EVERY WEEK

APRIL 11, 1925

Western Story Magazine

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EDISON MARSHALL'S

Stirring New Novel of the Northwest

Western Story Magazine

EVERY WEEK

Vol. LII APRIL 11, 1925 No. 2

Great White Wizard

By Edison Marshall

CHAPTER I.

DANGLING IN MID-AIR.

TO Davis, the director, the thrilling scene before him was simply the day's work. It was to be done, and done well; but patient and realistic detail rather than vision was the secret of his success. To Carlo Modesto, the leading man, it was "hokum" of the most degrading sort. He liked drawing-room parts and problem plays—he preferred a tail-coat to the flamboyant mounted police uniform he was now wearing. To Edith Quentin, whose face was better known than many a queen's, it was a perfect holiday, the most exquisite of make-believe, a childhood dream come true—her part exactly suited her—romance, color, adventure. She not only played it, but lived it—and perhaps that is why she "stole the picture!

Always a satisfactory actress, to-day Edith was at her best. Perhaps the fact that she was playing opposite Carlo wakened an added warmth in her; and particularly she was sensitive to the "location." Davis had achieved and carried out an ambitious plan—he had brought his company two hundred miles into the Yukon, five miles beyond the ultimate end of steel. Playing her part, she could look up to the ranges and breathe the piney balsam of the North woods in which the play was laid.

Her business to-day was particularly stirring. According to directions, she

over slide rock and rampart; and, barring accidents, he allowed a fair chance for success. A fair chance was all he asked for, such as until now he had always played, and won.

Of course he did not attempt any great swiftness. Once he looked up and smiled, as if in secret and unconscious amusement, at the assistant director's absorbed expression. Just the same the gray space of rock between widened as if by long strides.

He met the girl's eyes, looking up at him and brimming with hope, and he began to talk to her as he worked down. His deep voice was careless and casual, and it brightened her long before her scattered faculties could grasp his words.

"Don't worry. I'll either save you, or I won't, and your worrying will be over in either case. Try not to be frightened. You can't hang so limp if you're frightened, and every motion makes more wear on the rope. Oh! pretty near went then, myself. Treacherous, these cliffs. How the sheep can scamper over them I don't see. I'll be down in a minute."

She regarded him with slowly widening eyes. Her vision seemed to clear. Some of the fear mist swept out of her mind, and the beginnings of a signal clarity of thought took its place. Perhaps she would lose it soon, but now everything seemed simple and clear. Profound problems whose burdens she had but glimpsed became as sums for children, were answered and left her free. She wondered if this were a kind of introduction to death.

"How's your nerve?" he asked her.

At this question, so frankly asked, she emerged into his mood. She almost sobbed with relief. This was not because she felt safe—rescue was still no more than a sporting chance—but simply because her point of view toward the danger was changed. She could take her chance with him now, and meet the devil on his own ground. Winning or losing seemed not so important—the main thing was the playing of the game. She felt strong, light, and free.

Somehow this man's personality took hold of her and she was sharing in his calloused attitude toward life. The moon might vanish, soon, and this man sink once more out of her level; but for the moment they were fellow adventurers. As if this valiancy had lain innate in her, waiting to be wakened, she found herself answering him in her own vein.

"My nerve's all right, thanks," she answered.

"Good. Excuse me for asking." He worked down a difficult place and now was almost beside her. "I wanted to be sure you wouldn't clutch me, which would put us both out, mighty quick. I'm hanging by my eyebrows. Now, if I can take a little pressure off that rope——"

Clinging to the cliff with one hand he slowly worked the other between the ledge and the frayed strands of her rope. For the first time she realized his main intent: to hold it from the cutting edge and take the strain upon his arm. His hand, reaching around, grasped the lariat below its worn place and helped to relieve the strain upon it. Thus he hoped to sustain her until another rope could be dropped from above.

"You're pretty brave," she told him simply.

"A little, but not much. It depends on what you mean by brave." He tried to strengthen his precarious hold on the rock. "It's pleasant to have you think so."

"I know so. Will it hurt our chances to talk?"

"Not at all. I rather wish you would. We've got quite a few minutes to dangle. I doubt if these men can bring a rope short of five minutes. It'll help to pass the time."

Davis turned in amazement. "You don't?"

"No. I'll look around a little myself. Maybe I'll hunt him up in the morning, and talk to him—but Davis—we don't want a crazy dare-devil getting killed on our hands. A fine story for the papers, wouldn't it be—some poor backwoodsman killed while doubling for me!"

"Oh, I didn't mean he is crazy," the townsman protested. "If you'd ask me, I'd say that something has happened, some time or other, that has made him quit caring about his life. That's common enough, up here."

"I'll want him, whether Mr. Modesto does or not," the director said. "What's got into you, Carlo?"

Edith was puzzled too. All the time she had known that Carlo possessed depths which she had not plumbed. One side of him was beyond her—ever in shadow no matter how she moved—and though she had hoped to reach it soon, it was never more inaccessible than now. Whatever the sudden burden that had been laid upon him, he had no intention of sharing it with her. His Latin eyes had strange enigmatic lights in his ashen countenance.

"I'll go with you and hunt him up," Carlo told the man; but before they could start, the stranger himself came through the door of the hotel into the street. The townsmen called him, and he walked gravely toward them.

He bowed to Edith—rather mockingly she thought—and now that he was beside Carlo, she compared the two men to see whether their resemblance was real or fancied. They suggested each other—that was all; essentially they were different types. Yet the stranger was an absorbing study in himself—a personality vivid, perhaps sinister, certainly new to her.

It was the wind, the yelling demon of the North, extremes of weather, and the glare of sunlit waters that made him so dark. In the beginning he was probably rather fair. It must have been war—the rude, wild, daily struggle with the raw forces of nature dominant still in the North—that made him so steely, so wolfish.

He was far less handsome than Carlo naturally, and his rough life had scarred him. Any likeness to him lay in the general cast of his features. She believed that his mouth had once been boyish, sensitive, and almost feminine, but now a droop at its corner gave him a sardonic, reckless look, borne out by the cold brilliance of his eyes—trained eyes, from long watchings, from eager peerings into dimness. They told of a soul lost and battered, at the same time hinting of a remnant of sardonic humor, a calloused amusement with life.

"We meet again," he said to Edith. So far he took no notice of Carlo.

"Under less exciting circumstances," Edith told him gravely. "I present Mr. Modesto."

The stranger turned easily. "I am very proud to make your acquaintance," he said, in a mocking tone she remembered. "It seems to me that your face is familiar—could we have possibly met before?"

"My face is familiar to a good many," Carlo replied. At such meetings he was known to hold his own with the best. "Perhaps you have seen my pictures."

"Several times. Besides—your face would naturally seem familiar." Then, after a short but rather startling pause, in which all motion everywhere was arrested: "if only for its resemblance to mine, with which I am much too well acquainted."

"You know me by reputation. And your name is——"

" 'Sir, my name is lost.' Isn't that the way it goes? I've forgotten most of the Shakespeare I ever knew."

"That's about the way it goes," Edith told him. This little drama was some-

compensation for the curtailment of the view. Edith decided not to return to camp at once, and to nourish her love of beauty by watching the spectral progress of the crags through the mist. She easily induced Carlo to stay with her, and, acting on impulse as the man started to pass her, she invited Roy Stranger too.

Although Carlo might be embarrassed, even displeased, it was enough that she had pitied this man—in spite of his scorn of pity—and had sensed his bitter need of human companionship. A man cannot walk alone forever. As he had glanced at her and at Carlo, she thought she had seen a wistful plea through the mocking mask he wore. It was only the slightest hint, the merest suggestion of a break; yet she went out to meet it with her words and her smile.

She had not forgotten that she owed him an incalculable debt. Carlo, his eyes frozen, must make the best of what was apparently a situation awkward in the extreme.

She quite expected Roy to decline, but he paused, smiled, and sat down on the crag beside them. If he were grateful for her kindness he did not show it, nor did he show any trace of embarrassment at Carlo's presence.

"I'd like to join you, very much," he told her lightly. "Even in the 'great silences' one gets tired of silence and occasionally wants to talk."

As always, she was amazed at this man. Now the source of her wonder was his dissimilarity to Carlo, although he was dressed and made up to look as near like him as possible. A somewhat similar cast of features was now quite meaningless.

"This 'great silence' business makes me very ill," Carlo remarked. "That's part of the hokum—that, and the wolf pack, and the open places where men are men. I've been here almost two weeks, now, and haven't seen a sign of a wolf. And if there's anything silent about that damnable wind that shrieks around my tent, I'd like to hear it."

Edith smiled quietly in Stranger's general direction. "Mr. Modesto almost gives the impression of not liking the country, doesn't he?"

"And I don't!" Carlo exclaimed even more heated at Edith's coolness. "I abominate the place. Thank Heaven, I'm going to get out of it soon. I never had a worse part or played a more impossible story. A man and a girl, cut off by a flooded river and forced to spend the winter in the woods! Why, there are people everywhere. The idea of any one being cast away for a week, much less all winter, anywhere in Canada in these days is absurd on the face of it. Such conditions might have been true once, but now I don't suppose you could go a week's journey from a tourist hotel if you tried to. The river that's supposed to cut off the hero and heroine probably has a concrete automobile bridge over it. I tell you, it's hard for a man to be true to his art when he knows the story he is playing couldn't possibly come true."

This was quite an explosion, but Stranger looked and smiled. "You must remember this is the land of romance—not merely reputed to be, but actually is," he explained. "It is like a whole continent in size, and the longer you stay in it, the more it bewilders you—the less surprised you are at what it may show you."

"I'd be mightily surprised to have some of those events I've been doing before the camera come true to me——"

He paused, and the others waited for him to continue. They had heard no inflection on his final word indicating a conclusion; and for the long lapse of a second neither realized that he had been interrupted, and that the overdrawn and impossible scenes of the picture-play had flown wide and far from his mind.

at Carlo, and smiled suggestively. "I might say its mighty important."

So the girl got up, and Roy followed her a hundred yards down the long slope of the ridge, where she halted to wait for Carlo. "Shall I go on in?" he asked.

"If you want to, or have anything special to do." She glanced at the dim figures on the eminence above. "If you are free, I'd rather you'd stay here a while. I suppose it's nonsense, but I can't help thinking that perhaps that man is bringing trouble to Carlo. To come all the way up here, when he could wait a few weeks to see him at Hollywood—and then Carlo wasn't glad to see him! I could tell he was unpleasantly surprised."

"Maybe he is just afraid of being bored."

"No. Carlo is not easily bored, except by places like this. I feel sure the man brought bad news, or something."

