.

Just at daylight old Johnnie Crosscut had slipped up to Splitstuff Bill's cabin and poked his head through the door. "Come on, you stubborn old donkey," he had cried. "I want you to help me cut a tree. And you needn't go asking me a bunch of fool questions about it, neither."

But when they had come to that giant redwood near the edge of the precipice, and Johnnie had started sighting the fall straight across the chasm, old Billy

had started to balk. That was when he had taken the second chew.

"It will take a balloon to work her up!" he exclaimed. "Of all the dang idiotic freaks! Now I know you're crazy."

Old Johnnie Crosscut was grinning. It tickled his fancy to think that he had the other guessing.

"Yep," he answered, sighting the tree and measuring the big trunk, "I'm crazy, Splitstuff. Crazy just like a fox. Are you or are you not a-going to help me cut this tree? I can't sell the land without you sign the paper, but I kin fall any tree that's on my half. We agreed to help fall any tree that the other wanted, didn't we? It ain't my fault that your brain is all frizzled up and has lost its vision so you can't look into the future. How about it?"

A bargain was a bargain, even with old Billy. He lit his pipe, showing that he was nervous. After that he tightened his belt and sighted the fall over the cañon.

"Well," he said finally, "the way I gets it, the distance is about two hundred feet across. This here tree is about three hundred feet to the tip. When she falls, she'll strike on the other side and snap off like a lead pencil. That is, unlesen you rides her down one of them big trees on the other side.

"You could do that, of course, only it would bust all the limbs off that tree over there. That tree belongs to the lumber people, and they think each tree is worth about a million dollars—when they own it."

"Yes, and I knows that, too," answered old Johnnie Crosscut. "But I don't aim to murder none of them trees—not one. I'll let 'em act as a spring to break our fall. I don't aim to bust nothing. Just the same, I happens to know that there ain't two other men in all Californy who can make that kind of a fall without bustin' timber. We

can put in the undercut, then saw her, and wedge her down. What you say?"

Now, every craftsman likes to perform the supreme stroke of his calling. And Billy was no exception. If they could fall that tree without splintering it, they would have something to crow about.

"Well," he said, stroking his beard and watching an eagle soar over the chasm, "we kin try it. But, understand, I ain't a-goin' to be responsible for your fool judgment. Any man who would want to give away twenty thousand dollars for five ain't got no sense, and——"

At that allusion to the disputed sale, the argument was on again. It went on during the whole of the two days that they were chopping the undercut and dragging the crosscut. Old Billy would lean against the saw handle and look across at his aged partner. He loved him with all the love of one crony for another, but it was not in his nature to say it. Johnnie was getting old, he said to himself, and needed watching. And, dang his old hide, if he wanted to live alone, he could do it!

All the while old Johnnie was grinning to himself. He knew that the road around the head of Long Cañon took up twelve long miles, and that by falling this tree he was demonstrating the best short cut in the mountains. There was a vast difference between twelve miles and two hundred feet. He was going to sell out, and sell out just as soon as he could. Dang a pardner like he had, anyway!

It took two days to get ready for the last strokes. On the forenoon of the third they were all ready for the wedging. In fact, old Johnnie had just stooped to pick up the sledge when some one stepped from the tall ferns that grew close by. He recognized the man as the same fellow who had attempted to buy the claim a short time back. The old man dropped his sledge

in his surprise; he did not know how the cantankerous Splitstuff would take it. Splitstuff had reached into his hip pocket. But instead of a gun he had fetched out a plug of tobacco. Old Johnnie was thankful for that. He saw the speculator turn white, step back, and run his hand into his coat pocket; then he had checked himself. The tree was ready to fall, but Johnnie knew that, being a redwood, it would stand a long while—until it was wedged or caught by the wind. Old Splitstuff Bill was biting off a chew.

"Well, pardner," he was saying to the speculator, "you thought I was reaching for something else, didn't you? And I don't mind telling you that if you keep on shovin' into somebody else's business, I will reach. And just to help you with your thinking I'll show you how I do it." He passed his hand across his hip, and a gun barked; then the gun was back again. "So!" he said. "And I'll warn ye that old Johnnie is even a better shot than I am."

The city man blanched. He was a tall man with exceedingly long legs. His body was small for his height, and his face was hawklike. What with his derby hat, his hook nose, and his black eyes, he was like a spider. He had reached for an automatic and had already drawn out the butt, when he caught the idea of the demonstration. He laughed wickedly.

"Well," he snapped, "there are two of us that can play that game. Only I didn't come up here for anything like that. I'm an honest business man, Mr. Splitstuff—not a murderer. I haven't got anything to say to you, anyway. I gave you your chance a while back, and you refused it. So now I wouldn't let you in on it if I could. But Mr. Crosscut, here, is different. You can see with half an eye that he's got brains. He's got a good head for business. I want to see him down at his cabin."

It tickled old Johnnie Crosscut to

hear his partner rebuked. In fact, he had half expected to see old Splitstuff start shooting. Also, it suited his vanity to hear the speculator tell which one of them had the brains. Perhaps the city man had thought of a way of getting around his stubborn old partner. A city man would know all about the tricks of the law. Yes, he would go down to the cabin. The tree could wait, and so could old Splitstuff Bill.

The speculator looked up at the tree for a moment, and then started off in the direction of Crosscut's cabin. Five minutes later he was showing the old man a piece of paper. He had produced it from one of many blanks that he had in his pocket. It was a thirty-day option on the old man's share of the land. It was an important matter, he said, and if he could get that option he would be willing to write out a check for two hundred dollars. He did not say that the deal was almost a certainty and that the big lumber chief was even at that minute coming into the mountains. The old man did not understand much about business; he read the paper over and over.

"You mean," he asked at length, "that if I sign this here paper you will give me a check for two hundred dollars? How about my pardner, Bill?"

The speculator had pushed his hat to the back of his head; his eyes were growing blacker, and his lips were set—as if he could already see the old man signing.

"I mean just that, Crosscut," he said. "All you have to do is to sign the paper. I'll give you a check for two hundred dollars. The paper says that you agree to sell me your half interest for two thousand five hundred dollars. It says that I am paying you two hundred down, and that if I don't pay the rest within thirty days, why the money is yours. It's yours, anyway, because when I pay the balance it goes as part of the purchase price. Savvy? It's

yours, just as soon as it reaches your hands. Here you are. I got a check all made out. But first you better sign the paper. I want to be fair, and that's why I'm paying that two hundred. Always be fair, is my motto. Honesty, you know. Now, wait a minute. Here—hello, what's that?"

Old Crosscut's pony was at the feed rack. Just at that moment she had taken a notion to nicker. The speculator seemed to have a sudden interest in horseflesh.

"Dog-gone, Mr. Crosscut!" he exclaimed. "Did you notice that horse? She can almost talk, can't she? Never seen anything like it for a voice. She seemed to just say, 'I want some hay.'"

The words and the nicker apparently reminded the old man that he had not given his pet her customary bite. He turned around and trotted her out an armful of hay. That done, he came back to sign the paper.

"Yep," said the old man. "I clean forgot her. I allus gives her a nip every time I comes in, and she knows it. Ain't another pony like her for having sense. Knows every word I says. Yessir. And when I whistles she comes to me just like a dog. Splitstuff Bill, my old pardner, never kept a horse, but I allus did."

The old man had taken everything in good faith. He did not know that the stranger had purposely diverted his attention so that he could switch papers. Neither did he know that the fellow was a rogue and a master of his kind. The man said something about ink, and Johnnie started to find some. His holster got caught while he squirmed around, so he took out his gun and placed it on the table. He found the ink and the pen in a far corner of the drawer. The man placed the paper in front of him. It was the option just as he had read. The old man signed. And the moment that he had done so he learned something. The speculator

had pulled a second sheet from under the first and had left old Johnnie holding an unsigned option. The man straightened up. His evil eyes were snapping like devils.

"Thanks, old man." He laughed. "This is about the easiest trick that I ever turned in my life. An option, ha, ha! And me give you two hundred dollars? Yeah? Well, old boy, I'll tell you what you've done. You've just signed me over all your interest in this here shake claim. The option was what you was looking at, but what you was signing is just the same as a deed."

He should have known better. But he was the kind of a man who had to gloat over an evil act. The gun was in the center of the table, and he had no idea that the old man would reach for it. As it was, the rogue only beat him by an inch. Old John turned, and the speculator shot from the pocket of his coat. Johnnie Crosscut reeled around and then fell—shot through the lungs. It had all happened in a second, and was not at all in the rogue's calculations. For a moment the fellow stood still, wondering just what had happened. Then he stooped over to the old man's form.

"Dead," he said. "Dead. Well, I got the deed, anyway. They ain't a-going to prove that I killed him. What I wants now is to get out of here and get out of here quick. I'll just take his horse and ride up around Long Cañon and come out on the other side. Then I can hit straight for Frisco."

Two minutes later he was on Crosscut's horse, riding up the road. And he had hardly got out of sight when the lean form of old Billy Splitstuff came hobbling down the path that led to the cabin. The keen ears of the old woodsman had heard that muffled shot of the automatic. Had it been an old-fashioned .45, he would not have moved. But an automatic! That meant that the stranger had done the

shooting. Old Bill came straight down through the trees. He saw that the pony was gone, that the door of the cabin was open, and he saw a man inside, stretched out on the floor. With one leap old Splitstuff had his partner in his arms.

"Johnnie, Johnnie!" he cried. "Crosscut, old pal! You ain't dead. Tell me!" To himself he muttered: "No, he ain't dead yet. Shot—shot—let me see—yep, here she is. Thank God, she's high! It's his lung. But lots of men have lived through that. If I can only get him out and to a doctor!

"But his horse is gone. I suppose that crook stole the horse and is riding up the cañon. I got to have that horse. That crook will come down the other side. I got to get over and beat him to it. I got to take Johnnie!"

Suddenly he straightened up and ran to the door. He looked out and up at the sky. The cool air of the forest seemed to tell him what to do. He was thinking about that tree. All she needed was wedging—perhaps a few strokes of the saw. But could he get her down alone?

He knew that he could not climb the steep gorge of the cañon in half a day. If he could drop that tree, he would make it in an hour. That is—if he could do it. But first he would have to take care of old Johnnie. The old fellow had fallen with his head against the corner of the stove. He was unconscious.

In five minutes Splitstuff had him bathed and bandaged. Then he took him in his arms and started back to the great redwood. Old Johnnie might have had some wild notion in his head when he started falling that tree, but it was hardly anything like this.

The first thing was to place his partner's body on a bed of soft ferns. Then he picked up some wedges and began sighting. In a case like this, the

first wedge was very important. He would have to hit the limbs of the tree on the opposite bank. Before, it had been a matter of pride; now it was a necessity. The tree would have to go just right or it would snap off.

He started the first wedge—and then another. Soon he realized that he would have to saw. Sawing alone in a case like that was a terrible job—almost impossible. But old Splitstuff was sawing for a life. He went back to the wedge, and when he drove it in this time he got a pop like a rifle shot. The old tree was sending out its warning. Another pop and another!

There followed a half hour of back-breaking work; three quarters of an hour! If he did not get it down pretty soon, the villain would come down from the head of the cañon and escape. Old Splitstuff could not keep his mind off that horse. The tree popped and groaned its death agony. But a redwood giant is hard to tip. The old man put in more wedges.

The time came when every stroke of the sledge sent a quiver to the top of the great monarch. Whang! Whang! Whang! He was perspiring profusely and he was getting weak. Time was getting precious. Then—right before his eyes the wedge was getting loose. The saw cut had widened. He drove the wedge in with a mighty stroke. After that he stepped calmly back and waited.

A redwood does not go down with a bang. It starts with a slow hesitation. The top was just moving, for all the world as if the tree was taking its last breath, over—easy—easy, down—down, first with a soft swish, after that with the speed of a bullet. Boom! Crash! On the other side of the chasm there was a shower of limbs stripping from the trees, a crash and a grinding of splintered fragments. Then there was a sudden lurch as the tree stopped still. Old Johnnie had guessed right. The limbs and the tangle of brush on the

other side had broken the fall. The tree was across the cañon.

Now Splitstuff had another job. The tree was fully twenty feet through. He had to climb up the butt with old Johnnie on his shoulder. By using a part of the staging for a ladder he made it. He was up on the soft red bark. On his back was his partner, and below him was a dizzy fall of a thousand feet. His feet sank between the great seams of red fiber. He was conscious of but one thing—and one thing only. He kept repeating over and over:

"I got to get that horse. I was a jackass to act like I did. I was a jackass! Poor old Johnnie. They ain't a-going to take him from me. He ain't a-going to die. I got to get that horse."

And on his shoulder at that moment old Johnnie Crosscut was coming to; he had just opened his eyes. At first it was all strange to him—like a nightmare. He could not understand where he was. Then, like a flood, it all came back—the land shark, the switching of the paper, and the shot! For a minute he was puzzled. He was over a cañon and he was on a tree. Some one was carrying him. He heard a voice.

"I was a jackass to act like I did," said the voice. "Poor old Johnnie! They ain't a-going to take him from me."

That voice was Splitstuff Billy's. How Johnnie loved him! It was worth being shot just to hear the words. "The darn old rascal!" thought Johnnie to himself. "Well, mebber they was two of them jackasses."

That was all. He remembered their coming among the great limbs and that terrible gulf below them. After that, blackness fell again.

When Splitstuff Billy reached the other side and climbed out of the treetop, Johnnie was unconscious. Old Billy carried him three hundred feet farther until he came to the road that

led down from the head of the cañon. It was well sheltered and hidden in the dense forest. He had his plan.

First he made his partner a bed by the roadside and looked after his wounds. Johnnie seemed to be breathing easily. Then he straightened and started up the road on a run. There was a chaparral hillside a little way off and a clump of madrones above the road. He was going to play highwayman. The land shark ought to be along any minute. He chose a spot above a cut in the road. When the time came, he would land suddenly and take the crook by surprise. He felt of his .45. There was a noise coming a short way off. He planned to step on a fallen madrone log, flip out his gun, and wing his man. Next minute the rider came into view. Splitstuff waited. He stepped on the log.

But something happened. A madrone is about the slipperiest thing in the woods; the morning dew was still in the forest, and the bark was wet. Old Splitstuff had hardly placed his weight on the fallen tree when his foot skidded, and he fell backward. His head struck the log and he was knocked unconscious. His body started rolling down the steep bank; a boulder was unlodged and came after him. Plump! His body landed in the road. It was followed by a shower of gravel and boulders. One of the heavy rocks struck the old man's body, rolled over, and passed beyond the road. The horseman had drawn up. The speculator knew in an instant what had happened, that Splitstuff had been hoping to waylay him. He was wishing that the old man was dead, but he wanted to be sure.

"Going to pick me off, eh?" he muttered. "Just a-going to waylay me and shoot me like a dog. Going to murder me in cold blood, eh? Well, there's two of us in this game now. I might just as well pass sentence right now, seeing as how he was going to kill me."

I'll just get off and see that a good job is done. I could use a gun, but that might look suspicious. So I'll get down there and crush his head with a rock. That will make it look like he got killed in the slide. The low-down cur! He wanted to murder me, eh?"

He slid out of the saddle and started to pick up a rock. Just having found one to his liking, he was startled by a whistle from the road ahead of him. The whistle was faint; but the mare had pricked up her ears. She shied to the opposite side of the road and started forward. The man dropped the rock. A feeling of terror ran up his spine.

"Whoa!" he shouted at the horse. "Whoa! You brute! Whoa!"

Another whistle sounded, this time a stronger one. The mare had started to nicker and was running away. With a curse the long-legged villain started running to head her off.

"Whoa!" he yelled. "Whoa!"

That only seemed to frighten the horse. She gathered speed and broke into a gallop. The man had his gun in his hand. He was ready for any emergency. But this time his opponent had the advantage of a fair draw. The land shark suddenly stopped in horror. His blood froze! For there, sitting by the roadside, was the man whom he had killed. Old Johnnie Crosscut had whistled to his horse, and the horse had come. The old man was holding a wicked .45. The speculator whipped his automatic and let fire. But he was too late. The .45 belched, and the villain's hand dropped at the wrist. With a yell of terror the tall rogue started to run, but another shot stopped him. He heard the voice of Johnnie Crosscut.

"No, you don't, dang you!" The old man's voice was feeble and it was coming hard, but it was steadied by nerve and excitement. "No, you don't. I seen what you was a-going to do. You was a-going to crush Splitstuff Billy's head with a rock, wasn't you? Kinda

nice and merciful, ain't you? And I suppose you wonder how I got here, eh? Well, I'll tell you that right now. Old Billy carried me over on that tree. He must have found me where you shot me. And he must have put my gun back in my holster. Lucky thing he did. Then he put down that tree and carried me across. He must have laid me down in the road a ways back there and then went up to wait for you.

"I was unconscious when he put me down but it seems that I come to in time. I was afraid something would happen, so I dragged myself to this here tree. I had the gun and I wanted to help Billy out, if I could. Only he was too far away. That's why I whistled. Didn't I tell you that that there pony would come any time I whistled? Yep. So now you got a sore wrist. And I'm the boss. And seeing as how I've got the gun and old Billy's out of commission, I guess I'll just have to hold together until we kin get out. I'll warn ye though, that if I feel myself a-slipping, I'm just a-going to plug you and let you lay. Now then, you kin ketch that horse. Billy and me has got to ride somehow, and you kin walk. By the way, you better hand over that there little paper. Oh, now you needn't get sore. You don't want to feel bad just because you got beat by a couple of old shake makers like me and Billy. Leave that part of it until you get down to the sheriff. Yep. Wait a minute. Here comes some one up the road. Mebbe they will give you a hand."

A horseman had appeared in the majestic aisle of redwoods; then another and another. Before they knew it, the shake man and the crook were the center of an interested group of listeners. Old Johnnie was almost ready to pass into unconsciousness again; but he managed to gurgle out his story, pointing to his wound and the slip of paper as evidence—also to the crumpled form of old Splitstuff Billy. One of the newcomers

dismounted and took the old man's hand. Another stepped up to the crook. Johnnie saw the man slip a cord from his pocket and start binding the land shark up. Evidently the man was an officer. The man who was holding Johnnie's hand was speaking.

"Well, I guess we got here just in time, Crosscut. I'm the head of the new lumber company. My name is Tompkins, and I was just coming up here to take a look at your claim. Our cruisers turned in their report over a week ago. Evidently this man knew what they had said and was scheming to get in ahead of us, and hold us up. I don't mind telling you that we are mightily interested. And if what you say about this tree is true, your claim is doubly valuable. I'm going over now and see the thing for myself." Then to one of his companions he said: "Take care of the old men and see that they are comfortable. Better take them down to the company's hospital. I'll be back in a few minutes."

When he came back both Billy and old Johnnie had been loaded on the horses and were on their way to town. But the lumber man spoke to his companion.

"That really was a wonderful piece of timber falling. It's a natural bridge. The best part of it is that there's a tree on this side that we can fall alongside of the other and complete the job. It will save twelve long miles of hauling. When we get the other tree down we can dig under them along the bank and let them down to the level. Those timbers

will last forever. And really I believe that shake claim is the best that I've ever seen. It's worth a fortune in itself. And that bridge makes it worth just that much more again. Likewise, I would like to engage both of those old men to take charge of our timber falling. Men who can handle trees like that are as scarce as frog's hair. But I'm almighty glad that they caught that crook. That fellow has cost us a pile of money. Now he'll go where he belongs."

Two days later the two old men were sitting in adjoining beds in the hospital. There was a kind look in their eyes as they talked. Splitstuff Billy said:

"Honest now, Johnnie. Why did you cut that durn tree, anyway?"

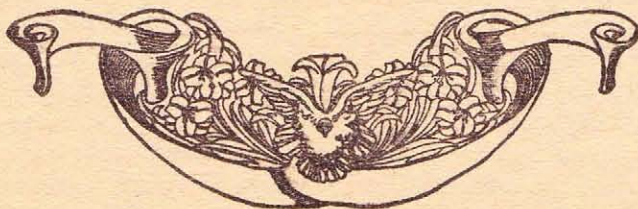
The other smoothed out his whiskers and smiled. So far he had held it a secret.

