EVERY WEEK NOV. 7, 1925

Western Story Magazine

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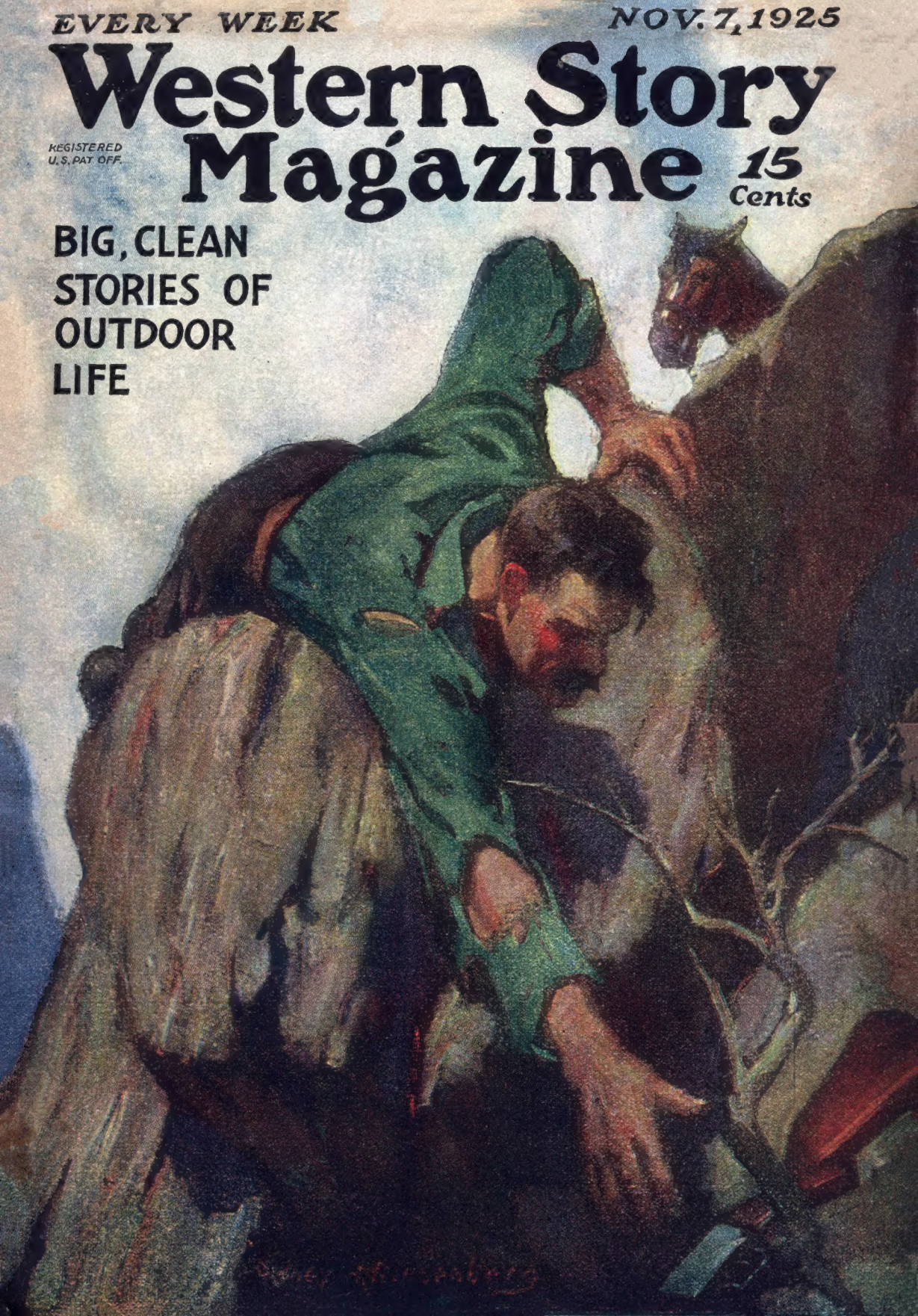

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Whatever music the mood or the company may clamor for—the operatic aria or the old song favorite—you can play it by roll on the Gulbransen Registering Piano with your Personal Touch, Time and Tone Volume, as in playing by hand.

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"Your Unsuspected Talent"—*It will show you*

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The Nat'l Ass'n of Piano Tuners recommends that all pianos be tuned twice a year. Your Gulbransen deserves this care

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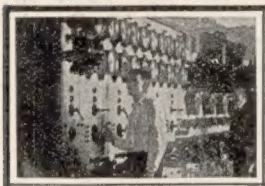

$20 a Day for Schreck

"Use my name as a reference and depend on me as a booster. The biggest thing I ever did was answer your advertisement. I am averaging better than $500 a month from my own business now. I used to make $18 a week."

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Occupation.....

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Western Story Magazine

EVERY WEEK

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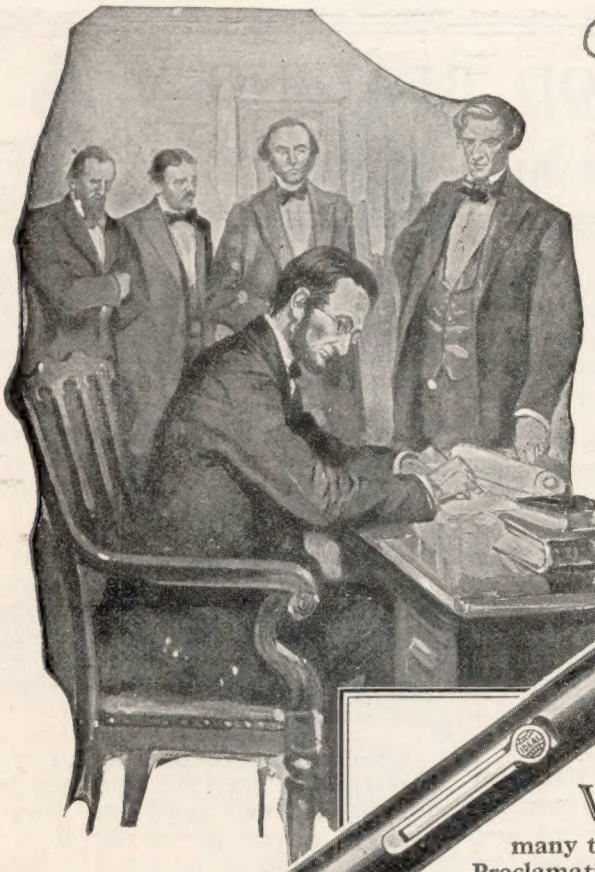

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GOOD READING

BY

CHARLES HOUSTON

What's your test for a good story? Isn't it one that picks you up much as a hard-riding cow-puncher swoops a hat from the ground at a rodeo and gallops you along to a breathless finish?

Between us we are not any too strong for these "highbrow, psychological" novels that are described by their publishers on the jackets as being "grim pictures of life as it is really lived," or "here we come face to face with despair and desolation painted in authentic colors," or "this book considers the deep problems that confront a sensitive soul out of tune with his surroundings."

Lately we've read quite a mess of books like these. In one of them there are four or five chapters describing with great detail the garbage that has accumulated in the back alley of a small town in Minnesota. In another we read about a nice young man who wrote nice young poetry and was shocked by the coarseness of his relatives who were in the pork-packing business in Chicago.

If that's the sort of stuff they write, that's the sort of stuff they like. But not for us. We'll take the garbage for granted, only pausing to wish that the local chamber of commerce would jack up the street-cleaning department a bit. And frankly, we don't get het up for one moment about the agonies of the nice, young man. It is our private opinion that a year's job in the pork-packing business might do him and poetry a heap of good.

No, sir, we may be lowbrows and all of that but we know what we like. And what we like is some rattling good Western story that starts with a bang and goes along with a clatter of hoofs in a cloud of dust. Or, again, we like to sit down in the evening and start in with the detective who is looking for the gunman who shot the rich old duffer in his beautifully appointed apartment and trail along with the dick until at length we are facing the desperate murderer in a dark room at the head of a flight of rickety stairs.

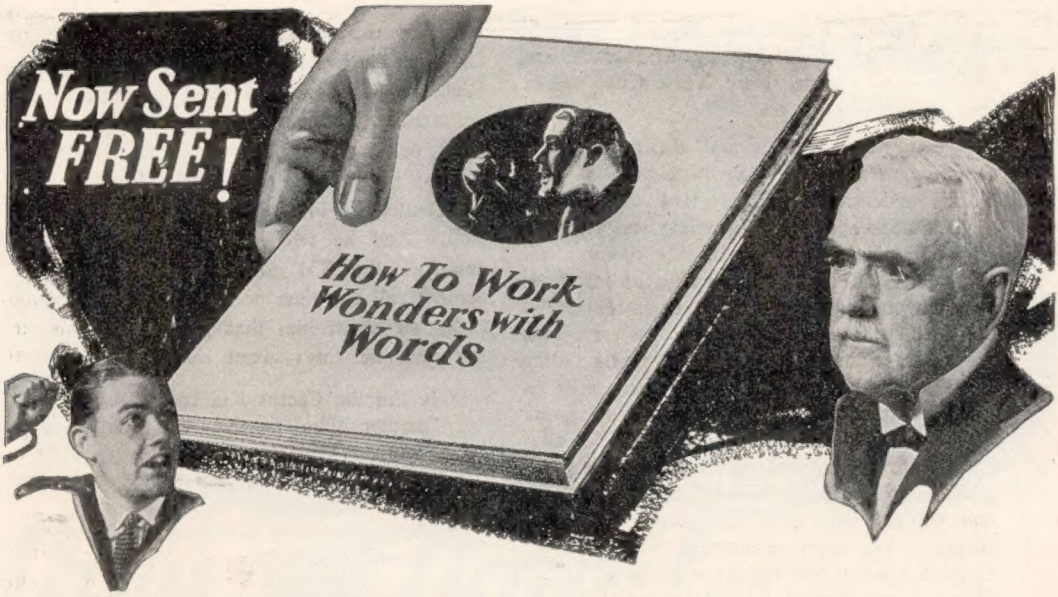
When we get hold of stories like this, we can't be bothered with things like food and drink and business engagements and such trivialities. We've just got to sit there glued to our chair until we find out what happened and how it happened and when and why.

That's why we've been feeling so chipper recently, for after reading a lot of this "highbrow" stuff we have got hold of several stories that fit in with the description of our tastes in the paragraph above. They are the good-looking books published at the surprisingly low price of seventy-five cents by that old, reliable firm, Chelsea House at 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City.

We are here to say that this house can certainly pick authors that know how to tell stories with a real thoroughbred's pace to them. There's no jog-trotting through the mud of things in these books. No, sir, the author gets going on the first page and keeps right on to the last flag with you, the reader, kept breathless all around the track.

Here follow snapshots of some of the latest of these crackajack Chelsea House publications. These are only a few culled from a long list of winners. Chelsea House books all bear this brand—"CH"—and it's our hot tip to you to ask your dealer to show you the entire list—especially if you're looking for the one best bet in Christmas presents.

(Continued on 2nd page following.)



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THE DEMON, a Detective Story by Johnston McCulley, Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Price 75c.

Speaking of gunmen and dicks and such, as we were a bit back, here's a story of New York's underworld denizens that whirls along at breakneck speed to a startling ending. Out of a blinding rainstorm into a room where a gangster chieftain sits boasting of his deeds steps an ominous figure in a red hood. He is the Demon, feared by even the bravest of the crooks and gunmen that prowl o' nights. Who is he? What is his mission? Why does he come into that thieves' haunt at such ar hour? These are the questions that Mr. McCulley puts before you, and if there's a drop of red-blooded curiosity in your veins you won't rest content until you have finished the last chapter. We don't recommend "The Demon" as good reading for the front porch of an old ladies' home, but it has our cordial O. K. for those who love a mystery story that's very much out of the ordinary.

THE WOMAN IN MAUVE, a Love Story by Georgette MacMillan, Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Price 75c.

She had a way of appearing under the most dramatic circumstances and then vanishing from off the face of the earth—this Woman in Mauve who so fascinated Ronald Franklin, the good-looking bachelor clubman. At first it merely puzzled him, and then he found himself involved in one of the most serious affairs of his career. For everything pointed to the fact that the girl with whom he had fallen so desperately in love was involved in the ugliest of tragedies. Apparently she was the confederate of murderers and crooks. But he could not give her up and set himself to solve the mystery of her identity. How he succeeded makes an unforgetable story of love and fighting all mixed up together and all the best of good reading.

THE CACTUS KID, a Western Story by James Roberts, Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Price 75c.

You know the name of James Roberts. It's like the mark "Sterling" on silver to find it on the jacket of a ripping Western story. Well, he has gone and done it again, turned out another galloping masterpiece against the background of his beloved West. Here he tells of a new way to collect a debt, the way the Cactus Kid did it, at the end of a practical Colt. And he tells us what happened then and how the Kid got into one scrape after another, all the time preserving the happy-go-lucky air about him that is best described in the song he sings about himself:

"Oh, I'm the Cactus Kid from Texas,
Tougher than weather and swifter than lead:
I fork 'em and ride 'em whenever I find 'em,
Till they're ready to quit or they're already dead."

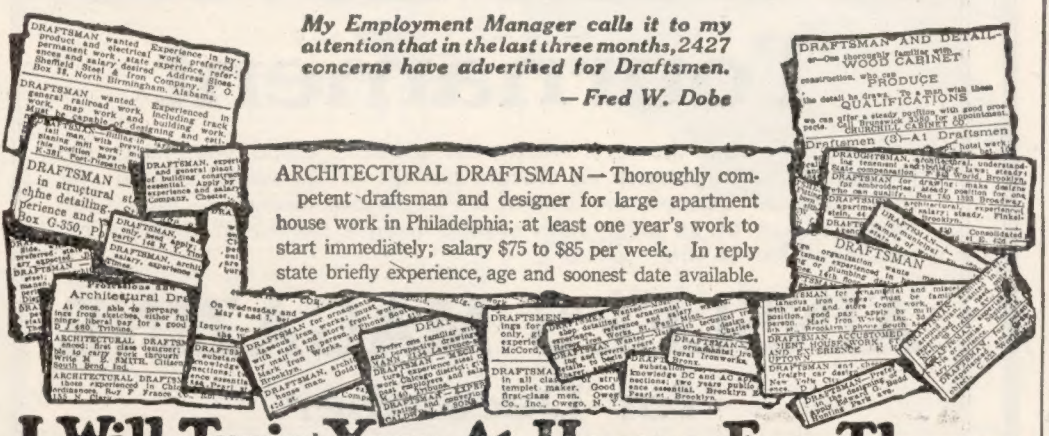
We urge you to meet up with the Kid because we know you'll like him fine. You can get an introduction from your dealer right around the corner.

THE books mentioned above are all seventy-five-centers, well bound and printed, called by those who ought to know, "the outstanding bargain in the book world to-day." But don't forget that Chelsea House turns out regular two-dollar novels as well—novels that belong in your library for keeps. Here is one of the latest:

ON THE RIGHT WRISTS, by Armstrong Livingston, Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue. Price $2.