"I'd enjoy staying, if you want me." So they found a crag to sit on, now gray and cold, but in the morning gilded by a rising sun. Here they talked of general topics, only occasionally glancing at the figures above them.

Was this North still the land of romance and adventure? She wondered. And suddenly she had her answer—such an answer as she had never dreamed, and never anticipated in her blackest fears. It was flung down to her by the little wind blowing along the ridge.

She heard Carlo's voice, yelling—but not the voice of the Carlo she knew. Its even flow was broken—it was like a river which, moving quietly, suddenly leaps, roaring, down a falls. Where was its restraint, its perfect modulation, its aristocratic detachment? It was a bellow of rage, revealing for the first time the choleric and passionate incarnation under his skin.

The sound smote her like a close-range blow, startling and shocking her with its violence; but in the mist the scene that made it was ghostly and dim. She saw Carlo standing with upraised arms, a shadow-silhouette in the fog. She saw Muller shrinking back from him, his arm held as if sheltering some small object.

"I'll fix you!" her lover was yelling, and she saw him lunge.

The incredible act that followed was over and done in the rush of a second. Carlo seized the man, swung him with a strength which she had never dreamed he possessed, and hurled him down over the brink of the chasm.

A dark shadow streaked before her eyes, visible only an instant from her higher position—then there ensued a quick tattoo of queer bumping sounds. And a long time afterward a minute black object jerked and came to rest against a snow bank that was far below.

A rushing minute—and then the sweeping in of silence! Carlo stood at the brink of the gorge, and because his arms were lifted as before, the deed he had done seemed a dream. The crags moved through the mist. Far below the placid river rippled—rippled to the sea.

To be continued in next week's issue of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE.

Steel Bound

By

Russell Arden Bankson

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POLISHED steel handcuffs slid shut with a soft clicking sound, and the two men stood there manacled together.

Deputy Sheriff "Bud" Ridpath, looking down at the smaller man who was his prisoner, answered the startled look in his face.

"I'm not taking any chances with you, Jake," he said. "You and me aren't going to part company until the deal's over."

Jake Bennett, bandit, doubled his powerful fists slowly, as though he would strike the other.

"They's forty mile t' go!" he said snarlingly, a threat in his voice. "Things can happen."

Bud took the key to the handcuffs from his right pocket. It dangled on a slender chain, which he twirled about his index finger.

"Things won't happen, though," he said.

Unconsciously Jake's muscles became tense again, his left hand, which was free, half reaching to snatch the key away.

"Cut it!" Bud warned him sharply.

Instantly he let the chain unwind and slip from his fingers, carrying the key in a wide arc through the air away from the trail and over the edge of the precipitous walls which drooped away into the rough, boulder-clogged cañon below.

"The only other key to those pretties is in the sheriff's office at Okanogan," he said. "Let's get started toward them."

"Yuh fool!" Jake raged at him, suddenly finding his tongue. "Yuh'd be in a purty mess, come a accident t' one er t'other o' us, without no key, wouldn't yuh? Only a durned fool 'u'd do a trick like that."

"I'll take the chance," Bud answered.

It was the first real chance Bud had had since he had come into the chief deputyship in that wild county, and the capture of Jake Bennett, wanted for a series of bold stage robberies, extending over a period of several years, was the super-task which he had set himself. Already the bandit had led him a terrific chase, and in the end it had only been by the merest chance that he had got the drop on his man.

Both men had lost their wiry hill cayuses the day before in a running exchange of shots, and they were afoot in that wilderness of almost impenetrable mountains. Disheartened, Bud was on his way out, over the vague trail which cut across the range to civiliza-

so low that they were almost stilled; then there were times when they seemed to be stronger, as though a new thread of life were weaving back into the broken body.

At these times Jake cursed softly to himself, there in the still night. In this last hope which flickered in his burned-out soul he had forgotten the anguish of thirst which had swollen his tongue and cracked his lips; he had forgotten the pangs of hunger which were taking the strength from his body. He thought only of that other man bound to him, and of the moment when the other should die.

But when daylight came again, Bud Ridpath still hovered between life and death.

Stealthily, a quirk of superstition creeping over him, Jake searched the pockets of the officer and withdrew a heavy hunting knife for which he was looking. It was the one Bud had used in preparing the game they had eaten on previous days.

"Curse him!" he swore, to keep his determination up. When death came to the other he was going to free himself.

Then, the knife clutched tightly in his left hand, he waited. The slow minutes moved forward like a procession before his eyes until they had marched into an hour—two hours.

Bud Ridpath stirred and flung his free arm out in a gesture of unconscious pain. His sensibilities were returning to him, and Jake cursed again, loudly, wildly. He could not murder a man who lay there helpless, unconscious.

"Yuh cursed fool, can't yuh die?" Jake raised his voice to the other.

Those words flung out into the deathly silence of the wilderness seemed to penetrate the subconsciousness of the other, and Bud opened his eyes.

Memory gone, he smiled weakly up into the face of Jake Bennett, bad man. "Hard time we had, old pal!" he mumbled thickly. "Devil of a hard time, wasn't it?" His eyes closed again, and he was silent, leaving Jake to sit there staring at him, a startled fear creeping into his face.

"Say! Yuh gone blooey?" he demanded suddenly.

Bud opened his eyes again. Memories were creeping back to him. "You there, Jake?" he asked. His right hand began to waver about through the air. "Where are you, Jake? I'd sort of like to feel your hand."

Surprised, reluctant, Jake's left hand went out and steadied the other. "I'm here!"

"Thought maybe you were gone." Bud's thick tongue formed the words after a painful minute. His fingers gripped tightly about the hand of the other. "I've been trying to tell you something for a long time, Jake," he went on. "I was just planning to tell you when those darned rocks began to slide down on us. They would have gotten you sure, if I hadn't dragged you over here and piled on top of you. Funny thing, me doing that. But it flashed into me I hadn't been square, tying you up like this so you couldn't help yourself. Remember when that rock got you on the leg and dumped you? I thought we were both goners then."

Jake remembered. Bud Ridpath had dragged him to safety, saved his life.

"Yep," he grunted.

"Well, I did that because I wanted to tell you something, Jake," the officer continued as though he had not been interrupted. His voice grew faint, then, and died away to a whisper.

Jake leaned forward eagerly to catch the words, but they were so low that he could not hear them. A new fear seized him. The other was about to die, and he was trying to tell him, Jake, something.

But the officer was not ready to die yet. He was only utterly exhausted, half delirious with his injuries and with

thirst. Two minutes passed, and then he began to talk again.

"I swore I was going to take you in, Jake," he said, his voice growing stronger. "There was only one sure way of doing that, and that was to hook us together. Then I had to throw the key away or you would have gotten me when I was off guard. You would have killed me for that key, and I knew it. But I knew you wouldn't do that if I was tied to you, anyway.

"Back there on the mountain, though, I knew I couldn't make it any farther. I knew one or the other of us had to die, and I was going to tell you something." His lips ceased moving, his eyes were closed.

In a frenzy Jake shook him roughly. "Talk!" he shouted. "What yuh got t' say?"

It was five minutes this time before the officer's eyes came open, and then he stared at the other for a moment before speaking. "It's no use. I can't make it any farther," he muttered. "I'm a gonner. You can save yourself, Jake. Only next time—some one will get you—sure!"

Silence again, then almost at once his lips were moving. He was talking in a whisper. "Gonner—need some water—save—self—got 'nother key!"

Jake's heart gave a mad leap. In that broken sentence a new vision of life and freedom swung open before him. A new world opened up. There was another key, and he was saved!

"Curse yuh! Where is it?" he snarled. "Come on here, yuh fool! Holdin' it out on me, was yuh? Thought yuh could get by with that on Jake Bennett, did yuh? Gimme that key!"

"Sewed in lining—coat—just under—inside pocket," Bud said. "Put it there—case something happened. Was trying—tell you about it."

Cursing, mumbling to himself, his eyes burning bright, Jake seized the hunting knife from the ground where it had dropped when he took Bud's hand.

Tearing open the coat, his fingers searched eagerly for the key to the handcuffs. Then, at the touch of the little metal object, the knife cut the cloth clean away, releasing it.

With a hand that trembled violently, he got the key and lost a whole minute struggling to fit it into the lock on the cuff about his own wrist.

A wilder fear than he had ever before known was upon him. What if the key did not fit? What if this were simply a terrible hoax which this dying fiend were playing on him?

He swore aloud. But just then the key slipped into the opening and the steel bond swung apart, releasing his wrist.

For a moment which seemed an eternity, while he lived over again his whole life, Jake Bennett sat there staring at the swollen member, holding it out before his eyes, his lips moving without uttering words.

Slowly he began to crawl shakily to his feet, again picking up the knife.

In leaning forward to rise, his face was suspended only a few inches above that of his enemy.

Bud Ridpath was watching him, looking up into his face. He made a feeble effort at a smile. "Sort of a relief, isn't it, Jake?" he asked. "Feel stronger myself already. Only I couldn't ever make it out of here alone. Save yourself. And you might send word to the boys. Some of them would want to come up here and find—what's left of me."

Jake stood up, wabbling unsteadily. He was free. And down there in the cañon, at the foot of the range, there was water. And there were fish in that water, to be had for food.

He took a step toward them, and stumbled over Bud's extended leg.

"Why can't yuh keep t' yuhrself?" he snarled.

this news must be kept secret. No one must know it. For if it comes to his ears, the shock will surely kill him at once!

The money lender lifted his eyes slowly. "He has been a great man," sighed he. "And this letter is to be kept a secret?"

"To a man like you—full of honor—tight-mouthed—what harm is there in showing it?"

"Well," answered the money lender, "we each have different ways of thought. If this seems good to you, it is good. And I admit that it makes you good security. What sum will you have?"

"Ten thousand," said Don Mateo, his eyes snapping with pleasure.

"You must be careful," said Cordoba with an odd smile, "that your entire estate does not run into my hands—at this rate."

"I? Careful? I shall be careful in time! But one must have money—to live like a gentleman."

"This will cost you twelve per cent."

"Ha? That is a double rate, Cordoba!"

"That is true, but it is a double risk."

"In what way, then?"

"Suppose that your father should change his will and leave you nothing."

"Tush! He loves me! Besides, what could make him?"

"The knowledge that you are showing me this letter, perhaps."

"Well," said Don Mateo, "let me have the money at any rate. I have no time."

What does it cost to scratch one's name upon a piece of paper? And behold, the fat money lender waddled across his office, taking with him a short-barreled shotgun of large bore. He opened his safe. From a drawer he selected a parcel of money and returned with it.

"How much does that safe contain, then?" asked Mateo, his eyes glistening with hunger.

"You have almost exhausted the contents," said Cordoba.