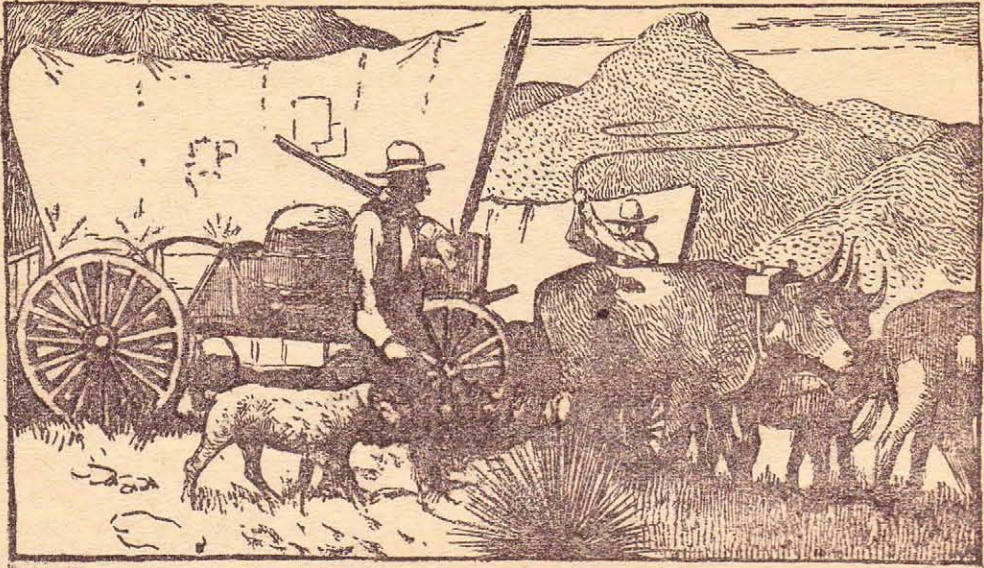
"Why did I fall it?" he answered. "Why, you durn ole rascal, why do you suppose? I didn't have a reason on earth except to get your goat. I was just contrary, that's all. I figgered that you'd go right up in the air, and that I'd just make you help me do it, anyway."

There was silence for a minute, and then old Splitstuff Billy said:

"Well, that might have been it, but I don't know. It was kind of lucky. Here Tompkins has paid us ten thousand dollars for our bridge and twenty thousand for our claim. Say, Johnnie, I just been a-thinking. We been a couple of durn ole fools. Ain't we?"

"We sure have," said Johnnie Crosscut.





Pioneer Towns of the West

(Trinidad) by Erle Wilson

Author of "Topeka," etc.



THE second oldest town in Colorado is Trinidad. The early explorers of the region were Spaniards and the name of this pioneer settlement which means "the trinity" is a heritage from these adventurers. The first white man to settle upon the site of this Western city was John Hatcher, who took up land for a farm there in 1846. This hardy pioneer constructed an irrigating ditch and raised a crop. But the hostile redskins not only destroyed his grain, but succeeded in driving him away from the valley.

Other settlers gradually came to the section, however, and in 1850 Trinidad was a plaza of widely scattered adobe huts. In order to reach the place, travelers were forced to cross a boundless region of hills and plains. During the early days of Western history, Trinidad was a stopping point for freighters with mule and ox teams who

followed the devious windings of the old Santa Fe Trail on the long overland journey to the New Mexico city. In 1861 cabins were built in and around the crude little frontier hamlet, and settlers began to grow crops of hay, grain, vegetables and fruit.

Trinidad was incorporated as a city in 1876, the same year that Colorado became a State. Three years later, the first telegraph and railroad entered the town. Electric street lights were introduced in 1880, and nine years later a five-story building was erected. In 1903 a street railway appeared, and from that time on the one-time crude border settlement has grown steadily. To-day it is a thriving modern city, with a population of fifteen thousand, ranking as the fourth city in size in Colorado. It is situated in the extreme southeastern part of the State, occupying a hilly site upon both banks of the Purgatory River. The Sangre de Cristo Range of the Continental Divide

is about forty miles distant, and Pueblo lies one hundred miles to the north.

Much of the prosperity of Trinidad is due to the coal-mining industry. Adjacent to the city a coal field occupies a long narrow basin of about two thousand square miles along the foot of the Rocky Mountains. This region contains the largest deposits of bituminous coal west of the Missouri River. Various mines in the section employ about five thousand men, with a monthly pay roll of more than five hundred thousand dollars. Stock raising is a thriving industry in the vicinity, and many excellent ranches are located in Las Animas County, of which Trinidad is the county seat. Agriculture is also extensively carried on in the land northeast of this Colorado city, where several irrigation canals supply water to alfalfa fields and crops of various kinds.

Trinidad enjoys a splendid reputation as a place of residence. Elevated quite some feet above sea level, the climate is ideal, the summers being bright and cool, and the autumns sunny and dry. This Colorado city has well-paved streets, attractive homes, successful mercantile establishments, and churches of almost every denomination. Good hotels, a large opera house, modern theaters, and a number of parks and playgrounds all contribute toward making Trinidad a pleasant place to live. An equestrian statue of Kit Carson, the famous frontiersman, was erected, after his death, and stands in the park, bearing the name of this great Westerner. The public schools here rank with the best in the country, and there is a well-equipped Carnegie library. A fine country club provides one of the best golf links in Colorado, and the city maintains a convenient camping ground for motor tourists.

Some of the most beautiful scenery in the West surrounds Trinidad, which is in the heart of a picturesque cañon and mountain district. Overlooking the

city at the south stands Fisher's Peak, named after a German artillery officer who commanded a battery in the army of the West, that camped at its base in 1846. This wonderful mountain rises to a height of over ten thousand feet and is one of the most noted peaks in the West. To the north of the city is a huge rock, known as Simpson's Rest. There is a story connected with this picturesque pile, which dates back to the days when Trinidad was a frontier settlement. Then it was that a pioneer, George Simpson by name, was attacked by hostile redskins. With his family, he took refuge on this high rock, establishing a miniature fortress upon it. Here he successfully withstood the savage onslaught of the Indians. Later he expressed a wish that this fortress should be his last resting place. And here he sleeps in a grave cut in the virgin rock. Upon the summit of Simpson's Rest the city has erected a huge electrically illuminated sign with the word "Trinidad" in eight-foot letters.

Thirty miles away from Trinidad, over a splendid highway, lies the beautiful Stonewall Gap and Park. The famous Stonewall is a huge stratum of rock turned up edgeways, rising some two hundred feet in the air with a thickness of about twenty-five feet. Through this peculiar formation which stretches for miles and miles is the Stonewall Pass, around which is a forty-acre park maintained as a free camping ground for tourists. Another fine scenic drive out of Trinidad is to the Raton Pass, a distance of twenty-five miles away, over a hard-surfaced road. And easily accessible from Trinidad is the San Isabel National Forest, which offers unlimited sport to the fisherman, hunter, and camper.

Trinidad is located on the National Old Trail, Santa Fe Trail, Colorado-to-Gulf and the Plains-Mountains Highways. It is served by four railroads. Trinidad is said to be one of the best-

lighted cities in America and has wonderfully pure water which is piped through a thirty-three-mile pipe line from the snow-capped mountains of the Sangre de Cristo Range. The entire system is municipally owned. The city is governed by a mayor and a council composed of ten aldermen. The present mayor is the Honorable F. R. Wood, who is serving a two-year term of office.

Among the prominent citizens of

Trinidad are T. W. Henritze, general manager of the Snodgrass Food Company and president of the chamber of commerce; J. C. Hudelson, president of the First National Bank; F. R. Wood, president of the Commercial Savings Bank; Ray Cox, president of the Trinidad National Bank; George Hausman, president of the Hausman Drug Company; and H. M. Corning, superintendent of the city schools and president of the Rotary Club.

In next week's issue Pueblo, Colorado, will be described.

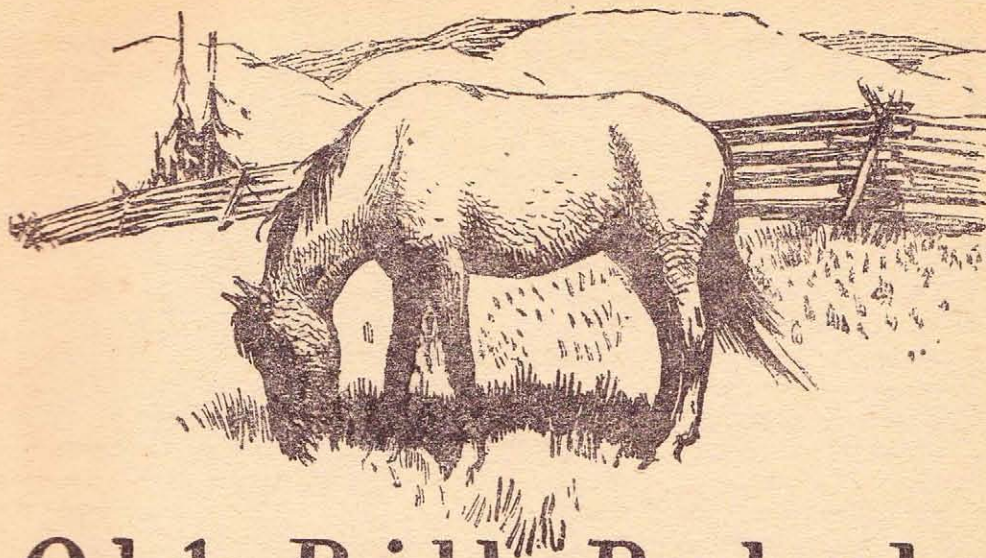
THE SANDS OF TIME

IN about one hundred and fifty years Alamogordo, New Mexico, will be entirely covered by sand. Near this famous frontier town, which has been a great center for famous cattlemen, outlaws, pioneers, and celebrated Southwest characters, are located the Great White Sands. These consist of pure white, crystallized gypsum blown from an ancient lake bottom, covering an area of two hundred and seventy square miles.

The White Sands are moving toward Alamogordo at the rate of one mile every twenty years. Old stage roads and cow trails of the eighties and nineties are now covered fifty feet with white sand. This mobile earth surface is formed and kept moving by winds that blow always in one direction. And this means that the small city must within a century and a half disappear or change its location. Nothing man can do will retard this earth creep, as the dunes are fifty and seventy-five feet high and the force with which the sand moves is almost inconceivable.

NAVAJOS PROTEST PAYMENT FOR BRIDGE BUILDING

A VIGOROUS protest was filed recently with the Senate appropriations committee by the New Mexico Association on Indian Affairs against the use of \$106,000 of Navajo Indian tribal funds to defray half the cost of building a bridge across the Colorado River at Lee's Ferry, Arizona, and one across the San Juan River at Bloomfield, New Mexico, both being partly off the reservation. It had been planned to use \$106,000 of Navajo tribal funds derived from oil royalties as part payment for the construction of these bridges. The document of protest, however, states that the Navajo tribal council made specific objection to such use of their money, and that the Indian bureau pledged its faith to have the income spent for agricultural and industrial purposes, irrigation and roads and bridges within the reservation, and for the direct benefit of the Navajos. They did not want their money spent on State or Federal highways. It is declared that the proposed bridges are for the benefit of the general public and that they will be of little or no use to the Indians.



Old Bill Rebels

by Frank Richardson Pierce

Author of "Lost Dog," etc.



HOA!"

John Little did not pull up on the lines when he gave the command, and the chances are that Old Bill would have stopped anyway. For fifteen years he had dragged the express wagon down to the station before train time, waited for several minutes until the train arrived and departed, then hauled the usual load of trunks and suit cases to the various parts of town. From time to time, opposition came in in the form of auto trucks, but for once gasoline and speed did not triumph over horseflesh. "Old John" and Old Bill had never lost a piece of baggage yet, and a few minutes one way or another counted for little when measured against reliability.

"Back up!"

Old Bill did more than back. He swung slightly to the left, cramped the wheels at the proper angle, then backed and stopped. John Little wrapped the lines around the whip he never used and climbed stiffly down.

As the train came to a stop he sang out in a voice somewhat weakened by time. "Baggage transferred. Baggage? Baggage? Howdy, Mr. Stanton! Yep, I'll get 'em right out. Hello, Joe, how'd you find things in the city? Yep! I'll get them trunks out right away. Baggage transferred! Baggage!"

When the last arrival had left the platform John Little found himself surrounded by suit cases, while his right hand held a number of baggage checks. He did not consult the station agent who also had charge of the baggage room; he merely removed such trunks and bags from the room as he needed and handed the checks to the official. Many of the bags and trunks he recognized without a glance at the names or initials.

Old John followed the same routine to-day, though it was evident his mind was not on his work. From time to time he would glance at a beautifully illustrated folder that spoke in glowing terms of bathing and fishing. Happy people, mostly beautiful girls were de-

picted emerging or entering the cool surf. Some were splashing around while others were reclining on the sand, drenched with sun. The only fish, probably, in the vicinity was attached to the end of a line which bent a pole at just the proper angle to simulate reality. To prove that it was a fish on the end of the line and not a snag, the fish was visible. In the distance a sailboat could be seen heeling over in the brisk breeze.

Old John knew the folder by heart. "Yes, sir," he explained to his various friends along the way, "it'll be my first vacation in fifteen years. I was going to take a vacation fifteen years ago. Then my horse up and died on me, and it took all my money to buy Old Bill here. Since then I've salted away some, not much, but some, and I've been too busy to find time. Me and Bill have been on the job right steady."

Some one asked: "How long will you be away, John?"

"I'm taking a real one; I'm going to be gone three months. I figure a man should have a little fun, as he goes along, and not wait until he's too old to play. I'm going to have some of my fun now. While I'm gone young Eddy Hillman will look after the business. He's home from college and can use the money. Besides rasslin' trunks will put him in good shape to play football next fall."

There was another question the townspeople naturally asked. "What are you going to do with Old Bill?"

Old John and Old Bill were always together, therefore, what was Bill to do during the period of relaxation?

"Well, you see Bill is only a horse, and a horse gets his fun as he goes along in life. Each night rest, a rest on Sunday, and his feed right along. It ain't like a man who needs a change of scenery once in a while. Danny Sexton has some cultivating, hauling, and the like of that to do this summer, and I figure Old Bill can earn his keep that

way. Next fall we'll be back at the same old place doing business."

It is pretty well settled that animals possess a certain process by which their actions are governed. There are those who claim animals reason and think; there are others who deny this and insist that every act of an animal is instinctive.

Old Bill was not particularly concerned over this problem of mankind. He only knew that the cool winds of an evening brought with them the scent of pine trees, falling water, and mountain meadows. For fifteen years he had turned his eyes toward the mountains some twenty miles away, and speculated on what might be there. But the opportunity to investigate never came. His life, it would seem, was to be spent on the pavements where a horse's feet all but burned from contact with the hot, black asphalt. His nostrils were continually outraged with the heavy scent of gasoline and burning oil. Except on the hottest days the pavements were hard to his hoofs. Each hoof-beat was a mild shock. Occasionally his duties took him down a dirt street, and when the earth was soft and springy from a recent rain, trotting was pleasant. But for the most part he knew only the hot pavements.

Each day it was the same. Old John would appear about sunrise and rest his arms for several moments on the top rail of the corral; then he would whistle. Old Bill would lift his head, thrust his ears forward by way of greeting, then break into a half trot, half gallop, until he crossed the intervening distance—whereupon he would sniff for the lump of sugar Old John so often brought. This daily act over with, the horse was cared for, later hitched up, and driven slowly to the stand.

Yes, not only each day was it the same, but for fifteen years it had been the same. Then, without warning,

there came a change. Old Bill responded to John's whistle and accepted a lump of sugar, but the man did nothing this morning except to toss an armful of hay into the manger. It was good hay, but at times Old Bill found it somewhat dusty. He longed for crisp, dewy grass. Occasionally he got it. Some passing boy or girl would pull a clump of grass and feed him, or he would nibble a stray blade or two when his duties took him beyond the pavements.

For several moments Old John contemplated his faithful horse. Bill's left hip sagged badly, due mostly to the way he was standing; his head dropped a bit too, John noticed.

"Bill, you're getting old," he said and seemed surprised at the discovery. "Some of these days you'll be dropping off and some of these days they'll be sending flowers to my funeral. Well, s'long, Bill, see you in the fall."

Old John boarded the train and settled back in his seat, still thinking of Bill. "Yes, sir, sure as you're a foot high, that nag is getting old. Yes, now that I think of it, he laid right down on me one day—went to sleep hitched to the wagon."

John was interested in the scenery for several hours; then he dozed a bit, after which he found the diner and ordered a fine meal. This was a vacation, and no expense was to be spared. Life was short at best, he reasoned, and a year hence he might not be alive to enjoy a vacation.

When the train stopped at the beach he gathered up his bags and stepped out. A number of taxicab drivers and baggage men nearly mobbed him.

"That ain't the way I get business," he grumbled, "attacking people with my bare hands."

He looked about for a horse-drawn vehicle to carry his bags to the hotel. There was none, so he submitted to the sales talk of a taxi driver who had pursued him knowing that eventually he

must weaken and fall. John settled back and experienced a mild thrill. He tipped the driver and registered. Later he bought a newspaper and retired, reading in bed with a light directly above his head.

"Pretty fine," he muttered, "pretty fine!"

The following day he was up before sunrise. The beach was practically deserted, except for an occasional bather. He walked, worked up an appetite, later donned a bathing suit, and spent the day swimming and dozing on the sand for hours at a time. For the first time he realized just how tired he was.

"Fifteen years' steady work makes it hard for a man to let down," he mused lazily. "This is sure going to make a new man out of me. Yesterday I figured Old Bill and I would drop off about the same time, but now I'll wear out a couple more horses. I wonder if maybe I hadn't better swap Bill for a younger horse when I get back. He sure looked about all in that last day—good old Bill." This was followed a half hour later by, "Good old Bill!"

Back in the corral Old Bill was realizing that something was wrong. A day had passed in idleness, and another day had dawned without the appearance of Old John. The sun began to climb, and about eight o'clock Danny Sexton appeared. He fed and watered Bill; then disappeared. An hour later he returned, climbed on Bill's back and rode him into the country for nearly a mile. Here he stopped at an old barn, harnessed the horse, and attached him to a light cultivator.

All day long Bill worked, and it was harder work than he had ever done before, because it was steadier. In the express business a horse indulged in rest periods between trains. But there was no rest in ranching. Dust came from the ground under him; dust was shaken from the trees on either side when his shoulders touched leaves and branches.

He frequently cleared his nostrils by violent snorts.

That night he was glad to lie down in his corral. It had been a tough day, no rest, no sugar. When it was dark a breeze stole down from the mountains. It carried the scent of pines, of green grass, and falling water. Bill sniffed longingly. Somehow he sensed that neither the pavements nor the orchards was the place for a tired horse. Rather it was up there in those moon-washed mountains so near, so silent and—so inviting.

Danny Sexton arrived earlier the following morning. He had, as he expressed it, a big day ahead. He was somewhat impatient with Old Bill.

"Come along," he ordered, "speed up a bit. This is an age of speed."

And when Bill, a tide of rebellion rising within him for the first time in fifteen years, balked, Danny jerked twice on the halter rope. The third time he yanked with all of his weight.

"Come on, dang yuh!"

At the same moment Old Bill tossed his head in defiance. The halter gave and Danny spilled backwards in the dust. Almost instantly he was upon his feet.

"Why, darn yuh!" he exclaimed, attempting to haze Bill into a corner. Bill let drive with a pair of clean heels, snorted, and galloped toward the open gate. When Danny pursued Bill speeded up.

"Well, can you beat that? It's the first time in years he's showed any life. Why, if I'd expected anything like that, I would have handled him different."

For an hour Danny pursued; then he gave it up. Old Bill had cut through several orchards, followed a road, and was now in the open. An area of sage stretched before him, and he followed it for miles. Here and there he found a blade of grass, but no dust and no hot pavements. Seven miles from town he crossed a stream. It was very clear and

cool, running over a gravel bottom. Old Bill drank leisurely as a man of leisure might sip wine. From time to time he looked about as if expecting pursuit. But Danny Sexton did not show up.

Bill found shade when it grew hot. At sundown he turned his nostrils toward the breeze, laden with the scent of pine, crisp grass, and falling water. He did not hurry, but plodded steadily through the moonlit night. Presently he began to climb. At first the grade was gradual; then it became steeper. He followed a draw for a while; then worked along a hogback. First he encountered small timber, then larger, until at last he topped a ridge and looked below him, in front of him and all around him. Ahead he could see the falls. The way the moon struck, the water seemed to splash silver about. The stream eddied a moment in a basin, before cutting through the center of the valley and working to the lower levels, where it formed the river from which Bill had drunk earlier in the day. Bill nibbled a bit at the grass then, tired from the climb, relaxed.

Dawn brought the old horse much that was new to him and nearly everything that he desired. He drank from the cold stream, ate the crisp grass wet with dew, and listened to the bird chorus that seemed to rise with the sun. During the morning he explored a bit, discovered a doe and fawn, and later climbed a ridge from which he looked down upon a laboring world. The valley below was flat and sweltering beneath the blaze of the midday sun, the orchards appeared to be tiny, green squares. Old Bill knew that horses were laboring among them, breathing dust and dirt. Bill kicked up his heels a bit, then trotted back to the valley. For hours at a time he contented himself with standing in some shady spot while the cold mountain stream gurgled about his hoofs. For many years these same hoofs had trod hot pavements.

Bill did not know why, but the gravel and water felt good to his hoofs.

Weeks followed, and no one came to the valley. Then one day a man passed and, seeing the horse, stopped and tried to catch him. Bill was not to be caught. He galloped away with tail up, mane flying, and nostrils snorting defiance. Several days later two boys tried to catch him with even less success. Bill was living and decided it was worth while. He did not propose to be caught and have to spend the summer working.