The storm begins to brew at a quarrel in a camp owned by the wealthy and unscrupulous "Spider of Wall Street." It gathers in rage to a thrilling climax when at last the handcuffs are on the right wrists—those of the man who killed the Spider, and then at length the sky clears. Armstrong Livingston has here written a detective story that in all its 300 and more pages never once lags or fails to thrill. Unless we are very much unlike the average fiction lover the country over, this book will be discussed for months to come and the tired reviewers will have something very real and interesting to enthuse over.

Draftsmen Wanted!



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—Fred W. Dobe

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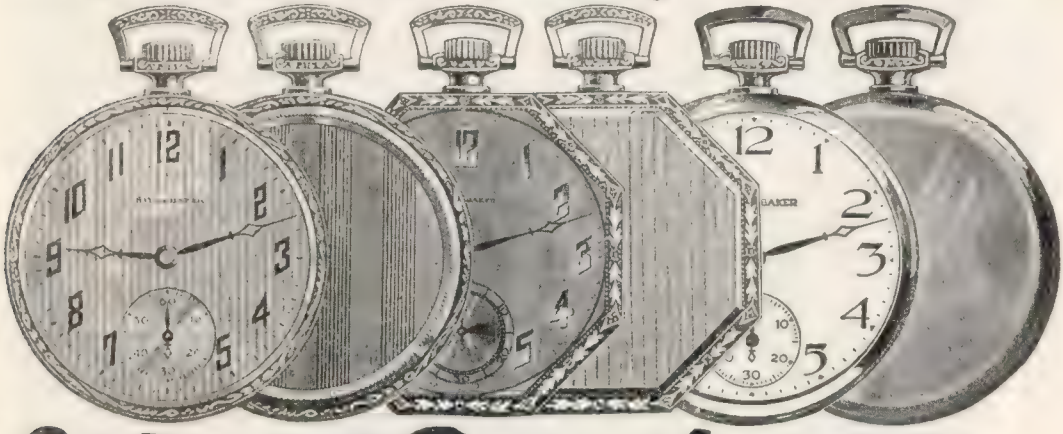

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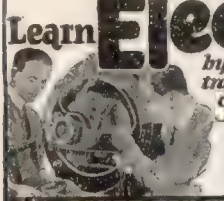

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EVERY WEEK

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Moon Eye

By

George Gilbert

Author of "The Snake-blood Clan," etc

CHAPTER I.

THE KILLER'S DRAW.

"SON, let's ride!"

Sol Hargiss swung to the saddle. The slender, active lad awakened from siesta-time somnolence to energy. He whipped his belted guns from off the back of the chair where he had hung them for greater ease while resting under the gallery of the Ojo Luna or Moon Eye, and snapped fast the belt with the gliding motion of hands used to the feel of weapons. He made a flying mount on Smoke, his dancing Roman-nosed cow pony, and in a few plunging bucks took the kinks out of the horse, settling him into the stride that put him alongside the staid dun lineback of his father. Then the young rider waved to the Mexican lad who had brought out his horse for him. Hargiss glanced with fatherly pride at the lad, who had now settled his pony into orderly, fox-trot progress.

"Yuh always have t' do it like the world's on fire." Hargiss made fun.

"Yes—I suppose. Does it do any harm?"

He met his father's eyes with a fearlessness that the older man liked, although he would not have admitted it. Sol Hargiss, ruler of a wide domain, many men, and herds all but countless, loved this lad who would one day be heir to all that the father had brought

together and made of the old Spanish land-grant estate he had bought years before and kept at its old-time standard of excellence.

"No, not much, son," he said, laughing in spite of his intention of being a bit severe. Hargiss was always about to lecture this harum-scarum boy who never yet had made a mistake against the traditions of his region, although he had committed many boyish faults that made men like him and—women love him.

Solomon Hargiss had often regretted that of late years he had been so engrossed in building up his big estate and planning for irrigation projects in the future. He had not given the boy the time he should have given him. Of course, old "Chet" Aseldine, veteran of the Hargiss forces, had all but fathered the lad for a long time, putting the fine points on his range education. Hargiss, noting the sudden access of manly strength in the lad, regretted that his had not been the pleasant task of shaping that growth in person.

The trail swung up out of the broad, well-grassed valley, over a ridge, down the steps made by three benches, across the wide, sun-smitten flat, and along a dry stream bed that led out of the pass and down toward Conejo Blanco.

The sun was casting long shadows when the two entered the town. It was but a little *pasear,* to use up hours otherwise dull for the older man. He had taken the lad with him for company. A rider might as well have gone in for the mail, but the owner of Moon Eye elected to go himself that day. There would be nothing important, but he might meet some other cowmen, have a chance to gossip, play cards, kill some time.

Together father and son swung down before the Branding Iron; together they walked into the place. The father sat down at a table where was a man of mature years, spinning an empty glass upon the table top. There was a subdued hum of small talk about the room. The lad went to the bar and called for a mild, cold drink that was served him with alacrity by a smiling, white-toothed Mexican who greeted him with due deference as "Señor Diego." The drink taken, young Hargiss turned about, hooked his long spurs onto the foot rail, worked his slim elbows into the space between the top rail and the bar and so hung, inanimate, hardly attentive to what was going on, watching with half an eye the card games, the talkers at the little tables along the wall.

Sol Hargiss started to ask of his friend some question pertaining to their joint trade, but Tommie Neylon's hand shot out and touched the broad, steady wrist of the other as he said:

"Barnett's in town again."

"Yeah?"

"Makin' war medicine—yuh ain't heeled?"

"No; I left off totin' guns a long time since."

"It's all right when yuh've got yuhr riders at yuhr back, but remember that there's a lot of Barnetts—a lot beside this one. There's 'Jersey' Barnett and 'Dade,' his brother, that's down below the line and full of poison still. He's the worst of all. Watch for the Barnett wolf that's in town to-day. He's the meanest of the old bunch that's stayed it out north of Mexico."

"Yeah?" His eyes narrowed down to merest slits.

"Barnett says he'll square up old accounts this time."

"Well, I won't pull a gun again, that's whatever," answered Hargiss.

"Barnett won't mind that. He's plumb pizen, Sol," Neylon urged feelingly. "He says yuh drove him out of this region, broke him up in business, and he'll shoot it out with yuh, no matter what comes."

"I had t' break him up in business, along with a lot of others. In those

years it was do or be done by the rustlers, an' we all know it. Barnett was lucky to get off with a prison term. He ought t've been hung, entire."

"Sure, Sol. But he's back, an' he's gathering a bad bunch around him. We may have t' call out the watchers again t' clean up."

For a moment Hargiss held the steady eyes of his friend. Then he shook his head, saying: "I guess those days are over. We'll send for the Rangers, if it's necessary. That's all."

Neylon replied: "Barnett might pick onto Ollie." He jerked his thumb back to indicate young Hargiss.

"Shucks, Ollie's only a boy," Hargiss said, yet with a note of alarm in his voice. His parental eye dwelt fondly on the lad, now indulging in eager persiflage with a losing monte player who had just quit the game to tell the world all about his hard luck.

"That wouldn't stop Barnett—yuh know he's pizen."

"Why'n't the town keep Barnett out?" Hargiss said, with growing distaste for the subject.

"This town has had a bad slump in manners an' morals the past two-three years, Sol. It needs the gentle influence of the watchers, too, a whole lot."

"I guess that's right, too. Well, I'll think it over; I may pack a gun again."

"Take mine while yuh're in town."

Neylon offered to unsnap his belt, but Hargiss stopped him.

"I always liked t' pack my own, same as I roll my own," he said, fishing out the makings and beginning to make a brown-husked smoke with deft fingers.

"All right, don't say I didn't tell yuh——"

"I'll say yuh did, Tommie."

He let smoke dribble from nose and firm mouth corners, started to arise from his seat, when a man at the door called in:

"Man out here wants t' speak with *Mr.* Hargiss."

The room was suddenly still. The man's head had been withdrawn from the doorway.

Hargiss half turned to go toward the door.

A harsh voice ripped out an oath.

Hargiss glanced over his shoulder at Tommie Neylon, whose face had gone white.

"It's Barnett!"

Neylon nodded, tugging at his belt again.

Hargiss shook his head, turned toward the door again. Neylon, starting to spring erect, caught his feet in the rounds of the chair, where they had been jammed for greater comfort. He fell over backward, losing the seconds needed to head off his friend. As he fell, Oliver Hargiss darted forward and assisted him to become upright. He was asking if he were hurt, when Neylon jerked out of the daze in which his wits were.

"Barnett's outside—on the prod. He's called yuhr father out——"

Ollie Hargiss leaped over his prostrate form. He caught his father at the door and, with the energy of youthful strength, tugged at his arm.

"Dad, keep back!"

"Yuh keep out of this, son."

The light of a terrible, set purpose was in the eyes of the older man. He started to go forward again, as from outside another harsh oath was to be heard.

"I'll talk t' Barnett," the son said.

"It's my place, he's sent for me."

"Yuh've got no guns; yuh ain't shot a gun in years; yuh're slow on the draw an' he's lightning fast, dad."

"It's me he's callin' for——" He lunged forward again.

Oliver Hargiss stuck one nimble foot between his father's feet, and threw him off his balance. As the older man staggered aside, against a chair and over it to the floor, Oliver rushed through the door and was outside.

The street was all but deserted. Here and there men peered from windows or from behind the corners of buildings. Before the Branding Iron a hulking man glared at the young fellow who stood, hands folded across his chest, his hat pushed well back, his eyes dark as midnight, his face set, lined, white. Inside, a few heartbeats before, he had been a boy; now he was a man, facing destiny.

"I sent for Sol Hargiss," the hulking man said with a snarl.

The boy did not move.

"I am his son!"

The hulking man was still, very still. Then he laughed.

"The cub will do this time—the old bear the next."

"You are Barnett?"

"Yuh said it——"

His hand jerked toward his belt like quicksilver. His gun leaped forward——

Young Hargiss seemed hardly to move. His right hand, so rigid under the guard of his folded left arm, simply dropped, grasped the butt of the left-hand gun that reposed in his high-hung holster, butt to the front. It was all done in one flowing, striking motion, that defied the eye for rapidity. His first shot beat that of Barnett by a thin, split second.

The flames from the guns seemed to cross in the coming dusk.

Young Hargiss fell over onto his left hand, outspread and serving as a third support, with his legs placed well apart. His body, thus steady on a tripod of controlled bone, muscle and nerve, served as a support for the right arm that held the pulsing gun toward the sagging form of the falling gunman, following it to the earth with a final spurt of lethal fire.

Barnett had fired once, the shot clipping the right ear of young Hargiss. After that one shot, Barnett had tried, with the gameness of the old-time gunman, to shoot again. But wavering powers, smashed to futility by that tearing first bullet from the lad, had not been equal to the demands of the occasion.

The door of the saloon smashed open, letting out Sol Hargiss, Tommie Neylon and the others. People came from the other places about town, and from hiding places behind buildings.

"Yuh all right, son?" Sol asked, bending over the young fellow.

"Sure, dad." His face lost its lines at once as the tension eased off. He spun the cylinder of the gun as he snapped erect, working the used shells out and feeding five new cartridges into the empty chambers. Like all careful men of the range he always left one empty chamber of his six-gun for the hammer to rest on in safety.

Neylon, bending over Barnett, spoke: "Five times, all in the middle of the body. I guess yuh wasn't takin' no chances on a flare-back, Ollie?"

"No—it was Barnett or me—I guess —I'm a li'le sick."

"I saw it," a small, bow-legged man said. "It was the old killer's draw he used on Barnett, like I taught him. I got in a minute ago and was just roundin' the corner of the saloon."

"Well, Barnett had it comin' to him," Neylon voiced the popular opinion. "I guess this will nip any plans for reviving the old crowd in Rustlers' Hole with him at the haid of it. I'm sayin' right here an' now that the range men have been watching things, an' we serve notice right now that if this town gets t' be a nest for snakes again, we'll come in an' work it over a whole lot and 'round 'bout that time we'll clean out Rustlers' Hole again. Barnett's friends can have the body. There'll be no inquest into this case. It was a plain case of self-defense."

The muttering among Barnett's friends ceased at once. Neylon crooked a finger at several of them.

"Take Barnett out an' bury him, *muy pronto*. That's all."

There had been a curious shifting of men as Neylon had talked. Men of the range had drawn together; men of the town had drawn together. The former group was small, compact, hard-eyed, stern. The other was fairly large, with much potency for evil, but its leader was now dead. There was a snarl here and there, but in the end the body was picked up and carried away. Sol Hargiss spoke to the bow-legged, small man:

"All right, point the way an' we'll ride. Thanks, Tommie, for siding us that a way. I guess it's time we did clean up again. Towns like this get vermin on them, like a dog gets fleas."

The bow-legged, small man went into the open space between the Conejo Blanco and the next business place and emerged forking a rangy bay gelding. Father and son swung to their horses and rode alongside the small man. There was a hum of approbation as the three left town—a hum from Neylon and his friends. There was silence from the White Rabbiters, whose champion had so soon gone down, never to arise.

The three rode in silence for a while. Then Sol Hargiss spoke to the small man on the bay:

"Chet, what yuh learned the boy didn't come in bad to-day."

"No?"

"But it wasn't necessary for Ollie t' go against Barnett that a way," Hargiss said decisively.

"No?"

"I meant t' go out an' face him. He'd never dared t' shoot me down, with the town full of range men and me not even armed."

"Barnett was a bit teed up, I was told. He'd done anything when he was that a way."

Hargiss mulled that over for a few hoofbeats.

"He might've. But that's all past. Now for the next thing. Ollie's got t' go away."

Ollie spurred forward until he was even with them.

"Don't talk that a way, dad. Barnett's friends will laugh if I run off now."

"It's not that. We can take care of them, and will. But yuh've made a start that may be bad for yuh. Barnett was a bad man, a killer, plus. Killers roll against each other. Some other hombre will call yuhr bluff——"

"I won't bluff," he said with quiet intensity.

"I didn't mean quite that. No, my son wouldn't bluff that a way. But yuh've got a name. People'll expect yuh t' live up t' that name. It'll lead t' more fights. Yuh're the heir to Moon Eye. I want yuh t' live, and work an' plan for all the men, women and children on the big ranch. I love it, and so do yuh. Yuh ain't got but a li'le schooling. There's new ways coming into use, an' men that run these big ranches are going t' run them with their heads, not with guns. The law's coming, entire. We big fellows have t' uphold it, not fight it. I want yuh t' go East t' school. A course in law and business wouldn't hurt yuh, when it comes t' managing Moon Eye in years t' come. What say, son?"

Ollie spoke easily: "All right. I could come home every li'le while, on vacations."

"No. I want that yuh should go away for five years; keep away. Learn all yuh can. Get education. Make friends that will count later when yuh'll need big credits from Eastern banks and big-money friends t' help yuh lay out towns that will spring up when we get our irrigation projects under way."

"Then yuh don't want me t' come back a-tall?" he said sadly.

"Not till yuh're educated."

"He is now," Chet said.

"Oh. he's got education in hosses.

guns, ropin' and all that. He can tell brands and cattle and men.

"I want my son to be a man well set up in education along lines he'll need when the country changes. I want him *different*. Son, draw on me for all expenses, an' don't draw light. Old Moon Eye will stand it. We'll sell ten thousand head this fall, an' that won't really clean out the increase."