"Shall I believe that? Adios, señor!"

Don Mateo was gone, but there was another instantly in his place—an old man with a rigid back which crumpled over as he sat down in the chair. He was bent so that his chin was thrust out, and he peered earnestly at Cordoba through his spectacles. Cordoba, straightway, leaned back and tucked his feet beneath him. He sat cross-legged to do business with this customer.

"The interest was due me yesterday," said Cordoba.

"Ah, yes, God knows!" said the old man.

"And *I* know," said Cordoba sternly. "What has happened?"

"I have brought you in—only half the money."

"So?"

"Ah, Señor Cordoba—you are great in wisdom," said the old Mexican. "You know how the blackleg struck on my little ranch, and the cattle died like flies! I have been stripped. I have been beggared. I bring you this money. You may take a larger mortgage on my ranch for the rest of your money."

"You have three sons," said Cordoba, more coldly than ever.

"By the mercy of God, I have three sons. It is true."

"They have left you, I suppose, now that your little ranch is like a poorhouse?"

"Left me? No, no, no! They stand beside me; they work like three dogs. My eldest boy said this morning: 'You shall not be shamed by going to confess to Cordoba. Let me go and take the brunt of his tongue!'"

"Ha!" said Cordoba. "Did he say that?"

"Ten thousand, thousand pardons! You are angry, then?"

"I am very angry—that people should think I would use my tongue like a whip. Well, my friend, cattle are cheap, now,

work, a staggering cost—the bridle was a jeweler's masterpiece!

But oh, how my heart sank when I saw it! For I could see, I thought, something of the things which had passed in the mind of poor Lew Melody before he made this decision.

When he saw me, he waved his hand to me and dismounted. Gray Pacer followed behind his master and stood looking over the shoulder of Lew at me with glittering eyes such as only a stallion, of all the Lord's creatures, possesses.

But here was Lew Melody, not so greatly changed that he would not do as he had always done out of respect to me—that is, take off his sombrero and stand with it in his hand while he talked. It was a little thing, I suppose, but from this famous youth, it caused a tingle to pass through my blood, without fail.

I could not help saying, at once: "Ah, Lew, you are going masquerading, are you?"

"I look like it, don't I?" said Melody. "But no—I'm simply stepping into a new name!"

"A new name?" said I.

"Yes, of course. You used to know a devil-may care fellow, called Lew Melody. I think his front name may really have been Lewis. I'm not sure. At any rate, you see another creature, now. I am a don, sir!"

And he tilted back his head and looked at me with that familiar smile—the mirth about the lips only, and the eyes made grave by the scar between his eyes which drew the flesh a little.

"Will you tell me what in the world you mean, Lewis?" said I, trying to smile in turn and making a sad job of it.

"Don Luis, if you please," said he. "Don Luis Melody—the names go with a sort of hitch, though, don't they?" And he laughed. It was an ugly sound, I thought.

"It makes no difference to me," said I. "I am your friend always, my dear boy. But other people will talk, you know!"

"Other people have always talked about me," said Lew Melody. "I wouldn't take that pleasure away from them. That's one reason I'm glad to do it. It gives them a better chance to talk. They can say that I've turned greaser, now!"

"They will not dare do that!" said I.

"Oh, I'm peaceful now," said he. "I make no more trouble. You can put me down, now, as one of the people who keep the law by force of habit. Besides, I'm afraid. When a man has been in trouble and then has to be bought out of it—it makes him afraid, you see! And Cordoba had to buy me out!"

I didn't like this sort of talk; the bitterness was too close to the surface in spite of his smiling.

He rambled on, talking rather loudly, as though he invited my neighbors to hear, and in fact, I espied the shadow of Mrs. Cheswick near her window, drinking it all in, greedily.

"But I couldn't go on being plain Lew Melody," said he. "Not while my father-in-law-to-be is spending so much money to set me up as a gentleman. I suppose that you've heard about the ranch he's bought for me?"

"Of course I've heard that. It's a splendid place, I understand. I congratulate you, Lewis."

"Don Luis," he corrected again. "Or Luis, at least. Well, it's a very fine place, of course. How many hundreds of acres there are in it, I don't know. And how much the timber alone is worth is hard to calculate. But there are three little streams running through it, so that we'll never be bothered by droughts such as this year. I'll be entirely secure there!"

There was an undercurrent of scorn and self-contempt in all of this which I pretended not to see.

"It must have cost a great deal," said I.

parading a little to-day so that people may know what to expect. I hope that you'll spread the news around a little."

I could not answer.

"Or tell everything to Mrs. Travis," said he. "I'm sure that she'd be glad to do a little talking."

I bit my lip. This shaft of irony had indeed struck home at the most vital spot of weakness in my dear Lydia. But the next word from him was a sudden whisper.

"Have you seen her lately, sir?"

I did not have to ask whom he meant. "I've seen her," said I.

"Is she well?" asked Lew Melody huskily.

"I think—quite well," I managed to stammer.

"I rode out like a thief in the night," said Melody, "and I peeked through the window at her. I thought she was a little pale. But she is not ill?"

"No, Lewis, not ill."

"Sometimes I wonder——" he began, and then stopped.

I did not ask him to continue, but, as quickly as I could, I changed the subject back to himself.

"A year ago you fought with a Mexican named Azatlan."

"Did I?" said he carelessly. "Yes, I think I did. A dog who tried to knife me in the back."

"You killed him, Lewis."

"I'm glad I was lucky enough to!"

"Two of his brothers are across the danger line, waiting to find you. Will you promise me to be careful?"

"Careful of the life of the son of Señor Cordoba, the rich money lender?" said he. "Can you ask me such a question? If I did not trouble about myself, I should at least have to take care of such clothes as these, should I not?"

But when he leaped onto the back of Gray Pacer, the direction in which he rode was straight back toward the river, and I knew, then, how well he would heed my warning!

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE CANTINA.

HE was not two blocks down the street when a rider on a foaming horse rushed up to him.

"Don Luis!"

"Well?"

"I come from Señor Cordoba!"

"Heaven be with him," said Lew Melody in solemn mockery.

"He sends me to warn you that two men——"

"Are playing mumble-the-peg?"

"Are in Barneytown hunting for you—brothers of——"

"I know them," said Melody, "if they look like their third brother."

"You have heard, then?" said the fellow, much disappointed.

"I am glad to hear it over again, however," said Melody. And he gave the man a piece of gold.

"You are to ride straight back to the house of Señor Cordoba," said the messenger.

"I am? Is that the order?" asked Melody, swallowing a lump of scorn in his throat.

"The señor begs you to come at once!"

"I shall do my best," said Luis. "But tell Señor Cordoba that the Gray Pacer has turned lame and that I may have to go slowly on the way home!"

The other eyed the flawless beauty of the stallion. "Ah, well, señor," said he, flashing a glance of admiration at the calm face of Melody, "I trust that fortune will be with you again. But they are known men, both of them."

"Which means that they are known scoundrels, eh?"

"By all means!"

"Where were they last seen?"

"In a place where—you must not go, señor. Those are my orders."

"You are not telling me—it is a bird in the air," said Melody, and gave him another heavy yellow coin.

dear friend, the Señora Alicia. We are old friends, are we not, señora?"

A gasping snarl was her only answer.

"I have come to my friend's house in the hope that I might find them here, because I wish to tell them what became of the other Azatlan. Is there no one among you by that name?"

Not a head stirred, not a voice spoke.

"Then hear me and repeat it to the two good brothers: Pedro Azatlan has left this weary world. Do you understand? I, who tell you, know. Because it was my privilege to open the door for him. And I showed him through into his new life. I know that the two brave brothers will be interested. Tell them, also, that I called here in the hope of having a pleasant word with them—about their brother's journey."

He tossed off his soda and then backed to the door.

"Adios, amigos!"

And he was gone.

CHAPTER V.

RETURNING TO THE CORDOBAS.

IF you think that Lew Melody was exceedingly brutal in this matter, I must explain a little: First, that he had recognized one of the precious pair by a resemblance to the brute face of the man he had killed the year before. For, the moment he had left the cantina, there was a great bustle and stir behind him, and the middle-aged man with the bristling mustaches, who was none other than Cristobal Azatlan, rushed from his chair toward the door like a bull. A taller and younger man sprang after him, overtook him, and dragged him back.

"No, brother," said he. "You were wise not to draw a knife or a gun. It was far better to let him go. We have not come here to fight like two fools, eager to throw our lives away. We have come here only to exact a vengeance, which is a holy thing, is it not?"

"Ah, gasped out Cristobal, well-nigh strangled with rage and with shame, "God must have sustained me, for otherwise I should not have been able to control myself. I should have rushed at him and torn him to pieces. Ah, Miguel, did you not hear it? It was he who opened the door, and sent our brother out of this life. Ah, dog of a gringo! Ah, the devil take and burn him little by little, forever! It must be to-day, Miguel—or I shall die! There is a fire in me! I shall die of hate if I do not kill him to-day!"

They led him back to a chair. Señora Alicia, full of solicitude, brought wine.

"Do not think, Señor Azatlan, that we suspect your brave heart. But is the bull as wise as the wild cat? No, no! It is fatal to rush at this Don Luis. He is a devil with ten hands, and each hand strikes deadly blows. I—your friend, who stand now before you—I have seen three bold and strong men rush upon him in this place. And that was in long years ago, when he was still a boy. Two of those men we kept in bed until their wounds healed slowly. And the third man was buried. It was sad and terrible. But all the men of the valley know that what I say is only the truth. It is the small shadow of the truth. Believe me, there is no shame for you. Tell him, amigos, if I have lied?"

Others came around Cristobal. It was to congratulate him for the patience with which he had endured the dreadful baiting of Don Luis.

"But it delivers him into your hands," said they. Before, he thought he knew your face, and he was right. But now he cannot be sure that you are Pedro's brother. He is already a dead man, and you and Miguel will succeed where so many have failed. But do not meet him face to face. It is deadly and unescapable! It is better to face poison. He works by enchantment!"

In this manner they soothed the in-

out with joy. It was like the Lew Melody she had known of old.

"Did no messenger come to you from me?" cried Cordoba, when he saw the young American.

"Yes."

"Ah, you were so long—I had a fear that—well, here you are; and you are safe! Luis, you must not move from the house for a few days, until I have found a way of disposing of—never mind!"

"Of Miguel and Cristobal Azatlan? Do you mean them?" asked Lew Melody.

"The devil has told you their names!" cried poor Cordoba. "How have you learned?"

"I have been to see them!"

"You!" cried all three, frozen with astonishment and with dread.

"But I could only find one," said Melody, hastening to relieve their minds of all dread. "I found only one—that is, only one that I could recognize, and there was no bloodshed—nothing but words. I scolded him, my dear friends, and then I came back to you."