Yet as the days slipped by, Bill missed something. He did not know just what it was. It seemed indefinite; yet it was always there, particularly in the morning. His life, now that the excitement of his new situation had worn off, did not seem complete. Often he stood silently, as if listening or thinking. Perhaps he was. Certainly man has no way of definitely determining. Perhaps he was only waiting for some one he knew must eventually come. The young birds living in the trees around the meadow became grown birds; the fawn became a spike buck, and Old Bill became Young Bill in actions. He stampeded in mock fright on the slightest occasion, and once or twice he bucked an imaginary rider from his back. But always this was followed by a period of reflection.

Old John Little, with the spring of youth in his step, swung aboard the train. His vacation was over; he was mighty glad he was going home.

"I sort of wished I'd brought Old Bill along," he muttered. "I'll be glad to see the old cuss. A man can't be around a horse every day for fifteen years straight and not miss him. I suppose a horse might miss a man, too. I hope they didn't work him too hard this summer; he was pretty much all in when I left."

As the train neared home, Old John's

conscience prodded him slightly. The right thing would have been to pasture Bill somewhere for the summer, but he had not thought of that until now.

Eddie Hillman was at the train to take his bags. "Hello, John," he said.

Others crowded about with greetings. They thumped him on the back and said he was looking great. He had not acquired a coat of tan, for fifteen years in the sun, delivering baggage, had tanned him to an extent which no beach resort could hope to improve.

"Where's Bill, Eddie?"

Eddie grinned. "Bill's gone, John!"

"Gone?"

"Yep! Acted something scandalous the day after you left, tried to kick the daylights out of things and disappeared. Danny couldn't catch him. I guess Old Bill figured he was due for a vacation, too. Ain't been seen around since."

"I guess he figured right. I should have given him a vacation. Well, don't any one know where he is?"

Eddie pointed to a notch in the mountains. "There's a meadow up there, if you'll remember. I saw Bill while I was up there fishing. Tried to catch him, but he was wild, and had to give it up."

It was night before Old John reached the mountains. He camped in a cabin until dawn, then covered the last mile to the meadow. It was sunrise when he stopped and shed the saddle he was carrying. A small windfall blocked his path, so he rested his arms on the trunk and looked across the meadow. There was Bill eating contentedly. John whistled sharply.

"Hey, Bill!" he called.

Bill lifted his head with a jerk, hesitated a moment, then galloped across the field. This was the thing he had missed, the morning whistle, and what came with it. John climbed the windfall and dropped down on the other side. Then he extended a handful of lump sugar.

"I'm not the same man, Bill, and you're not the same horse. You're looking great."

Old John glanced about the meadow. "Talk about horse sense, I'm danged if you didn't use more of it than I did when it come to picking a place for a

vacation. Next summer we're coming up here together. A couple of people that work together ought to play together, and you're just like a person, Bill."

All of which Bill confirmed with an enthusiastic nod of his head.



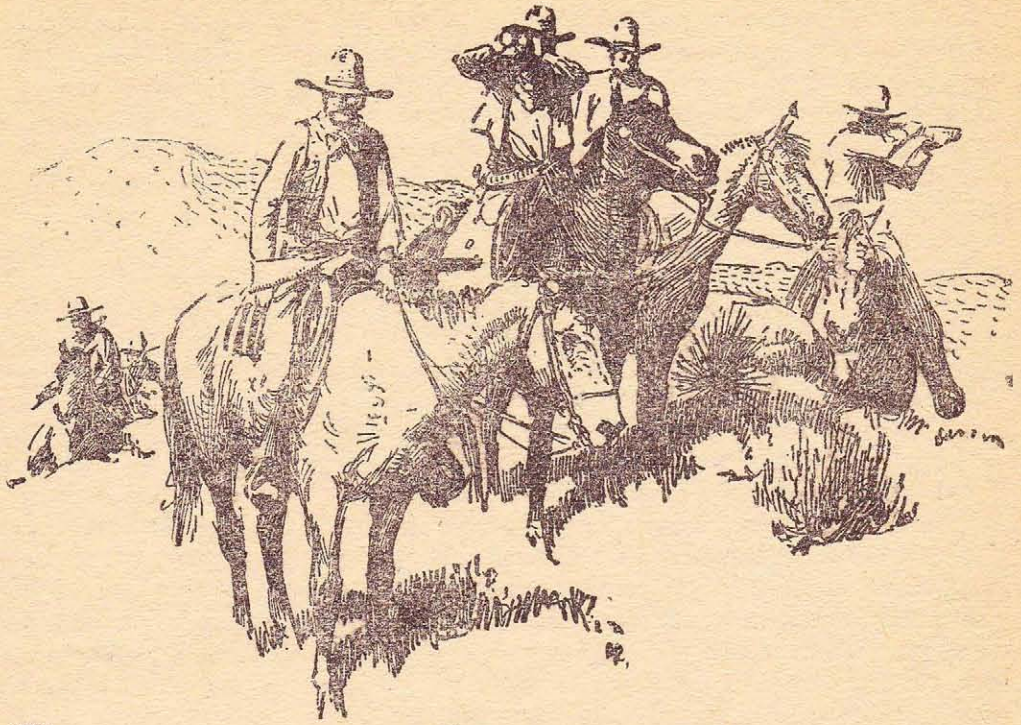
BEAR TAIL MAKES BIG MEDICINE

THE most imposing figure in the Crow Indian tribe is unquestionably Bear Tail, the lone surviving medicine man of the Crow people, living on the Crow reservation in Montana. He is held in great reverence by his fellow redskins, especially by the older Indians of the Pryor district. Bear Tail's prestige in this quarter arises from an incident that occurred five years ago when the Indians of Pryor Agency were planning an all-Indian rodeo. There were two factions interested in the rodeo, and, of course, one of these factions wanted to dominate the other and control the events. The faction to which Bear Tail belonged was the weaker and failed to get the better of the various arguments that arose. After the manner of other races when disgruntled, the worsted faction decided to ruin the rodeo, rather than have it conducted in accordance with the ideas of their adversaries.

They therefore went into conclave with their medicine man, Bear Tail. Although everything seemed ready on the morning of the day set for the big show, Bear Tail came forward and warned the camp that there would be no rodeo. The younger members of the tribe jeered at him and ridiculed his prophecy.

When it came near noon, and the active preparations for the rodeo became manifest, Bear Tail went to his tepee, painted his face with weird designs in brilliant colors, and covered his body with white clay. He then bade his squaw cover with mud the entire body of his pony, with the exception of its eyes, nose, mouth, and ears. He also warned her to make the tepee fast, as a great storm was coming.

His next move was to mount his pony and ride through the camp, carrying his medicine staff and a willow whistle. He blew the whistle and chanted incantations, accompanied by pleading gestures toward Heaven. It is stated on good authority that, when Bear Tail left his tepee, the sun was high in the heavens and that the sky was cloudless. Everything seemed favorable for the rodeo. Within a quarter of an hour of the time the medicine-making on the part of Bear Tail was inaugurated, however, gusts of wind were tearing at the tepees, and in another five minutes, a gale was blowing. It blew harder and harder until every tepee finally went down and the rain was falling in drenching sheets. The rodeo did not take place, and as a result, Bear Tail acquired great prestige as one having unusual influence with the gods who make wind and rain and thunder, and control the destinies of rodeos.



Just a Cow Horse

By Ray Humphreys

Author of "Agent Oliver Learns Injun Lore," etc.



WHEN "Silent Chick" Breen, the Bear Creek rancher, roped a runty blue roan mustang stallion and began to make the outlaw over into a cow horse, the other ranchers of the isolated district shrugged and shook their heads sorrowfully.

"Why," said Joe Myers, of the Three Bar, "that pair o' hard uns is just bound to kill one another, that's all. Silent, he's as heartless as a stone wall—glum, sour, an' mean—an' that runt stallion has a bad eye hisself, to my way o' thinkin'."

"Yep," said Floyd Penny regretfully, "they're a good match. But I'm bank-in' on the stallion. I mentioned to Silent yesterday that he oughter look

out fer that blue roan, but Silent only grunts, sayin' he'll break him all right enough. I'm thinkin' the stallion may break Silent's haid fust!"

While Silent Breen was not particularly popular in the district, because of his taciturn demeanor, he was, nevertheless, an old-timer and a good cattleman. Therefore, he had the district's respect, if not love. His neighbors, looking askance at the blue roan stallion, had warned Silent in just the same impersonal, spontaneous way in which they might have warned a tenderfoot of a coiled rattlesnake. It was simply duty, in their minds.

As for Silent—he said nothing. Whenever any one chanced by his ranch and stopped to say something derogatory about the mustang stallion, old

Silent merely grunted or else remarked that the blue roan ought to make a good cow horse, being smart and quick. He didn't have any doubt but that he'd eventually tame the little devil.

"I guess he's about right, at that," was the way Ralph Fairley eventually summed it up. "Old Silent is heartless enough to kill that pore hoss, if necessary, an' when it comes to the devil in a man and in a beast, I guess the two-legged devil'll win out!"

It seemed so. Before many weeks Silent began to ride the runty roan stallion habitually, and the mustang appeared to be thoroughly broken. The range wiseacres shook their heads.

"Guess a mean man can lick a mean hoss," they decided.

But they were premature in their judgment, it appeared. Some two weeks later, "Thad" Salter rode by Silent's place and dropped into the ranch shack, finding food burned to a crisp on a stove in which the fire had burned itself out. That was a bad sign. When he went to the barn he found two mares in their stalls, stamping and fretting, and when he loosed them they headed madly for the water tank. That was another bad sign. Thad looked around, put two and two together, and then ran his pinto two miles to the Eddie Owens ranch, where he spread a vague alarm.

"Hey, Eddie—old Silent's disappeared," cried Thad, pulling his pinto up in the Owens yard. "Reckon it was yesterday, too. Signs at his place. I'll bet a dollar, I will, that he's done fer, by that roan stallion, somewheres on the range!"

"Then thar's just one thing to do," said Eddie, making for the corrals. "I'll git my boys together—an' we'll go by Frank Campbell's place an' rouse him. Then we'll spread out—but say, Thad, better take a fresh hoss!"

It was almost dusk before the hastily assembled posse of searchers, after

hours in the saddle, came upon a huddled form on the open range, in a clearing just south of Squaw Mountain. In fact they might have missed the spot altogether had not the eagle eyes of Thad Salter espied a saddled horse there.

On approach, the horse threw up its head and snorted a challenge. It was the runty blue roan mustang, and the searchers knew that they had found their man in the crumpled heap that sprawled on the earth near the nervous horse.

"I knowed it," said Eddie Owens quietly. "I knowed it would happen; that stallion has done fer him. Campbell, yuh're a good shot. I'm thinkin' yuh'd better——"

Campbell had already had the same idea. He raised himself in his stirrups and whipped out his six-gun, quick as greased lightning. But the roan stallion was quicker. There was a whir, and the stallion, running stiff legged, like a jack rabbit, ducked for a willow patch. He swerved just as Campbell's pistol cracked. There was no need for Campbell to tell the others that he had missed.

With the stallion tearing off through the timber, beyond range now, the men dismounted to examine the body. But they got a surprise. The old rancher was still breathing. They pawed him over quickly, taking inventory of his injuries.

"One busted arm—forearm, left," said Eddie Owens expertly, "an' two or three ribs cracked at least. An' bad cuts an' bruises on his haid, an'"—Eddie ripped open Silent's flannel shirt—"the same on his chest an' on his shoulders."

"That stallion throwed him an' then stomped on him!" exclaimed Thad Salter, in a hushed voice.

"But he's still livin', boys," said Eddie, looking up. "He's unconscious, an' I'd say he was bad off. Thar's only

one thing to do—rope him across the back o' the easiest pony we got here an' lug him into the hospital at Evergreen, eh?"

"Yuh're right, Eddie!"

"All right, Ed, reckon that sorrel mare o' mine is 'lected. I'll ride double with young Geiger, an'——"

On the way to Evergreen, where a small hospital afforded Silent his one chance for life, discussion centered on the runty roan stallion and it was the consensus that a bunch should be organized to go out and "get" the killer.

"He's saddled an' bridled," said Eddie Owens, "an' he's crazy wild in the timber around Squaw Mountain. I say let him be; he'll hang hisself sure as shootin'. His bridle or the saddle will catch somewhars on a limb, an' he'll die a harder death than ef he was shot—good riddance—an' we don't need to hunt him down, either!"

While Eddie made his prophecy in good faith, it turned out that he was wrong. Silent Breen had been in the hospital only a week, taciturn and uncommunicative as ever, but slowly pulling out of the shadow of death, when reports began to come in about the blue stallion, and they were terrifying reports, too.

"I seen him on the mesa, about two miles west o' Bendemeer," Bill White told Eddie Owens, "an' he's got rid o' the saddle an' most all o' the bridle. He's loco, sure as I'm a foot high. I seen him rush a bunch o' cattle, charge down on a young bull, an' like to kill him—kickin' an' bitin' at him. Then I rode out, and he beat it pronto!"

"A killer," said Eddie judiciously. "He ain't loco; he's just a killer. It's in his blood now that he almost done fer Silent. Some outlaws are like that—attackin' man an' beast without fear or favor—an' old Silent tried to gentle *that* hoss. Well, we'll have to go git him, that's all. We'll lose cattle ef we don't!"

However, nothing was done just then. It was some two weeks after that that young Geiger, who ran a bunch of white faces on Cub Creek, a tributary to Bear Creek, came racing into the Owens ranch to report more depredations by the roan killer. Geiger was mad as he could be.

"We gotta organize a gang an' go hoss huntin'," he told Eddie excitedly. "That blue stallion o' Silent's is raising the devil on the range. I went out to see my stuff this mawnin' an' blamed ef I don't find one o' my best yearlin' steers stretched out daid an' all kicked an' bit to pieces. I thinks it may have been a duel with a strange bull, but I looks fer sign an' sure enough I find it—it's hoss sign; small, unshod hoof. Ef I'm any judge, it's the killer, the blue roan stallion that liked to murdered Silent."

"Guess yuh're right," said Eddie slowly. "We'll have to git busy. Let's see, to-day's Friday. How about startin' a round-up Monday? That'll give us time to get the boys together. Better tell 'em all to lead a change hoss, too."

"All right," said Geiger.

And so it was all arranged along Bear Creek. The ranchers were notified by courier that the district's only recent wild horse round-up would take place the following Monday, object—to rid the range of that runty roan stallion that almost killed Silent Breen, and that was actually slaughtering stock. While many riders would have scoffed at the idea of wasting time to get revenge on the roan for injuring Breen, none of them hesitated when it came to going after a stock killer. It was really money in their pockets to rid the range of the killer.

When Monday came it saw a determined group of riders ready for the hunt. Every man had an extra horse, some provisions, and a bed roll. Eddie Owens was elected leader by acclama-

tion, and then some time was lost reaching a decision as to where the roan stallion might be looked for first. Some were for combing the thickets on Squaw Mountain; others were for sweeping the Bendemeer Mesa, and still others were for riding the low meadows along the creek itself.

"While I ain't no fortune teller an' able to say whar that roan is," said Eddie Owens finally, "I'm positive he ain't along Bear Creek. That's whar the ranches are, an' from all we know o' the brute, he's afraid o' humans. And I don't think he's in the timber, neither. He's rid o' his saddle an' like as not he lost that in the timber after a hard struggle—may have been hung up a day or two, too. No, I'd say look first on the Bendemeer Mesa. That's my vote, boys!"

Eddie's vote carried. But at night, after hard riding and running down everything that looked, at a distance, like the stallion, the searchers reluctantly turned their tired mounts of the day loose, to pick their way home. They'd use the spare horses on the morrow and hope to find the roan. They'd be out of rations the second evening, and that meant the hunt would have to be called off for the time being. The roan seemed to have vanished off the face of the earth. He was not on the mesa and he was not in the rich meadows along the tumbling Bear Creek.

"Waal," said Eddie, at the start of the second day's ride, "we'll make Squaw Mountain. Campbell, you strike fer the south slope an' work to the west. The boys with me will work the north slope an' go east. That way we'll cover her. Ef you sight 'im—fire a volley as signal, an' we'll do the same. An' look fer tracks—that might lead us right!"

But the hunt ended the second day without a glimpse of the roan. The cowmen went home discouraged.

For a full month nothing was heard of the roan. The ranchers began to believe that he had, at last, hung himself by the remnants of his bridle, in the timber, or else that he had left the range.

Meanwhile, in the Evergreen hospital, old Silent Breen had won his fight for life and was rapidly convalescing. But he was as reticent as ever, and, outside of being evidently grateful for any attention on the part of doctors or nurses, had nothing to say. A few of the ranchers from the Bear Creek district visited him, but they were received so coolly that they went away quickly, without mentioning the roan stallion at all. They were afraid to bring up that subject.

Then, out of a clear sky, the roan popped up again. He was seen chasing cattle on Squaw Mountain, and the ranchers immediately laid plans for another hunt. The plans were rushed particularly after Thad Salter, who had been doing considerable snooping around on his own hook, had brought in word that the stallion had made his headquarters in Cup Cañon, a blind arroyo several miles south of Squaw Mountain. The first hunt had not extended that far.

Owens, at this news, announced that the new hunt would first beat Squaw Mountain, to scare the crafty mustang to his retreat, if he were on the mountain, and that then the avengers would push into Cup Cañon, bottling him up and riding him down until a bullet could end his career.

"We'll make it Wednesday," said Owens, "so all the boys can be notified. No spare hosses this time—just a short, fast sweep over Squaw Mountain, and then into Cup Cañon. Everybody meet here early Wednesday mornin'. Start at eight o'clock!"

When Wednesday came it found a goodly bunch of riders at Eddie Owens', and the start was made promptly at

eight o'clock, although not all of the ranchers had come in by that time. With instructions to the cook to send all tardy ones after the main group, Owens pulled out and made fast time with his cavalcade to Squaw Mountain. Then, with much shouting and the occasional pop of a rifle or report of a six-gun, the riders rolled up and over the densely wooded mountain, hoping that the roan, if he were in the timber, was streaking it for his hide-out in Cup Cañon.

Whether it was fate that made Floyd Penny late for the rendezvous at Owens', is problematical. But he was late. The ranch cook obeying instructions, told Floyd that Owens had said to follow after, and Floyd wheeled and was off. But he decided that by cutting down the valley road, past Silent's ranch, he could make better time and save several miles of riding. He took the short cut, and, much to his surprise, came upon old Silent leaning on the gate at his place. Floyd pulled up, more to give his horse a breathing spell than to talk to Silent.

"Lo, Si," greeted Floyd, "glad to see yuh back. Didn't figger yuh'd be up so soon. Feel all right now?"

"Tolerable," replied Silent. "Got back yisterday. Yuh seem to be in a big hurry."

"I'm late fer that posse o' Eddie Owens'," said Floyd, before he thought. "I'm cuttin' in now to beat 'em over Squaw an' meet 'em at Cup Cañon."

"Posse?" echoed old Silent eagerly. "Who they trackin'?"

The rancher bit his lip, realizing he had let the cat out of the bag, but he decided to enlighten the old man—seeing there was no reason to believe that Silent wouldn't be pleased at the news.

"Why, ain't yuh heard," countered Floyd, "they're—we're huntin' down that roan stallion that liked to have did fer yuh. He's been killin' stock. We got him located now."

"Huh!"

"Gotta be goin'," said Floyd uneasily. "S'long!"

And on his ride Penny grunted to himself. "Ol' codger wasn't much excited about it, one way or another. Waal, he's a heartless ol' devil. Mebbe I don't blame that roan fer tryin' to kill him—mebbe——"

But no sooner had Penny disappeared down the road than old Silent, although weak and shaky from his long stay in bed, galvanized into action. He rushed to the barn, ignoring the questions of the hired man who had tended the ranch in his absence, and there saddled up one of the ranch mares. He was mounted and off in a minute, but he did not follow Penny. Instead, he forced the mare through the creek, and the last the hired man saw of them they were disappearing in the timber beyond. Silent knew he had no time to lose if he were to be on the hunt, and he also knew a shorter cut to Squaw Mountain than Penny's route.

Meanwhile, the ranchers and the cowboys with Owens had combed Squaw Mountain quickly and boisterously. On the far slope they halted to rest their horses before plunging into Cup Cañon. The men dismounted, loosed saddle girths, and lounged around, resting. At Owens' suggestion they lingered so that any stragglers might catch up with them there.

"We got the killer bottled in thar," said Owens positively. "I've got a strong hunch on that—but that ain't sayin' we can keep him thar long enough to shoot 'im. He's a shrewd devil, that stallion is. He's got hidin' down to a fine art. But my plan to git him is this: Frank Campbell here, who is the best shot among us, he'll wait here at the mouth o' the cañon—ready to let go with his rifle. The rest o' us will go in, hopin' to see that roan. Ef we do, we'll shoot—ef we don't, an' the wily mustang doubles back on us or sneaks

through our cordon, then Frank will pick him off here as he tries to dodge out."

"Good idear, Eddie!"

"That way we can't miss gettin' him!"

As the posse was mounting, preparatory to going in, several late comers arrived, including Floyd Penny. The latter told of seeing old Silent Breen at the Breen place as he passed. Penny did not add that he had stopped to talk with the old man, and no one in the posse thought of asking. At Eddie Owens' command the horsemen rode into the cañon, leaving Frank Campbell posted some fifty yards inside the entrance, rifle alert, ready to pick off the blue roan if he chanced to break back for liberty.