The moon was swinging up, up. Old Chet grumbled to himself a while and then became fully audible. "Yuh didn't need any book education."

Sol Hargiss cut him short. "This boy's been raised all right, so far. His mammy dyin' when he was young left him pretty much for yuh t' handle, Chet, an' yuh've done a good job, as far's yuh know how. I've done what I could, an' Moon Eye has done well, accordin' t' each man's ability. But he's goin' t' school now, and that's whatever."

"That's whatever" meant, with Sol Hargiss, that the last word had been said. Oliver and Chet exchanged glances—glances in which perplexity and sorrow were mingled. They let Sol jog on ahead and leaned over in their saddles to talk. Chet Aseldine spoke first.

"He means it this time, Ollie."

"He sure does."

"Yuh've been talked at that a way before, but now it's sure pop, Ollie."

"I guess I'll have t' go. If I don't like it, I can come back."

Chet nodded and they exchanged handclasps.

"Yuh can get suspended or suspected or something," Chet told him. They exchanged winks. Then they spurred up even with Sol Hargiss again. The trio rode along in silence while the shuffle of the ponies' feet whiffed up the dust in steady rhythm.

They topped the ridge. Instead of continuing with the two older men, Ollie turned aside, saying:

"I'll go down and see Billy West a while."

The others exchanged smiles. Chet called: "Don't forget t' bid Millie West good-by."

"All right," he sang back gayly.

The early evening light was kind to the landscape that had been so harsh under the glare of the sun. The moon had risen as they had followed the home trail. The horse knew what was expected of him—had often traveled the ridge trail before. Ollie, dreaming in the saddle, hands clasped on the horn, kept his thoughts turned ahead, not behind, where lay the body of his first man slain in fair combat. The trail wound along the crook-backed ridge, down the declining hogback in which it ended, out onto a flat. The sound of a silver-stringed mandolin and a lilting soprano voice could be heard as Smoke made toward the small, low house, with its corral behind and windmill in front.

Long years ago, in old Madrid,
Where softly speaks of love the light guitar——

Smoke nickered; the music stopped abruptly. Ollie swung down as a girl came from under the low shelter of the gallery, mandolin held lightly in her left hand. Her right arm was a line of beauty against her side in the moon glow. An oval face, caressed by the shimmer of the mellow rays, was turned up for Ollie to kiss. He laid one strong arm about her shoulder lightly and began to talk, after he had kissed her. He told her of the day's events, and what his father had told him. She was silent throughout his recital and for a few moments after that. Then she said:

"Brother Billy will be in a bit later. I'm sorry it came out as it did, but you had to kill Barnett, Ollie. He was bad. I'm glad you took the chance and saved your father. But he is right, too. Go away for a time. I am only fifteen and you seventeen. I'll wait for you always, Ollie, always——"

"Yuh make it easy for me t' go, Millie. His voice broke a little. "All right."

CHAPTER II.

A VISITOR AT MOON EYE.

NEXT day Ollie Hargiss rode—east. He did not ride Smoke, but a common pony that could be sent home from the railroad town to which he was bound. Ollie had to promise the Moon Eye riders that he would let them send him a big box full of gifts later—Navajo blankets, snake-skin hat bands, ore specimens, tanned fawn hides and the like—gifts of love. Chet whispered sage and very useless advice about "not lettin' them Eastern dudes in school run no blazers on yuh." Sol Hargiss simply handed Ollie a check book, saying: "Make 'em wide an' handsome, son. Moon Eye can stand the gaff."

And then, to cover up deep agitation, Ollie rode. The riders gave him farewell with a volley of sixes and the long yell. Ollie waved his hand—and was gone without letting them see the stealing, eager tears that they all suspected he had shed. None of them wanted to see for fear of making the lad feel that he had been a weakling.

Ahead of Ollie was a priming course in a famous prep school, where special tutors were to iron out deficiencies in his book learning, and then a course in a famous university in Connecticut.

What was in Ollie's mind it would be hard to say. There was Chet Aseldine's advice to get himself put out of the school, but that would not be fair to his father. He had given his word to go and do as his father wished to have him do.

"I'll go through, as far as I can," he told himself, as he watched the staid pony's ears waggle back and forth.

He had asked to ride alone. His father, Chet and the boys had understood! He wanted to go away without fuss or feathers—face the new world ahead of him in his own way, and that way a credit to the whole outfit.

As for Barnett dead and his friends, they were all of yesterday.

"We'll run them off the range," Chet had told Ollie, "if they make a peep."

Evening found Ollie in Barnard, partaking of such amusement as his mood called for. He had shaken off the sadness of parting. Now the future held out arms to him—arms that beckoned and allured. The staid Moon Eye pony was in the town corral, his return provided for. The station agent placed the flag for the Overland Special. Ollie waited at the platform, ready to make the flying mount that the hesitant pause of the fast train would call for. Ollie's new grip, bought in Barnard, was full of wearables fit to last him till he got "out East." The book full of blank checks reposed in an inner pocket, over his heart. Ahead of him had gone a telegram that he had given to the station agent for Sol Hargiss—a wire addressed to the Eastern bank where Hargiss had much money on deposit, and a wire that opened up for the son almost unlimited credit when he used the blank checks, properly filled out. Ollie thought of that provision for his future with a queer grip of emotion that clogged his throat.

He leaned against a post that upheld a corner of the station roof. He did not see the man who had followed him from a hotel in town—at a distance. The man kept his eyes fixed upon Ollie's face, turned in profile to watch the track to the westward. Two or three times the man seemed on the point of speaking to the lad, but he always overcame this intention and remained in the shadows till the train came in, hesitated, got under way as the heir of Moon Eye darted up the steps of the Pullman—and was gone. The curious knot of onlookers gradually broke up and drifted uptown.

The man now turned back toward the

town's center, walking with head down, as if in a brown study.

At dawn the man rode southwest out of Barnard, racking along quietly on his powerful, rangy bay. He rode with his body in a straight line, up and down, like one who knew the country and the trails. His horse did not stumble nor waver in his shuffling gait, but kept to the work of the day faithfully, as if he knew what was required of him, and that he would be held to it sternly and even harshly.

Late afternoon found the man in Conejo Blanco, where he dropped the bridle rein of the bay over the peg on the end of the hitch bar of the Branding Iron.

The man stood for a moment with his back to the door, surveying a scene that seemed to be familiar to him. The quiet games were going on; the man behind the bar looked up, looked again, nodded. Two men at a table close to the bar gave the man a momentary glance. The man nodded toward them and started forward.

"H'lo Sol, old hoss!" He thrust his hand out in greeting as he advanced. "And yuh, too, Tommie Neylon."

They shook hands with him with some warmth, laid down their cards and shoved back their chairs a bit. The man sank down in a chair that he kicked toward the table with a single, sweeping lunge of his long leg, hooking his toe under the front rung of the chair with a skill that proved he was still nimble afoot, despite his having passed the divide between youth and age.

"Old Merve Glane back again, eh? How's things up in Wyoming?" Sol Hargiss asked.

"All right; I'm not rich an' I'm not poor. Le's have a snort."

They did, a sedate and a mild one. Then they began to talk of former years and friends.

A mild contest arose between Hargiss and Neylon, as to which should have the pleasure of having Glane for his guest. Glane let them argue of this and that for a time, but in the end solved the riddle by suggesting that he would visit Hargiss first and go to see Tommie at Two Arrows later. Now the man began to inquire after this or that one he had known in other years. Finally he asked:

"And Tod Barnett?"

Tommie and Sol exchanged glances. It was Tommie who told him Barnett had been slain before the Branding Iron two short days before.

"Served him right, too," Glane commented. "Barnett was always bad. We had t' run him out an' into the pen that other time."

Tommie glanced at Glane sharply and laughed a little. A slight flush showed on Glane's face. Then Hargiss spoke up:

"Never mind, Merve; we all know that when yuh went against Barnett that time, yuhr gun stuck in yuhr holster, and I had t' finish what yuh started. It's always been all right with us."

"I was only joshing yuh," Tommie explained, calling for a drink. The little incident passed over, leaving no apparent ripple on the surface of the renewed friendship.

So Mervin Glane, long, thin of face and voice, rode home that night with Sol Hargiss. The presence of this old-time friend relieved, for Hargiss, a ride that he had feared to face alone, almost dreading to be under the stars without the lad at his side—the lad who by now was speeding eastward.

As they rode, the visitor to Moon Eye let Hargiss, whose tongue itched for talk, go on and on in his talk about the boy who had gone. He told Glane all about the boyhood of the lad, how he had lost his wife, leaving the lad to grow up without the care of a mother. He told how Chet Aseldine and the other riders of Moon Eye had taught the boy what he should know of range manage-

ment, taking pride in their pupil's progress.

"I guess old Chet taught him how t' shoot?"

"Chet spent a lot of time with the boy's shootin'," Sol admitted.

"I guess Barnett found he did a good job?"

"Yes, Ollie needed it all then."

"I suppose old Chet hates me yet? He always said that I'd ought t've got Barnett when I went against him out behind the saloon in Conejo Blanco that time. He thought I wanted Barnett t' get away, and not be caught and sent t' the pen."

"I know Chet had that idea. The rest of us knew your gun stuck."

"Well, I won't start any blazers on old Chet over that."

"No," Hargiss said rather shortly; "I wouldn't."

"Yuh bet I won't rile him up."

"No, I wouldn't. Chet is still the fastest gun thrower in these parts—I guess in all the land."

"He still keeps up his morning drill?"

"Just the same as ever, Merve."

Then they were silent, jogging side by side as they had jogged years before in trail work, line riding, to catch the winter's drift on the ranges of other men. Talk started anew, and Glane told of his experiences in the upper country, and how he had had several big stakes from mining and deals in cattle. He had not kept his winnings, however, he let drop.

"Yuh always was a wastrel," Sol told him good-naturedly.

"Yes, I never pinched the two-bit pieces." If there was a sour note in his voice on that phrase Hargiss did not notice it.

"Well, just hang up yuhr saddle with me, an' it'll be all right as long's yuh want," Hargiss invited.

"That's hearty, but I'll work, after I've visited some."

"All right, if yuh want. I want chances t' talk a bit now an' then. I'll miss the lad." He tugged thoughtfully at his thin, white-streaked mustache.

"Yeah?"

"Sure will. He was a pret' good lad."

He began to tell more about Ollie and his pranks and how he had been "educated" by old Chet.

"He ever have a girl?" Glane asked, with seeming indifference.

"Never a real girl. He paid some attention t' a nice, li'le girl on a small ranch down below us—Millie West, sister of Billy West. I guess they came into the region after yuh left."

"I don't remember them. Must've come in afterward."

"That trail that forked off on the ridge goes t' their place."

"Oh, yes; they must run their stuff on the Pima Springs range. Not many?"

"No; that nook only feeds a few. I ship their cut with Moon Eye herd; West rides for me when he can. Nice neighbors, too."

"The gal about Ollie's age?" he asked casually, as if keeping alive a line of talk that served to pass away time, but did not especially interest him.

"Younger; nice li'le gal, too."

They rode into Moon Eye as the moon was going to rest. Glane did not meet any of the men. The two old friends went to their beds soon. Glane commented favorably on all that he saw of the betterments about the ranch house, showing a hearty, friendly interest in all that met his eyes.

And yet——

As Glane glanced about the decent, orderly guest room, with its bed piled with expensive Navajo blankets, at the clean, white curtains blowing in and out of the window frame, at the pretty lamp on the mahogany table, a single, writhing flicker of hate swept over his thin face. Then he puffed out the light and went to his bed.

CHAPTER III.

THE VISIT LENGTHENS.

THE boom of the gong awakened Mervin Glane. He dressed, not hurrying. In the big room he found Sol Hargiss waiting. They went to a well-served breakfast, followed by plenty of cigars pressed onto the guest.

"Now we'll go out an' look her over," Sol invited.

They strolled out. On the big bench beside the front door, under the east gallery, Chet Aseldine sat, awl in hand, a bridle in his lap, mending a broken throat-latch. Chet nodded to his employer, then stiffened as Merve spoke.

"Howdy, Chet. I'm back for a li'le *pascar* on the old range."

"Yeah?"

The awl dropped in Chet's lap, likewise the strap of the throat-latch. His hands, slim, nervous, were still for the moment. His body was immobile.

"Glane will be the guest of Moon Eye a while," Sol Hargiss announced with authority.

"Oh—all right," said Chet, relaxing. He went on with his sewing. The two strolled past him, toward the home corral, where a man was roping out a horse.

"He didn't shake hands with me," Glane said with a jerky laugh.

"So I noticed."

Then they were at the corral gate and watched the morning fight between rider and mount, a sight ever old, never stale.

Hargiss took his guest under his charge and showed him all there was to see close at hand. They mounted later and rode. Behind them Chet jogged, his slate-gray eyes chilly when they rested on the back of Glane, warm when they rested upon the strong back of his employer.

The other Moon Eye riders that they met were either cordial to Glane or else indifferent—with the indifference of men making a new venture in acquaintance. Glane played cards with Hargiss; their gains and losses about balanced. He ate of the plentiful fare served by Ching Gow. He commented with favor upon the orderly arrangement of the bachelor establishment maintained by Hargiss. The Mexican women lived with their families in tenant houses on the place; they came to the *casa primera* to do needed tasks and went away. Ching Gow was the Number One Boy who oversaw everything indoors, as Hargiss oversaw all out of doors.

Together they visited the West place, and Hargiss bantered blushing Millie about Ollie's absence. She was polite to Glane—that was all. Her brother Billy shared her reticence in that respect.

"They weren't overly friendly t' me," Glane remarked to Hargiss, on their way back to Moon Eye.

"Oh, they're just shy, I think, that's all."

Chet, riding behind, permitted a thin grin to stir among the wrinkles on his sun-leathered face, and scowled at Glane's back again.

Like all other visits, this one finally wore to an end. The two had talked all usual subjects threadbare. Glane hinted that he would go soon over to visit Tommie Neylon. Hargiss was surprised to find himself not urgent upon his guest's remaining. They were in the big main room of the ranch house. Fire blazed on the wide hearth, less for warmth than for old times' sake. Antlers were over the mantle; guns hung on them of many sorts, from the old Spanish flintlocks with finely chased silver butt and barrel, to the newest models of repeaters. There were swords, knives, hair bridles, moccasins—the usual array of frontier finery accumulated from former years of Spanish-grant opulence and down through American years of steady thrift. Glane

glanced at Hargiss, who was smoking, his face a bit moody.

"Ever hear much about your brother Tom's doin's up in Wyoming, Sol?"

Hargiss jerked the butt of his cigar into the embers.

"Not much. Yuh cross his trail up there?"

"A few times!" he replied with a laugh that could mean much or little.

"He cut things wide open up there?"

"Oh, not so bad."

"Too bad about Tom; he came down here when Ollie was a baby. He took sick and died not long after. I always thought there was a girl up in Wyoming that might've told why he came back so downhearted. I never asked him."

Hargiss waited expectantly.

Glane slid down in his chair till his long back was bent into a half moon. He spraddled his feet out wide apart and rubbed the insides of his thin legs as the flame gleams played and leaped.

"May've been. I never heard of any."

"I heard once that he was mixed up with a half-breed girl."