"Were there others there?" asked Cordoba.

"There were; and that's why I tell you about it, because I know that you'd hear very soon whether I spoke or not. But there is no harm done."

"Except that you have insulted one of them in public. And now he cannot exist in happiness until he has—ah, well, Luis, if you were not so terrible, we would not love you so much, I suppose. But now you must not stir out of the house. Promise me that, until I have had a chance to find these men and deal with them?"

"But how would you deal with them?" asked Lew Melody.

The money lender winked broadly at him. "There are ways!" said he.

"You will bribe him to leave the valley?" asked Lew. "But they would come back again. You cannot handle such nettles with a light touch; you must crush them. Leave them to me. It is all in the knack of the thing—very simple, and no danger. I only talk of it to-day, because I know that you will worry."

He was stopped by the expression of Cordoba. The poor man was in a complete panic. It had been one thing to hear of the fierce exploits of this youth, when he was no more than a gay visitor in the house of Cordoba now and again; but as the future husband of Juanita—yes, with that marriage barely around the corner of to-morrow, so to speak, it was absolutely necessary that they should find some means of curbing this creature of fire. But how put a harness on a comet? With despair, then, and with love, and with a sort of futile rage, the money lender gazed at the youngster. Then he turned to his wife.

"Speak to him!" he entreated.

The señora had watched all of this scene with a keen and patient eye, with an interest neither feminine nor masculine; nothing existed in her except the mother afraid for her daughter's happiness, and in this moment she was seeing terrible ordeals in the long years which stretched ahead for Juanita if she married such a man. And, by a sort of premonition, a foreknowledge, she knew that this marriage should not be. So she made no answer to her frantic husband.

It was Juanita who spoke, and in such a tone as neither her father nor her mother had ever heard from her before.

She simply said: "We have talked too much of what Luis should do. I suppose that he'll decide for himself in the end!"

It was as though she had said: "What are we, that we should prescribe?"

So that matter ended for the moment, but a strange chill had come over the household and would not leave them. They sat about fumbling for something

tainly not with Furnival himself, who had ridden so hard in the direction of Barneytown. It began to seem like an exciting mystery to Slim when, far and faint in the house, he heard the sound of a girl's voice, and, a moment later, the familiar murmur of Lew Melody.

It was such an immense relief to Slim, that he was about to turn away with a sigh; and then he grew interested, not to eavesdrop upon the pair, but in the nice experiment of seeing how sharply he could attune his ears to those light sounds.

There are ways and ways of listening, but few have the power to throw their attention in a definitely concentrated direction. Yet, from the wide and circling horizon of noises around him, Slim shut out from his consciousness the yelping of a far-off coyote—a mere pulse in the air—the sharper conversations from the hen yard behind the house, the dreary squeaking of the derrick pulley, the lowing of a cow like a doleful horn in the distance—all of these noises were closed out of the ear of Slim, and he heard, only, the delicate stir of voices within the house itself. Then, having shut out all else, as a burning glass focuses the sun to a point of fire, so Slim centered his attention and received reward. For, at once, he could distinguish the thread of the conversation. The merest puff of wind would have shattered that dainty web of sound, but no wind came, and presently Slim was fascinated by the picture which those voices were painting for him—a picture so startling and so grim that he could not believe the ears with which he heard it. For he had looked upon Lew Melody as the happiest man in the world; and now he could peek behind the curtain and see the truth! Only a brief glimpse of the truth, but that was enough.

"I shall manage in some way," was the first thing Slim heard Sandy saying.

"Ah, Sandy," said Lew Melody, "I wondered why I should be punished like this, but now I can understand. It's because I've lived for myself and hunted for nothing but my own fun—and my fun was making trouble for other people. I've lived by the gun; and now I'm punished for it."

"You'll be happy, Lew."

"I shall be?"

"She is very pretty; and she loves you. And so do all the Cordobas. But how could they help it? And you'll have money. That helps to smooth out life, I know."

"When she came to me like that in the mountains—I had to do something to save her name. Was there anything else?"

"You had to marry her, Lew. It was the only right thing. Do you think that I shall ever reproach you for it?"

"I know that. And it only makes the pain harder to bear."

"Besides, perhaps I shall be happy, too, after a while. There are things for one to do. And my father needs me. I shall find some sort of happiness. But oh, how I wish that I had never broken out at you to-day! It was only because father brought you in so suddenly—and said so many kind things about you—just for a moment I thought that my heart would break. Because I love you so! Do you forgive me?"

Slim tiptoed from the veranda with a white face.

It was much more to him than if he had looked in upon a frightful murder. He was fifteen, and at fifteen the ideals are as rigidly established as lofty walls of steel. So it was with Slim. Here was his pleasant picture of the future life of Lew Melody pulled down around his ears. He had seen him as the husband of a lovely girl, the son-in-law of a rich man; trouble seemed annihilated for Melody. But here was the truth! And that a man should

marry a woman he did not love, even from a sense of duty, seemed to Slim —thief, vagabond, and incipient gun fighter as he was—the most deadly and blasting of sins.

"Something has got to be done!" said Slim.

CHAPTER X.

"A VERY GREAT CRIME."

SUCH a decision as Slim had come to was proper enough; but what under heaven could be accomplished, he did not see so clearly. What he was determined upon, however, was that this false marriage should not take place. It was true that he knew Juanita and liked her very well; but he had seen Sandy also, and to see her, as the poet says, was to love her. Moreover, he felt that this project of Melody, to marry one woman while he truly cared for another, was a crime so dreadful that anything was permissible to prevent it. Therefore means, no matter how brutal, did not appeal to Slim as things to be rejected. His only difficulty was to find the way in which the thing could be done.

In the first place, he decided that he could not endure to meet Melody face to face at once. There would be too great a danger of his tongue running away with his discretion, and Melody must not now suspect what was in his mind; for nothing he could say, he very well knew, could alter the mind of Lew.

So he rode the roan mustang straight back toward Barneytown, but at a slow gait; and slowly he was passing through the streets when he came past my house just as I was busy in the garden watering Lydia's hedge of sweet peas, which is the joy of her life, I think, beyond anything else in the world. Well, it is a pretty thing, that hedge, and I think that when it calls the eyes of the townsmen toward our house, it sends them by with a happy thought of their clergyman.

However, the sun was very hot, and when I saw Slim, I was glad to retreat to a corner of the garden under the shade of a tree and turn the hose into the trench to run as it pleased—a thing which Lydia greatly objects to. I waved to Slim, and he rode his horse up close to the fence. He was proud of his ability to talk with men like a man would, and now he drew himself up in the saddle and looked in a patronizing fashion over the brilliant wall of the fragrant color which the sweet-pea hedge raised into the sun. The aroma of it went like a secret blessing half a block away, when the wind was blowing softly.

"That ain't a half-bad garden," said Slim. "But, Jiminy Christmas! Mr. Travis, what a pile of work you and Mrs. Travis must put in on it!"

"Quite a bit," said I. "Quite a bit, but it's worth it. Don't you think so?"

"Well," said this imp, "we all got our own tastes, you know. Speakin' personal, I'd say that these here sweet peas smell pretty sweet, but they smell like work, too, and I dunno that I care for the smell of work."

"Work," said I, a little sententiously, I fear, "is the only great happiness in life."

The eyes of Slim opened at me. "Might that be a joke?" he asked, with a frown of wonder on his young-old face.

"Not at all a joke," said I. "Because, you see, man is intended to labor."

Slim blinked. "I dunno that I see that very clear," he admitted.

I am always glad of an argument, even with a youngster, because an argument will open the mind. I have noticed that I am always more violent about a matter of which I am only half convinced. And one never half persuades the other fellow without becoming half unpersuaded one's self. However, there are certain things about which one feels a calm conviction.

When they are challenged, one merely smiles down at the challenger, very much as I now smiled down at Slim.

"I'll explain," said I. Do you know really anything in the world that is happy without work? Consider the squirrels and how hard they labor almost all the year!"

"H'm!" said Slim, and looked restlessly about him.

Presently he pointed. "How much work does that do?" said he.

It was a rascally blue jay perched on the top of a sapling, which flaunted it back and forth in the sun, making it look like a rare jewel.

"Ah, that is a pirate, a marauder!" said I.

"What I ask is: Is it happy?" said Slim calmly.

"Why, one can never judge entirely from appearances," said I rather feebly. "I admit that it looks rather pleased with itself; but that's probably because it's thinking of the last bird's nest it robbed—the scoundrel!"

"All right," said Slim patiently; he made his point. "It's happy. And does it work?"

"I don't suppose it does, a great deal," said I.

I was immensely embarrassed, but for a moment I could not think of a favorable direction in which to turn the conversation.

"But after all," said I, "birds and beasts cannot be judged by the same standards that we use for men."

"I dunno," said Slim. "They ain't so different. They're born, the same as us; they live and eat and sleep and drink and die, the same as us. They get mad and they get glad, the same as us. They got their friends and they got their enemies. Ain't they a good deal like us, maybe, after all?"

"My dear child," said I, taking on a more pulpitlike manner, "do you not see the great difference? No, perhaps you do not, because it is not apparent to the naked eye—only to the inward glance which rests upon the spirit!"

"I dunno that I foller you," said Slim, and he politely stifled a yawn.

I grew a little angry, I admit. "Slim," said I, "have animals souls!" "I dunno," said Slim. "Why not?"

It was staggering. I stared at that young pagan for a mute moment, and then I said: "Why—er—isn't it apparent?"

"I dunno that it is," said Slim. "How d'you make it out?"

"Do you dream," said I, "that there is a heaven for dumb beasts?"

"I dunno," said Slim. "Why not?"

"Because they have no souls to go there!"

"That's what you said before," remarked Slim dryly.

"Can they speak? Can they reason?"

"I dunno that a lot of talk is much good," said Slim. "I never heard no talkin', and I never done none that said half of the things that was inside of me. Did you?"

I could not help biting my lip.

"Slim," said I, "could your horse, yonder, reason and talk as we are talking now?"

"Can you smell what's in the wind the way he can?" said Slim. "Can you see as far? Can you hear as well?"

"Physical properties only!" said I. "What is the soul and the heart of a beast compared with that of a man, Slim?"

"I dunno what you mean," said this irritatingly blunt child.

"Consider, for instance, the affections," said I. "What is so beautiful in the world as love! And can a beast really love, Slim?"

"Well," said he, "how many folks is there in the world that you'd die for?"

"Is that to the point?" said I. "However, perhaps there are some. Death is a good deal, however!"

"Could you name one gent that you would die for—I mean, step right out

Lew Melody had come into the jungle bent on action, he certainly could not wish to attack all six of them at the same time. He must establish a friendship with a few of them—or a state of neutrality, at least.