As Cup Cañon was some four miles in length, varying in width from a hundred and fifty feet to a quarter of a mile, all densely forested, except for the tiny glacial stream that sifted down its center, the place was an excellent hide-out for any animal. Campbell, on guard at the entrance, did not doubt but that the smart outlaw, dodging the riders, might at any moment burst into view, headed out of the cañon. It was for this reason that Campbell stood tense, ready to shoot at a moment's warning. It would be everlasting disgrace for him if he allowed the blue roan to breeze past him to safety.

As Campbell waited, however, and no sound came from the depths of the cañon but the shouting of the riders who had gone in, he gradually relaxed, realizing that the stallion must be ahead of the beaters, or he would have made a rush for the mouth of the cañon before this. A half hour passed, and Campbell figured that Owens and his men must be practically halfway along the blind cañon. Half an hour more, and they would surely reach the high cliff barrier at the head of the cañon. There, most likely they would find the

outlaw stallion at bay, with no chance to escape his fate.

Suddenly, as Campbell waited, eyes fixed on the cañon mouth, he heard a sound behind him. It was ridiculous to think that the stallion could have circled, but Campbell shot a quick look over his shoulder, to gasp in amazement. What he saw was not the runty roan stallion, but a white-faced old man on a big bay mare.

It was old Silent Breen, looking like his own ghost. Campbell turned back to watch for the stallion, and Silent dropped off his mare and staggered up to Campbell, who greeted him cheerily.

"Got 'im yit?" asked Silent. Campbell shook his head. "No—not yit," the rifleman answered. "Apparently the boys ain't flushed him out yit, but most any minnit now, I reckon——"

Campbell broke off abruptly as the sounds of thundering hoofs echoed up the narrow cañon. He gripped his rifle tighter.

"Now," he whispered, "that must be him—now——"

Then old Silent Breen did a strange thing. He grabbed for Campbell's poised rifle and seemed about to wrench it from the rancher's hands.

"Here, Campbell," he cried excitedly, "lemme have it. I say—lemme have the rifle. I gotta——"

Campbell took one look at the old man's white face and then, recollecting that Breen was noted as a dead shot, surrendered.

"Sure, I get yuh, Silent," said Campbell. "Yuh want the revenge, eh? Waal, yuh can have it. Take the gun—but be sure yuh put a bullet home. Be quick. He'll come roarin' out o' that patch o' brush like a cyclone. Shoot low an' ahead o' him."

Crash! Out of the timber, just as Campbell had predicted, catapulted a runty blue mustang. He brought up with a jerk at the unexpected sight of the two men bottling the cañon's

entrance, but old Silent Breen was as quick as the stallion.

"Here, Bluey—here, boy!" shrilly called the old man, advancing toward the quivering animal. "Here yuh are, Bluey. Don't yuh know me, boy? Here, here now. That's a boy. Nice boy, nice ol' feller, nice ol' Bluey."

The stallion, snorting suspiciously, seemed torn between opposite emotions. His instinct told him to wheel and run for it, but his heart urged him to delay. There was something familiar in the figure approaching him, something familiar in the voice.

"Nice ol' Bluey—nice boy," wheedled the old man, advancing cautiously, while Campbell watched in dismay. "Nice feller—that's it, boy, stand still. Bluey, don't yuh know me? Good ol' Bluey, nice Bluey, here, Bluey——"

The stallion snorted and started to rear back.

"Look out, Silent!" cried Campbell, "he's a-plannin' to strike at yuh. Use that rifle; yuh're close enough. Pot him."

But for answer Silent dropped the rifle.

"Gosh!" cried Campbell, jerking out his six-gun.

He raised it—and just as he pulled the trigger old Silent, seeing Campbell's moves from the corner of one eye, plunged in front of the trembling stallion. There was a needlelike stab in Silent's left shoulder, and he was whirled half around. But he staggered on, whispering soothingly to the frightened horse that seemed on the verge of bolting. The next minute he had his arms around the blue roan's neck and was clinging there.

"Don't shoot, Campbell!" he cried weakly. "This is my hoss—mine—mine—an' nobody can harm him now!"

And while Campbell stood, open-mouthed, gazing at the strange sight before him, the echo of his shot had recalled the riders from down the cañon.

The noise of their coming alarmed the nervous stallion, but old Silent clung to his neck desperately.

"Thar, thar, Bluey, stand still. No-buddy is goin' to hurt yuh. Pore feller, nice Bluey," soothed Silent.

And when the gang arrived, fully expecting to see the blue roan stretched out in death, they tumbled off their horses in astonishment as great as was Campbell's. There, on the fringe of the woods, quivered the runt stallion, and hanging to him, with a wounded shoulder, was old Silent Breen.

The posse passed from awe to disgust.

"See here, Silent, yuh ol' fool!" challenged Eddie Owens. "What do yuh think yuh're doin'—trying to commit suicide?"

"That stallion is a killer; he's been killin' stock on the ranges—killin' cattle—an' he nigh kilt yuh."

"Nigh kilt me?" echoed old Silent weakly but determinedly. "That's a lie! Mebbe yuh think he did it, but he didn't. That day I was hurt—Bluey an' me here was rushed by a bull—which knocked Bluey down an' sent me sprawlin'. Afore I could git up the bull was on me—stompin' me down. But Bluey here—he's got courage. He scrambled up an' charged, plantin' kicks on that bull's ribs an' haid, savin' me. The bull turned on Bluey, but Bluey was too quick. Las' I remember, Bluey was standin' guard over me an' the bull was circlin', still mad, but scared. It was Bluey saved me, gents, before yuh found me on the mesa that day. Yes, sir!"

The ranchers' eyes popped.

"Huh—but—but he's nipped yuh now, Silent," cried Eddie Owens. "Yuhr shoulder——"

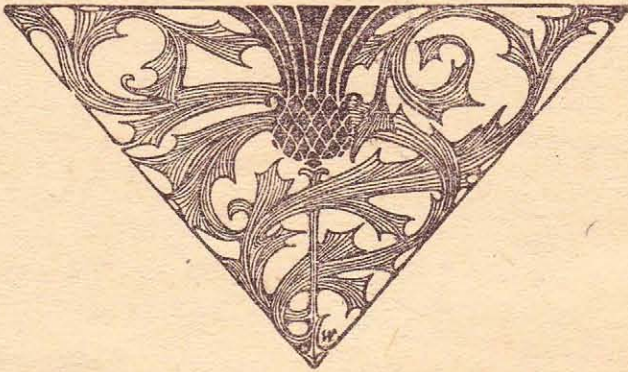
"No," interposed Frank Campbell, who had regained his power of speech. "I did that, Eddie. I shot Silent. Afore I understood, I shot at the mustang an' Silent leaped in front to save

'im. I didn't know how matters were. I'm plumb sorry."

"Well, I'll be jiggered!" roared Owens, laughing in his nervousness. "Ef this don't beat all! Guess we all misjudged that pony; guess we'll have to pardon him fer killin' bulls an' steers after what that bull did to yuh an' tried to do to him. An'—an'—guess we all misjudged yuh, Silent, thinkin' yuh was

mean an' heartless just because yuh didn't say much. No mean man could gentle a range stallion like yuh've broke this roan, an' no heartless man would 'a' jumped in front o' a six-gun to save a hoss like yuh did. Silent, yuh'll pardon us?"

"Pardoned!" said the old man, smiling, as he sunk his tired head against the throbbing throat of the blue roan.

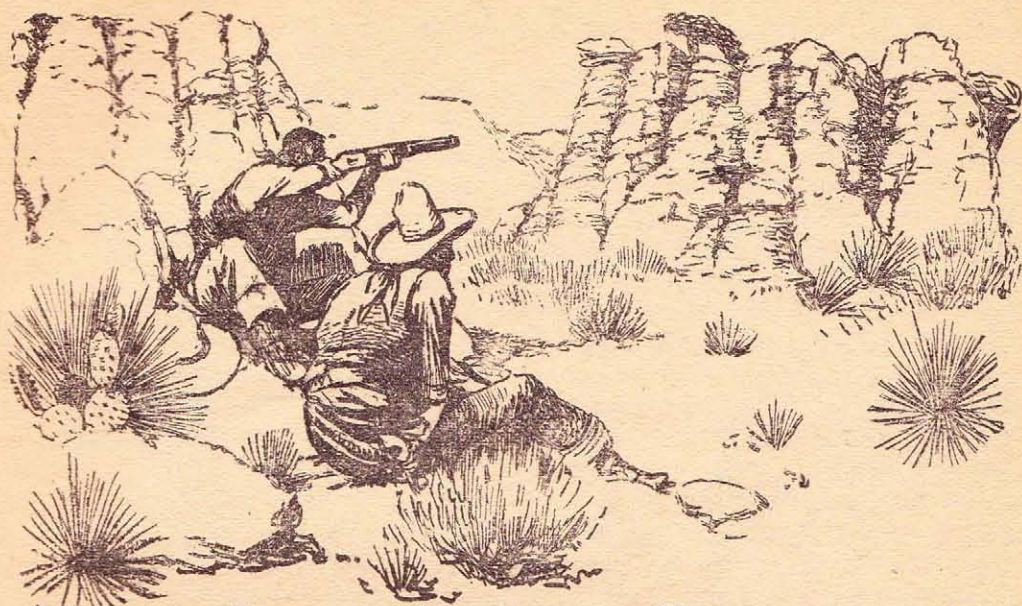


WEALTHY INDIAN SPENDTHRIFTS

AN instance of what the wealthy Indians are apt to do with the sudden riches that have come to them of late years from oil leases, is furnished by the case of an Osage Indian woman who was released from Government guardianship a little over eighteen months ago and allowed to handle her own affairs. Her average annual income from oil royalties and bonuses is twelve thousand dollars. When she was released from government control, all the restricted funds held to her credit with the exception of the sum of \$3,819 were turned over to her.

A little while ago, she applied to the department of the interior for this \$3,819. At the same time, she filed a statement showing how she had spent the rest of her money.

This statement showed that she had expended \$1,200 for a fur coat, \$3,000 for a diamond ring, \$5,000 for an automobile, \$7,000 for furniture, \$3,100 to pay loans which she had obtained from her mother and sister, \$600 for shipping furniture from Florida to California, \$1,500 loaned to her sister, \$4,000 as cash payment for a California home, \$2,500 for a lot, and \$12,000 put into Florida real estate. The balance of her money was spent for such general items as clothing, traveling expenses, income taxes, and gifts to her people.



Teeth of the Desert

By **Kenneth Gilbert**

Author of "Half-a-Step Onward," etc.



ON," said old Zeb Prentiss to his younger partner, Tom Slade, "I'm tellin' you that I've spent forty years off and on, in the desert, and I'm learnin' somethin' new every day. But one thing I learned early, and I reckon it'll always stay by me. The desert gives you one chance, and if you're honest and fight squar' like a man should, you'll likely win. But this little old waste of burned sand, which has allus seemed to me like some sleepin' varmint that's ready to rouse up and bite you unaware, hasn't one inch of space to spare for a man that's weak, physically or morally."

The valley through which they were plodding was a deep, elongated hole in the earth, perhaps a mile wide and several miles long. Just now it was burning dry with the drought that had gripped the land for several weeks. In the distance were the cool, snow-cov-

ered peaks of the Little Lost River Range, and the sight of them was a mockery to any thirsty traveler.

Outwardly Prentiss and Slade were unlike, and a shrewd judge of human nature would have guessed that the dissimilarity went deeper. At this moment, it was more marked than ever. Zeb Prentiss was an old desert rat, gaunt, stooped, his whiskers bleached by many suns almost to the neutral hue of the desert itself. Yet his squinting blue eyes were mild and trusting, and his voice was pitched in a companionable key.

Slade was slender, dark, and impatient of movement. He was given to scowling much, particularly while old Zeb babbled on in his garrulous fashion—it was as though some weighty problem had fastened to him. Prentiss had by chance met Slade at Cinnabar and, lonely for a partner, had prevailed upon the younger man to go on this

prospecting trip. Slade scoffed at first, but later became interested.

Old Zeb had made good. They had found gold; not much, it is true—perhaps fifteen thousand dollars' worth—yet it was more than Slade had ever seen before, much less possessed. When the old man, with a skill born of long experience, had located "color," Slade excitedly believed they were going to become rich. Yet the find had proved to be only a pocket. The discovery made Slade sulky; he felt, somehow, that Zeb was at fault. And when the old man proposed that they "hit for town" and enjoy their new-found wealth while it lasted, after the fashion of the true desert rat, Slade's irritation turned to anger. He wanted to stay out in these hills and seek more gold, but old Zeb, to whom the search for the precious metal counted for more than the actual finding, was satisfied for the time being. Slade finally agreed to return to Cinnabar, particularly when it was pointed out to him that they needed grub, and that they couldn't continue for long to "live off the country" by shooting game.

Even now, as they made their way across this last hot valley, they had but a few mouthfuls of food between them. Each carried a canteen, covered with brown canvas into which was ground alkali dust until the cloth had become a tawny color. The clothing of both men was powdered with the stuff.

Slade was no prospector, anyway, and a month of it in the hills had served to put an edge on his temper, until he had moods that were positively murderous. At this moment, with old Zeb leading—Slade did not know the trail—the aged prospector's bent back seemed a temptation. Slade allowed his mind to run free in conjecture as to what would happen if he should take advantage of this opportunity. Inside old Zeb's shirt was the other half of that gold. And he, Slade, had the only rifle. Could he

make a convincing explanation to the people back in Cinnabar as to the reason why this old prospector hadn't come back? A fall over a cliff might prove a plausible story. But he couldn't afford to display the gold. That would arouse suspicion. He'd merely have to say that they had failed, and that old Zeb had accidentally met death.

Yet the thought made him shudder. If there was only some other way! Maybe he could rob the old man and set him afoot. The difficulty with that plan, however, lay in the fact that he, Slade, didn't know the trail. No, there was only one way out, if he didn't want Prentiss to keep the gold. He plodded on, still immersed in his thoughts.

A strange old geezer, this Prentiss. He had spent most of his life in these same hills and made pets of wild animals. What good would money do him, anyway? He'd be just as happy if he were broke. No one would really miss him if he never came back to Cinnabar.

The trail led past a promontory which overhung the valley. Here the rocks, of harder substance, had resisted the erosion that had gouged out this valley which had been the course of a long-vanished stream. From the floor of the valley to the top of the promontory was all of two hundred feet. Although its scored sides were rough with fallen rock, on the top of the promontory were clumps of sagebrush, now white with the alkali dust that had sifted over everything.

"Yes, sir, son," said old Zeb. "She's one hot day. I'm goin' to set me down for a little spell and rest. We'll make t'other end of the valley before sundown, and it's just as well not to go hazin' along too fast in this here heat."

He seated himself on a rock, wiped his damp brow, and took a sip of water from his canteen. Then he calmly pulled out his pipe, filled it with tobacco which he whittled from a plug, and lighted it. Only a desert rat who has

become inured to the terrific heat of the sand wastes, and who has literally become sun-cured, could have enjoyed it, as old Zeb did. Slade swore a little under his breath, and took a heavy pull of water from his canteen. His moodiness had settled upon him like a cloud.

"Yes, sir, she's shore a hot country, son," resumed the old man happily, rubbing the back of his brown, gnarled hand across his forehead. "Looks jest the same as it did when I come here nigh onto twenty year ago. Don't change much, does the desert. Sand shifts around a little, but, all in all, it looks jest the same.

"I used to have a shack back there in the hills—there's good water there, but it's out of our way. It got too lonesome for me. Guess if I hadn't got tired of it I wouldn't have come out to civilization, and I wouldn't have run across you, eh?"

"Guess not," said Slade shortly. He was thinking of something else just then, his fingers rubbing aimlessly against the barrel of the rifle, which lay across his lap. Old Zeb babbled on, yet now and then he shot a curious, side-long glance at his companion.

"Left there about two years ago. I had lots of pets in my time—reckon I've told you about some of them. I tamed one of these here little desert wolves, or thought I did. Anyway, I raised her from a pup, and she'd hang around the place pretty close, waitin' for me to feed her. I reckon she's gone back plumb wild by now. Yes, sir, the desert is shore a funny place, and it's got a way of testin' a man."

He broke off and was silent, and Slade turned to regard him with mild interest. But the old man was staring up at the lip of the promontory. He chuckled a little.

"I jest caught sight of a wolf or somethin' up there," he announced. "You wouldn't think, now, that a wolf would come down out of the hills this

far, would you? And in daytime, too. Maybe they prowl down in the valley at night. There must be *suthin'* that lives in this God-forsaken spot." He was thoughtful for a moment; then gave a sharp exclamation.

"By gravy! I wonder if it could have been that there little wolf I tamed? Tom——"

But Slade did not hear. Without rising he threw up the rifle and fired.

"I saw it!" he exclaimed. "Right up there by that clump of sagebrush alongside that rock. Got it, too, I'll bet!" Old Zeb was regarding him with a hurt expression in his old blue eyes.

"But why'd you want to shoot, Tom?" he demanded. "That there little animal—whatever it was—wouldn't do you any harm!"

Slade turned on him.

"What d'you know about it?" he demanded. "I'll shoot every varmint I see. Don't need any advice from an old desert rat, either!"

For a moment he regarded old Zeb truculently. The aged prospector did not move, but his blue eyes held those of the other man without flinching. It was Slade himself who broke the spell. Whatever thought ran through his mind as he stood there gripping the rifle—well, it was not the time.

"I'm goin' up there and see if I can find it," he decided.

Old Zeb watched him go, saw him climb slowly over the rock slide toward the clump of sagebrush at the summit of the cliff. It was a heart-breaking task in this heat, but evidently Slade's curiosity was aroused. Now and then he paused to rest, breathing heavily, for the climb was a steep one. At last he reached the top, and looked around carefully.

"Hit it, all right!" he called down triumphantly to old Zeb. "There's blood here." The old man said nothing.

He saw Slade seat himself, slip the

canteen strap off his arm, and tilt the container to his lips for a long drink. The old man's eyes returned to the dancing haze over the hot sands ahead, while he continued to smoke quietly. After a time, he heard Slade come scrambling down the cliffside. Without a word, the prospector got up, and once more led the way toward the coolness of the distant hills.

They stopped to rest once more after a mile and a half of it and then went on. The sun was near the western horizon now, and the heat had a still, breathless intensity that almost cooked Slade's lungs. Old Zeb, plodding along the same as ever, seemed not to mind. He heard Slade swear, and stop.

"Gimme a drink!" said the man hoarsely. "I've lost my canteen some place. Of all the crazy things I ever did in my life——" Old Zeb handed over his canteen, yet retained his hold on the strap.

"Easy, son!" he cautioned, as Slade gurgled with the neck of the container at his lips. "That just leaves us about out of water, if we find that the spring I'm dependin' on up ahead has dried up." He removed the canteen from Slade's lips while it was yet half full.

Old Zeb found that his fears were justified. When darkness had come, and they had reached the point in the hills where he had planned to stay until daylight, the depression among rocks at the base of a little cliff was utterly dry; the sediment in the bottom of the bowl where the spring had been was covered with mud, seamed by weeks of drought. There was nothing to do but make a dry camp, build a fire, and consume the last few mouthfuls of food, with sparing sips from the canteen.

The change which old Zeb seemed to have undergone, persisted. Now and then, as he sat smoking by the fire, his eyes covertly strayed to where his partner, moody and preoccupied, sat hunched on a rock.

Slade was the first to turn in that night. The stress of that long jaunt across the burning valley had tired him immeasurably, so he rolled in his blankets and with the rifle beside him, quickly lost himself in slumber. For a long time Zeb sat there smoking, staring unseeingly into the dying fire.

The chill which marks the usual desert night became more noticeable. A honey-colored moon rose over the hills, turning the clumps of sagebrush to filigrees of dusted silver, and the brush rattled loosely in a light, intermittent breeze. A night bird, some desert owl, perhaps, moved on hushed wings along the face of a hill, then veered sharply, and struck at something crouching at the edge of a thicket. Instantly there was a shrill, wavering cry that sent the echoes chasing up and down the dry cañons.

Slade moved restlessly. Suddenly, he sat up and looked around. The fire was out, but on the opposite side of where it had been, he could see the indistinct outlines of a form huddled in a blanket.

He regarded it curiously for a long time, without moving or making a sound. All at once he began to move stealthily. He got to his knees, and possessed himself of the rifle. Then he deliberately lifted the weapon, pointing it at that huddled form. Its loud, clapping report, following a streak of reddish-yellow flame that sputtered from the muzzle, seemed a profanation of the profound silence. Again and again he shot.

He could see the form flinch as the bullets struck it. At last he jumped to his feet, sprang over, and kicked at the huddled thing beneath the blankets.

It collapsed oddly, with a loose rattle. He stooped and tore the blanket apart. Beneath it was a small pile of greasewood sticks which had been propped up carefully so that outwardly it had the semblance of a sleeping form. Tricked!