"Oh—that—well, that wouldn't count, would it?" Glane said laughingly.

"I heard they were married."

"Well, I never heard of that."

"Anyway, he never had any children, and I guess the woman died or something. Poor old Tom; it's all over with him now!"

"Now, yuhr kid—is he like yuh? Yuh've never yet showed me a likeness of him."

Hargiss got up and went to the mantle. He brought down a photograph of Ollie and showed it to the other.

"Look an' see."

"Where'd he get that dark hair an' nice oval face?"

"His mother was Spanish, daughter of old Don Romero that I bought Moon Eye from. They were clear-blood Castilians, too."

"Yes, I know. We were all a bit afraid of old Romero in the old days. Who'd ever thought yuh'd make a stake in trail cattle, buy the old don out an' marry his daughter. Well, yuh always was a plumb fool for luck, Sol."

He said it admiringly and heartily. Hargiss turned his back to put the photograph back onto the mantel. A look of hate shot across Glane's thin features like a play of summer lightning!

Hargiss turned to face Glane, remaining on his feet while the other remained seated.

"I'd ought t've shown yuh that picture before. I thought I had."

"Oh, I'd seen it, an' thought it was yuhr kid, but I never thought t' ask till now. Yuh talking about Tom and his having had a girl up in Wyoming and maybe a kid—that a way. It stirred my mind to ask about yuhr kid."

Hargiss strolled about the room. Glane stirred in his seat.

"I'll ride t'-morrow. Over t' Tommie Neylon's. Comin'?"

"No; sorry t' have yuh go so soon. Comin' back this way?"

"I guess, after a while."

"Glad to have yuh any time, old-timer."

"Don't I know that?" He got up and fell into step with Hargiss as he paced again the length of the long room. "Don't I know it?" His voice was a bit husky.

"Merve, yuh got all over my bustin' yuh up with Meriam Tainter away back yander behind the years?"

Glane laughed deeply. "Oh, that was just a boy-and-girl affair. She wanted your brother Tom; she flirted with me a li'le t' make Tom come cross with a proposal. That's how I lined it out then, an' I guess it was so."

"I thought for a time yuh held it in against us both a mite—against Tom and me?"

"No. That's all gone, with the rest. I and Tom were fine friends up in

Wyoming. He ever mention me when he came back?"

"No, not ever."

"Well, he was always a close-mouthed cuss. T' tell the truth I was a bit on the dodge up North for a time. Killed a man an' he had a lot of friends. I guess Tom thought I was as well off if he didn't say much about me."

"T' tell the truth, I never asked Tom about yuh, Merve. We all thought yuh'd sloped into Mexico after old Chet had said what he did about yuh."

"I might have. But that's all over. I've got a li'le stake now, and I may settle down an' quit rovin'."

Hargiss looked at him keenly and nodded. "That wouldn't be a bad idea. Well, I'll ride into town with yuh in the morning and yuh can ride over t' Neylon's the next day. He may be in town lookin' for yuh, at that."

"All right, old-timer," he said, thwacking Hargiss on the shoulder with a rough show of friendship. "All right. *Buenos noches!*"

Glane and Hargiss rode to town in the morning with Chet Aseldine behind them, his guns polished, his back straight.

Finding Neylon in town, Hargiss bade Glane adios.

"Ride over, any time; stay as long's yuh want t', Merve," he left with him.

"Sure, old-timer."

Chet was silent as they rode back toward Moon Eye in the potent dusk.

"Yuh don't like Glane yet?" Hargiss asked the lean, bowed, alert old rider.

"I never did," he answered.

"I thought after all these years yuh'd get over that."

"Glane!" Chet let the word drip like acid from his stern lips. "He always was a good stranger t' me—an' he always will be!"

A streak of something shot out of the scrub at the side of the trail; it seemed to merge with the earth ahead. Chet's hand flicked forward; his ready gun pulsed and pulsed. His old horse, steady as a rock, did not flinch; Hargiss' mount danced a bit. Chet spurred forward, swept up a limp jack rabbit that he had thus easily slain. He looked at it in the deepening dusk and threw it aside. "Ever' shot hit him, he's cut t' mincemeat. I couldn't see him good, though. Like t' do that t' Glane."

CHAPTER IV.

KIN BRAILE!

OPENING the door of the Red Eagle jail, Sheriff Waite thrust forth a very much dejected stripling, saying: "Kin Braile, git out o' my sight; yuh're the dog-gonedest, most ornery, low-flung heathen in the whole State of Wyoming."

The stripling stumbled along, slumped down presently on a box before a small store and peered about him.

The street of the little town was almost deserted. The jailbird got up, strolled along with his shoulders humped forward, like some evil bird. His eyes scanned the ground for something that he soon found and pounced upon—the stub of a cigarette cast aside by some opulent puncher. He retrieved it, looked at it hopefully, found that it fitted in with his hopes, lighted it and was seemingly content to slump down on another empty box and blink at the sun.

Sheriff Waite sauntered past him presently up to the Eagle House. There he spoke to a man in the public room.

"Hello, Merve. Yes, I turned him loose. It would've been the pen for him if I'd pressed the charge, but as yuh say yuh'll get him out of this region, entire, I'll let him go. I don't want the county charged with his keep in the pen if I can get out of it."

"Tell him who interceded for him?"

"Sure did. Yuh wanted him t' know?"

"Well, I didn't care," he said as if

it were of no moment. "I'm goin' t' try t' do something for the brat on account of his daddy. Knew him in the old days. I'll take him down to a li'le ranch I'm going t' start in the Lower Country after a while. I'll haze him out into the open range for a while an' see if there's any good in him, first."

"Thar's a right smart of bad in him, I'll say."

"Well, I'll take a chance."

"Yuh always were open for long chances—an' as I remember it, yuh lost a lot of them," Waite said derisively.

"I know it, but not any more. I'm due for good luck now, and plenty of it."

Merve Glane went out and strolled down the street. Presently he came to where Kin Braile, dejected and sour, blinked at the sun from his perch atop an empty barrel that he had found handy to the uses of laziness.

Glane strolled back and forth, rather obstentatiously smoking successive tailor-made cigarettes. He knew that the dark eyes of the wanderer were greedy as he lighted up each time. Glane opened the box of smokes, toyed with it, once dropped it, turning in time to pick it up before the wanderer had had time to clutch it. He noted with pleasure the rising desire of the wastrel for a full smoke of the alluring weed. Puffing away in comfort, he seemed to be goading the other to ask for relief from the craving for tobacco.

Braile snapped upright, the laziness gone from him. He ran toward Glane, tugged at his elbow. "Hey, mister, gimme a——"

Glane whirled on him, face smiling and voice winning. "Why, hello, youngster! Sure. In hard luck?" He extended the box, that Braile clutched at greedily. Somehow, though, he got only one smoke and then the box disappeared in Glane's pocket.

"Hard luck!" Braile exclaimed. "Down to the last notch."

"Afoot?"

"Afoot! Long ago. Came into town two weeks ago with some money, a horse, a fair outfit. Now I'm cleaned."

"Anything else?"

"Yes; been sleeping in jail nights," he said with an effort that told of a spark of pride hidden somewhere in him.

"And I suppose doing all sorts of dirty work around town to hang on and keep going in iniquity?" Glane said with a deep tinge of scorn.

"Well—yes." His dark face convulsed with a tide of shame.

"How'd yuh like t' go t' work?" Glane asked suddenly.

Braile's eyes flashed; he seemed to straighten into a semblance of manhood. "I'd like to—honest, mister——"

Then he was silent, as if shamed at being lured out of the pose of rather reckless insolence that he had assumed as soon as he had placed the cigarette between his full lips.

"I'm ridin' soon for a place that I'm goin' t' buy. I'll want hands. I'll want one personal hand, a man t' ride with me a lot——"

The younger man's hands twitched nervously; he felt of his empty belt suddenly.

"I can ride, rope—and——"

"Well?" Now Glane's eyes were chilly, cold in appraisal.

"And shoot!" he said explosively.

"Oh—did I say I needed any one t' shoot for me?"

"No—but I can shoot. Sometimes a man that runs an outfit needs a man that can shoot and that will go through."

Glane nodded—smiled warmly again.

"I rather like yuh; come with me."

Braile started to walk beside the other, but soon lost step and shambled behind. Glane led the younger man to the sheds behind the Eagle House and spoke to the stable man, who soon came out leading two horses. One was

the tall, rangy bay that Glane had ridden down in the Moon Eye region a month before; the other was a nice, short-coupled, Roman-nosed buckskin, equipped from hoof to withers with everything that a horse should have for the open range. The saddle was nice, but not too ornate. A glance at it and at Braile would show any one skilled in horse management that the outfit would fit him. The stirrups stood set at about the right length. The bridle was nicely hand tooled. Behind the saddle capacious war bags reposed. On the horn hung two nice frontier six-guns in a good, strong belt. Dangling from the horn, too, were gloves, soft and pliable, held together by a bit of string that was used to hang them over the horn. Too, a pair of long-shanked spurs, with a touch of silver, were tied to the horn.

Glane swung up onto his bay and smiled down on the lad who stood, with mouth agape, eyes full of yearning, as he looked over the other horse and outfit.

"In those war bags are a lot of things," Glane said slowly; "everything a lad would need for anything that might come up in the open country."

"Yes—I suppose so."

"Get up and ride him a while; I want t' see how he acts with some one forkin' him," Glane invited.

Without a word young Braile vaulted into the saddle, all the slack slothfulness going from him in a twinkling. The buckskin danced and pitched a bit, but soon eased down as he felt the hand of a master on the rein and heard the commanding voice of authority, as it rang in his ears.

"Let's take a *pasear* out of town a ways 'till I see how he acts," Glane invited again.

They fell into step on the way up the street. Sheriff Waite waved to Glane, and not a few of the people of the town stared at the wastrel, riding a fine horse —seemingly in possession of a fine outfit.

"Talk about picking up a snake t' bite yuh later, that's what Glane's done, taking on that young devil t' work for him on his new ranch," Waite told the villagers. They agreed with him, for Braile had made a bad name for himself since he had blown into town not long before, proceeding to split things wide open. He had had quite a lot of money upon his arrival. It had soon vanished. Then had followed a period of further uproar, paid for out of money secured by selling parts of his outfit, and finally he was a man afoot, lowest in Rangeland's social scale because afoot from his own foolishness, not from the honest ill chances of fate.

As for Braile and Glane, they rode side by side, toward the southwest. After an hour of steady fox-trotting, they came to a spring that Glane seemed to know, for he turned aside into a side-draw to find it, and knowing just where to dig in the moist clay at the foot of the bank to make a depression that filled as they held the horses back. They drank first, then let the horses drink. Then they set about making a little fire, at Glane's suggestion, and he asked the other to stake out the horses while they ate from ample stores of food that came from his saddle pockets.

The meal was good, consisting of chicken sandwiches wrapped up at the hotel, frijoles inclosing luscious and crisp slices of cold bacon, slices of cake and finally, good coffee made on the little fire. Braile smacked his lips audibly as the last crumb of his portion disappeared. Glane threw him a full box of cigarettes, and he soon had one going, lying back gratefully to rest on his back while he emitted great clouds of tobacco vapor.

"Been a long time since yuh had a meal like that?" Glane hinted. He was sitting erect and watching every shadow that passed over the face of Kin Braile

now. A certain tense alertness seemed to have come over the man. Before he had been careless of manner and pose; now he was intent and almost impatient.

"Yes—and I'm wondering," Braile replied.

"Wondering!"

"What yuh're doing all this for. Giving me a nice ride on a nice hoss, a nice feed, cigarettes and all this. What do yuh want?"

Glane laughed. "Suppose—just suppose—that I gave yuh that hoss, an' that saddle, an' that bridle an' those guns and all that goes t' make up that nice outfit?"

Braile snapped erect, his eyes fairly smoldering in their darkest depths. "Yuh're meanin'——"

"Just that. I might give yuh what I've said, and then I might put yuh where yuh eat like this every day, three times a day. What would yuh do for a man that'd do that for yuh?"

"Do for him! I'd—I'd steal for him, I'd give him everything I could; I'd—I'd kill for him——" His voice broke almost into a cry, so intent was he upon making his meaning clear. In his eagerness he had leaned toward Glane across the embers of the tiny fire. Glane grasped his wrist and drew him still farther forward and held the younger man's glance firmly. It did not waver. Glane threw the wiry, thin wrist aside with a gesture that was almost contemptuous, saying: "Would yuh be as grateful t' me as yuh were t' yuh half-breed mother that yuh deserted and left t' die of a broken heart among her own people?"

Braile's wrist jerked, but Glane's gun flashed first and the boy's gun clattered down, useless. Glane laughed. "Thought yuh could outdraw me, eh! That's the extent of yuhr gratitude for what I've done so far. Come, put that gun in yuhr holster."

"I don't want any man referrin' t' my mother that a way," Braile said sullenly. He picked up his gun and snapped it back into its place quickly.

"But yuh deserted her, after she'd made a man of yuh an' set yuh up with a decent outfit by demeaning herself in towns t' get money for yuh?"

"Yes—I did—I was only a kid then. I cried bitter tears when she died and knew then that she'd done a heap for me," he said, his voice quivering. "But how'd yuh come t' know about all that?"

"I lived up in the Peigan country once. I knew your father."

"My father! Who was he?" His voice was harsh.

"I'll tell yuh, some time."

"And what do yuh want of me this a way?"

"I'll tell yuh all of that. But t' get back to the talk I was giving yuh a while back—how'd yuh like everything good that life can give a man—lands, cattle, men t' ride an' rope and shoot for yuh and money——"

"Yuh're only hazin' me, Mr. Glane."

"Well, all right. Suppose I am. But *if* yuh could have all those things, would yuh take them?"

Braile's eyes glittered greedily, their dark depths holding a lambent fire.

"If I could have them, I'd wade through blood, withers deep, an' be burned with fire and scorched by hot sulphur. I've starved, been froze, spit cotton—done everything that's poor an' mean in my time."

"Well, yuh needn't do any of those things again, if——"

He held out his hand and caught Braile's wrist again, and Braile's voice shook with eagerness as he asked:

"If what, Mr. Glane?"

"If yuh'll do what I say."

"And what'll that be?"

"Come with me." He strode with Braile to the spring, now clear and limpid within its rim of clay. He forced Braile over until his face was clase to the mirror that the spring made.

"Look at yourself," he ordered.

Braile saw the scraggly beard, downy and soft with the crinkle of youth in it. He saw dark eyes, heavy brows, a face oval and regular, white teeth as he smiled at his reflection.

"What is this, a kind of a play?" he said, jerking away from Glane, who put his hand into the side pocket of his coat and drew out a flat something.

"No; just keep what yuh saw in the spring in mind and then, look at this——"

He thrust out a photograph that Braile took eagerly.

Back from the face of the picture there looked at him a face that was, line for line, feature for feature, his own. It was not a mere resemblance. It was not likeness. It was a face that was just as if that of Braile, cleansed and shaved, had been before the camera and the slender, erect figure of the lad in the protograph was just like that of Braile as he now held himself erect and almost glared at the picture.