"To say that I'd shoot a man that was down!" cried Harper. "That's a rotten thing to spread around. I'd like to get the rat who said it."

"I've forgotten," said Lew. "It was some fellow from Montana. He told us quite a lot about you."

"What else?"

"Why, I remember that he said that Shep McArthur was a friend of yours."

Here Tony Mack, whose glittering eyes had never left the face of the young gun fighter, broke in: "Well, that was the truth. You and Shep was bunkies, Dan. Ain't that right?"

"We was," admitted Harper. "He was my best friend in the world. He left me one summer. Heaven knows whatever became of him!"

"I can tell you," said Lew Melody, "one part of the story. I met him right here. There was a fire that night a good deal like this one to-night. I remember that Shep McArthur was boss of the fire and was telling the boys what to do. He told me to get some wood for the fire, and he spoke very sharply. I'm a very sensitive, nervous sort of a chap, Harper. When he spoke to me that way, I couldn't help objecting. And in another moment—you know how it is—we had our guns out. I was unlucky enough to hit him with the first shot."

He was speaking with an oiled gentleness, but the eyes which he fastened upon Dan Harper were the eyes of a tiger. He held the entire group fascinated.

"That bullet went through his leg, Dan. He shouted that he had enough as he dropped, and I stopped shooting, of course. But the minute he saw me lower my gat, he raised his and started pumping lead at me as he lay on the ground. His bullet nicked my ear. I'll always remember McArthur because of the chip on the rim of this ear." He touched the place gently with his fingers.

"So you understand, Dan, why I had to kill him?"

"I understand," said Dan Harper huskily. And all the muscles in his throat were distended by the grip of his teeth as he ground them together.

"I'll sit down by you, Mack," said Melody, "if you don't mind." And he made himself comfortable by the fire—sitting at the extreme point of the arc of which Cristobal Azatlan made the other tip.

"You know me, too?" said the yegg.

"I know that Dan Harper and Tony Mack often travel together," said Lew. "That's why I suppose that you're Tony Mack."

"Our friend seems to be a mind reader!" exclaimed Doc Ransom, who had been using the last conversational interval to shift his gun to a more convenient pocket. "He seems to be able to select names for all of us! What about our two friends on the left? Could you name them?" said Doc Ransom.

"Miguel and Cristobal Azatlan," said Lew Melody. "We have met before. I might almost say that we are old friends. I knew their brother a year ago!"

The deadly irony of this remark caused even the calm of Doc Ransom to break a little, and he flashed a side glance at the two Mexicans. But they sat with faces of stone, smoking and hearing nothing.

"And here is another," said Ransom, pointing to Tod, the sneak thief and burglar. "You have given four names out of six, and I suppose that you could name this gentleman, also?"

Perhaps I have pointed out that Lew Melody had, one by one, created enemies out of four of the six men in the circle

So he waited, with the life ebbing from him at every moment. And a lifetime, I suppose, whirled through his brain with the passage of each second.

Then he heard the noise of Tony Mack—frightfully burned, to judge by his groans—as he dragged himself from the water back toward the dry land—a groan for every breath he drew. Perhaps that rascal had been injured enough to end him with the others. There was a grim satisfaction to Lew Melody in that thought.

There was a new sound, now, a distant muttering like soft thunder which rattles beyond the edge of the horizon. But this grew faster than the noise of any thunderstorm sweeping across the face of the sky. It swelled and whirled closer—the pounding of the hoofs of many horses!

Then, with a great crashing, the cavalcade struck the outskirts of the woods.

"Slim!" said Melody to himself. "But it's too late!"

The meaning of that noise was not lost upon the two hunters in the dark. There began a brisk crackling as they rushed from the brush covert in an opposite direction, and at the same time, the first riders lunged into the dull glow of the firelight which filled the clearing. Lew Melody, turning himself with an infinite labor, saw Juanita—the first rider, on the pinto mare which he had given to her.

"Luis!" she cried.

It was not she whom he wished, but since she had come, he answered faintly: "Here!"

She was at his side in a flash, and men thronging after her—a great dismounting, snorting of horses, creaking of leather, jingling of spurs. He was pleased with these sounds. They came to him as out of a sleepy distance, for a black burden of rest was falling upon his eyes.

The face of Juanita, as she leaned above him, was a dull blur. Only her voice had life and light as she spoke to him. And then her sharp cry of agony.

"Help! He is dying!"

Professional hands took charge of him. Vaguely he recognized the voice of the Mexican doctor. Lights flared up around him. No, he was being carried into the clearing and now he was put down by the fire, which was freshened until it filled the eyes of Lew Melody with yellow lightnings.

Then, from Juanita: "He will live, doctor?"

"I cannot tell," said the doctor. "If he wants to live—perhaps!"

Lew Melody heard no more. He had fallen into a blissful sleep, so it seemed to him—or was it death toward which he sank? No, for he was called back by burning pains. The doctor, with two assistants, was hastily drawing wide, gripping bandages, about his wounds. That pain gathered like a great crescendo of music, and crashed upon his brain.

And he fell into darkness again.

CHAPTER XVI.

MELODY LIVES.

JUANITA was not in the clearing. She had remounted the pinto mare and now she was flying up from the river bottom, and twisting through the thick shadows of the Mexican town, and then the hoofs of her horse struck out an echoing roar from the old bridge that staggered across the Barney River.

Before her glowed the lights of the American section, with its broader streets, and now she was passing through it with the scent of freshly watered lawns coming cool and fragrant upon either side. And now she was beyond those lights of the town and stretching up the weary rise of hills to the east.

The pinto mare, laboring with all her might, seemed to be standing still, and

The Trail Home

By James Edward Hungerford

DOWN the ol' trail, with a clickety-click,
Ridin' fer pleasure, an' movin' some quick,
Sittin' a saddle I'm fittin' with ease;
Nothin' to stop me—jest fannin' the breeze!
Little hoss steppin' with pep an' with pride,
Chock full o' happiness that he can't hide!
Nostrils a-flarin', an' eyes shinin' bright,
Eatin' up miles, with a keen appetite!

Gosh, but it's great to be foot-loose an' free!
This is th' life—you kin take it from me!
Far from the jankle an' racket an' noise,
Back in the West, with its pleasures an' joys.
Been on a jaunt fer a sight-seein' trip;
Headin' fer home, with my little clothes grip;
Gone fer a month, but it seems like a year—
An' you kin bet I am glad I am here!

Been to the city to see all the sights,
Gittin' my fill o' the shimmerin' lights;
Herdin' with folks in the cañons o' stone,
Feelin' some lonesome, an' trailin' alone;
Now I am back on the ol' twistin' trail.
This is th' life, an' it never grows stale.
Far from the clatter an' clamor o' men,
Sittin' astride o' a bronc hoss again!

Gulches an' gorges an' mountains an' hills,
Coulees an' cañons an' rivers an' rills.
Beauties o' nature that dazzle the eye—
Here I am willin' to stick till I die!
Sniffin' the perfume o' sweet-scented sage,
Gone fer a month, but it seems like an age!
Breathin' the fragrance o' balsam an' pine—
Here in the heart o' this ol' West o' mine!

Down in the valley, I'm glimpsin' a shack;
Loved ones are waitin' to welcome me back!
Smoke wreathin' up from the chimney o' stone;
No more homesickness, an' trailin' alone!
Eyes are a-shinin', an' pulses athrob.
Glad to be back again, an' on the job.
Heart is a hummin' a song in my breast,
Beatin' in time with the heart o' the West!

to the effect that Spike was sick on the day of the contest, or out of condition, and demand another chance. He would then become reckless in his statements, apparently, and offer to back his man with real money. When Spike again met the local champion, he invariably won, after almost losing the fight. It was a sure thing and paid well, in view of the fact that Strand usually had an agent in the crowd covering all side bets. When each community had thus been properly trimmed, Strand, Spike, Frank Holt, the referee, and the agent, moved on to greener fields.

Three weeks before the Frying Pan Sizzle, the annual round-up of which "All-around" Austin was general manager, Strand dropped from the westbound train and looked about. Then he made his way to All-around Austin's general store. He found in All-around Austin a genial soul, typical of the cattle country, who preferred horseflesh to motor cars, and who had a way of looking into a man's eyes so steadily, that unless the man was strictly honest himself, he would invariably look away. Strand got to the point at once.

"They tell me you are running this layout, and that there is going to be a smoker the last night of the round-up."

"That's right," All-around admitted, studying the other shrewdly. All-around Austin knew the type, and was trying to fathom the other's game. If there was to be any trimming done in connection with the round-up, All-around Austin preferred to do it himself.

"I hear you are looking for a man to meet *your* man, Randolph, in the main event," Strand continued. "Understand he is a cow-puncher from the Diamond Hitch Ranch."

"That is true," replied All-around. "But I haven't definitely decided that it will be Randolph. He is a good boy, with a future; that's what the cattle country thinks, but there are a couple of others around here who are not so bad."

"Ever hear of Spike Lambert?" Strand queried.

"It seems like I had," Austin replied. "He beat a big coal miner at Black Diamond, didn't he?"

Strand nodded. "Yes, Lambert is a coal miner himself. He looked pretty good to me, and I thought I might develop him into a pretty good boxer. We are touring around these parts giving him the experience. If you can use him, let me know. However, we must match him against a local man. I don't want him to go up against some ringer and get licked."

All-around Austin frowned. "The West doesn't do business that way," he said coolly.

"What will the purse be?" Strand continued.

"Two thousand dollars for the winner and a thousand dollars for the loser. It is not so very much, but it is all we can stand. We aim to break even on these round-ups; give all the money to the winners of the broncho-bucking contest, the bulldogging, and the like of that."

Strand was a clever fight manager. "My man has the reputation," he said. "Win, lose, or draw, we want the long end. You see, he is the drawing card."

All-around Austin did not look like a fight manager. He looked more like a Western country storekeeper, and he was.

"The drawing card in this affair will be the local man, and not the outsider," he said quickly. "I won't guarantee you a blamed cent, except that the winner will get two thousand dollars and the loser one thousand. Take it or leave it." And All-around Austin busied himself about his store while he cheerfully whistled the "Old Gray Mare."

Presently he tossed a sheet of paper to Strand. "If you want to match your man against ours," he said, "just fill in

emerging from All-around Austin's general store. A round-up brings people from every corner of the earth, and it was evident that she was out of her element, though intensely interested in the throng.

She made her way unobtrusively down the street. A thick-shouldered individual followed, and when she turned off, overtook her with quick strides.

"Hello, girlie," he said, "I guess me and you are the only regular people in this burg. Suppose we look it over together?"