For a moment Slade stood there, rifle in hand, snarling like some cornered wild beast. There was fear in his eyes now, and desperation. Somewhere out there in the brush, hiding and watching him no doubt, was the old man he had intended to kill. Old Zeb carried a six-gun in an armpit holster, Slade knew. At that moment the old man might be drawing a bead on him to avenge the attempted murder.

Whirling, Slade leaped for the sagebrush and went crashing through it, running as though for his life.

A few moments later the darkness resolved itself into a form which crept cautiously to where the fire had been. Old Zeb retrieved the blanket and poked his fingers in curiosity through the holes which the bullets had made. He shook his head sorrowfully.

"Plumb crazy," he decided. "I could see it in his eyes. Darned lucky thing for me that I did, too!"

He rolled up the blanket, and felt around in the darkness for his outfit, not daring to strike a match, although it was a certainty that Slade was far away by that time and probably still going. His fingers rubbed the familiar form of his canteen.

He took out the stopper, after shaking the container and hearing a satisfying gurgle, and held the neck to his lips. But he put it down without tasting it.

"Nope," he decided, "I ain't as thirsty right now as I'm goin' to be. Tommy Slade's goin' to need a drink of water, too, before he gets through with this. He's a cussed, low-down, would-be killer, but I never left a pard behind yet. I may kill him when I find him, but I gotta find him first. Reckon he'll know what I was talkin' about when I said this here old desert would bite him if he didn't shoot squar'."

He moved into the brush a little apart from the place where they had camped, and remained there until daylight. With

the first glimmer of dawn he was off, easily trailing Slade in the loose sand.

Midday's sun was blazing down fiercely when Slade came to the conclusion that he was lost. In his heart he knew that he had been lost for some time; but, stubbornly, he would not admit it. Somehow, some way, he'd beat this game, find a trail that led out of these accursed hills. He still carried the rifle, but he was burning up for a drink of water.

Probably old Zeb was trailing him, seeking revenge. That, for one thing, kept him moving, although his muscles ached with the torture of steady plodding through the hot, lifeless sand, and his throat and lips were cracking from lack of moisture. His tongue was already beginning to swell.

What a fool he'd been not to grab old Zeb's canteen before he made that wild flight from the camp! He could go hungry, but he couldn't go much longer without water. And what a fool he'd been to lose his canteen the previous day!

The thought brought him up short for a moment. He remembered now where that canteen was; strange he hadn't recalled it before. When he had climbed to the top of the cliff to see what he had shot, he had lifted the strap from his shoulder and taken a drink, laying the canteen alongside the rock he was sitting on. There it was still lying, beyond question!

Probably it was the only water within miles; his only chance for life, for he could not keep going much longer without a drink. There were not more than a few good swallows of water left in it, but they were more precious than all the gold in these hills. He must find the canteen!

But first he'd have to find that cliff up which he had climbed. At the moment he stood at the bottom of a wide, sandy gully, which might lead to the

valley up which he and old Zeb had had come the previous day. Where Zeb was at that particular instant was unimportant; Slade was concerned solely with making a fight against death by thirst. He started down the gully, hoping that it would widen out into the great depression in the earth which he sought.

Half an hour of patient trudging, and he found that it did indeed do that very thing. The whole country hereabout was vastly strange to him, but he was certain that the plain before him was the valley. Far off to the left, a good two miles, was a promontory which looked familiar. He'd have to chance it, anyway. If he could make it that far, he'd recover the canteen.

As he plodded on, the sun smote him with renewed force, and he felt himself growing light-headed. He felt as though he were almost floating in air; as though his feet were barely touching the earth. Then this was replaced by the feeling that his feet were weighted with lead. Once he staggered and fell but came up again, the startled light of fear in his eyes. Couldn't afford to fall. He might stay down, and very quickly the sun would "get" him.

Agas passed, and at last he was quite sure that the promontory was but a short distance away. Yet it might be an illusive trick that his eyes, almost blinded by the glare and heat, were playing upon him. He stopped and tried to concentrate his faculties, clear his rapidly fogging brain. Yes, the promontory wasn't far now. And how good that water would taste!

Hot! What was it that babbling old fool, Prentiss, had said about the desert having teeth? Slade laughed wildly at the thought. It was a good joke. Yes, the desert had teeth, all right! It was showing those same teeth at him now. But he'd live to laugh at them!

He stopped again, reeling, yet know-

ing that he stood at the very foot of the promontory, almost in the exact spot where he and old Zeb had paused the previous day. It was harder to concentrate on the work ahead of him now; somehow he felt as though his brain was slowly melting. His eyes roved to the summit of the cliff, the goal he would have to attain. He could see the place to which he had climbed; the same clump of sagebrush. And, then, it seemed, he saw something more; a thing which made him gasp with sudden fear.

The wolf at which he had shot! The animal old Zeb had talked about. There wasn't one chance in ten thousand it could be the same—yet somehow he knew that it was. He had wounded her the previous day, so that she had dragged herself off to die; of that he was quite sure, yet here she was back again, to haunt him! Just the gray shade of her there at the edge of the sagebrush, hiding. But it seemed to his disordered mind that he could see her head, grinning at him.

Or was it old Zeb himself? The hat of the old prospector, just showing where he lay hidden, waiting for Slade to approach? The man croaked hysterical defiance and raised his gun which, despite his delirium, he had not thrown away. He'd have to take no chances; one shot must do the trick. He centered all his faculties on the effort, steadying himself with a momentary rally of will power. The rifle spoke, and Slade tried to cheer. For he knew he hadn't missed!

He cast the gun from him then, knowing that he'd need every ounce of unhampered strength to make the climb, and began to work slowly up the rock slide. Every step was torture, but the thought that held him to it was that up there lay life—precious water that would clear his brain, save him from madness.

Yet it was slow work, painfully slow.

Inch by inch he crept slowly upward, pausing now and then to gather fresh strength.

He made it at last, as a man will battle to the end to maintain life. The last rock was passed, and the ground leveled out. He lay there gasping for a full minute before he could rally long enough to search for the canteen. Gone was all thought of the wolf, even of old Zeb himself. He croaked in triumph as he came on it, beside the sagebrush clump.

Tremblingly his fingers fumbled with the stopper, and at last it came free. He could hardly contain himself as he canted it to his lips. But no water came. Desperately he sucked at the mouth of the container; then, as the realization came to him that the canteen was dry, he expended his last effort in hurling the deceitful thing from him. Yet it was a weak effort. The canteen rattled hollowly against the rocks a bare ten feet away. But Slade did not hear it. His head had dropped to his arms, and he lay very still. The teeth of the desert had bitten deeply at last.

Shadows of the peaks were lengthened out when Zeb Prentiss, following a twisting trail in the sand, reached the foot of the promontory. Whatever the mood of the old man when he had set out to overtake his fleeing partner, it was mild enough now. The tracks made by Slade told their own story to old Zeb, wise in the ways of the desert.

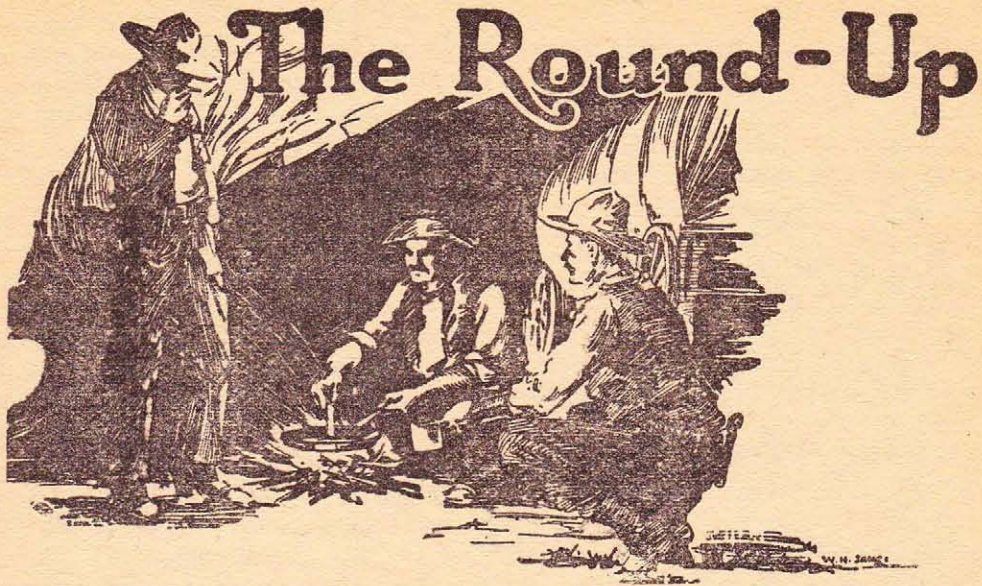
He had hurried faster, hoping that he could be in time, for he still had water with him, and he knew that Slade had none.

Yet when he saw the discarded rifle lying in the sand at the foot of the cliff, he knew that he had been too late. Would-be murderer though Slade was, and deserving of no sympathy, nevertheless to the old man he was a partner who had been merely led astray by his own cupidity. A greenhorn in the desert, too, was enough to evoke consideration. The gun lying there, and the tracks leading to the rock slide—these things spelled tragedy to the blue eyes of old Zeb Prentiss.

Slowly he climbed the cliff, reaching the top just as the sun went down in a blaze of glory behind the distant hills. Intuition told him what he would find, yet his eyes did open in surprise at sight of the canteen. So here was the place Slade had left it, and, remembering, had come back to get it. Caked with alkali dust as it was, it was the color of a bleached-out hat—or the coat of a small desert wolf. Zeb turned the thing in his hands, and then part of the mystery came to him; but the real explanation, as seen through the eyes of the crazed Slade, he would never know.

"Plumb crazy he was at the last," remarked the old man softly. "He done threw away his only chance for life." He turned the canteen again, until he saw through the bottom of it the jagged hole made by Slade's rifle bullet.





'MEMBER how we got talkin' 'bout crows not so very many evenin's ago? Well, here is A. V. St. John, of Elmira, New York, who's got some mighty interestin' dope on them old black caw, caws:

"**BOSS AND FOLKS OF THE ROUND-UP:** I am a regular reader of the WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, though not a subscriber, and while reading the latest issue this evening, made the discovery that I have been missing a lot of good stuff by not always reading the Round-up, and I want to plead guilty, beg forgiveness and promise to be good in the future.

"Referring to what Brother White of West Virginia says about crows that talk, I can say that I have often heard people hereabouts speak of splitting the tongue, also of cutting the tongue, to make them talk, but I have never seen the operation performed nor have I examined the tongues afterward; however, I have known them to become good talkers. I have also known crows taken when young to become good talkers even though their tongues had never been tampered with in any way. They are about as good as any parrot and far tamer and more to be trusted at

large. A tame crow is very mischievous and much given to pilfering small—and especially bright—articles and hiding them.

"We have another American bird that can be taught to talk exceedingly well in the magpie, only he is a bird of moods. I mean by that that if he takes a notion to talk, all well and good, but if he makes up his mind to be quiet, no amount of talk or persuasion will induce him to say a single word till the spirit moves him.

"For the benefit of those who may not be familiar with the magpie, I will say he has the size, shape, motion and habits of our familiar blue jay of the East, but in color is black and white instead of blue and white like the jay. I first met the magpie in northern Utah, but the best talker of the species I ever saw was in a livery barn in Columbus, Indiana.

"Should this effort escape the wastebasket, I'd be glad at another time to touch on the habits, nests, eggs, et cetera, of the crow.

"Nothing that I read gives me more comfort than the WESTERN STORY, and I wish to compliment the author of 'White Wolf' on his insight into the nature of animals."

"Regular Army," who will talk to you about the endurance powers of horses, and also explain why he does not give his name, commands our complete attention:

"BOSS AND FOLKS: Just finished reading your column in the Round-up section and want to say a few words in regard to the number of miles a horse will travel in one day at a lope. Though it never has been tried at a lope in the army, I can give you an idea of hikes made in the army by two or three cavalry regiments.

"Troop G, of the Eleventh Cavalry, during the war with Spain, in Cuba, marched one hundred and thirty-eight miles in twelve hours. Incidentally I might say that this troop holds the world's record for a march and endurance hike. At the end of the hike all men were present, and all horses were in the best of shape, except that they were tired.

"The Twelfth Cavalry in 1911, in the Philippines, marched ninety miles through the rocky country there, in pursuit of the Moros.

"The other one is the Seventh Cavalry, now stationed at Fort Bliss, Texas, and I can say quite a few of the people who made this hike will verify my statement. In 1916, during the hostilities with Mexico, in eleven days the Third Squadron of the Seventh Cavalry marched eight hundred and eighty-six miles in eleven days into Mexico over the mountains and uncut paths.

"This is all I have to say. Pardon me for not giving my name, but in the service it is best not to. I am an old soldier, nineteen years in, and most of it has been spent in the mounted service in the cavalry and field artillery, and am a native of the West."

While we are on horses, we'll hear a man who shoes 'em, J. H. Wilson, 921 South Seventh Street, San Jose, California.

"BOSS AND FOLKS: I have read the WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE for two years without missing one, and I don't think there has been even an ad I have missed. Now, if you will excuse me for butting in, I would like to say a few things about horses. I have been a blacksmith for about thirty years. I have shod pretty nearly every kind of a horse there is, and I know that you can handle most of them with kindness. I have shod some that other smiths had to throw to shoe, and I never put a rope on them. The great trouble with most men is that they are afraid of them. If a horse finds out you are afraid of him, you may just as well leave him alone. I never allowed a horse to be whipped in my shop, not by my men nor its owner. If a man brought a horse into my shop and started to whip him, I simply told him if he wanted me to shoe him just leave him alone or take him out of my shop.

"Now, about six-guns—I am used to Colts and Smith & Wesson. I started with a Colt old cap and ball when I was twelve years old, and I have had a gun ever since. I worked for Miller and Gus two years, and I used most of my wages on ammunition. Now I don't want any one to think I am bragging, but I was a pretty good shot. I am fifty-six years old now, but with my automatic there don't many jacks get away."

Here's some more shootin' and—a little poem on the subject thrown in. What do you know about that! R. E. Monroe, New Castle, Indiana, speaks:

"BOSS OF THE ROUND-UP AND FOLKS: Excuse my sticking in around the circle, but as a reader and an admirer of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE for six years, I believe I am within my rights. Buddies, I've handled guns some, or believe I have anyway, having spent five years in service with Uncle Sam. I've

carried .45s, sidearms, sixes, and automatics, and shot 'em too. They are good guns. I prefer the auto for its speed and recoil. If kept clean and handled correctly, it will not jam. With your holster strapped to your leg at an even length with your hand, it will give you service unsurpassable. At least I found it so.

"I would like to hear of others who think the auto is a good gun to cotton to. Now, I'll give you that little poem

the boss was kiddin' me about. Don't go throwin' anything, now, not till I get a chance to duck behind that chuck wagon. I'm off:

"That's a mean-looking gat you've got, buddy,

Has a bore as large as a bowl,
I've seen the time, with a friend like that

Men have gotten out of a mighty mean hole."

IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE OF WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE

ACRES OF UNREST

A SERIAL

By MAX BRAND

It was all a game—a cruel, ruthless game—this pitting the one brother's son against the other. Charlie was a normal, strong, healthy son of the West. But Peter had been made strangely strong by ruin and strangely weak by triumph.

JIM CROW OF VIO

A NOVEL

By GEORGE GILBERT

The love of the rich, crafty rancher for the girl and her father's ranch; the girl's rejection of his attentions; the suspicion attached to the puncher she really loves—and over it all flutters the black wings of a talking crow.

ROCK-BOUND HONESTY

By ERNEST HAYCOX

Old Man Cruze loved his daughter and his reputation for honesty. And his temptation arrived at the same time that his girl was in dire need of money.

AND OTHER STORIES

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For June Joy—blue skies, the open road, a knapsack, and a Hollow Tree emblem.

Twenty-five cents in stamps or coin sent to The Hollow Tree, Western Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Ave., New York, will bring you either a button for your coat lapel, or a pin. In ordering be sure to state which style you wish.



Miss Helen Rivers, who conducts this department, will see to it that you will be able to make friends with other readers, though thousands of miles may separate you. It must be understood that Miss Rivers will undertake to exchange letters only between men and men, boys and boys, women and women, girls and girls. Letters will be forwarded direct when correspondents so wish; otherwise they will be answered here. Be sure to inclose forwarding postage when sending letters through The Hollow Tree.

THE argument about the Golden State, started a while back by R. C. N., in which native sons and Gangsters from other States, have had their say, has aroused so much interest that letters are pouring into The Tree on the subject. I wish it were possible to read all of them out in full.

Here's one couple, Mr. and Mrs. F. Camp, of 303 Knickerbocker Avenue, Rochester, New York, who write: "Mr. R. C. N. may be right or he may be wrong about conditions in California, but here is one family that is going to find out for itself. I am a good printing-press man, also a first-class barber and have been out of work only two weeks in seventeen years; maybe that is why I feel sure of finding work out there." If there are Gangsters in Southern California who care to send their address, Mr. and Mrs. Camp will be glad to look them up and shake hands with them.

This advice is offered to California-bound folks by a man from Montana, who has lived in the Golden State for seven years: "Look over the State, travel up the coast, stay a few days in each town. You will soon find one that

will suit you. There are millions of acres of land undeveloped in California just waiting for somebody with backbone to go ahead and develop them." This brother also says that he landed in the State with eight children and nothing but his hands and the clothes they wore, and there has never been a day since that he could not get work. He is a builder.

M. W. S. of Gridley has always been able to get work in California, too, he states, if he would accept the price offered. "You will find drawbacks in every State," says he.

The Nevadan has a few words to put in. "California can boast many Easterners who make their living here and who are loyal and true. June Rose, Golden State Girl, also Polly, its people of your caliber who make life worth living."

A. J. S. of Hayward contradicts Polly's statement that California has as much snow as any other State. Says he: "The lowlands are practically free of snow; the only places where it does snow to any great extent are those above three thousand feet elevation. Regarding the possibility of securing work at

a good wage, conditions in the southern part of the State are not as good as they are in the central and northern parts."

W. L. Proctor of Dallas, Texas, writes: "An Indignant Californian says that a little valley fifty miles long and thirty miles wide puts out over two thirds of the world's supply of fruit. To take the statistics of the United States this statement must be all wrong, as Arkansas, Missouri, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Texas all supply a good portion of our fruit. Tennessee and Arkansas have been the two leading States for several years in strawberries, and Arkansas has the largest peach orchard in the world." Anybody else anything to say about this?

A native daughter wants to put in her bit.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: California! It is a God-given boon to mankind. Do you wish snow in winter? Go to the northern part of the State. Sunshine and flowers for the winter? Go to southern California. Work? Anywhere, on this condition, that you are sincere in wanting work. In the northern part are great agricultural ranches, lumber mills, construction work. The southern part is different. There are small truck gardens, chicken ranches, citrus groves, oil fields. I wonder if some people know that oil is what makes it possible for Long Beach to live? The people built their city on oil, by oil, and now they eat and clothe themselves through that oil.

I live in Long Beach, but have been from the Oregon line to Mexico three times and across the State five times, so I've seen a great deal of California. I say, come to California, but do not come expecting wealth to fall into your hands. Health will come to you unbidden, but wealth must be sought. By wealth I do not mean only money, but joy and contentment and then the money will follow.

MRS. H. RAY HAMILTON.

751 Newport Avenue, Long Beach, Calif.

And another.

DEAR HOLLOW TREE AND SAN DIEGO: San Diego, you are all wrong; we do raise oranges in northern California. While we do not have groves, all the same you can find oranges in Shasta County. As for the mud you mention,

I don't understand. We don't know what mud is. And as for fruit, San Diego, you will have to show me where you raise more than we do. I can take you to Siskiyou County and on one small place can show you every kind you want to look for, and lots of it. I am afraid our thousand wonders has it all over you folks. I do know the State from end to end, San Diego. SHASTA DAISY.

June Rose, Shasta Daisy would be glad to hear from you.

Barney McManus, of Nevada, wants to join in the argument.

DEAR GANG: Why do ninety per cent of the people who go to California and return to their native States eventually drift back to the Golden State? I have traveled in over half the States in the Union and am in a position to know.

Now, H. C. M. of Los Angeles, you say you have been there for five years and only worked about one fifth of the time. Did you really want work or didn't you? If you went out and looked for work and couldn't find it, your case is very strange.

And surely, F. D. H. of Oakland, you don't think San Francisco and Oakland are all the cities in California, do you? Have you tried going to any other part of the State and seeing how the climate there affects your wife's health? If you'll just go south, where there is a dry climate, I'm sure her health will improve immensely.

California has this State or any other I was ever in beat a mile. When I get back and feel like migrating you may be sure it will all be done within the boundaries of sunny California.

Looks like an argument within an argument has "done riz up:" northern California vs. southern California.

DEAR HOLLOW TREE AND SHASTA DAISY: Shasta Daisy, I'll back you up until Los Angeles incorporates San Francisco. My word, San Diego, didn't you know that L. A. completely covers southern California? My home is in Los Angeles, but I haven't lived there for several years; I don't savvy Mex and am not an Iowan farmer.