"I didn't know any one ever took my picture—an' I never had togs like those. Look at those ivory-handled guns, that silver-trimmed hat, those fine chaps and all that fancy riggin'. I never had on no such nice outfit like that." Braile tapped the photograph with his lean forefinger.

"No, no one ever took yuhr picture that a way. That's not yuhr likeness," said Glane, going toward the fire again. He sat down and Braile came to face him across the fire again. Above them the horses cropped steadily; a little wind came sucking down the draw.

"Then whose picture is it?" Braile demanded.

"It's the likeness of a man that one day will own more cattle than he can count. He will have fifty riders at his hand's turn. He will have a big, fine house, a nice girl, hosses, money—everything. *He will have all these things, unless yuh do.*"

"Well, show me the way and he won't ever have them," said Braile, his voice ringing like a bell—a bell with a sombre, menacing tone.

"I'll show yuh the way—but if I do, what do I get?"

Their eyes clashed; their glances clung and held. Braile answered: "All that yuh ask."

"On the day that it turns out as we wish, yuh'll sign a certain paper an' give me what I ask for?"

"Yes."

"All right. Now let's talk it over."

Braile settled himself to listen, as Glane began.

"Yuhr father was Tom Hargiss from Arizona. He married yuhr mother, Shy Fawn, a half-breed girl of the Blackfeet people. She was half Spanish. He left her—drank, gambled and all that. She almost died of shame because she was deserted, but she raised yuh, someway. Tom Hargiss got killed in a gun fight a few years after he left yuhr mother."

Braile was very still now, his eyes reading the face of the other closely. Glane went on: "Since yuhr mother died, yuh've been riding all over these upper ranges, working a li'le, shootin' a lot, looking out at faro, racing quarter hoss, gambling too much, drinkin' too much. Now, it's time yuh quit it an' made a big play for big money an' security all the rest of yuhr days."

Braile's thin tongue came out to wet his dry lips.

"Yes, that's it. But what about that other fellow who looks like me?"

"He is the only son of your uncle, Solomon Hargiss of Arizona. His mother is dead, too. He is half Spanish—half Hargiss and half Spanish. Yuh're half Hargiss an' a quarter Spanish, but nature, in the deal, gave yuh everything in face and form that Ollie Hargiss has got."

"I've seen pictures of people that seemed t' look some alike, but when yuh saw the originals, they were different."

"I know that, but I've seen this young Ollie Hargiss. He looks just like yuh, Braile. How did yuh get that name?"

"Took it from a man I worked for oncet. I got tired of the Indian name my mother made up for me. She never would tell me who my father was or anything about myself. I suppose she had a spite against the the whites from the way my father used her?"

"That was it, just that. Well, that's all behind yuh, now. Yuh're on the upgrade. Yuh've no kin t' follow an' hamper yuh. I'll lay out a plan for yuh. Ollie Hargiss will be away five years. In that time he'll change—such changes as come to a man in growin' up an' roundin' into man's estate. His father may see him. No one else will that knows him. Well, when it's time for him t' go back to Arizona, yuh'll go in his stead. Yuh'll be educated between then and now. Yuh'll be made t' fit into his life. Yuh'll be the heir of Moon Eye an' all that's on it and all that appertains to it. Yuh'll ride top hosses every day an' eat and drink big. If yuh want a man killed, yuh'll nod to a rider an' sit in yuhr saddle an' see it done. Yuh'll hire a two-gun man t' do yuhr shootin' for yuh."

"This Ollie Hargiss, now, can he shoot?"

"He can an' has. Listen."

He told of how Ollie had saved his father by facing Barnett. Kin Braile voiced his approval of that.

"But how will I be able to stand in his place?"

"Ollie Hargiss will never go back to Arizona."

"But in case he don't, how about his father? He will know his son from me; natural affection will show him the lifference, won't it?"

Glane laughed with sinister inflection. "Sol Hargiss won't be there t' question yuhr title. He'll be daid a whole lot, an' I'll be at yuhr side t' advise yuh in everything."

"Admit all that, are yuh sure that I look enough like Ollie Hargiss t' play the part?"

"Yuh look like him, except for one thing. When he shot it out with Barnett, Barnett clipped a bit off one ear. Now, that mark will always be remembered. Yuh'll have t' have yuhr ear scarred that same way."

"All right; take a brand an' burn it."

"No; men will know the mark of a bullet that a way. I'm goin' to mark yuh and try yuhr nerve at the same time. I cain't go into a game like this with a man that's got a trace of off-side play in him. I'm going t' try yuh out hard an' tight. Get up an' walk off there fifteen paces and then wheel an' face me. An' don't flinch or you'll never go a bit farther with me in this big game that I've laid out before yuh. Go pace off the distance and wheel. I know from what Hargiss told me how Ollie's ear was clipped."

Braile sprang to his feet, as did Glane. Braile stepped off the paces firmly, wheeled, faced Glane, whose hand suddenly flicked to his belt, jerking out his right hand gun. The gun spat and Braile, steady as a rock, smiled back.

"My ear's clipped all right." He put up his finger to touch the spot.

"All right," said Glane, snapping his gun back into its holster. "Put some dust onto it t' stop the bleedin' and let's catch up the hosses and ramble. Yuh've got the nerve all right. It isn't so sure that yuh've got the brains t' go through on this big game. There's a woman in it, a pretty one, Millie West, that yuh've got t' fool yet—and old Chet Aseldine, too. I'll tell yuh about him as we ride."

CHAPTER V.

OLLIE STICKS.

IN that Connecticut prep school, Ollie Hargiss at first found the way hard and full of thorns. Accustomed to have grown men defer to him and look up

to him, as the heir to Moon Eye, Ollie found it hard to listen meekly to the admonitions of scholarly men, paid to instruct him. But there was a streak of saving common sense in the lad. He saw the use of the learning. He became strangely popular with the young fellows of his class, for they found that the young Arizona lad would hold his own, would not lie, would stick to a friend. He made many friends and found school life not so bad. He yearned for horses, ropes and guns. Buying a nice, easy saddle horse, he used him in long rides all about the sleepy, old college town.

Another thing that made Ollie stick it out was his intense loyalty to his father. His father was giving him this wonderful chance to be educated; he wanted him to delve into books, so that he could be better able to manage the big Hargiss estate later. All right, Ollie reasoned, his father was wise, beyond the wisdom of other men. Ollie would stick it out.

And so he did. He suppressed all desires to go back home. He wrote to the bunch, through old Chet Aseldine, and laughed when he read Chet's crabbed lines admonishing him not "to forget how to draw a gun fast."

"I won't need any of that. The country'll be all settled and quiet when I get back," he thought.

As he mixed with highly cultured folk in the East and delved deeper and deeper into books, his speech smoothed out. Less and less of the Western tang was in it. Yet when he became excited, the old range talk came bubbling up and the boys, from this, affectionately called him "Old Arizony."

Once or twice Sol Hargiss wrote, hinting that he might come on East for a visit at the school, but there was always something to prevent. Now it was calf round-up or beef time or something else. Two or three times his father mentioned having been visited by an old friend, one Merve Glane, who also had known Uncle Tom Hargiss.

So the first year passed. At vacation time Ollie longed to go back to the range, but a stern letter from his father advised him rather to visit the friends he had made in school. Ollie set up a small but complete bachelor establishment on Long Island Sound, had his little yacht, joined the local and exclusive yacht club and found no trouble in moving in good company. The summer passed away, and Ollie started his second year in school.

Once, when he did not see them, two men followed him, the older pointing him out to the younger, who was strangely like Ollie in build and features. The older man whispered to the other, as they watched behind a vine-clad trellis in the grounds where Ollie was staying at home then:

"Mark him well, Kin; that's the lad. Get every move he makes down pat. Study him whenever yuh can. Be him, not just like him. Our plan's working out well. I'm in right down at the old Moon Eye with Sol Hargiss; he doesn't dream that his nephew is alive and looks so much like his only son that he'd have hard work telling yuh two apart."

"All right, Mr. Glane," said Braile with his eyes intent upon Ollie. "We'll work it out together. I'm going t' be heir to Moon Eye—or die tryin'."

CHAPTER VI.

THE MASTER MIND.

AS Kingdon Braile, of Decatur, Illinois, Kin Braile made his appearance in another prep school in the East—a small, quiet school in a New Hampshire hill town. It was such a school as is often to be found—a school modeled upon the bigger, more successful school of its type, having the same courses of study, the same atmosphere, the same traditions, a school fitted to give scholars almost the same finish im-

parted by the greater school, but at a less cost for tuition and especially for living expenses. For this smaller school was, after all, but a copy of the larger. Glane had selected it for Braile with keen judgment. He intended that when Kin left it, he should be educated, as near as possible, as Ollie Hargiss had been educated. His master mind foresaw queries as to courses of study and the like, when the homecoming was past, that would make it necessary for Kin to have a solid background of study. He reasoned it might as well be a background of study that would be like that taken by the real heir of Moon Eye. Kin had picked up some learning—the elements of knowledge. Thus he had a fair start toward the really desired end.

Glane settled Kin there soon after he had taken him to the town where Ollie was and had let him view, from afar, the form and face of the man he was to supplant in all the good things of life. Before leaving Kin there for one of his periodic visits to his old friend, Sol Hargiss, Glane sat up with Kin a good share of the night, instructing him in the course he should pursue in the immediate future.

"Whatever yuh do, keep out of print. Don't do anything in school that will get yuhr picture in the papers. I mean, don't go in for athletics, or music or any of those things that these rah-rah lads do for fame. I want yuh t' be educated, because it's part of the game."

"Why couldn't we get rid of Ollie Hargiss now and then me step into his place at the school? It's a long time t' wait."

"That shows how few brains yuh've got t' the acre, Kin. Old Sol might come East some time soon. We cain't control his moves yet. Yuh might make some slip. No, yuh've got t' study out yuhr part, quiet an' slow an' easy. Take yuhr time. It's worth it t' win Moon Eye."

"How did the ranch come t' have that name?"

"I'm glad yuh mentioned that. It's part of the history yuh've got t' have at yuhr tongue's end t' hold up yuhr bluff when yuh get there. It was this a way.

"In old times, when the first Romero held the old grant, there was a big drought. They were a long ways from any other Spaniards an' the hostile Apaches raided them and killed all their choice beef stock. Only one big bull escaped and he was blind—a moon-eye, *ojo lunar*. He was the granddaddy of all the herds they raised afterwards. He was blind from having his eyes cut t' bits in a big sand storm. His eyes were all blued over, like, the legend goes. Well, however that may've been, he was the patron saint of all the big herds on Moon Eye, as yuh might say. He was a big, rangy old longhorn, I guess, by the traditions I've heard, and he left his mark on the Moon Eye beeves. They've always been a bit superior, and the meat an' hides have always stood ace high in the markets. So that's that.

"Keep that in mind when yuh come into yuhr kingdom. Now, Kin, I've got t' go back West. I cain't earn the money you'll need here unless I go West. I can go back t' my old set of tricks—faro, grub staking hold-up men and the like. It'll be like gall an' wormwood to' me t' stand it, same as it will t' yuh, but it's part of the game we're playing. Five years isn't long t' wait for millions. If a chance offers t' shorten the time, all right, I'll cut it short. Meantime yuh'll live here, study, enjoy life. I'll get the money t' yuh, somehow. I'll not be too nice about how, either. I'll visit Sol Hargiss every li'le while, because it's part of my plan t' seem very friendly with him."

"Tell me more about yuhr end of the game," Kin wheedled.

Glane's face took on harsher lines and his voice was heavy with menace.

"Yuh let me run my end of it, entire. Yuhr part now is t' get educated an' keep out of Ollie Hargiss' sight. Get down to where he is once in a while and observe him at a distance. Use those field glasses I gave yuh for that. Learn his manners and gestures and all of that. Study his clothing and all that you can—but at a distance."

"Yuh needn't be afraid; I'll do everything yuh want done," Braile said fawningly.

"Well, first thing yuh want is t' learn t' talk smooth, an' get that Western drawl off yuhr tongue. I was close t' Ollie Hargiss the other night when he didn't think any one was listening to him talk to a lot of young lads down in that Connecticut town. He's getting so he talks real polished and like a dude. Watch yuhr tongue. People back home will expect he'll be different when he gets out of school, and so yuh want t' be different, too."

"All right, Mr. Glane."

"Now, here's all the money I can spare now. Enough t' last yuh a long time. I'll get more, later. I'll run out here when I can. I won't write. Letters have hung too many men. Yuh won't write t' me, for I won't give yuh any address."

He got up, shook hands with Kin and left him to take the train for the West.

As the door shut, Kin stood for several moments immobile. Then he shook his fist at the closed door.

"All right, I'll play this game, but if I ever get t' be boss of Moon Eye, with riders at my back and everything at my command, I'll rule in my own right an' not by your leave, Merve Glance. Yuh think yuh're usin' me; but I'm goin' t' use yuh, and when I'm where I want t' be, yuh'll never stand in my way. As it is, I'm going t' live fat on your money and take life easy, as long's yuh keep me in funds. No more long rides against sand storms and blizzards; no more tryin' t' hold the drift of some other man's cattle in winter for a few dollars a week and beans an' bacon and poor coffee. I guess not! I'm goin' t' live well, sleep well an' laze a lot. Even if this big scheme of gettin' Moon Eye never pans out, why I'll have a lot of fun in this school town among these Eastern dudes. I'm goin' t' fool them all by being as near like one of them as I can while I'm here."

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT CHET SAW.

THE beef herd rolled out; the Moon Eye tightened down for winter conditions. The winter would not be hard there, but on their higher ranges there would be some snow. The line camps must be kept going, and riders held ready to go where emergency called. Merve Glane appeared for a holiday visit and chummed easily with his old friend, Sol Hargiss. He somehow managed to keep Sol so busy that Hargiss postponed the intended visit to the school in the East. Without saying so directly, Merve Glane managed to let Sol get the impression that it would be better for the boy to go ahead without any softening influence from home.

"He might get homesick an' bust right out; that's so," Sol found himself saying, without knowing just why he had fallen in with the artful suggestions of Merve Glane.

"We can go over and visit Tommie Neylon; he'll be glad to have a round of ruddles or a tilt at stud," Glane insinuated slyly.

"That'll be fun. I may go East later. I hate it out there. If it wasn't for the boy, I'd never go. Ever been East, Merve?"

"Not any," with an emphatic shake of his long head. "I wouldn't want a dawg to go there. But I suppose it's best for yuhr kid t' be there. Get any letters lately?"

"Sure; let me read yuh th' latest."

He got it out, a scrawly, boyish letter,

full of good feeling and chat about things he had done, places he had been, and young fellows he had come to know. There were some photographs, too, of Ollie with some friends. The pictures were just informal snapshots, but they were good to the eyes of his father, it was plain to be seen.

"He writes nice; I like t' hear what he's doin'," Glane commented, following, with his keen glance, Sol's motions in putting the letter back into the drawer of the table in the big room where they were sitting for the evening. The fire took off the evening chill. In a corner of the room, next to the fireplace, Chet Aseldine braided a hair bridle for Ollie, to be sent as a present later.

Chet never had thawed out, so far as Glane was concerned. He was polite to Glane as a guest of the house. That was all.