"Suppose we don't!" she replied, and turned to go.

"Just a moment," he objected. She glanced around apprehensively, with the hope of avoiding a scene. Only one person was in sight—a tall cow-puncher, right from the range. He approached with long, quick strides.

"Men don't follow ladies around in this country!" he said.

Spike squared off. "I guess you don't know who I am!" he growled out, and then he followed his words with a blow at the sunburned jaw.

The other feinted, caught him off guard, and smacked his fist to the jaw. After about ten seconds, Spike commenced to squirm around in the dust and wonder if the stars twinkling overhead were real or caused by the blow. The girl was looking at the cowboy in open-mouthed amazement.

"Rex Dunlap, where on earth did you come from?" she cried.

"Just rode into town and nearly fell off my horse when I saw you going down the street. Naturally, I followed."

"Come quick, Rex," she said nervously, "this man is a prize fighter. I just recognized him a moment ago. When he regains his senses he will just about kill you."

"Well," drawled Rex, "he had a right smart chance, and didn't take it!" But for other reasons, he took the girl's arm and hurried from the scene. "I am tickled to death to see you, but it's going to open up the old hurt again. I guess I'm not good at forgetting a girl. For two cents I would get rough and pack you off to the ranch, right now. Once I thought you cared a little bit. I had no business to think so, I suppose."

"Yes, you did," she replied, "because I led you to think so."

"Hang it! When I asked you, you said no!"

"Because I wasn't sure of myself, and because I wanted time to think." Just a trace of bitterness crept into her tone. "I have had two years to think it over—two years in which to realize that a man of your type never speaks idle words; he means just what he says."

In his blissful ignorance, the big cowboy credited the meeting to luck, but the girl knew otherwise. It was ten per cent luck and ninety judgment on her part. It was not the first round-up that her heart had led her to.

Spike Lambert was in a black mood.

"What's the matter with you?" demanded his manager.

"Nothing," growled Spike. "The moment I settle with this Randolph, I'm going out and punch a big stiff of a cow-puncher, that put it over on me when I was trying to date up the girl you saw me follow out of the post office."

Strand was not interested particularly in Spike's brawl. Spike could take care of himself.

"Randolph is out and a man named Dunlap takes his place," he explained. "He is a rancher up here, and dubs around with the gloves for the fun of it. It is the best thing that ever happened. These poor saps think he is good, and they have emptied their socks of their last cent."

All-around Austin hailed them as they passed his store. "Come and meet that Dunlap. He got in from the range last night."

a hard-looking range man. The latter was drawing a .44, the barrel of which to the referee seemed fully a yard long.

"I ain't heard no rumors," interrupted the cowboy, "at least not any rumors that we are worried about, and I don't aim to have you call off any bets."

For just a moment the referee stood his ground. Never in his life had he seen so much artillery at one time. Everywhere he looked, the butts of guns protruded from holsters. In fact, there were more guns than there were neckties in the audience.

"And, furthermore," continued the cowboy, "if you wear glasses in your refereeing, dust them off and dust them plenty. Savvy?" He tapped the butt of the .44 with almost reverence.

The referee's throat was dry. Somehow he felt that he had just kissed three thousand dollars good-by. He turned to the timekeeper. "Let her go," he announced, and the gong rang.

Spike Lambert leaped across the ring like a panther. He hated them all, the crowd, the men with the mark of open spaces stamped on their faces, who talked in terms of square dealing, and, above all, he hated his opponent. The weight of his attack caused Dunlap to give ground, yet Spike's vicious punches were met skillfully. Surprised, he clinched, and when the crowd could not see, he resorted to tactics barred in the ring. A moment later Spike broke away with haste. Here was a man who knew his own game.

When the gong sounded, neither had any distinctive advantage. Dan Devoe was in high glee.

"When this fight is over with, I will have enough to build a house on my land; then wedding bells for me."

He sponged off Dunlap's face and shoulders in a manner indicating experience, whispered a few words of advice, then slapped him on the back, as the gong sounded for the second round.

Rex Dunlap did not win the next round or the next; he barely held his own, and a fortune hung in the balance repeatedly. Yet it was a contest such as men seldom see, and then the tide turned. Long hours in the open, sleeping on the ground, winter and summer, clean living—had turned the tide.

Spike fought with his back to the wall, and a blow of desperation somehow reached the spot. Dunlap was down. With a cry of joy the referee leaped forward and commenced to count. He reached the count of nine in less than five seconds, but the "ten" died in his throat as Dunlap gathered his will power and struggled to his feet. It was raw—an outrage—for it denied the range man the right of those precious seconds of recovery.

An angry roar came from the crowd; the referee paled as several men started to crawl through the ropes. All-around Austin waved them back, but crawled through the ropes himself. As the battle continued, Austin thrust the referee from the ring.

"I quit!" the official muttered nervously. "I'm through!"

"You bet you're through!"

The gong sounded and the contestants walked to their corners. All-around Austin knew none of the fine points of the ring game, but his education in square dealing was extensive. He lifted his hand, and the throng became silent.

"Spike Lambert had his own personal referee for five rounds," he announced, "and he got away with everything but murder. He almost got away with the fight. I don't know much about refereeing, but I've a sneaking idea of what's square. The fight will go on. When I say break, I want you men to break. I don't aim to pry you apart, and the man who hangs on will lose the fight. I've got a stop watch, and from now on the count will be ten full seconds when any man is on the canvas. I'm going to squat down in that corner and look a

lot. If I don't like what's going on, I'll act according."

The gong rang, and Strand sent his man from his corner with a rush; then he slipped around and tried to talk to Austin.

"Look here!" he cried angrily.

All-around kept his eyes on the men. "If you've got anything to say, write a letter, and I'll answer."

Failing to divert the referee's attention long enough to slip something over, he resorted to an old trick of the ring. Between rounds he sprinkled a dab of powder on Spike's gloves.

"Now play for his eyes, and when that stuff works in, you'll have things your own way."

Spike, badly worried, took new hope when he left his corner. For a time he boxed, until at length he shot in a swift one squarely over Dunlap's eye. It was a tap, and yet——

In all his years on the range none remembered seeing Dunlap lose his temper. They saw his face twist suddenly from the agony of that eye; then a rage as cold as the breath of the arctic seemed to grip him. The crowd stood up as one. It saw Spike measure his almost blind opponent and strike a clean blow. It should have dropped the range man in his tracks, but he shook it off and cast discretion aside. Fear gripped Spike.

"He didn't drop!" he muttered, and retreated. "He——" Spike swung and missed, and the world became black.

Rex Dunlap did not glance back, as in a trance he heard All-around Austin toll off the count over the prostrate Spike, heard Strand's frantic pleas for him to rise. All he could think of was relief from pain.

While Dan Devoe bathed his eyes, several men carried Spike from the ring. The roar of joyous .44s splitting the night was deafening. It should have awakened even Spike, but it did not. Strand hurried over to the stakeholder.

"We protest! Hold all bets; I'm going to take this into court! An armed man refereed the fight, and——"

All-around Austin overheard the remark and led Strand from the scene.

"Some men don't know when they are well off," he said. "You tried to rob a lot of hard-working cow-punchers, and didn't get away with it because the range had a man that could beat you at your own game. Your ringer was recognized right off the bat. Take an old-timer's advice before those mavericks out there lose their tempers and begin to yell for raw meat. You'd better pay your debts and then get out of town. Hear those six-guns. Don't that mean something?"

Apparently they did; a barking six-gun is eloquent in argument.

SAVES THE GOVERNMENT'S FISH.

ALFRED HENSEL, a farmer who lives near Filley, Nebraska, is using a large tank at his home in lieu of a fish pond on his farm which went dry in the fall. About a year ago the government placed the fish in the pond, and when the pond went dry because of the long period without rain in this section of the State, hundreds of the fish were seen floundering about in the mud. Hensel thought it was his duty to save them, after the government agents had gone to the trouble and expense of stocking the pond, so he transferred them to a large water tank near his windmill. He intends to keep them alive until spring and then restore them to the pond.

sole, with no imprint of the heel. Tom could read that clearly. The man had knelt on one knee and had leaned forward; thus resting on the knee and the sole of the other foot. Had he heard Joe running, crouched down, and been ready to fire? That seemed probable.

Tom now returned to the body. He took up the gun and examined it. He found that it had been fired three times. That indicated that Joe had returned the fire of the other man. Probably he had been fired upon once and had not been hit. He had wheeled to confront the man and had been shot in the breast. He had gone down, and his attacker had fled.

"It'd look," was Tom's conclusion, "as if that guy hadn't been workin' with Joe after all. I reckon he was just watchin' him. Joe come runnin' out, and the guy plugged him. Joe was runnin'. Ain't no question about that. Mebbe that guy thought he had found gold and didn't want him to get outside and tell anybody."

He stood looking down at Joe's upturned face for a moment. Joe, in death, looked younger than Tom surmised that he was. Tom guessed that hard work and the excitement of his hunt had worn him down somewhat, for his face was thin. It had a lean look, a cleaner, healthier look than it usually wore, Tom was sure. It was not an evil-looking face now, either. Perhaps death had refined it, restored some of its lost boyishness to it. It had not, of course, the look which was in Ruth's face, but there was a resemblance, nevertheless.

"Well, old-timer, you paid the price, didn't you?" Tom said sadly. "I don't think you knowed half the time what you was doin'. You had kinda lost your grip on things, but it seems like they have collected a little more than you owed."

He went to Silver and led him back to the body and then he tied the body on Silver's back. He would take the dead man and get Doctor Raymond to come out and see just how he had been killed. He could get to the Denny ranch before sunup, and possibly could get the doctor out there before Ruth arrived. She would probably not be home till toward noon.

His face softened as he thought of the girl. This would be a bitter blow for her. Joe had made her suffer in his life, and now he would make her suffer by his untimely and violent death. And the task of breaking the news to her would be Tom's. He did not, however, shrink from that. He was glad in a way that it was so. No one, he was sure, would tell her more gently.

The moon had gone by the time he reached the ranch house and the darkness before the dawn was over the land. He tied Silver so that he should not move with his gruesome burden, and walked toward the house. It was in darkness as he had known it would be, and he rapped on the kitchen door. The door was presently opened by Eddie. He stood looking down at Tom for a moment and then fear shot into his eyes.

"Has something happened to Ruth?" he asked.

"No," Tom answered. "It's Joe, Eddie."

Relief came to the boy's eyes, and then fear suddenly clouded them again.

"Has he done somethin'—somethin' awful mebbe?" he asked.

Tom stepped up on the threshold and put his arm across Eddie's shoulders.

"No, he hasn't done anything, son," he said quietly. "He is past doin' anything to anybody—or to himself."