San Diego, since you left the old folks back in Iowa and settled in San Diego, you have never been north, or you would know that the entire Sacramento Valley raises oranges; also oranges are raised as far north as Cloverdale. I have seen train loads of fruit leave Rose-

ville, one every hour, night and day, for three entire weeks.

Your Rim-of-the-world Drive is a joke compared to our Redwood Hi-way. Our coast scenic drive passes through the largest trees in the world, through the towns where the flags of five nations have flown, through a petrified forest, through the land of a thousand smokes, past a whaling station and past a redwood tree that is the largest known, a tree so large that if it should be cut down, an eight-room one-story house could be built on the stump.

We have the largest artificial lake in the world, the most crooked railroad, the largest egg center, also the largest university in the world. We produce the most hops, prunes, lumber, and gold. We have the Yosemite, the only active volcano, and the bad lands.

A. S. BUDWORTH.

Camp 5, Burney, Calif.

F. R. McCoy, 448½ South Campbell Street, Springfield, Missouri, says he's just got to horn in on this California talk. "I have seen California from top to bottom not as a tourist but as a working man. Most any of the northern part is always good for work if a man wants to work and is not too particular for the time being. If you want information about conditions in the Golden State, write me, inclosing a stamp, and I'll tell you about both skilled and unskilled labor, or you can write the Chamber of Commerce at San Francisco and they'll tell you."

Earle Farish, 1216-17 Street, Bakersfield, California, who is not a native but has lived for four years in the State, disagrees with H. C. M. about its being

no place for a wage earner. "A mechanic who is worth fifty dollars a week in New York can make seventy-five here," he states. "If you don't believe it, Mr. H. C. M., before you start walking back, drop in and pay us a visit. There is always a demand for A-1 mechanics here and they pay as high as two dollars an hour. So if you want to make that stake to return to New York, come and get it; it's only a hundred and thirty miles from Los Angeles to Bakersfield."

Walsh, from Los Angeles, says:

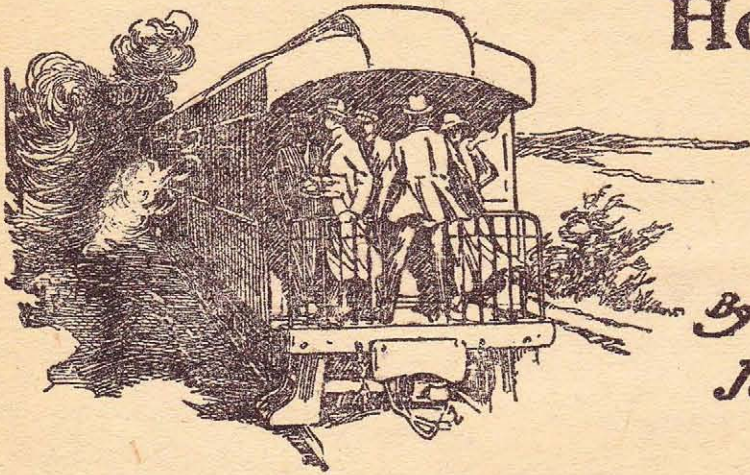
As I see it, the more people that come here, the more there are to feed; consequently, the number of grocery stores should increase, hiring help. The canneries, bakeries, and slaughterhouses would need more help for their machinery, baking, et cetera. Then, too, here is the end of the railroad coming from the East. The shops of the Southern Pacific, Union Pacific, and Santa Fe are immense. I say that work for the right man is not hard to get. To contradict a statement of H. C. M., only apprentices in their second stage get the wages he wrote of. The conscientious man, knowing his business, gets from fifty dollars upward.

What about the orange, lemon, and walnut growers south of the city here, and the rose gardens south of San Francisco? How did their owners begin? There are thousands of different opportunities waiting for the right seeker. But it's like prospecting: hard work.

I will admit that many of the laborers here are Mexicans, but they are the most willing workers. We have a warm climate here, their climate, and we are close to their original homes.



Where To Go and How To Get There



By
John North

It is our aim in this department to be of genuine practical help and service to those who wish to make use of it. Don't hesitate to write to us and give us the opportunity of assisting you to the best of our ability.

Address all communications to John North, care of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

WESTERN TRAILS—EL CAMINO REAL

THIS modern motor road fully keeps up the reputation of its name as a "royal road," Camino Real, given to it in the old days of Spanish dominion in California. As public roads in Great Britain are king's highways, so in Spain they are royal roads, and while this route was familiarly known to the natives as the "Trail of the Padres," it was El Camino Real officially and has retained its Spanish name.

For seventy-five years the padres traveled along this road to and from their various missions from San Francisco to San Diego, sometimes on foot, sometimes astride hardy little burros, packed to the limit with necessaries for the journey and supplies for the mission houses. In course of time, the trail became a well-beaten and popular path for pack trains and riders; then the stage coach rattled over its long

course, followed by the railway. Now there is a constantly increasing automobile traffic that rolls merrily over the smoothly-paved highway, built to meet modern conditions and giving pleasure to thousands of motorists on every day of the whole year.

It has been said that the climate on the California coast is the most delightful in the United States, and some go so far as to affirm that there is nothing to equal it in the whole wide world. Certain it is that in summer the nights are cool enough to require a blanket, while in winter the warm ocean current keeps the temperature at a comfortable figure. El Camino Real is clear of snow during the winter and is beautiful at all seasons, with no scorching sun in summer and no pinching cold winds in winter.

While flowers bloom on the ocean side of the mountain range throughout

the year, the spring is the time when the region is in its full beauty, for at this season the whole length of the route is in bloom, while miles of blossoming orchards in the vicinity are a delight to behold.

Many take the trip over El Camino Real simply for the pleasure and the health-giving qualities of the outing, but there are others who do so with a view to picking out a future home site in a section where the climate is dependable. These should not neglect the many side trips that invite the motorist to turn from the main highway and follow a well-graveled or dirt road, leading to some historic spot or to a stretch of seashore or flourishing orange groves, or perhaps to some famous hot springs of proved medicinal qualities. All these will be of interest, whether one is out for pleasure or with the idea of hitting upon a location for a little farm, or for a place in which to start business anew, or for a spot to which one may retire from time to time to rest from the world's cares and enjoy nature's gifts at their best.

Leaving San Diego, where we arrived last week by the Old Spanish Trail, El Camino Real runs north for many miles, following closely the ocean shore, and passing the picturesque ruins of the famous Mission of San Juan Capistrano, which have been partly restored. Every Sunday during the summer months services are held here, and the mission pageant is presented for the benefit of visitors and to raise funds for the further restoration of the ruins.

There are good hotel accommodations all along the many miles of this historic highway, from the more expensive

types to the most modest, and a number of very excellent camping sites are to be found within easy distance of the cities.

From San Juan Capistrano, the route leaves the coast and runs inland through the towns of Santa Ana and Anaheim to Los Angeles. This city is known far and wide for its well-paved boulevards and highways, as well as for its orange groves and orchards. No motorist passes through without making a good stop-over. All are welcome, and every accommodation to suit all purses may be found here.

GOOD ADVICE FROM SCOUT LAKE

DEAR MR. NORTH: I was interested in the letter in *WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE* asking about Willow Bunch, Saskatchewan. I have lived sixteen miles west of Willow Bunch, near Scout Lake, for some time. It is twelve miles south of Verwood on the Canadian National Railway, which is not yet working there, as it has only just been finished.

The land is rolling prairie and is the most fertile in Canada. The price ranges from fifteen to forty dollars an acre, and there are lots of farms for sale. The best way to get them is to go out among the farmers. The hardest part is to get into a district where the water is good, and this should be found out before buying. The best way is to live among the farmers for a while. They don't charge any more for food and lodging than others. It is good, also, to observe the customs of the country and not try to give the old-timers too many points on etiquette. They might not take kindly to the new ideas.

If any readers wish to write, call, or radio, my address is Section 2, Township 5, Range 30, west of 2d Meridian, Scout Lake, Saskatchewan, Canada. FRED W. SCHWENN.

And there you are! Any one interested certainly has Brother Schwenn's full address, and no letter should go astray.



MISSING

This department conducted in duplicate in DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE and WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, thus giving readers double service, is offered free of charge to our readers. Its purpose is to aid them in getting in touch with persons of whom they have lost track.

While it will be better to use your name in the notice, we will print your request "blind" if you prefer. In sending "blind" notices, you must, of course, give us your right name and address, so that we can forward promptly any letters that may come for you. We reserve the right to reject any notice that seems to us unsuitable. Because "copy" for a magazine must go to the printer long in advance of publication, don't expect to see your notice till a considerable time after you send it.

If it can be avoided, please do not send us a "General Delivery" post-office address, for experience has proved that those persons who are not specific as to address often have mail that we send them returned to us marked "not found." It would be well to notify us of any change in your address.

Now, readers, help those whose friends or relatives are missing, as you would like to be helped if you were in a similar position.

WARNING.—Do not forward money to any one who sends you a letter or telegram, asking for money "to get home," et cetera, until you are absolutely certain that the author of such telegram or letter is the person you are seeking.

McGILLVRAY, HANNAH, and Mrs. **ANNIE WHITE.**—Last heard from about twelve years ago. Their brother would be glad to hear about them. Colin McGillvray, Ocean Falls, British Columbia, Canada.

ANDERSON, BOB.—Left Mexico, Missouri, about 1922. Over six feet tall, blue eyes, ruddy complexion, brown hair. Have important news that you should know. I won't betray your whereabouts if you don't want me to. D. L. Hollingsworth, 1019 Benton Boulevard, Kansas City, Missouri.

CHURCH, ACE ROBERT.—Missing twenty-four years. Last seen at Duluth. From there he went to British Columbia and bought timberland. He is large, fair, blue eyes, stout and tall. His sister would like to hear from him. Mrs. Lidda Weeks, Box 31, Consecow, Ontario, Canada.

MURPHY, DAN.—Born in Ogdensburg, New York. Past seventy-two years of age. His stepfather's name was John Lyons, and his mother, Mary. His brother, Edward Murphy, would like to get in touch with him or his descendants. Please send any information to James Stanley, 314 9th Street, Troy, New York.

WAGNER, HELEN and **JOHN F., Jr.,** or **GENE BONNER.**—There are several checks held at the bank for him. Come at once to save trouble. Mother, 1880 Quincy Drive, Bakersfield, California.

BASSETT, OWEN FRANK HENRY.—Thirteen years old, large for age, weighing one hundred and forty-five pounds, brown hair, blue eyes. Left home February 25, 1926. Write to your mother or father or sister, and everything will be all right. Mrs. Pearl Keck, 736 Briar Place, Chicago, Illinois.

LEE.—Of Boston. Get very lonesome out here. Would be glad to hear from you. Billy Schulz, General Delivery, Smackover, Arkansas.

ROBINSON, ALFRED PETER.—Was a jockey in Paddington, London, England. Came to Halifax, Nova Scotia, about twenty years ago, and rode in races there during the summer. Disappeared a day or so after. His eldest sister would like to hear from him. Mrs. Kate E. Phipps, 89 Hopedale Street, Hopedale, Massachusetts.

SPRANKLE, FRED, Jr.—Was in Spreckles, California, a year ago. Would be grateful for any news about him. Address S. G., care of this magazine.

O'CONNOR, RICHARD STEPHEN.—Please write to your brothers, John and Bill DeFrance, Kentfield, California.

MONTGOMERY, GEORGE.—A half-breed Cherokee Indian. Last heard of in Wisconsin. Any information will be greatly appreciated by his cousin, Mrs. Neva Montgomery Gallagher, 448 5th Street, Bremerton, Washington.

NELSON, W. F.—Was in the oil business here in 1921. It is very important that I hear from him. C. O. Iley, Box 189, Gorman, Texas.

PICKUP, CHARLES.—Left home October, 1924. Last heard of in Illinois. Fifty-seven years old, short, gray eyes, hair partly gray, scar on his nose and upper lip. Please come home to your wife, or write. Everything will be forgiven. Mrs. Charles Pickup, Burlingame, Kansas.

ROBERTSON, ETTA DAY.—Please write to an old friend. The last known address was Queen City, Missouri. Mrs. W. H. Kelley, 400 N. Hancock Street, Ottumwa, Iowa.

BARNABY or HARRINGTON, MAMIE.—Died about sixteen years ago. Her daughter would like to hear from any of her aunts or uncle. Miss Josie Barnaby, Box 45, Hollister, Idaho.

ROSE, ALICE.—Was in Mineral Springs, Alabama, ten years ago. Her sister would like to hear from her. Bessie Trotter, Wolfpit, Kentucky.

FOSTER, NATHANIEL.—Last heard from in 1898, when he left Smith County Texas, and went to Canada. He was then sixty-five years old. Had seven boys, George, Sam, Bill, Grover, Bud, Henry, and Joe. His granddaughter would like to hear from any of them. Mrs. Vernie Douglas, Prescott, Arizona.

MURRAY, RANDLE.—Colored. Missing from Philadelphia about twelve years. His mother would like to hear from him. Mrs. Laura Murray, care of Mrs. Daisy Thompson, 739 Baltic Avenue, Atlantic City, New Jersey.

MULLEN, E. D.—The second husband of your divorced wife wishes to communicate with you. Important. Carl Wilson, 1448 East 37th Street, Los Angeles, California.

LOWRY, JIM.—Enlisted from Threshoon, Ontario, in 1916. Fair, age twenty-eight. Please write to your long-lost sister, Teenie, care of this magazine.

BROOKS, ELMER and HARVEY.—Were taxi drivers in Rochester, in 1923. Please write to your sister, Teenie, care of this magazine.

CROWDER, JOHN CRAIGEN.—Born in McMinnville, Tennessee, December, 1886. Last heard of at Hollywood, California, about a year ago. Important that he should write to his brother, Edward William Crowder, care of Assistant Engineer, Southern Pacific Company, Sacramento, California.

LAYTON, LILLIAN.—About twenty-five years old, weight one hundred and ten pounds, height five feet, dark hair and eyes. Last heard of at Cheyenne, Wyoming, where she was working in a restaurant, about 1920. Please write to G. W. W., care of this magazine.

SLADE, OTTO.—Left Jerome, Arizona, March, 1925. Please write to the one who loves you still. W. M. S., Box 624.

SHIRLEY, JACK.—Was in the navy in 1922. Please write to your old pal of the C. E. F., at Woodstock, New Brunswick, Canada. "Peck."

HARNERD, WALTER.—Your old friend who lived on the Yates place, and picked cotton with you for your grandfather Mullin, wants to hear from you. After nineteen years that we have been apart I still need you. M., care of this magazine.

WILLIAMS, CLINTON.—Lived on Stockholm Street, Baltimore, Maryland, in 1919. Please communicate with Clayton, care of this magazine.

HARMAN, SOLOMON.—Left home when seventeen years of age, and went to White Sulphur Springs. Later he married Mrs. Hayes, and had one son, named Henry. His grandchildren would like to hear from him. Samuel E. Harman, 823 North Hazel Street, Danville, Illinois.

JEWELL, PHILIP H.—Your mother begs you to write to her. She has news for you. Mrs. Mabel Jewell Wright, 3906 Beechwood Avenue, Pine Lawn, Missouri.

SPRULL, LEO.—Any one who recognizes this name and can give any information that will help to establish his identity please write to Mrs. E. A. Wright, 3906 Beechwood Avenue, Pine Lawn, Missouri.

EVANS, JOHN EDWARD.—Age twenty-one, tall. Left Milwaukee, January, 1924. Send letter in care of this magazine and I will send you our new address. Rene.

FINNEY, WILLIAM A.—Your buddy from the U. S. S. "Texas" has been trying two years to get in touch with you. Ben F. Willems, 2944A Greer Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri.

HOLM or HOLMES, JESSE.—Last heard of in Whipple Barracks, Prescott, Arizona, in October, 1924. Medium height, southern pronunciation. Any information will be appreciated by E. M., care of this magazine.

BERRY, CURLY.—Of Ohio. Last heard of at Prescott, Arizona. Please write to Ed, care of this magazine.

STONE, R. L.—Rumored to have been killed by a freight train, prior to Christmas, 1925, between Muskogee and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Address Lena Stone, 917 Greenville, Lagrange, Georgia.

O'BRIEN, J. W.—Last seen in East St. Louis, Illinois, February, 1926. I love you and my heart is broken. Your wife, Anna.

FARGO, Mrs. EVA KOCH.—Last seen at Willmar, Minnesota, prior to Christmas, 1925, between Muskogee and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Address Lena Stone, 917 Greenville, Lagrange, Georgia.

L. E.—Arrived well. Hope Lillian and George are all right. Expect to hear from you soon. Love, Chandler, care of this magazine.

VINSON, WESLEY LEROY.—Still look and pray for your return. Dot is married, and I am all alone now. Please write. Mother, A. V. D.

BUCKLEY, DAVID.—Photographer by trade. Last heard of at Digby, Nova Scotia. His son, Nelson, is seriously ill. Please write to Leo Buckley, 32 Grove Street, Taunton, Massachusetts.

BEATTIE, THOMAS.—Left Belfast, Ireland, about thirty-seven years ago. Had dark, curly hair at that time. Believed to be in America. B. McComb, 2119 West 31st Street, Los Angeles, California.

VAUGHAN, Mrs. E. M.—Last heard from in Los Angeles, in September, 1925. Any one knowing her present address please notify Norman F. Gray, Columbia Steel Corporation, Pittsburg, California.

JEAN, BURRIS.—Sixteen years old, short, black hair and eyes. Left home February, 1926. Your mother is heart-broken. Let us know where you are, and we will send your clothes and whatever you need. Dad, E. W. Jean, Route 3, Farmersville, Texas.

MARTIN, BILL.—Please write. It is important. Am ill at my mother's. Troy.

FISHER, MARVIN.—Will you write to me? Lost your address. Troy Davis, 1404 Brown Street, Oroville, California.

PEADING, EVA KING.—I am very lonely. Please write to E., Company G, 35th Infantry, Schofield Barracks, H. T.

LIGDAY, FRANCIS, and MAURICE, REBOUILLET.—Last seen when we separated about ten miles from Shanghai, China, during the rebellion in 1924. Have important news. Please write to K. J. L. C.

JENNINGS, ERNEST B.—Last heard of in Holliday, North Dakota, in 1918, when a man by the name of Blake put him in a home. His brother would like to hear from him. A. B. Jennings, U. S. S. "Reno" (303), San Diego, California.

JENNINGS, M. C.—Last heard of at Sioux City, Iowa. His son would like to hear from him. R. B. Jennings, U. S. S. "Reno" (303), San Diego, California.

ARNOLD.—Write to Chester at Eldorado, Arkansas, care of American Gro. Company.

ARCAND or GRANT, DAVE.—I cannot believe you went away from me of your own accord. I need you. Write or come home, all is forgiven. Your wife, Mrs. D. A.

JACKSON, JOSEPH.—Went to England, October, 1915. Forty-nine years old, short, turning gray. Any one knowing his whereabouts please communicate with his wife, Mary A. Jackson, 1703 Fourth Avenue West, Vancouver B. C., Canada.

ANDERSON, CHARLES F.—Received your letter O. K. Everything is forgiven. I will come to you. Write soon. Your wife, Gladys.

WILLIAMS, HARRY F.—Formerly of Martins Ferry, Ohio. Please write to your daughter, Violet Marie Williams, 1932 South Broadway, Martins Ferry, Ohio.

RELATIVES.—Who are in Ireland, New York, and Chicago, Illinois, please write to me. I was born in New York City forty-two years ago. Please send any helpful information to William P. Everard, 619 Elm Street, Rockford, Illinois.

GRAY, ARIETTIE ALICE.—Disappeared from Durango, Colorado, in 1918. She is about twenty years old. Her mother is losing her health worrying about her. Please write to her sister, Mrs. Gertrude Brown, 469 East Mountain Street, Pasadena, California.

OLAN, EDGAR, and FRANK WILSON.—Your mother needs you, as "Mike" was killed last summer. Edgar is about thirty-two years old and was a sailor when last heard from. Please write to Helen Ahlgren, Evanston, Wyoming.

TURNER, RICHARD.—Last heard from in Breckenridge, Texas, in 1920. Please write to me. S. E., care of this magazine.

WATSON, MUSE.—Last heard from at Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Write to S. E., care of this magazine.

MORRISON, HARVEY.—Formerly lived at Houston, Texas. Please write to your old friend at once. M. E., care of this magazine.

H. E. FRIEC.—Of Pittsburgh, or Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Please write to W. J. Sake, P. O. Box 382, Placerville, California.

HAMILTON, Mrs. ROBERT.—Last heard from at Wheatling, Wyoming. Her mother is very anxious to find her. Address Mrs. Marilla Harbison, 243 Ute Avenue, Grand Junction, Colorado.

BUZZ.—Please communicate with me. N. I. M.

WELLS, HARRY GARRY.—Last heard of aboard U. S. S. "New York," second-class fireman. Write to an old shipmate, T. P. Holt, 2018 Ross Avenue, Dallas, Texas.

SETTLE, BILL.—Have not heard from you since you left for France. Write to R. A. Smith, Pampa, Texas. Your cousin, Ora.