Chet was pretty lonesome. How much of his life Ollie had filled, no one had known. He had been closer to the lad than his own father had been. Engrossed in the management of the big ranch, Sol Hargiss had found it easy to shift the care of the boy over onto Chet's willing shoulders. Chet had been at first nurse, then instructor, to the lad. He had become accustomed to every mood of Ollie. He could catch shadows of feeling in his letters that Sol never caught. Chet could sense in them the inner struggles the boy was going through in fitting himself into school life. He could feel the shifting currents of affection, pride of increased powers and longing for home skillfully concealed under bantering phrases in the letters.

Being so lonesome, Chet had taken up light work about the home corrals and breaking pens. He was really a pensioner—could do as he pleased. Sol Hargiss made it a rule to ask Chet to ride with him to and from town and whenever he rode with Merve Glane, Chet was apt to be in the rear.

Now Hargiss proposed bed, and Glane agreed. Chet remained, seemingly intent upon the bridle. He watched, long and patiently, the door of the room where Glane slept. After a time Chet put away his work and went to bed as well.

The dawn came. The sun speared a way through the mists the chill of the winter's night had flung, gossamerlike, over the Moon Eye home range. As the light of the golden shaft appeared, the door of Glane's room opened softly and he came out, with a compact object in his hand. He stole to the table, pulled out the drawer and found the letter from which Sol Hargiss had read the night before. In rapid succession, the man propped the leaves of the letter up and set them, in the sun's rays, before the camera. He snapped off page after page and finally snapped the pictures that were with the letter. Then he put the letter and the original photographs back into the drawer and went back into his room. As the door of his room closed, the door of the big room leading toward the rear of the house opened, and Chet appeared, standing on the threshold musing to himself.

"I wonder what he was doin'? I didn't get up soon enough t' see. He put something back into that drawer. What was it? I better keep my eyes more open. I wouldn't trust that fellow as far's I could throw a bull by the tail."

In his room, Glane carefully put the camera away in his grip. Then he waited till it was time for breakfast, when he sauntered out, as if he had just that moment left his bed. Sol Hargiss greeted him, and together they rode for Tommie Neylon's to spend the next few days. Glane took his belongings. Chet helped him strap the small grip back of his saddle and took occasion to feel of the small, hard object in it. He saw Glane looking at him and pretended to be busy with the tie-

strings. As the two friends rode side by side that day, Chet, behind them, gazed at the grip, often muttering to himself: "I sure wish I knew what was in that bag."

Once Glane wheeled in the saddle, to catch Chet looking at the bag, and Glane laughed, saying: "Chet, yuh seem interested in my grip."

"Yes; I don't see what yuh want a grip for, anyway. Why not a war bag, like sensible folks use?"

Glane was almost about to make some cutting remark, but the slatey eyes of the old gun fighter filmed over with something that made Glane shiver, and he did not speak. Instead, he began to pass banter with Sol Hargiss and so managed the talk that when they reached Conejo Blanco, Hargiss turned in the saddle all of a sudden and said to Chet:

"Chet, get the mail an' ride back; the boys may want their letters and packages from the mail-order houses. I'll ride on t' Neylon's. Be back in a few days."

This did not suit Chet in the least. He had hoped to go to Neylon's, where good cheer was dispensed freely to all who came. Yet this was an order, and as such was to be obeyed. So Chet went back to Moon Eye, resentful and more than ever impressed with the necessity for keeping close watch upon Glane and all that he did. The old-timer could not have put into words the reasons for distrusting the visitor, but the impression in his heart was strong that Glane was not worthy of complete confidence.

As for Glane, he visited with Neylon and Hargiss at the Neylon place, made a renewal of his fine impression with jovial Mrs. Neylon, and then rode away.

"Going down into Old Mexico for a *pasear*," he told them, taking at the first a trail that made good his tale. "I can afford t' loaf some time away once in a while, being a bachelor without responsibilities. At any rate I'll be sure to see yuh all next spring at calf-hazin' time."

He did, indeed, ride south—for a few days. Then he struck a place where he was known, put the rangy bay into a pole corral, in charge of a cross-bred hireling, took a sober-hued cayuse in his stead and rode into Prescott, where he took a train for the East. Six days later he was with Kin Braile again, in the little New Hampshire school town. He had the photographs of the letter Ollie had written to his father and the photographed reproductions of the pictures Ollie had sent his father. He gave them to Ollie as they walked on the snowy hillside above the winter-bound New England town and explained to him:

"Yuh wanted some of Ollie's handwriting. Well, here's a lot of pictures of some of his letters. I didn't dare steal the letters, for Sol Hargiss reads them over all the time. I didn't dare take the pictures, so I photographed the whole lot. Study it. Perfect yourself in it, for Sol Hargiss has shown Ollie's letters everywhere, and every one is familiar with his writing. Yuh'll have t' make out checks and ranch accounts and write a lot. Yuh'll have t' write like him. Then, in these letters, he mentions young fellows he knows. Yuh'll have to get all that into yuhr memory so if any one back at Moon Eye asks about things in those letters, yuh can answer right up, *muy pronto*. See into all of that?"

Kin Braile nodded and took the letters eagerly. He studied the pictures especially, and struck them with the back of one hand, as he held them in the palm of the other.

"Yes, there he is, in fat and plenty, and I'm on the outside. Well, we two will have the fat some day and he will have——"

Here Kin Braile whirled about to face his mentor, asking: "What will

become of Ollie Hargiss when we get ready to make our big play?"

Merve Glane laughed a bit uneasily and looked away. Then his face hardened.

"Oh, that will take care of itself. What's yuhr idea, Kin?"

"He hadn't ought to——" He stopped, as if unwilling to finish his thought aloud.

Glane laughed again. "No, he hadn't ought t' be let live. I'll say it, right out. If we let him live, he'll get us, some day. If yuh ever have t' face Ollie Hargiss, gun in hand, yuh'll not live t' tell about it afterward. I hear he's practicing in a shootin' gallery where he is and keeps his hand in at the draw."

"How do you learn so much about everything?" Braile asked, with a look at Glane that showed he honestly feared the man who seemed to foresee every point in the desperate game they were playing.

"Oh, that's my part of the deal, t' learn an' know everything we need t' know in advance. I'm glad yuh've clipped a lot of Western slang off yuhr tongue. I never could do it, for I'm too old. But yuh're young an' can do a good job. Not too good, though. If yuh come back t' Moon Eye talkin' like a dude entire, the punchers'd spot yuh for a fraud in a minute. Especially old Chet Aseldine."

"Why do yuh always talk about that old coot—I mean old man?"

"Yuh'll understand better when yuh see old Chet. We may have to get rid of him before the coast is all clear."

Kin Braile nodded and they soon separated. Glane went back to the West.

CHAPTER VIII.

HARGISS MAKES HIS WILL.

ALL through the winter, events conspired to keep Sol Hargiss from going East. He referred in his letters to Ollie to his intention of visiting Ollie at the end of the next school year, when he would be ready to go to college, if he succeeded in his courses of study. Ollie's letters were cheerful and full of plans for pushing his advantages in schooling.

Spring found Merve Glane back in Arizona. He had little to say as to his whereabouts during the past months. He had plenty of money to spend. He visited Neylon's first, then rode over to Moon Eye. Hargiss was glad to welcome him, for Glane always urged him to talk of Ollie and that was something that eased the ache of lonesomeness in Sol's big, tender heart.

The two sat long and often in the big room, while the work of the huge ranch went on orderly and with seeming leisure. Sol was the boss of it all. The riders came and went at his beck and call. Chet carried messages for him to this or that one or group of riders; Sol Hargiss was master of his wide domain in his own proper person. There had been no ranch boss there since he had taken hold.

In some way that evening Hargiss found himself talking about his estate and what would come after he had gone. He never could have told how it came about that he so talked. Smoking and putting in a word here and there, Glane studied his man. He finally steered the talk around so that it was safe to say:

"Sol, did you ever make a will?"

"A will? What for?"

"Well, yuh might go suddenlike. Most cowmen do, yuh know."

"Well, what of that? I've only got one son, my only child. He'd inherit without question."

"Yes, I know, but I heard of a funny case last winter up in Wyoming. A man died up there, worth a lot of money. He was supposed to have one son. But when the son tried t' heir the property, up bobs a woman that no one ever had heard of and lays claim t' the estate as his second wife."

"How did it come out?"

"The lawyers got a nice lawsuit goin'. Of course in the end the real son got his estate, but it cost a lot. I heard the case argued and the lawyers said that if there had been a regular will, the woman wouldn't have had a ghost of a show in court. She wasn't in any way kin t' the daid man. She hadn't known him but in a passing way. But her slick lawyer put her up to making the claim, and they fixed up a fake marriage certificate that made it seem like they had a case till it was all torn to bits. It was just a blackmail case, but it cost a lot t' fight it."

"I've a notion yuh're right, Merve. I'll make a will, setting out that Ollie's my only son and heir. I'll not only do that, but I'll show it to a lot of people, so there won't be any question about it. I'll have it put in my safe-deposit box down in Prescott."

This idea pleased Sol highly. For one thing, it gave him something to do for a while. He drew up two or three rough drafts of a short will, leaving everything to Ollie. He showed these to Merve Glane, who objected.

"That would never do. Here yuh haven't left anything t' yuhr old riders, like Chet an' the rest. Folks might say yuh was stingy, after yuh're gone."

"That's so. I'll tell Chet about that. He's always makin' bad eyes at yuh, Merve," Sol said laughingly.

"A will that has some li'le bequests that a way t' show that the maker of it is able t' think straight, goes a long ways if a contest comes up, alleging mental weakness, or something like that," Glane put in artfully.

"That's so. Say, will yuh go down t' Prescott with me t' have this fixed up?"

"I hardly think so. I've got some business that I hate t' put off much longer."

"Oh, let it go. Come along with me. I want yuh for a witness."

"Yuh can get plenty of witnesses better than I am. Pick out some young fellow that's apt t' live a while," Glane said smilingly.

"Yuh're apt t' last as long as the next one. Come on with me."

"Well, all right, t' oblige an old friend. Better pick out some big wig down in Prescott that yuh know t' act as executor. Maybe yuhr lawyer."

Sol Hargiss studied a while on this question.

"Some town man might make a botch of managing this estate for Ollie, if anything went bad with me. I wish I had an old-time range man I could ask in as executor."

"There's Tommie Neylon."

"That's so. Tommie would do."

"And then yuh might put in an alternate, if Tommie couldn't serve."

"Yes—that's so."

"That would be just a formality."

"Of course—well, we'll go down t' the city right soon an' see about this will business."

That he was doing something in what he deemed to be Ollie's interest was enough to start Sol Hargiss hard on the track of this new idea. He took Glane with him a week after that, after sundry talks and halfway starts toward completing the business. Glane was like the shadow of Hargiss now.

When they returned from Prescott, the will was duly made out and had been left with Haight & Bremane, Hargiss' attorneys.

Tommie Neylon was named as executor.

Finally, if Neylon was dead, incapacitated or refused to serve from any reason, the alternate executor was named.

It was the old friend of Sol Hargiss, Mervin Glane, made known to the big lawyers as Hargiss' friend on that trip and who let his name be used thus "as a mere formality."

"Why, Sol Hargiss will probably

outlive us all, and if he doesn't, Tommie Neylon will. I'll never serve on that will," Glane told them in the office of the law firm.

Hargiss seemed to feel better after this business was done. He now took full credit for making the will, and his friend did not oppose this boast.

Although he had pleaded press of business when seeming to avoid going to Prescott with Hargiss, when the matter was first talked of, Glane now developed sudden leisure. He said he would go visit Tommie Neylon again, as Hargiss was very busy with the spring work then, and Tommie, having a small ranch, would not be so pressed that he could not give up time to a friend. He parted with Hargiss with much good-natured banter about the will.

At the Two Arrows, Glane visited satisfactorily with Tommie. There was an undertone of seriousness to Tommie's talk that time, however. When Glane was about to leave, he drew Glane aside and gave him his confidence:

"I'm booked, old-timer. Doc Bradley done told me last month that I've got something coming on me that will cut me down within less than two years. Heart's gone wrong. I'm keeping it from my wife and Hargiss and every one."

"Can't yuh go East to some of those big specialists?"

"No use, the doc says it's something that will grow on me a li'le at a time. Don't tell any one. I'm tellin' yuh because we've always been friendly and yuh've got a close mouth. I wanted t' talk t' some one about it, old-timer."

Glane gave him words of hope and cheer and rode away—to turn back at the first bend of trail and look toward the Neylon place, laughing to himself. "As if I didn't know all that since I played poker last with Doc Bradley in Conejo Blanco in the winter. Tommie, yuh're a good pard, an' I'm sorry t' use yuh for a stalkin' hoss, but when Sol Hargiss goes out, Ollie disappears, and Kin Braile comes here as Ollie Hargiss to be heir of Moon Eye, I'll be legal executor of the big estate. Kin Braile, as Ollie Hargiss, will do as I tell him for a while at least, and with that sort of a whip hand on him, it will be my own fault if he doesn't do as I say all the time. Once let me get into the saddle firm an' clean, and I may own Moon Eye myself some day."

The plotter rode away to ply his crooked trades again in order to get together gold sufficient to keep the false heir of Moon Eye supplied with enough money to meet his increasing demands for more and more cash to enable him to indulge in all his whims.

CHAPTER IX.

"SON, YUH'VE DONE WELL!"

THREE years passed, and still Sol Hargiss did not go East to see his son. As for Ollie, he kept to the strict line of duty. He studied hard, traveled all through the East during his vacation spells. If his heart, ever yearning and turning toward old Moon Eye, at times overflowed with inner longing, no hint of this was in his letters home. No hint of it was to be found in the series of nice pictures that he sent on from time to time. Not a few of these were copied by the small, compact camera of Merve Glane and sent on to the false heir of Moon Eye at that other Eastern school town. These letters and pictures gave Kin Braile such an insight into the life and disposition of Ollie Hargiss that he felt sure he could stand almost any test when the time came.

Glane, crafty and serpentlike, knew that he must not snub too hard Hargiss' recurrent plans for seeing Ollie. At the end of the third year he had a flash of what he told himself was inspiration. Sol Hargiss had been hinting at going East to see Ollie. He had talked rather

openly to the riders about it. And then, to urge himself on, Sol had announced that Moon Eye intended to enter some stock in the approaching Chicago Cattle Show.

"I'll be only a day's run by rail from Ollie then," he told Glane; "I could go down East then and see the boy."

"Why not have Ollie up to the cattle show? He ought to see what such a gathering of men and animals is like. Yuh could show him a fine time in Chicago. Yuh'll have two or three Moon Eye men with yuh handlin' the cattle. Ollie would like t' see them, too."

"Say, that's an idea, old-timer." He thwacked Glane across his thin shoulders. "Now yuh're shoutin' man talk."

"I'll be ridin' t' town to-morrow. Write the letter t' Ollie then, invitin' him t' Chicago for the cattle show. I'll mail it then."

"All right, we'll miss no bets on this deal."

The letter, duly written, was taken by Glane to Conejo Blanco—and no farther. He sent, instead of it, a letter to Kin Braile.

Come to Chicago, October 22d. Important. Bring your best togs and best company manners. A big test is coming. You are to meet Sol Hargiss and be accepted as his son, if all goes well.