Eddie shivered violently and leaned against Tom for a moment. Then he slowly straightened up.

"Does Ruth know?" he asked.

"Not yet," Tom answered. "I left her at Logan's. We've got to take care

of Joe, Eddie—get him to lookin' as decent as we can, you know, before she comes home."

"We got to work fast, then," Eddie said. "It's comin' mornin'."

"I'll bring Joe in," Tom said. "Then I'll go into town and get Raymond out here and an undertaker. It there an undertaker there?"

"Why, there is a man that does that kind of work for Raymond," Eddie said. "We—we will have to get a coffin at the county seat."

"I'll take care of everything," Tom promised. "I'll bring Joe in now. You won't be afraid to stay here with him, will you?"

"I won't be afraid," Eddie answered.

Tom returned to Silver and bore the body inside. Eddie walked behind him and stood beside the cot in the living room when Tom put the body down and covered it with a blanket which was lying there.

"Where's Herman?" Tom asked.

"Upstairs asleep," Eddie replied. "He don't do much but sleep. He don't eat nothin', and he ain't got nothin' to say."

"I'll start," Tom said. "You get your clothes on. It'll be day before long, and then it won't be so bad."

"I'm not afraid," said the boy steadily. "Somethin' was goin' to happen to Joe, both me and Ruth knowed. We was afraid of somethin' worse than this."

Tom nodded. He gripped the boy's shoulder and then he went out to Silver.

The sun was coming up when he rode into the little village. He went directly to Raymond's office and knocked on the door. Raymond, he supposed, slept back of the office, and this proved to be so. The doctor roused quickly like one used to be roused at any hour, and he opened the door to Tom. He looked down at him with a cold light of distaste suddenly leaping into his sleepy eyes.

"Well?" he snapped out.

"Joe Denny is dead," Tom said. "Been murdered, looks like. I want you to go out there and bring with you the man that works for you in such cases. I heard you had such a man."

He had not, of course, known how Raymond would act. He felt that the doctor could scarcely refuse to accompany him. He was not prepared for the manner in which Raymond took the news, however. Raymond's face suddenly blanched and the light in his eyes died. He was as stricken, Tom thought, as if Joe Denny had been some one near to him.

He put out both hands and laid them rather uncertainly on the door jamb, and his fingers clawed at the wood before they were suddenly still in a strong, steadying pressure.

"Joe Denny?" he said. "Dead? Murdered? Who did it?"

"I don't know. I found him alone up in the gulch. He had been shot; looked like he had been shot through the heart."

Raymond gazed at him for a moment. Then he took his hands from the door jamb and straightened up. His face took on a more normal color, and then a look of cunning came into it.

"*You* found him up in the gulch?" he said.

While he had been riding into town, Tom had been turning many things over in his mind. He had had time to think of all the men he had met since he had come to this country. He had thought of this man, of Saulsbury, of Larkin, of the Mexican, of Peters, the ranch hand, of the man who had been on guard.

"Thank heaven," he had said, "that I got a good look at that fella. I'll be huntin' for him right away."

As he had neared town he had forced himself to stop thinking of Ruth, to whom his mind had inevitably reverted. He had seen that he must keep himself alert. He was still looking for

"I guess the devil must have popped an evil notion into my head, for the minute I set eyes on that blue roan I said to myself that there was a horse that would lick Joe Denny. I knowed that Denny was hard up for money. He always was. He has been sellin' his stock till he hasn't hardly any left. So I sent the Mexican over here with the horse, with word for Denny that if Denny would gentle him I'd pay three hundred dollars."

"You expected that horse would kill Denny," said Tom.

"No, I didn't. You know yourself that it takes several thousand horses to produce one man-killer. You hear talks of man-killers, but you don't often see one. I thought this horse would give Denny a ride, and I also thought Denny couldn't do nothin' with him. He would be shook up some, and he would be hurt in his pride, for while he didn't live on a horse, he thought he could ride anything on four legs, and generally could. That's how come the horse was here when you showed up."

"It made you mad when I gentled that horse, eh?" Tom asked.

"It was the way you done it that made me mad," Saulsbury replied. "When a man pulls a trick like I was tryin' to pull, he has got a little sense of shame to fight, and it seemed to me that you was wise to my game, though of course you couldn't have been. If you had been gentlin' that horse for yourself, or—or for Miss Denny, you'd have played around with him till you won him over if he was ever to be won over, but since you was only goin' to deliver him to me, you treated him rough. You was just tryin' to bust him and arrangin' it so he could bust me later on or I could keep on bustin' him."

"He had been ridden and was ready to be ridden again when I got through with him," Tom said, grinning.

"Oh, I know the difference between bustin' a horse for another man and gentlin' him for your own use," Saulsbury said, and a rueful grin came to his lips.

Tom stood looking at the man for a moment. He saw that he had misjudged Saulsbury in a way. Probably Saulsbury was a fairly decent citizen, generally speaking. Something must have carried him off his feet. Tom could guess what that was. It was his feeling for Ruth Denny.

Tom, however, could not discuss that with him, and he had a notion that Saulsbury would not discuss it.

"Joe Denny's death has made you see things in a new light, has it?" Tom asked.

"It sure has," Saulsbury replied. "I may have been playin' a few tricks myself, but I ain't no murderer, and I don't countenance murder. I come over to see you to find out if there was any way I could help you to find out who killed Denny. That's on the square, Paige."

"There was another murder a while back," Tom said coldly. "A boy named Harry Comstock was murdered, up near where Denny was killed, too."

"Why, yes, I knew about that," Saulsbury said, "but that wasn't anything that interested me. The sheriff took up the case and couldn't find out anything."

"That boy was my brother," Tom said.

"Oh," said Saulsbury. "That's what brought you here, eh? Why didn't you tell me so when you came?"

"When you was hand in glove with Larkin and had that Mex workin' for you?" Tom scoffed. "And Raymond a friend of yours?"

"Appearances were against you, too," Saulsbury said. "Well, I'm here to help you find Joe's murderer if I can."

"Where's your Mex now?" Tom asked.

"Darned if I know. He rode off the night after we met you on the cattle drive, and I haven't seen him since."

you locoed longhorns, or do I have to send for a book an' show it to you in print?"

But there was no necessity for the sheriff to carry out his concluding offer. Astounded as both young men were, it was apparent that they had grasped the phenomenon clearly. By common assent they turned from the sheriff to gape at each other.

"Come to think of it, he was always on the bridge when I seen him," stammered Lafe.

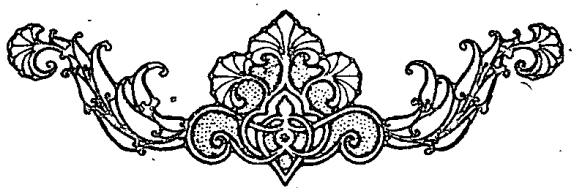
"An' he was always on the grass when I seen him," said Bud, grinning.

Sterrett was not slow to perceive the psychological advantage of that moment. "Right you are," he agreed heartily. "An' if you're willin to admit that you've been a couple o' fools an' will agree to hold the peace hereafter an' forever, I reckon Chuckaluck will be glad to extend a welcome hand to both o' you."

It was for just the briefest moment that the eyes of the two held. Then, impulsively, Lafe's hand went out to Bud.

"Reckon, you wasn't color blind, after all, Bud," he said.

Bud's hand met his halfway. "An' I figger it was a brown lizard you seen, at that, Lafe," he returned, flushing. "S'pose we mosey along toward the hotel, now. Sis told me to be sure an' bring you back with me!"



LONG'S PEAK CLAIMS TWO VICTIMS

TWO daring mountain climbers, a man and a woman, essayed the ascent of Long's Peak, in Colorado, a few weeks ago. The woman was Miss Agnes W. Vaille, secretary of the Denver chamber of commerce. The man was Walter Kiener, of Denver. They made the ascent successfully, but as they came down, they were caught in a tempest of snow and wind. The thermometer which Kiener carried showed fifty degrees below zero. By the time they started on the descent, it had become dark. While going down a slope, the young woman slipped and rolled one hundred and fifty feet before she stopped. The pair struggled desperately against the forces of nature through the night, and in the early morning, Miss Vaille found that her feet and hands were frozen. She was unable to go on. Kiener tried to carry her and stumbled along with her in his arms for a while, but finally had to give up. He then propped her up in the lee of a boulder and pushed on by himself to get help. He managed to reach the Timber-line cabin, callapsing just as he got within hailing distance. A rescue party near the cabin heard his shouts and went to his aid. He described the plight of his companion, and the party at once set out in the face of the blinding snowstorm to the girl's rescue. The second victim of the storm was a member of this rescue party, Herbert Sortland, an employee of Long's Peak Inn. He turned back from the quest and perished in the snow drifts. When the others reached Miss Vaille, they found that she had succumbed to exposure to the bitter cold.

As a member of the Colorado Mountain Climbing Club, Miss Vaille had scaled all but sixteen of the peaks of more than fourteen thousand feet elevation in America. Her father, F. O. Vaille, is a retired Denver millionaire, and was on his way home from a trip to Honolulu when his daughter met with her untimely end.

sorrow, tragedy, aye, and even comedy are hidden in those documents!

But every story must have an ending. For more than forty years it seemed as though "finis" never would be written to the mystery surrounding the discovery of the great Raindrop diamond. Now, in the year 1924, chapter two opens!

On July 18th last, the correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian,* England, cabled the following news story:

CAPETOWN, July 18th.

Three thousand people, including "poor whites," experienced diggers, students, clerks, and even girls took part in the wild race to peg claims on the new diamond diggings at Zeekoefontein, on the banks of the Vall River, this week.

A few weeks ago a Mr. J. J. Tromp bought a farm in this vicinity, a poor, desperate sort of farm hidden away on a lonely part of the veld. Once in possession of the farm, however, he discovered diamondiferous soil, and began working a valuable claim with some two hundred natives, which is now returning him an average of from two thousand pounds to three thousand pounds a week. According to general practice, therefore, the government declared the area surrounding the farm a proclaimed area, and fixed a day this week for the rush. No fewer than two thousand claim licenses were taken out during the three days preceding the rush, which thus made the event one of the biggest diamond rushes ever held in South Africa.

On the day appointed, nearly two thousand men and boys formed the far-flung line behind the mining commissioner, Mr. C. M. Jack, and his detachment of mounted police. A few athletic girls showed prominently in the waiting crowd. The long proclamation was read as the runners clashed their iron pegs and impatiently swayed in readiness to rush.

Soon after eleven o'clock struck, the last words of the proclamation were read, and the line of flags was lowered in unison. So began the greatest rush ever seen by the mining commissioner, who has had many years of experience in the Transvaal.