HALE, EDNA.—Medium build, middle age, widely traveled. Last heard of at Bellevue Terrace Hotel, Los Angeles, California, in 1923. Kindly communicate with your old friend, Martha Fraser, Route 2, Rocks, Maryland.

LEROY, WILLIAM.—Twenty-six years of age, black hair and eyes. Last heard from at Sioux City, Iowa, about five years ago. His mother and sister would like to hear from him. Address H. R. H., care of this magazine.

CHRISTIAN, Mrs. EVA.—Last heard of at Clarendon, Arkansas. Please notify Mrs. Tom Love, Route 4, Greenbrier, Arkansas.

BEAGLE, CHARLOTTE.—Last heard of at Syracuse, New York, in 1921. Any information would be appreciated by Harold Lord, 721 S. Iron Street, Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania.

GARRET, ALICE.—Of Richmond, Virginia, who was camping at Bruce Memorial Park with the Robert E. Lee School for Girls, in 1924, please write to me at once. Lawrence Slawson, Noroton Heights, Connecticut.

EWALDT, NILS, and THORSTEN BERGER.—Thirty-three and twenty-three years of age, left Memphis, Tennessee, bound for Hollywood, California, with the intention of going to work for Mr. Thumberg, who, according to their statements, was a contractor in Hollywood for building movie scenery. Nothing has been heard from these boys, who are of Swedish nationality, speaking English fairly well. Please inform O. B., care of this magazine.

LEONARD, ARCHIE.—Saw him in Los Angeles, California, in 1915. Information in regard to him will be appreciated by Mrs. Emma A. Kimberlin, 653½ 3rd Street, San Bernardino, California.

J. H. C.—We all feel to blame and will do anything to make things right. Please, Frenchie, try to understand and forgive me. Will always love you, and cannot forget. Please write, if only a line. Your wife, F., 375 Main Street.

BRYSON, JIM.—Last heard of at Track City, Tennessee. His nephew would like to hear from him or any of his relatives. Ulysses A. Bryson, Box 5, Bruceton, Tennessee.

CHURCH, CHARLEY E.—Went from Goderich, Canada, to his farm in Saskatchewan. His nephew would like to hear from him. Mrs. May Berringer, 813 13th Street, Port Huron, Michigan.

NEBRASKA JOE.—Please write to your old pal again, as I have many things to tell you. Remember Roman Bay and you will know whom this is. Bob W.

F. W. J.—Write to me in care of this magazine. Your wife, G.

FELT, L. W.—Rather stout. Last heard from in Lake City, Colorado, as a mining engineer. Your old friend from Canada would like to hear from you. D. R. Catlin, Box 313, Nederland, Colorado.

THEOBALD, BILL.—English, left leg stiff, about six feet tall, sixty-four years old, brown hair, gray eyes. Last seen in Sacramento, California, in August, 1925. Any information will be gratefully received. E. G., Box 295, Roseville, California.

CAMPBELL, LAURA, EFFIE, EARL, ALBERT, FRANCIS, WILLIE, and RUSSELL.—An old friend wishes to hear from them. Left Stockton, California, ten years ago for Canada. Mrs. Francis Vierth, 119 Redwood Avenue, Modesto, California.

BRUNELLE, ARTHUR L.—Was in Petersham in about 1900, and later in Holyoke, Massachusetts. Please communicate with G. McL. Toombs, Box 419, Sparks, Nevada.

WILLARD, JOUBERT.—Formerly of Hutton Valley, Missouri. Last heard from near Pueblo, Colorado. Please send any information to Mrs. Ada Reynolds, 267 East 32nd Street, Portland, Oregon.

ROSE, DON.—Heard from five years ago at Brooklyn, New York. Please write to Melva Deale, 2002 Edmondson Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland.

TITUS, or WATSON, CATHERINE.—Left her home in Woodstock, Ontario, in 1883, at the age of fifteen. Her anxious sister would like to hear some news of her. Mrs. Maggie Minard, 103 Victoria Street, Brantford, Ontario, Canada.

MUDGE.—I am very anxious to locate you, and to be of any help within my power. F. M., care of this magazine.

RUSHING, EDWARD.—Please write to your old buddy, who was in Battery D, First F. A., Fort Sill, Oklahoma. John D. Childs, R. F. D. 2, Box 105, Davis, Oklahoma.

NICKLOW, QUINCY H.—Left June 21, 1925, for Pittsburg. Twenty-nine years of age, brown eyes and hair, fair complexion and tall. Was a fireman on the P. B. E. His mother and wife are anxious to hear from him. Address Mrs. Quincy H. Nicklow, care of this magazine.

THORNTON, W. S.—Your wife and two children are still waiting for you to come home. Mrs. W. S. Thornton, Route 4, Box 83, Mebane, North Carolina.

ROSS, IKE, LIZZIE, KATIE, ISAAC, and JAMES.—Would like to find my parents and brothers and sisters. The five children and I are in poor health. Mrs. Roy Miller, R. F. D. 2, Foss, Oklahoma.

NORTON, FRANK.—Last heard of in North Adams, Massachusetts, about twelve years ago. Please write to Joe Jarvis, Box 104, Sarnia, Ontario, Canada.

BRUCE, DAVID.—Last heard of at Middlebury, Vermont, working for Cummins Construction Company. Any one knowing his whereabouts please write to Lillian, care of this magazine.

HONE, CURTIS NELSON.—Mother is failing in health and is anxious to hear from you. Please write to us at once. Your sister, Fayo Goodlet, R. R. 4, Greenfield, Indiana.

NOTICE.—I was kidnaped by a man and brought to Gaffney, South Carolina, fifty-two years ago. This man went under several assumed names, Hale, McHale, McHales, Phalen, McPhalen, and Douglas. At this time, there was being offered a large reward for a stolen boy in the New York "World." Friends become interested in me, and my captor sent me away from Gaffney during the night, with a negro. My kidnaper promised to tell me some time who my parents were, but dropped dead in Florida, in 1915, without giving me any information. He said my birthday was October 19, 1870. Any information as to whom my parents might be will be greatly appreciated. J. C. Dellinger, Denver, North Carolina.

STANBERRY, JOSEPH HOYT.—Missing since January 4, 1926, from his home in Chillicothe, Missouri. His parents have news for him that he will be glad to hear. Address Mrs. N. Stanberry, Chillicothe, Missouri.

JIMMY B.—Won't you write and let me know how you are? I miss you so. Della, Route F, Box 35, Fresno, California.

MARTIN, FRANK PATRICIUS.—Was a sergeant in the marine corps stationed at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, 1922-23. Please write to Marion Mercier, 2 Nichols Avenue, New Market, New Hampshire.

STEVENS, HARRY.—Would like to hear from you. Have mail for you. Mother, Brooklyn, New York.

STEPHANY, JOHN.—Your old pal would like to hear from you. Believed to be in the West. Frank J. McGurk, 2101 Green Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

FRANKLIN, FANNIE CARR.—Last heard from at Cincinnati, Ohio. Gave no address in her letter. Her sister would be glad of any information. Mrs. Minnie Carr Underhill, 3606 Union Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

RICHARDS, BEN J.—Tall, dark hair and eyes. Last heard of at Klamath Falls, Oregon, when he was working at a Mormon's camp on Natron Cutoff. Please write or come at once to S. M. R., Box 585, Nampa, Idaho.

DAILY, CHARLES M. and ROBERT T.—Have sad news for you. Please write to your sister, Mary J. Search, Box 4, Logan, Kansas.

DORMAN, WARD.—Eighteen years of age, dark hair and eyes. Left home two years ago. Write to your mother, Mrs. Mame Dormand, New Kensington, Pennsylvania.

RENO, BOB or BESS, and ROLAND ROBB.—Please write to your sister, Jessie Reed.

CRETHERS or CARRUTHERS, DEWEY.—Was in Everett, Washington, in February, 1924. His father will be grateful for information as to his present whereabouts. J. H. Crethers, R. R. 2, Gleason, Tennessee.

KIDD, MINNIE or BEULAH.—Last heard of in Lagrange, Georgia, about ten years ago. An old friend is anxious to hear from them. Miss Georgia Huss, P. O. Box 726, Wauchula, Florida.

HORN, Mrs. DOLLIE or LAVINA.—Lived in Rosedale, Kansas, in 1920. Is about thirty-two years old. Please write to O. E. Tucker, 528 West California Street, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

MONTY.—June first, am sending letter to Toronto, by name you gave me. De-de isn't well. Hurry and write. Have news for you. Kiddie.

SCHOONMAKER, PETER W.—Stone mason by trade. Last known to be in Spokane, Washington. Your second son is anxious to hear from you. R. W. Schoonmaker, Box 66, Bergland, Michigan.

ISADOR.—Please write to your old pal, as I have some very important news for you. Martin Percy Newcomb, Collecting Company 31, 11th Med. Regiment, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii.

BROWN, WILLIAM.—Would like to hear from my brother, whom I have never seen, as we were placed in different homes after our mother died, over forty years ago. Father was a contractor and builder. Ida Smith, care of this magazine.

WILSON, JIM, or BILL HUNT.—He is needed by a dear friend with whom he made his home for several years. Dark eyes and hair, medium height. W. W. W.

KEISER, Mrs. ETHEL.—Whom I have never seen, as I was adopted when a baby. Have been told that she lived at one time in California. Please write to Ida Smith, care of this magazine.

SMITH, Mr.—Who placed his daughter, Ida, in the Philadelphia Home for Infants, at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, over forty years ago. He is believed to be a contractor and living in or near Chicago, Illinois. Please write to Ida Smith, care of this magazine.

SIMPSON, Mr. and Mrs.—Had four daughters and two sons. Last heard of thirty years ago in Dallas, Texas. Good news for some of them. J. R. Burnett, P. O. Box 387, Kerrville, Texas.

WARREN, PERCY.—Left England in 1910 for United States. Tall, age forty-three. Last heard from at Chicago, Illinois, eleven years ago. Kindly send any information to his mother, or his uncle, William Allen, Route 3, Crookston, Minnesota.

HASTINGS or DAWSON, EDITH.—Formerly of Chicago, Illinois. Lived in Washington, D. C., during 1918. A dear friend would like to hear from her. Address "Billy," care of this magazine.

SHORT, J. W.—Tall, gray eyes, light hair, walks with slight limp. Last heard from at St. Francis, Kansas. His mother and sisters are very anxious to hear from him. Mrs. Sarah Davis, 305 W. Towanda Street, El Dorado, Kansas.

ANDERSON, EDWARD and ELLA.—Any information about them would be appreciated by their only son, Earl Anderson, 318 Maxim Building, Newcastle, Indiana.

LAYMAN, Mrs. MARY K.—Last heard from at Toledo, Ohio. Would appreciate hearing from her or her daughter, Mrs. BERTHA ALLEN. Bertie L. Maxwell, Glenn Ranch, California.

COX, GEORGE H.—Was in Fresno, California, in 1915 or 1916. Please write to your sister, Ada R. Cox, 7797 Wykes Avenue, Detroit, Michigan.

WALTERS, JOHN.—I am still living in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. L.

CAMPBELL, Mrs. DELLA GRAY.—Or any of the old crowd living in Harriette, Michigan, in 1895. Your old neighbor and Claud's nurse. M. M., care of this magazine.

LOWER, H. D.—It is important for him to write to his nephew. Last seen on the road to San Jose, California. Floyd Palmer, R. F. D. 9, Jackson, Michigan.

McCROY, ALEXANDER.—Last heard of at Mount Vernon, Illinois, about 1898, when he was an engineer on the Illinois Central Railroad. Had three brothers, George, Franklin, and James. Please send any information to W. H. McCroy, P. O. Box 286, Tiptonville, Tennessee.

HARRIS, JAMES LUTHER.—Please write to your brother, W. T. Harris, 614 North Second Street, Pekin, Illinois, or your half brother, J. R. Youngblood, Big Cabin, Oklahoma.

KENNETH, H. G.—Your mother believes you are dead, and is grieving too much. We will do anything for you we can. Write to your Aunt Lawsie, 123 S. Seventh Street, Zanesville, Ohio.

BARKSTROM, JOHN F.—Thirty-nine years old, dark, straight hair, blue eyes. Last heard of at Alhambra, Montana, in March, 1914. Please write to your brother, W. H. Barkstrom, 105 Vega Street, Jamestown, New York.

SPECIAL NOTICE.—There is mail at the office of this magazine for the following people. Please send your correct address to the Missing Department, and mention the party you advertised for. Jean Massey, Helen Y. Bluffs, Olive Hartman Anderson, Alford Cody, and Gene Little.

BILLIE B.—Have changed our address to R. R. 1, Long Lane, Missouri. Have written two letters to L. S. Mother.

PERRY, JOE NELSON.—Medium height, dark hair, hazel eyes. Am still waiting for that long-looked-for letter. Am so worried. Peggy Fullerton, 3924 Campbell Street, Kansas City, Missouri.

FERRIS, JOSEPH.—Moved from New Bedford, Massachusetts, to Providence, Rhode Island. About nineteen years old. Please send any information to Reginald E. Barron, 138 Ontario Street, Lynn, Massachusetts.

GANO, KENNETH JAMES.—Formerly of Free Soil, Michigan. Last heard from at Los Angeles, California, in 1924. His mother would be very grateful for any information concerning him. Mrs. James Gano, R. F. D. 2, Hebron, Ohio.

PERKINS or TANSWELL, HELEN.—Please write to an old friend. M. G., care of this magazine.

JOHNSON, MILLIE.—Colored, age twenty-two. Last heard from at Mamou, Louisiana. Any one knowing her please notify her friend, Merrell Wilson, Box 102, Carthage, Texas.

People You Admire

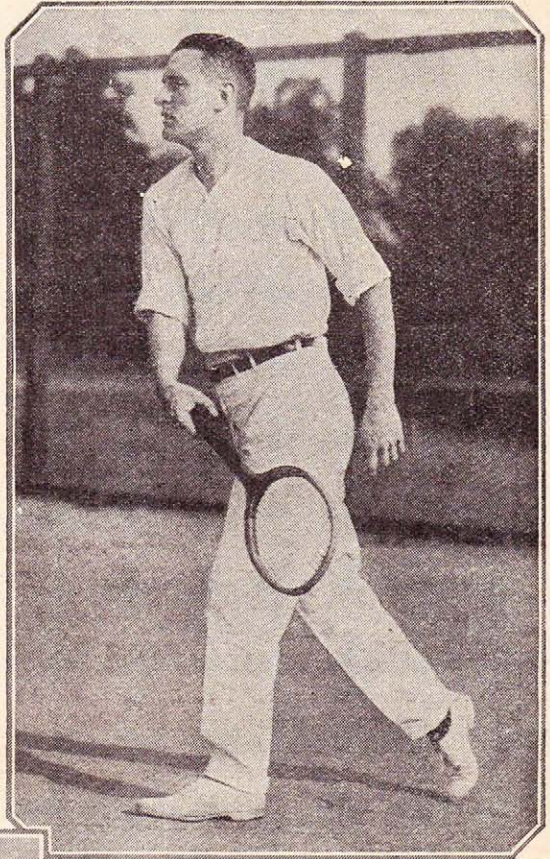
*Buoyant, vital, they banished their ills—
found fresh joy—through one food*

NOT a "cure-all," not a medicine in any sense—Fleischmann's Yeast is simply a remarkable fresh food.

The millions of tiny active yeast plants in every cake invigorate the whole system. They aid digestion—clear the skin—banish the poisons of constipation. Where cathartics give only temporary relief, yeast strengthens the intestinal muscles and makes them healthy and active. And day by day it releases new stores of energy.

Eat two or three cakes regularly every day before meals: on crackers—in fruit juices, water or milk—or just plain, nibbled from the cake. *For constipation especially, dissolve one cake in hot water (not scalding) before breakfast and at bedtime.* Buy several cakes at a time—they will keep fresh in a cool dry place for two or three days. All grocers have Fleischmann's Yeast. Start eating it today!

Let us send you a free copy of our latest booklet on Yeast for Health. Health Research Dept. Z-29, The Fleischmann Company, 701 Washington Street, New York.

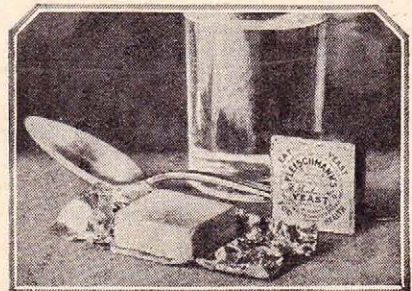


"**RUN-DOWN, IRRITABLE AND DEPRESSED,** my nerves were in a dreadful condition. My physician recommended Fleischmann's Yeast. I took three cakes a day for two months. I noticed a remarkable change. My energy returned, my complexion regained its freshness. And I still take my Fleischmann's Yeast to keep fit."

VIRGINIA B. MAURICE, New York City.

"**'YOU LOOK SO MUCH BETTER** than we, who have had vacations, do' remarked several of my teachers today. 'Is it the arduous work of summer school or prosperity that agrees with you?' The truth is that Fleischmann's Yeast has cured the constipation that sapped my strength for so long. Today I feel like a new man."

CHARLES F. WILLIS, Baltimore, Md.



THIS FAMOUS FOOD tones up the entire system—aids digestion—clears the skin—banishes constipation.

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements



He detects the slightest trouble

If you see your dentist at least every six months he can prevent teeth decay and detect the first trace of gum infections. It is better to see him in time than to take chances with your health.

Pyorrhoea robs

FOUR out of FIVE

According to dental statistics, pyorrhoea steals into the mouths of four out of five men and women after forty. You can tell pyorrhoea's approach by tender, bleeding gums. Go to your dentist at once for treatment and be sure to use Forhan's for the Gums night and morning.

Forhan's prevents or checks pyorrhoea. It contains Forhan's Pyorrhoea Liquid which dentists use in combating pyorrhoea's ravages. It firms the gums and keeps them pink and healthy.

The entire family should begin to use Forhan's today. Besides safeguarding the health it cleanses the teeth perfectly.

You owe it to your health to make Forhan's a regular daily habit. At all druggists 35c and 60c in tubes.

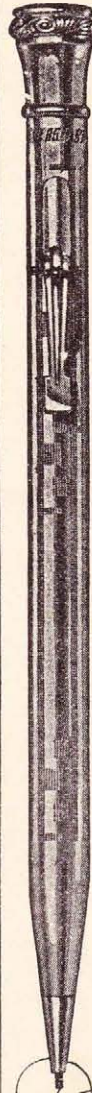
Formula of R. J. Forhan, L. D. S.
Forhan Company, New York

Forhan's
FOR THE GUMS

More Than a Tooth Paste . . . It Checks Pyorrhoea



DATINGS



There's an Eversharp for you in any style and size you want. This one, the popular standard gift and business model, with 18 inches of lead up its sleeve, gold-filled at \$5

School days end—Commencement is here — and workaday life is beginning. Give the graduate a gift that carries both sentiment and practicality.

Give something that bridges these momentous days between theory and reality, and helps translate the chance thought into sure advancement.

Give the gift that better than any other teaches Success' first lesson:

PUT IT ON PAPER!



Success waits on the man who keeps in line with his thinking those best friends of an active brain—EVERSHARP AND WAHL PEN.

Perfect writing mate for Eversharp is the new Wahl Pen. Finely balanced; beautifully and lastingly made of precious gold and silver; precisely designed to match your Eversharp, in combination sets, or individually at \$8

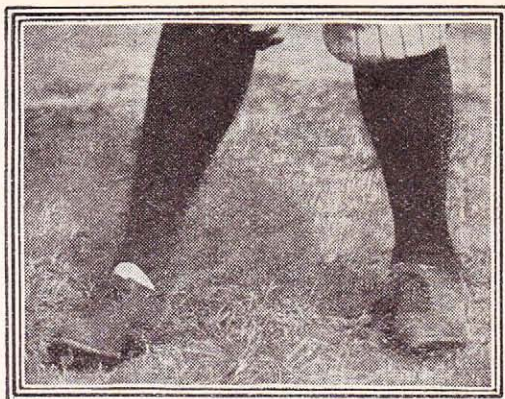


Put it on paper
EVERSHARP
and
WAHL PEN

© 1926, The Wahl Co., Chicago. Canadian Factory, Toronto

FAMOUS FEET

..how they're kept free from corns..