Chet Aseldine was all on fire to go to Chicago with the prize stock. In some way Glane managed to insinuate into Hargiss' mind objections to this. Instead, three new Moon Eye hands, "Three-Finger" Berne, Ike Wallinge and "Breeze" Yarnall, were selected.

The cattle and their handlers went in a special stock car, with bunks installed for the men. Hargiss and Glane went ahead on a fast limited train.

"Ollie's written he'll be at the Palmer House. Shows he knows a good hotel," Sol rejoined to Glane, as they sped eastward; "all the old-timers put up there when they're in Chicago. We're t' meet him in one of the parlors there. He's puttin' on dog, all right, but old Moon Eye can pay the shot."

Sol Hargiss was not too critical when he found a tall, square-shouldered, bold-eyed young fellow there, dressed in the latest Eastern mode, able to talk to him about studies and experiences among the best people back East. He took the young fellow to his heart, and the pseudo heir kept up such a rattling string of references to things mentioned in Ollie's letters that Sol Hargiss was pleased, because this, he told the astute Glane, proved that the boy valued his father's letters from home and was showing it by so many remarks on their contents. There were two or three errors made by the changeling, but Glane was always present with a glib suggestion or hint that lifted the tide of lagging talk onto safer levels.

The three Moon Eye riders, out at the stockyards, took to Ollie from the first. They were young fellows of the Moon Eye region, nice riders and ropers, and they were proud to be noticed by the young heir of Moon Eye. In some way they had been put forward by Glane as good men to take. Hargiss had taken them, without hardly knowing why he had passed over so many veterans of the Moon Eye Range in so doing.

Hargiss had a lot of business to attend to, and Glane kept him on the move on various pretexts.

So it fell out that the heir of Moon Eye suggested to Sol Hargiss that he spend a lot of time out with the cattle at the show and in chumming around with the Moon Eye boys. This pleased Hargiss, who also wanted to get away from the fashionable hotel, and out where he could chum around with old-timers in for the show. While Hargiss saw a great deal of the heir, he saw him always with other people or while something was going on. Sol became engrossed in the chances of Moon Eye's winning prizes and lent his suggestions

to the proper conditioning of the Moon Eye entries. The heir also busied himself with such things.

As the show neared the end, the three Moon Eye riders found themselves more and more attached to the young fellow who was so democratic with them, and who was sending home by them so many nice greetings to the Moon Eye bunch. He bought four handsome silk neckcloths and gave one to each of the three, saying laughingly:

"I'll keep the other one. When I come back to Moon Eye, I'll wear mine and you three wear yours. It will be a sign between us to remember all the good times we've had here. I'm going to pick you three men for my personal friends—to ride with me close and along with old Chet. How is he coming on, anyway?"

He listened as they extolled Chet and told of how he missed the heir. They tucked their green-and-red plaid silk neckcloths away with feelings of proper pride. He added another one, for Chet; that pleased them still more.

The show ended with Moon Eye winning three good prizes, and that pleased Sol Hargiss so much that he was busy going about among the losers and bragging over his victories. He kept "Ollie" with him and introduced him to friends. Some of them knew the real Ollie, but they all accepted this upstanding, well-behaved young man for what Hargiss held him up to be—the heir to Moon Eye. The story of how the real Ollie had killed Barnett was known all through rangeland, and this gave "Ollie" standing as a game man among game men.

"Son, yuh've done well," Hargiss said, as it came time to part. "Yuh ain't changed any, except that yuh're educated an' polished."

They were back in the Palmer House again. "Yuhr voice is some different; I suppose that's from yuhr age gettin' its strength. Son, I'm mighty pleased!"

"I'm glad you're pleased, father," with a clever shade of emotion in voice and manner.

"More than pleased, son. Yuh've grown in body an' in mind. Don't forget that old Moon Eye can stand a lot of drawing on her account. Dip in deep; the old brand will stand for it all."

"Ollie" had to go for his train then. Hargiss bade him good-by with a mist of tears in his gray eyes. He was seeing the lad then through the mist of years and he was not looking for points in him to criticise, but for things in him to praise abundantly.

After "Ollie" had gone, Glane made an excuse and went out after him. He caught Braile in the lobby, drew him aside and whispered a different line of praise:

"Kin, yuh done wonderful. Keep her up that a way!"

Kin's eyes glowed with the feeling of power and pride over his ability to deceive. He said: "That wasn't a bad play mixing with those three Moon Eye riders?"

"No; that's a king pin, all right. We're takin' long chances, of course. I couldn't steer him away from the East this time. We had to play it this a way. But now that it's over, I'm glad."

"But isn't there a chance that Ollie Hargiss will write something in a letter, showing he wasn't at the cattle show? Or that his father may write him, making reference to what took place here and so start either one or the other of them to suspecting something is wrong?"

"That is a chance we've got t' take, Kin. I don't see how we can avoid it, but I'll try to work a way around it, somehow. I see most of their letters now, on one excuse or another. Sol shows me Ollie's and those he writes to Ollie. I've been living at Moon Eye pretty much lately, since I turned that big trick in the Del Oro region."

"Then Hargiss cottons to yuh—I mean likes you as well as ever?"

"Yes, an' guard that tongue of yours better. Don't try t' talk all dude talk, but comb that worst slang burrs out of it. I'm pretty near a steady stayer at Moon Eye now. Hargiss has made me paymaster and storekeeper. I'm in solid with them all, but that old ranny, Chet Aseldine. We'll get rid of him some time."

"Why not use him?"

"Yuh don't know Chet," Glane replied shortly.

"Anything in the papers about the cattle show that would give Ollie Hargiss a hint that I've been here?"

"No; the papers cover them from the standpoint of cattle, not people. The news accounts show that Moon Eye won prizes, that's all. Moon Eye has won them before, sending entries without attendants. If Ollie sees that item, he'll pass it over without knowing really what it means. As I said before, we've got t' take some chances in this game. It's a game for millions, and it's worth the while. If it fails, we'll just slope, if we can."

"I'd rather play for millions—and lose—than never to play at all. So far we haven't broken a law that I can see."

"No, but—later—well, Kin, so long. Forget that part of it."

They clasped hands and Kin swung out of the lobby, confident of himself and of the future.

The three Moon Eye riders were jubilant. They had had a fine time, had groomed the winning Moon Eye entries and had chummed with the heir. They rode back in the Pullman section reserved for them by Sol Hargiss, and they sang the praises of Ollie all the way.

"Being educated ain't changed that lad any," Ike Wallinge told them as they lolled on the red plush cushions and rolled out cloud after cloud of smoke from the best brands of cigars. Each wore the silken neckcloth the heir had given to him. Ike Wallinge was intrusted with the present for Chet.

"No, siree, Bob; Ollie's a dandy kid, all right," Yarnall chimed in.

Three Finger Berne was also warm in the praise of "Ollie."

"Old Chet'll swell up like a poisoned pup," he told them.

When they rode into Moon Eye they found Chet, indeed, waiting for them. He did not say anything as Sol told the punchers assembled about Moon Eye's success at the show. Neither did he remark upon the way the three Moon Eye punchers had been treated by Ollie. He seemed to be waiting for something. Ike handed him the pretty neckcloth and told him who had sent it. Chet turned aside then and they knew that a mist of emotion had filmed over those hard eyes that always seemed to look through men when he was the least bit aroused. Chet knotted the neckcloth on negligently and appeared to make rather small of it; they all knew he was very much pleased.

"Just thank Ollie for me in yuhr next letter, boss," he said to Hargiss. He felt so pleased, in fact, that he was a shade cordial toward Glane, who did not fail to take his cue from this and sing more and more loudly the praises of the son and heir of Moon Eye.

The months passed away again. Glane, firmly established at Moon Eye, was now all but indispensable. Hargiss was depending upon his old friend more and more. Tommie Neylon came less often to town. He was concealing from friends his real condition. Only Glane, at Moon Eye, knew that Tommie was liable to die at any moment—although he might last months, if no great shock came to overburden his fast weakening heart.

Now and then Hargiss talked about going East to see Ollie again. His letters, some of them altered by Glane, were not so frequent. But they were

warm and filled with words of cheer. That a copy of each found its way to the false heir, of course, old Sol never knew. But Glane had so managed things that everything was in his hands now, almost.

And so the months passed and the time approached when Glane was able to say, when Hargiss hinted at going East to see Ollie:

"He'll be coming home soon, for good."

"I ought t' be out there when he graduates with honor, as he's bound t', from the marks he's taken already."

This peril to Glane's plans was met by the receipt of a letter, seemingly from Ollie, really written by Kin Braile and posted from the college town where Ollie was. In part this letter said:

Now, dad, I've got a favor to ask of you. I am to deliver the class oration, and I am afraid I won't do well if there is any one I know real well to listen to me. It might embarrass me to have you or old Chet or any of the boys in the audience. I know you will feel sorry that you can't be here to listen, but please don't come, or I may break down. I hope you'll understand just what I mean, dad.

"He's afraid I'll give him the fantods if he looks at me. I understand just how it is. He's primed plumb full of big words an' he wants t' orate without lettin' his mind stray back t' Moon Eye. All right; we'll keep away."

Moon Eye generally approved of this letter when it was read in the bunk houses.

"Sure does the kid credit not t' want t' have the audience packed with his friends when he goes up against that speechifyin' game," old Chet said; "he don't want us there t' applaud, because it might influence the jedges. He's four-square, that boy is."

"I guess I'll take a li'le *pasear* on some private business," Glane said to Hargiss next morning after the letter came. "Chet can look after the storehouse and keep accounts for the boys."

Hargiss agreed to this arrangement, and Glane left Moon Eye, ostensibly for Prescott. Glane had in his possession several letters from the real Ollie, urging his father to come to his college for graduation. Those letters worried him. He left, hag ridden with a fear that between the time he could do what he had in mind and then, a letter from the real Ollie would come, making references that would start an inquiry. But he had to take that chance.

From Prescott he sped East, as fast as the fastest limited could take him.

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

WYOMING RANCH DAMAGED BY FIRE

A DESTRUCTIVE fire did considerable damage recently to the ranch of Ed. V. Newcomer, sixteen miles south of Sheridan, Wyoming. Both Mr. Newcomer and his eight-year-old nephew were injured by the flames. The blaze started from an overheated stove in the wash house, and when it was discovered by the children, it had gained too much headway to be extinguished promptly. The wash house, the storehouses, and the bunk house were completely destroyed by the flames. The storehouses contained large quantities of the honey for which the Newcomer ranch is famous, and which is one of the most valuable crops of the locality. Honey extracted from more than one hundred stands of bees was lost.

Several pieces of ranch equipment, including a gasoline engine, were also destroyed. The dwelling house of the ranch was not included in the devastation, although one side of it was scorched.

The Land Beyond the Mist

By

Ernest Haycox

Author of "A Wooing in the Wilds," etc.

TO keep out the misery of the eternal Oregon rain, Tom Cameron sang.

The heavens leaked with a persistence beyond the experience of the emigrant train. In seven days there had been no sun or sky above the tops of the fir trees. A heavy rolling mist hung over the line of wagons, shutting them out from the rest of the world as effectually as if they were in a fog bank at sea. Through this dark, lowering curtain came the steady deluge, soaking into the canvas schooner tops, wetting clothes, bedding, penetrating the food —reaching every fabric and every article. There was not an ounce nor an inch of anything dry in the whole weary column.

Cameron's pony walked as if he were a twenty-year-old nag. His flanks steamed and twitched, his hoofs were weighted down with huge lumps of gummy clay, his mane hung in separate twisted hanks. The animal was in no worse shape than his master, whose blanket capote dripped water like a colander sieve. Rivulets ran from the man's beaver cap across his wet face to a yellow mustache; fell from either side of this, like twin waterfalls, to the capote and thence streamed down the buckskin breeches in an ever-growing course, falling finally to the sodden, mud-sunken road in a tiny cascade.

"I'd be a danged sight more dry if I turned this hyar shirt inside out," muttered Tom, wringing his mustache free from its accumulation of water. Then he fell again to the song.

"Oh, Kernel Doniphan-o——"

It was in the late fall of '48, and these twenty wagons were traversing the Barlow Road over the Cascades to the valley of the Wallamet. The trail ended for them after a long, long journey. They had started from Independence, Missouri, in April and it was now November. In the beginning, it had been a hundred wagons trekking across the vast prairie lands, following the plainly marked, deeply rutted Oregon Trail. At Fort Hall many months later the greater part of the caravan turned south for California and gold while the rest followed the older road to the Columbia and the old Wish-Ram villages at the Balles. Here they split again, part rafting down the bitter-cold river to Fort Vancouver, the rest coming over the new Barlow Road.

The patient oxen pulled at the traces,

slipping and sliding in the muck. The bull whips whistled and cracked. Somewhere ahead of Tom Cameron the lead wagon groped in the mist seeking the road through the everlasting, dismal firs. The cattle herd was equally lost in the mist behind. It was all a confusion of noises, overborn by the clack and clatter of vehicles and the incessant pattering of the rain. The wailing of infants came up to him from many a direction, minging with the shouts and epithets of the drivers. A brave pioneer woman in some distant schooner was singing a hymn:

"Bless'd be the land of plenty——"

It was a stirring tune and an inspiring thought, yet the woman's voice cracked in the middle of the verse and went down a-wailing. Ah, it was weary and heart-breaking, this last stage of the trip! Where was the promised land, the lush meadows free for the preëmpting, the bountiful game, the smiling sun? Had they come so far to find so poor a welcome? Better by far the fever and ague of Missouri, infinitely better the crowded, dearer land of Iowa.

Off to the right boomed the turbulent Clackamas. Tom Cameron wrung his mustache again and pulled a little aside to allow another horseman passage room. It was "Old Man" Follett, holding a dripping hand to a Websterian brow. The elder's face formed an incongruous appearance. A bulging upper part harbored a pair of sweet, candid blue eyes, complemented by an undershot bull-dog jaw covered with stubble.

"By Godfrey, Tom, ain't there any sun in this cussed land?" A linsey woolsey coat hung like a meal sack from his shoulders. "My fambly's all got chills. I ain't been dry fer a week. Ef we don't find Oregon City mighty soon thar'll be some buryin' to do."

"What's Captain Bell say?"

"Shucks, Tom, he ain't no wiser nor you and me. Dang, sometimes I wish I was back in old Illinois. Ef I don't find good land here I reckon the missis won't ever look me in the face again."

A lank Missourian shouted from his wagon seat. "Land o' plenty, hey? Thunder, I'm ready fer the turn around! I'd like to git aholt of the alligator who guv me the idea of leavin' St. Louis! I'd put his haid in a tub o' water an' see how he liked drownin'. Got a chaw?"

Old Man Follett moved on. "No, I ain't. Ain't been up to our wagon for a couple days, Tom. Another scrap with Susie? Waal, I reckon I wouldn't blame anybody fer quarrelin' this weather." He was lost the next minute in the fog, leaving the younger man silent. There was no longer any savor in singing the song about Colonel Doniphan. The misery of the dank, skin-creeping atmosphere worked on his nerve. A draggled sight he made, but no sorrier than any other of the train. There was no laughter throughout the whole caravan; the flame of anger and personal grievance had burst out continuously in the past week. Elders were bickering over directions; young men going at it rough-and-tumble fashion behind the cattle herd where there was no hindrance to gouging or heel and toe. The Emory boys bullied all the rest. Tom Cameron pulled at his mustache and was warmed by a persistent anger.