For five hundred yards the path was cleared. Youngsters in shorts and football jerseys and hardened old diggers drew ahead. Twenty donkeys charged before the oncoming rush, and thousands of Kaffirs on flanking kopjes raised a continuous cheering. A volley of curses ran out here and there as the more impetuous stumbled against their fellow runners or blundered over boulders to the ground. Trousers were torn and ripped by the thorn bushes, and many of the runners fell by the way. But the great mass rushed on down the gully which rapidly closed over the final four hundred yards to where the site of the rich alluvial deposits lay around the owner's mine, which extends from the edge of the running water in the great sandy river bed. For one hundred yards between the rocky ridges pegs were feverishly driven in. Several disputes occurred, but these were quietly settled by the officials.

"My largest stone," Tromp, the owner, said, "has been one of thirty-four and one half carats, and it was a Cape Byewater stone, but I am receiving from twenty pounds to twenty-seven pounds per carat for the finest class of my stones, and this is a price far above the average for South African diamonds."

Chapter three—assuming that Tromp's Zeekoefontein farm was the cradle of the famous "Raindrop"—will probably open with the announcement of the discovery of another "big un." In the meantime, Tromp's present crop of stones, valued up to four thousand dollars each, is, in diggings parlance, "juicy pickings."

PLANTS TWENTY THOUSAND TREES A DAY

TREES at the rate of twenty thousand a day have been planted by farmers in western Canada in the last twenty years, according to a report of the Canadian agriculture department. The report shows that a total of one hundred and fifty million trees have been distributed free to farmers in that section since 1905. Early maturing varieties, suited to climatic conditions were supplied by the government. Canada's tree-planting campaign in western Canada was intended to transform the landscape of the prairie provinces.

like mighty well to hear what he's got to say, and to have you listen in, too. Go it, Toots:

"HOWDY, BOSS: The Belle Fourche Kid and Hackamore Slim know their stuff when it comes to breaking hosses. There are several good ways of breaking hosses, but here is one way that will turn out a gentle-broke one every time.

"First, keep all fools and cowards out of the corral. To halter-break a four-year old, don't use a war bridle; tie him out on a log that he can't drag too far and let him picket-break himself. Watch him close the first day so he won't tangle himself up and get killed. In about two days he finds that he can't get away and that he must avoid getting tangled up.

"Lead him in the corral, lay him down, tie up a hind foot kind of short, and let him up. Take a slicker or blanket and sack him out on both sides. Slap on the blanket and saddle several times so he quits flinching when you do it. Cinch up fairly tight for he is apt to bloat up on you. Climb on and have the foot untied and ride him around the corral several times. If you sacked him out good, I'll gamble he won't buck. If he tries to, pull his head up. You want a gentle hoss not a buckin' one. Ride him ouside the first few times with the hackamore, then later use a snaffle bit and later a curb bit. Remember a green, grass-fed bronc is soft, so don't ride him down, because it don't take them long to play out. Better give him fewer hard rides and more handling till he savvys how to carry a man and kyak.

"This plan won't suit a bronc peeler who likes his half broke and treacherous. Well, I invite criticism and arguments. So long, folks. See you later.

"TOOTS O'REGAN,
"Curry, Montana."

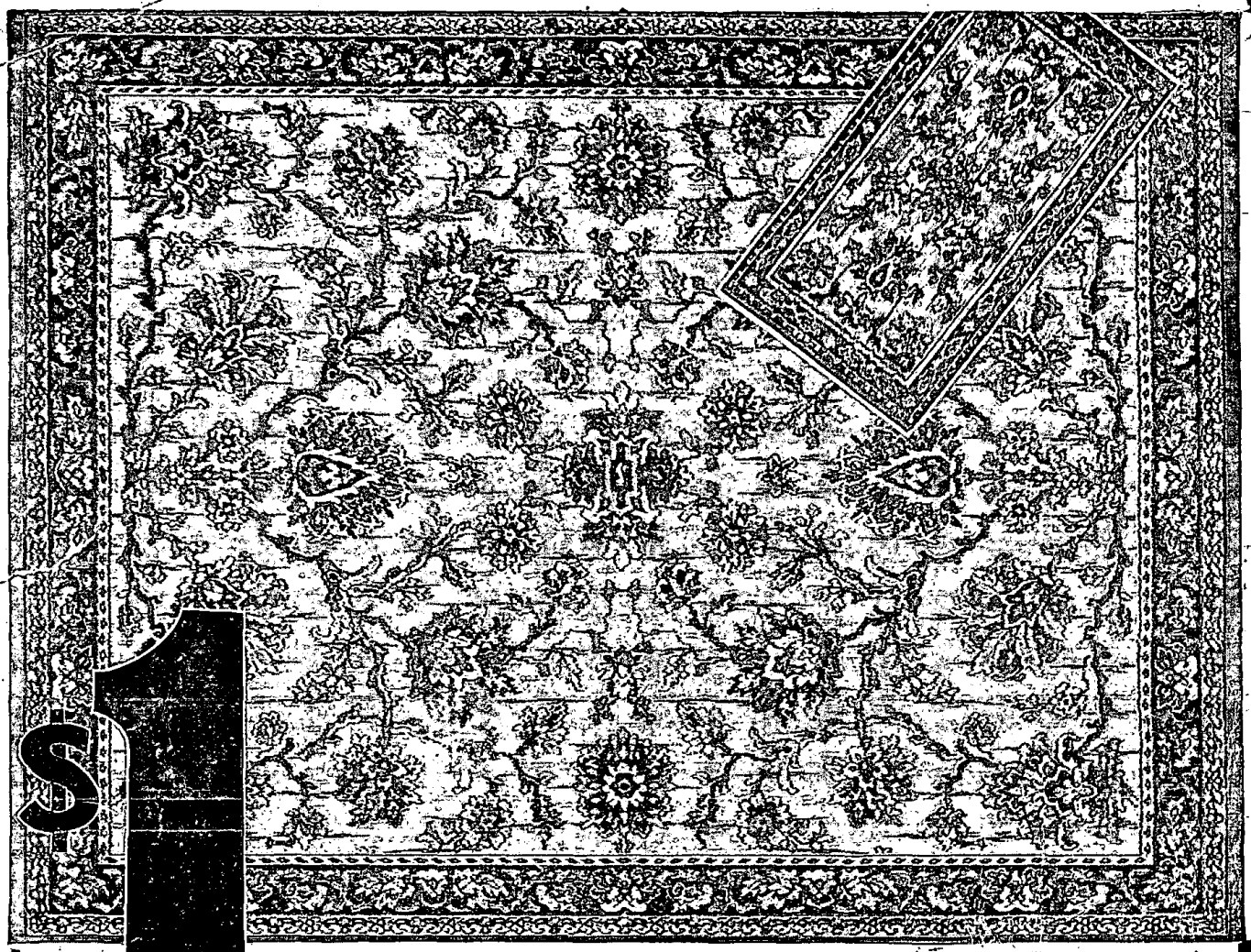
And now, please just hark ye to George C. Clark, Gainesville, Florida. He's a dandy boy with a hoss, and it's a lot he wants to say about them, and of saddles, too. We ask you, George, to tell 'em:

"BOSS OF THE ROUND-UP AND FOLKS: I have been a reader of the WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE for some time, and enjoy the magazine very much.

"As a lover of horses, I feel like saying a few words in regard to breaking them. I have tried breaking them both ways, gentle-breaking, and busting, and while it takes longer to gentle-break a horse, it pays in more ways than one. I have a half-Morgan stag I ride now, who was five and a half years old before he ever saw a saddle. He was caught and gentled, and from that day when he was first ridden until now—he is eight years old—he has never pitched. He stands up for three and four months at a time, grain fed, and when taken out to ride, all he attempts to do is to prance and act like his feet were too good to touch the ground. I haven't given him three months actual work in his life. However, I am planning on riding him through to Michigan next summer, in search of health, as I am an ex-service man, with a bum heart and lung. So I am in no shape to ride hard any more, especially mean horses.

"My brother believes in good old busting and he usually has a fight out of his horse every morning. He has absolutely ruined the spirit in several horses he has broken, and they were not worth a darn as cow ponies, no life, no energy, just plugs.

"I have three saddles and a McClellan, such as was used by the army. The latest saddle I have was Frazier built on a special Fremont tree, sixteen-inch swell, fourteen-inch tree, medium high cantle, double rigged. I had it made for the horse I have now, my favorite. The bars of the tree are built extra wide, due to the fact that the favorite's back is broad and level and with real low



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THIS is the rug that is exactly right for the best room in a cheerful, well-kept, happy, refined home. It comes in full room size only, 9 x 12 ft. It is a Velvet Rug, made of closely woven high quality worsted yarns, with a heavy back. It is woven in one piece, without a single seam. Will give excellent service and years of wear. Colors are absolutely fast and will not fade. The rich shades of blue, tan, rose and taupe blend perfectly with the warm tan background. To fully appreciate the quality, beauty and rich coloring of this rug you must see it on your own floor. And this you can do entirely at my risk. Send the coupon and $1 and the rug will soon be on its way to you. Use it for 30 Days as if it were your own. No matter how much you have used it, you can return it, if you are not thoroughly pleased. Your first payment and all transportation charges will be refunded, the trial will not cost you a penny. This is my fair, square, Money Back Bond that makes the Rug its own salesman; that makes it prove its worth in your own home. **Order No. SA5085. Special Sale Price $39.95. Terms: $1 with order, $3 Monthly. Hearth Rug to Match. Absolutely Free, if you act promptly.**

HERE IS A RICH LOOKING PERSIAN DESIGN VELVET RUG OF UNUSUAL CHARM AND BEAUTY. A rug of cozy warmth; aristocratic in appearance, excellent in quality. A rug you will be both glad and proud to own. In its splendid design and color harmony this rug is a reproduction of a costly oriental rug. So, it will meet with the approval of the most exacting, the most discriminating buyer.

Hearth Rug Free!

This 27 x 52 inch Persian Design Velvet Hearth Rug is of the same quality, the same pattern and the same colorings as the 9x12ft. room size rug described on this page. It matches the big rug exactly. When used in the same room, the two will harmonize perfectly. This Hearth Rug is a Prize to the Prompt. It does not cost you a single penny. To get the Free Hearth Rug you must order promptly. Both rugs will be sent together.

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President

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Send me at once the 9x12 ft. Velvet Rug and Free Hearth Rug to match as described above. Enclosed is $1.00 first payment. It is understood that if at the end of 30 days' trial I decide to keep it, I will send you $3.00 monthly. Order No. SA5085. Price $39.95. Title remains with you until paid in full. Send me your Big Free Catalog also.

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