BABE RUTH'S Home Run Feet

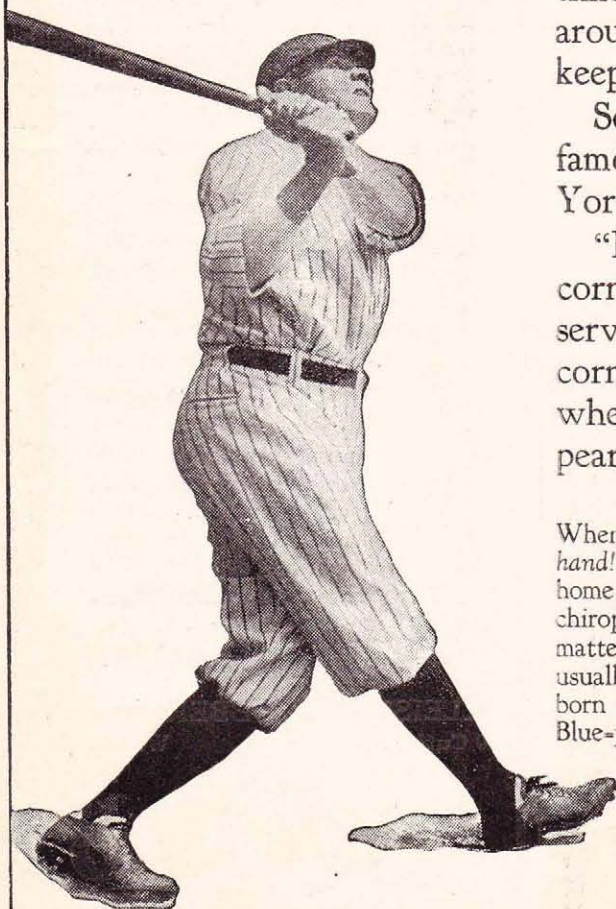
"It isn't always the length of the hit that scores the run. Sometimes it's the speed in getting around the bases. So I have to keep my feet in prime shape."

So writes Babe Ruth—the famous "Bambino" of the New York Yankees.

"Ball players are prone to corns. Our feet get pretty rough service. But I keep mine free of corns by putting on a Blue-jay whenever a potential corn appears in the offing."



When trouble is a-foot—have Blue-jay at hand! For 26 years it has been the standard home corn-remover. Ask your physician or chiropodist. Blue-jay goes to the root of the matter and routs the troublesome offender—usually in 48 hours. But even the most stubborn corn seldom needs more than a second Blue-jay plaster At all drug stores.



Blue-jay

THE SAFE AND GENTLE WAY TO END A CORN

© 1926

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements



Leather face or baby face

Spreading the gospel of the Mennen Shave naturally makes me notice faces a whole lot.

I've been handed the keys of the city by men with faces as tender-skinned as a baby's and others with faces that looked like a Sunday roast-of-beef on Wednesday.

And they all swear by Mennen Shaving Cream. Here's a lather that can reduce the horniest whiskers to absolute and complete limpness. The great Mennen discovery—Dermutation.

If you're one of those 3-brush-dabs and 7-second-razor artists, it gives you a shave—a close shave—better than you've ever had before. A shave that stays all day.

And if you've got a tender, shave-every-other-day skin, your razor goes through literally without any pull or scrapy feeling. A clean, smooth de-bearding every day.

Next, a little squeeze of Mennen Skin Balm rubbed over the shaved area. Tingling, cooling, refreshing. Tones up the tissue—soothes any possible irritation. Greaseless—absorbed in half a minute—and as sensible as putting on a clean collar to go and see your best girl. Comes in tubes.

Same way with Mennen-Talcum-for-Men. Made so it won't show on your face. Dries the skin thoroughly. Antiseptic. Leaves a gorgeous silk-like film that protects against wind, rain, sun or a scraggly collar.

Step into your corner grocery store today and get the makings. It's a good habit to get habituated to.

Jim Henry
(Mennen Salesman)

MENNEN SHAVING CREAM

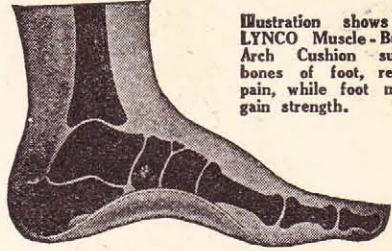


Illustration shows how LYNCO Muscle-Building Arch Cushion supports bones of foot, relieving pain, while foot muscles gain strength.

Rest Your Tender Foot Arches On Soft, Springy CUSHIONS



Never permit them to be propped up by some hard, unyielding support. LYNCO Muscle-Building Arch Cushions are entirely flexible—they're Nature's first-aid protection against foot aches and pains due to weak or fallen arches.

They conform to every curve of the foot in any position it takes, giving continuous, resilient support. It is the only type of support that follows every movement of the foot and allows free muscular action and normal circulation.



LYNCO Muscle-Building Arch Cushions are made of special cellular rubber covered with soft leather—no metal. They give immediate and permanent relief from pain. Light in weight and comfortable to wear any time with any shoes.

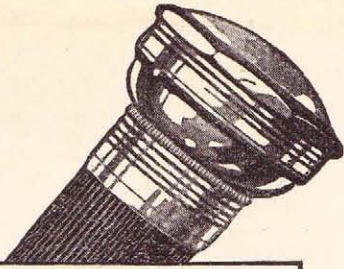


See your doctor, chiroprapist or shoe dealer
—or write us for full information.

KLEISTONE RUBBER CO., Inc.
70 Cutler Street Warren, R. I.

Lynco

EASY-WEAR FOOT AIDS



Why Buy a Burgess Flashlight?

WHY buy fire, life, theft or automobile insurance? Or, why lock your doors?

Simply to guarantee that in emergencies you will receive definite assistance and protection in one form or another which will overcome the immediate danger and possible loss.

Burgess Flashlights have for many years been a convenient and positive guarantee that will guard, guide and aid you against the dangers and inconvenience of darkness.

Don't buy just a flashlight. Ask for Burgess. Look for the distinctive package. The success of Burgess Radio Batteries has proved conclusively the quality of all products of the Burgess Battery Company.

A Laboratory Product

BURGESS BATTERY COMPANY

GENERAL SALES OFFICE: CHICAGO

Canadian Factories and Offices:
Niagara Falls and Winnipeg

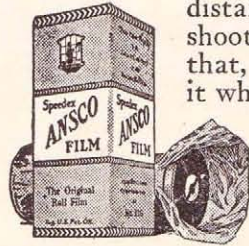
**BURGESS
FLASHLIGHTS &
BATTERIES**



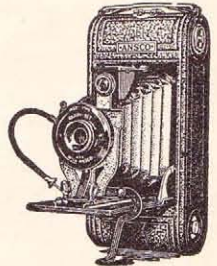
*Prove
your fish stories!
—take pictures!*

The largest always seem to get away but the big beauty that took so much skill to land makes a tale worth telling—if you can prove it with pictures.

Your Ready-Set camera is prepared for instant action required without setting for light, speed or distance. Open—aim—shoot—just as easy as that, and you can prove it when you tell it.



*AnSCO Speedex Film—
in the red box with the
yellow band—fits all roll
film cameras and is
made for inexperienced
picture takers to get just
the pictures they want.*



ANSCO
CAMERAS & SPEDEX FILM

Pioneer Camera Makers of America
ANSCO—Binghamton, N. Y.



Wrist Grip
GIRDOLON
Patented Feb. 10, 1925

With skirts so short, the younger set are now wearing stockings over the knee instead of rolled, and, still uncorsetted, have joyously welcomed the Girdlon to hold their stockings trimly taut.

The Girdlon is of dainty webbing or shirred ribbon, and is a perfectly comfortable "garter belt." There is no pinching at the waist, because it is

worn around the hips where it is scarcely felt—and it cannot possibly slip down.

If you don't find it readily, your favorite shop will order it. Or we will gladly serve you direct—webbed garters \$1.25, shirred ribbon \$1.75, post-paid. Give hip measure only and color preference.

GEORGE FROST COMPANY, Boston
Makers of the famous Boston Garter for men

Genuine Diamond Wrist Watch



Send for This Book—It's FREE!

Over 3,000 other bargains in Diamonds, Watches, Jewelry and Silverware—appropriate gifts for Graduations, Weddings, Anniversaries and Engagements. Send for it NOW.

\$1
With Order
10 Months to Pay

Simply clip this ad, pin a \$1 bill to it, and mail it with your name and address TODAY. This guaranteed 15 Jewel Wrist watch with 14 K Solid Gold case, set with 4 Blue-white Diamonds and 4 Blue Sapphires will come for your approval and 15 day trial. Price \$42.50. If satisfied, pay only \$4.15 a month, otherwise return and your \$1 will be sent back. No Red Tape—Prompt Delivery. All Dealings Confidential.

L. W. SWEET, Inc.
Dept. 986L—1660 Broadway
New York City



Be Popular Play Jazz

It sets them going. Young folks are enamored by those tantalizing tunes. Be the Jazz King with your



SAXOPHONE

Teach yourself, 3 free lessons give you quick easy start. Try any instrument in your own home 6 days free. See what you can do. Easy terms if you decide to buy. Send now for beautiful free literature. A postal brings details.

Buescher Band Instrument Co. (6X)
1556 Buescher Block Elkhart, Indiana



30 Days' Free Trial

Select from 44 Styles, colors and sizes, famous Ranger bicycles. Delivered free on approval, express prepaid at Factory Prices. You can easily save \$10 to \$25 on your bicycle. Prices \$21.50 and up. \$5 a Month often advance first deposit. Parents and girls can easily earn small monthly payments. Pay as you ride. Best quality, at factory prices, express prepaid. Tires, Lamps, wheels and equipment, low prices. Send No Money, do business direct with makers.

MEAD CYCLE COMPANY
DEPT. M-4, CHICAGO

Write today for free Ranger Catalog, factory prices and marvelous easy payment terms



DIAMONDS

LOFTIS BROS. & CO. 1828 Stores in Leading Cities

THE OLD RELIABLE ORIGINAL CREDIT JEWELERS
Dept. A222 108 N. State Street Chicago, Ill.

CASH or CREDIT

It's Easy to Own a Genuine Diamond Ring

Our immense stocks include thousands of the latest mountings in platinum and solid gold, and set with brilliant blue white Diamonds of exceptional quality. Order today and get your ring at once. Pay 10% down—we ship goods immediately. Balance weekly, semi-monthly, or monthly as convenient.

- No. 28 \$37.50 \$1.00 a wk.
- No. 31 \$187.50 \$4.70 a wk.
- No. 27 \$69 \$1.75 a wk.
- No. 30 \$97.50 \$2.45 a wk.

Big Diamond Book FREE! Write for It Today!



Wrist Watch

14-K white gold hand engraved case. Fancy wing ends. Silver dial. High grade 15-Jewel movement, \$25. \$2.50 down and \$1.00 a wk.



17-Jewel Elgin

No. 15—Greengold, 17-Jewel Elgin Watch; 25-Year Quality Case; 12 Size; Gilt Dial; \$50. \$3 down and \$1.00 a wk.

Wedding Rings

No. 24—The "Elite" \$750
18-k white gold
Set with 3 Diamonds, \$22.50;
5 Diamonds, \$32.50; 7 Diamonds, \$42.50; 9 Diamonds, \$52.50; 12 Diamonds, \$67.50.

\$100 a Week Selling Shirts



Others Earning \$100 Weekly selling direct to wearer. Custom Quality Shirts made by Carlton, 5th Ave., N. Y. America's greatest shirt values, silks, staples and exclusive patterns. We deliver and collect. Your profit: 25% paid daily. Big, beautiful sample outfit FREE. Permanent position. Salesmen and Saleswomen write today for outfit.
CARLTON MILLS, INC.
98 Fifth Ave. Dept. 73-E New York

FRECKLES

Tells How to Get Rid of These Ugly Spots and Have a Beautiful Complexion

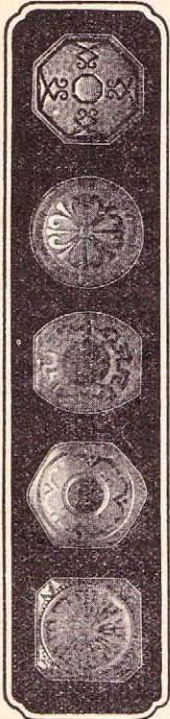
There's no longer the slightest need of feeling ashamed of your freckles, as Othine—double strength—is guaranteed to remove these homely spots.

Simply get an ounce of Othine from any drug or department store and apply a little of it night and morning and you should soon see that even the worst freckles have begun to disappear, while the lighter ones have vanished entirely. It is seldom that more than an ounce is needed to completely clear the skin and gain a beautiful complexion.

Be sure to ask for the double strength Othine as this is sold under guarantee of money back if it fails to remove your freckles.



They do notice your cuff buttons



A HUNDRED times a day your cuff jumps into the foreground of the picture—telling your taste in dress!

Kum-a-part Buttons in your cuffs add that touch of correctness that only good jewelry can give.

They're convenient for you to use, click open, snap shut; and they're guaranteed to last a lifetime.

At jewelers or men's shop you can easily match Kum-a-part designs to your favored shirt patterns.

Prices according to quality up to \$25 the pair.



Write for
Correct Dress
Chart "E"

The Baer & Wilde Co.
Attleboro, Mass., U.S.A.

KUMAPART
CUFF BUTTON

TRADE MARK REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.

30x3 1/2
\$7.65

LET US SEND YOU

Goodyear, Goodrich, Fisk
and other standard makes,
slightly used tires which have been
returned and treated with our secret
process and are giving thousands
unusual mileage and service.

**ALL TUBES POSITIVELY NEW
YOU RUN NO RISK**

Size	Tire	Tube	Size	Tire	Tube
30x3	\$3.25	\$1.50	33x4 1/2	6.25	3.00
30x3 1/2	3.85	1.75	34x4 1/2	6.50	3.25
32x3 1/2	3.85	1.85	35x4 1/2	6.75	3.30
31x4 1/2 ss-cl	4.59	2.00	38x4 1/2	7.25	3.35
32x4	4.85	2.25	33x5	7.50	3.50
33x4	5.45	2.50	35x5	7.75	3.75
34x4	5.75	2.75	38x4.40	5.45	2.75

Above prices plus postage or express.
Should any tire fail to give satisfactory
service, we will replace at 1-2
purchase price. Send \$1.00 deposit
on each tire ordered, we reserve the
right to substitute one make for another.
If you send full amount with
order, deduct 5 per cent. Specify
whether straight side or cl. wanted.

CHICAGO TIRE & RUBBER CO.
3100 S. Michigan Ave. Dept. 162 CHICAGO

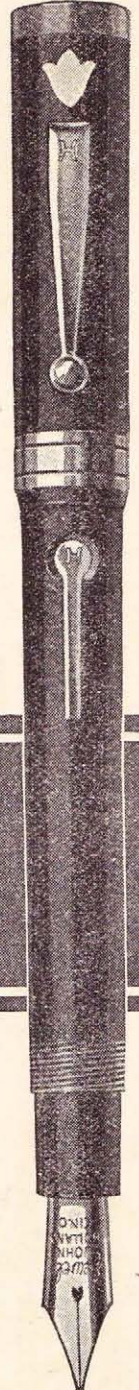
No Other Pen invites this test

More convincing than thirty years of everyday use is this *proof* of the *fine quality* and *remarkable endurance* of the JOHN HOLLAND Drop Test Fountain Pen. Let it fall six feet—point down—on *hardwood*. Then pick it up and write *perfectly* with it. We guarantee the Drop Test pen unconditionally.

The GIFT for Graduation



For 61 years, John Holland Fountain Pens have been favored graduation gifts. No fountain pen gives greater value in beauty and service.



**JOHN
HOLLAND
Drop-Test**
JEWEL Fountain Pens

Sir Jewel . . . \$7.00
Lady Jewel . . . \$5.00

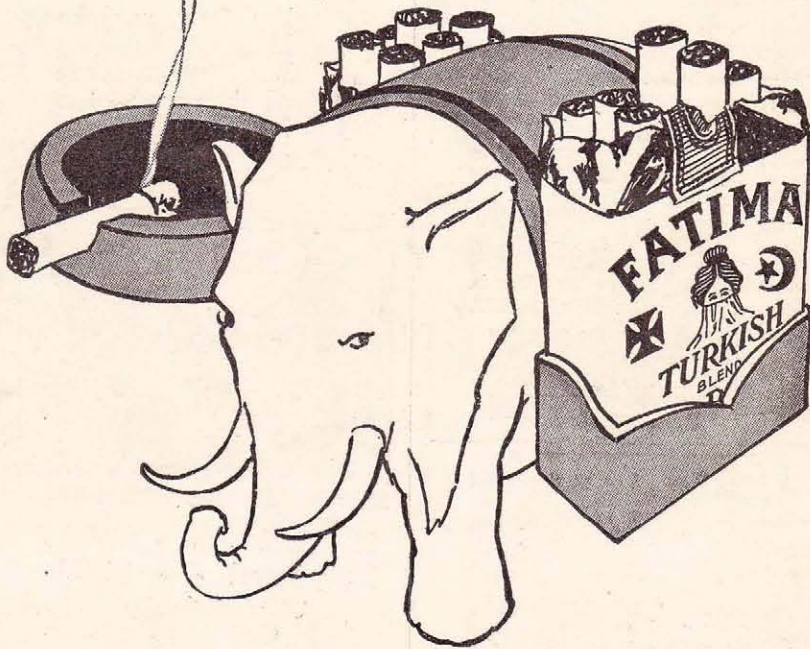
**Unconditionally
Guaranteed**

In black or colors, as you prefer. Barrels and caps are indestructible. Other John Holland Pens, \$2.75 up. Write today for name of nearest dealer.

John Holland
The JOHN HOLLAND GOLD PEN CO.
Pen Makers Since 1841
Cincinnati, Ohio

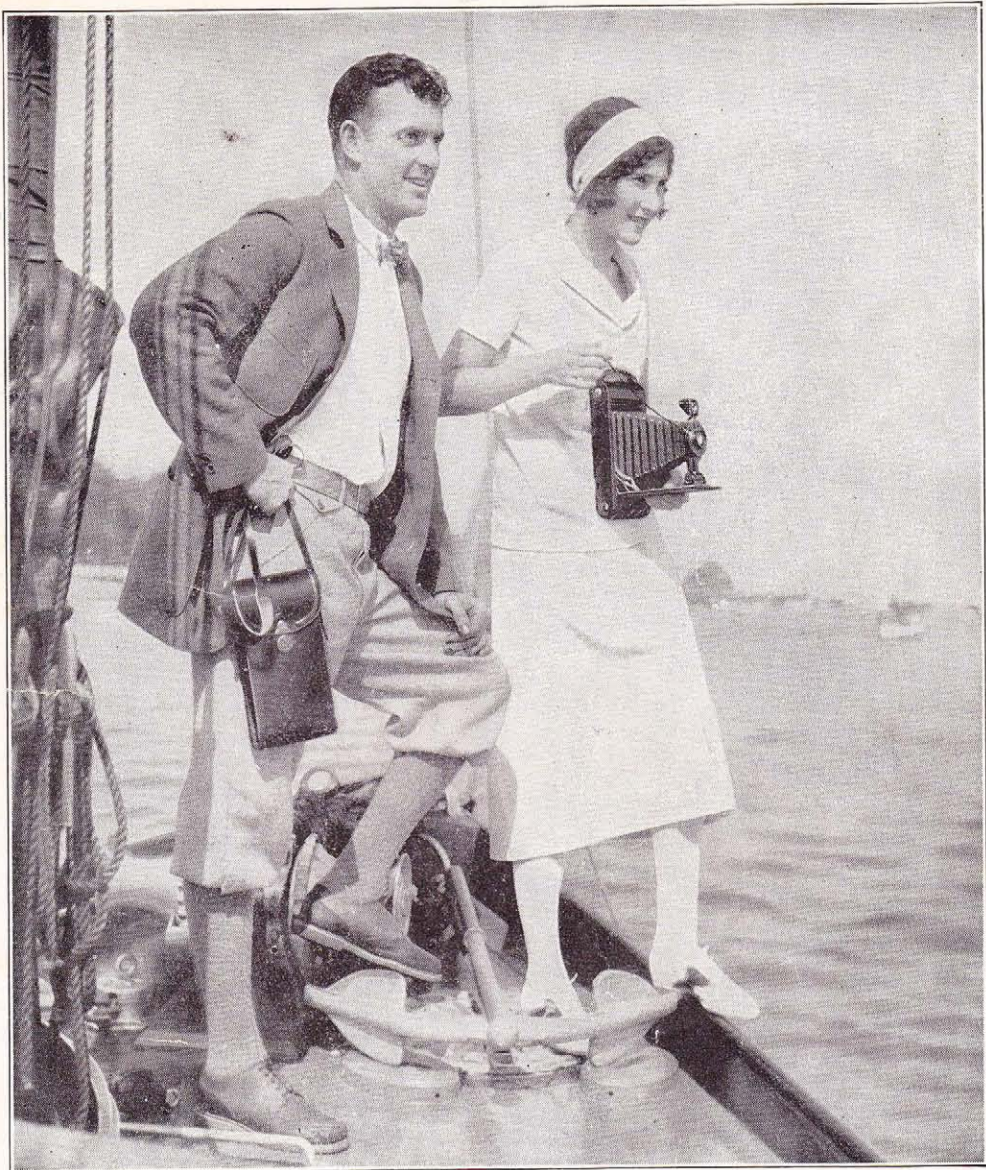
Without question

BECAUSE it costs us more to make Fatima the retail price is likewise higher. But would men continue to pay more, do you think, except for genuinely increased enjoyment? The fact cannot be denied — they *do* continue



What a whale of a difference just a few cents make

LIGGETT & MYERS TOBACCO CO.



Let Kodak keep your vacation

Autographic Kodaks, \$5 up

Eastman Kodak Company, Rochester, N. Y., *The Kodak City*

Black Jack

4/50



“that good old licorice flavor!”