The horse started and wheeled, plunging against the Missourian's wagon. Cameron brought up and turned to see the dripping face of an Indian buck poke through the vine maple, stare a moment, and disappear. He spurred the horse in pursuit, but the underbrush was too heavy and, recollecting a clearing a short distance back which seemed to promise entrance into the soaked woods, he swung around and galloped down the line of schooners. The coast tribes, he had heard, were not

openly hostile. It paid, however, always to keep on the alert. One Indian might mean a whole band of warriors waiting at some convenient ambush.

So thinking, he edged between bushes and wagons, the horse sliding in the mire. Of a sudden the brush dropped back into the mist and a bare foreground loomed up ahead. Turning, horse and rider were immediately isolated from the column. The grind and clatter advanced out of the haze, witness to the proximity of people; a driver spoke to his oxen in tones that boomed up to Cameron like a gun shot; and yet there was not a single glimpse of movement to be seen through the uncanny pall. The rain beat slantwise against him, redoubled in force. Then the horse stopped and a young man in homespun, hatless, dashed through the mist, closely followed by a mounted trio. The young fellow pulled up directly before Cameron with something like a gasp of relief. Upon sight of this the horsemen came to a sharp stop.

"Oh, you're hereabouts, huh?" grunted the foremost. A scowling chap, he was, with a black cowlick roaming below the brim of his Missouri hat and dividing a narrow forehead. It was a dark face with a broad nose and thick, mobile lips —handsome in a way and possessing, when broadened into a smile, an undoubted attraction for women. It was otherwise with the men of the train, who saw only the danger signs in the ill-disciplined features. They left "Hank" Emory, leader of the three Emory boys, alone. The other two were lesser copies of the older brother, with much the same sullen expression, the same pouting lips and depth of chest.

"Tom," said the young fellow, panting. "They're pickin' on me ag'in."

"I'll teach you to stand in my road!" cried Hank Emory, swinging down from his saddle. "Make a monkey out o' me, huh?"

The first rule of frontier existence bids each man shoulder his own burden and go his own way; interference is not tolerated save as it comes by request. Here was a fight brewing between the bully and the other, with three men a-saddle impassively looking on. Emory was the heavier, the more dangerous, carrying with him the threat of many whispered brutalities. The chap facing him, while not much younger, seemed to be overawed by his reputation, but he shook his fist at the aggressor and appealed to Cameron. "I ran because all three were on me. You see fair play's done, and I'll fight. I ain't afraid."

Cameron nodded. "Clean fightin', Emory. No rough an' tumble."

Emory bore down upon his opponent viciously. There was a wild swinging of fists and the swift escape of breath. The lad's head snapped back and his hands went down; he was sprawled upon the wet turf with a hand to his stomach, writhing from side to side and sobbing like a child.

"Teach you manners!" yelled Emory, jumping forward. His hat fell off, and the mop of black hair waved wildly above the cowlick. The dark face was a seamed battleground of unrepressed fury. The two followers looked on with satisfaction. Tom Cameron brought his arm from beneath the capote, bearing a pistol.

"That's a plenty. Stop right thar."

Emory stumbled and brought up. "Plenty? Why, I ain't begun to teach him manners."

"You've had yore chance. That's plumb plenty. Git along and leave him alone."

"Maybe you'd like to try it out," said Emory, his eyes growing wider. "I've had my fill of yore ways. Climb down and risk a fall."

"When I fight with my fists I'll chose the place," replied Cameron. "Want to have somebody holding a gun on the rest of yore friends."

"Haw! Reckon yore back is made out o' the color yaller!"

"Thar'll be plenty o' time to decide that, too." Cameron pulled on his mustache until the skin grew white at the roots. "When I come callin' you'll git plenty chance to proye it."

From beyond the curtain of fog there emerged an unusual, disconcerting sound. It started with a distant shout from the front, half inaudible. The successive wagons picked it up, men and women alike adding their voices until, when the rear of the column was reached, it had become a mighty cry. Guns were fired, pans beaten. A woman screamed at the top of her voice:

"Glory, glory, glory! Oregon City! Praise God!"

The whole train resounded with the racket. Dogs were yapping; the cattle bawled out of fear. Some one took up a banjo and a popular tune trembled on a nasal voice while the strings made a flat, unmusical sound against the wet sounding board of the instrument. No matter, the song was sung with vigor, with a dozen voices picking it up.

Journey's end at last! Somewhere in front was the goal they sought, the shining reward that had held their courage night after night. Somewhere in the mist was Oregon City, the capital of the provisional government of Oregon, whose fame had lured them away from solid, comfortable homes and sent them all the way across the desert and over the mountains. Oregon and plenty!

Emory gave a last scornful glance at Cameron, sprang to saddle and tore through the fog, with his followers close behind. The fallen lad picked himself up and hobbled toward the train with an apologetic glance at his protector. "Reckon they'll be layin' for you now," he said. "There's been plenty of talk of a fight atween you and him. Whole camp speaks of it." He grew angry all in a moment. "Don't you let him swipe yore girl." Then, ashamed at the outburst, he broke into a trot and vanished.

The noise lost volume as if the wagons had of a sudden plunged over a precipice. Cameron urged his horse through the gray wall and found the cow herd driving in front of him; he pushed around it and alongside the train until the trees vanished once more. Through the mist he made out the spire of a church. A screeching of brakes and a cry of warning was born back down the line. "Watch fer the grade! Turn yore wagons out o' line at the foot o' the hill—goin' into camp!"

Cameron cut through and galloped along the side, descending a precipitous hill. In this pocket the fog thinned, and before his astonished vision stood the city mentioned by a thousand camp fires, the Mecca of the West.

One narrow street wavered between a double row of frame houses and cabins. To the left reared the gray shadow of the basaltic bluff the travelers were descending. On the other hand Cameron heard the sheeting sound of the rain pouring on a river. This, he decided, would be the Wallamet, for the roar of the falls, likewise famed in a hundred reports, thundered down the mud-bogged street. The houses were weather-beaten; across the false fronts of a few stood painted captions. A store, a grain shed, a pit saw and—witness of civilization's march—a newspaper. In all the length of the rain-drenched thoroughfare there was not a single sign of life. Cameron arrived at a glaring sign across one such false front announcing "Rickerson's Gen'l M'ch'd'se." On impulse he slid from the dispirited horse and entered the place, slamming the door against the wind. There, at last, he saw people; one sallow woman stood behind the counter and fixed her snapping eyes at a tall, loosely jointed character against the wall.

"Honest?" she asked in a shrill voice.

"Did I say you wa'n't honest? But ef you was Governor Abernethy himself I wouldn't give a nickel's credit! How can a body make a living that a way? You are like every other shiftless man—wantin' to run off to Californy and hunt gold while the crops go to pot here and poor wimmenfolk near starve!"

"Ma'm, I reckon my credit ought to be good. Yore husband never denied me what I needed. It's only a sack o' flour and a shovel I'm askin'."

"To traipse off to Californy with. Fools' gold! Stay home, I say, and grow wheat. That's better'n gold. Ef my husband guv you credit, why, go an' hunt him up." She turned toward Cameron with a bitter smile. "Nary an able-bodied man left in Oregon any more since this turrible gold fever. January it was they discovered it at Sutter's Mill. A bad January for Oregon. Women and children plowin' the ground and the pesky Indians bolder'n ever. My husband gone off with the first, vowin' to git rich. Not a word have I heard since. But what would you be wantin'?"

"Some tobacco," said Cameron. "And a few sticks of that dry kindling wood by the stove, if I may."

Overcome with a mumbled dissatisfaction the lackadaisical fellow sauntered toward the door, shooting a glance at Cameron's wallet when the latter paid for his tobacco. "I wouldn't blame old Joe," he called over his shoulder, "ef he never come back. Fer a wife you talk too much." Then he slid hastily into the rain. Cameron, grinning, followed, tucking the kindling wood beneath his capote. He bent his head against a sudden onslaught of the storm and picked a way between the houses, now and then casting a wistful glance at the cheery lights that glowed from within. He passed the church a second time, and in five minutes was within the circle of wagons.

The site picked for this day's rest was indeed a miserable one. Half of the ground was overflowing with water; the rest was ankle-deep in mud. One great blaze shot up from the center, and lesser fires struggled by several of the wagon tongues. The families for the most part stuck within the damp shelter of the wagons. The burst of excitement had subsided; not a song rose above the splashing rain; not a cheerful word could be heard save from one small group of men near the big fire. There, surrounded by the newcomers, stood a plump, middle-sized gentleman, dressed in lawyers' black and with a gray-shot beard and beaming eye, sheltered under an umbrella. It was Abernethy, the governor.

"Rain? Bless you, rain does no harm in Oregon. But we have plenty of it. From October to May. As for land, God made the finest land and placed it in these valleys. But the best pieces near by are taken. You'll have to scout around, go farther into the bench, or beyond Chemeketa, six and seven days' riding."

Cameron rode on to a certain wagon in the circle where Old Man Follett struggled with a dying flame. He turned his mild eyes upward, and for the first time in all that two-thousand-mile trip the bitter discouragement was apparent in them. "Tom, whar's mercy in this world?"

Cameron drew out the handful of dry kindling and passed it to the elder. When he raised his head he saw Susan Follett watching through the front opening of the wagon. His mud-splashed countenance resumed some small measure of its gayety. Yet there was no answering smile on her clear, oval face; no welcome in the gray, spirited eyes; no encouragement in the manner she lifted her determined little chin. She was a frontier girl, born of a frontier family and having that fusion of elements in her blood which forever left its impress on all things coming under

its influence. It was as if Tom Cameron had struck flint with steel and aroused a spark. Well, there was powder to put that spark in action. He was no love-sick swain. He compressed his lips and turned away.

The cause of the quarrel? Who might tell? Who knows the list of nine thousand and nine things, any one of which may be disagreed upon by man and woman. A thousand miles back on the Sweetwater there had been a quarrel and a reconciliation. But thereafter disagreement kept obtruding itself. Then Hank Emory, arrayed in his finest trappings, swirled up to pay court, leering at Cameron's impassive face. There would be trouble brewing there. Such a man was Emory that other men distrusted him, and women found something attractive in the rough coat of gallantry. Susan Follett spent one defiant glance at Cameron and chose to give the bully her attention. It was more fuel than Emory needed to augment his overbearing attitude.

The fire guttered in the wind and took fresh life from the dry kindling. Follett shielded the blaze with his coat. "I darn near got my bellyful of misery. I ain't no glutton fer such punishment. Whar's all this good land, eh? Tom, somebody's stretched the truth. I might have known." He drove two sticks into the ground and fashioned a crane. "Susie, pass out the big kettle."

There was a splashing of mud and the profane shouts of men; through the downpour appeared Emory and his brothers. The horses reared and sat wildly on their haunches. Follett muttered his disapproval. Cameron moved not an inch.

"Wet weather, wet weather!" cried the leading Emory. "Didn't I tell you Californy was yore proper station? Thar's gold and sun to be had."

"Tarnation!" muttered Follett. "Do ye take me for an old fool?"

Emory guffawed and favored Cameron with a sharp, sudden look of malice, then doffed his hat in a gesturing circle to Susan Follett who once more appeared at the front oval. "Lady, it's shore damp for purty faces."

She smiled. Cameron, looking up, saw that the smile was a little pinched about the corners of the mouth. Her answer, though welcoming, lacked warmth. Any less obtuse individual than Hank Emory might have noticed it. But he grinned broadly and swung nearer the wagon. "Well, yore at the end of the trip, Susie. Ain't it about time fer an answer?"

Follett started up with a burning stick in his fist. "Susie?" he said softly to Cameron. "Thar's liberty for you."

Cameron laid on a restraining hand. "Let it run a little longer," he counseled, and pulled at the yellow mustache.

The girl shook her head and seemed to draw away. "Mister Emory, aren't you a little hurried?"

"Haw! That's the same song you guv me last time. I ain't to be put off. Hyar I be, a two-fisted fellow, good enough for a lot of women. Ain't I good enough for you? Sartain, I can fight harder'n that fruz-faced Methodist stickin' so close to yore paw."

"Reckon that's a point to be settled now," broke in Cameron, handing the reins of his animal to Follett. The scene had attracted attention, and the quick dismounting of Emory brought a dozen of the younger men up on the rush. "It was sort of agin' my principles to fight in the train," continued Cameron. "Thar was trouble a-plenty. We're camped now and it don't matter."

Emory jeered, "Nice boy, nice manners," and looked around for his brothers. They had been edged away by the spectators, so he shoved his burly head between his shoulder blades and began weaving his fists. "I'll tan you! The devil with sech nice ways."

"Any way goes," countered the other and stepped swiftly aside. Emory

rushed in with the black, curly poll pointed like a battering ram. Cameron was not to be deceived; he saw the little red-rimmed eyes peering up at him, waiting for a slip off guard. A fist whirled out, grazed Cameron's chest and passed on. For so heavy a man the braggart worked lithely. He was about in a moment and charging again, this time upright, both arm flailing. Cameron stumbled in the mud, caught desperately at one of those arms and, going down, pulled his opponent along.

It made a weird, unbelievable scene with the rain falling in a never-ending downpour, and the ground six inches deep in muck. The crowd stood closely about and yelled. Follett clung to his club; the fire was trampled out and the ashes smoked dismally. Governor Abernethy had advanced with the rest and stood foremost, the umbrella shielding the lawyer's black coat, watching the battle with humorous eyes. "This," he said to Follett, "is a peaceful land. Most of our quarrels have to be imported from Iowa and Missouri." From her vantage point on the wagon Susan Follett stared in alarm, fists clenched and body moving unconsciously with the fighters. When Cameron went down beneath the braggart's weight she struck the wagon seat with her knuckles and cried "Tom!"

But Tom was buried too deeply in the mud to hear. The stuff covered both men from head to foot. Neither could get a grip and hold it. Time and again blows were launched which missed and landed in the gumbo. The braggart churned both feet to get a better position, lost his balance, and went rolling. The lanky fighter found his opportunity at that moment, got to his knees and fell astride Emory, seizing the black hair. That brought a roar of delight from the crowd. Emory's head sank down until a yell of fear bubbled out of the muck. Cameron swayed in his improvised saddle, raised the braggart's head for the moment and recited a short apology. "Say it after me: 'I beg the lady's pardon fer causin' so much trouble.'"

"The devil——"

Down went the head until a geyser of water shot up and a strangled cry emerged. Cameron yanked the poll up a second time. The apology was offered in wheezing syllables. Cameron released his grip, sprang up and watched for further aggressiveness. Emory was in no condition to do added damage. His mouth and eyes were plugged and plastered; not until some kind one thrust him through the crowd to his brothers could he find his bearings.

Cameron was not in much better shape. The governor's eyes beamed. "Looks like you were an alligator from some Louisiana swamp. I've seen much fighting but your style is most entertaining and least sanguine."

It furnished a moment's diversion in a dreary day and put the people in higher humor as they plowed off to their respective wagons. Follett pointed to the creek. "Reckon you'd best hunt out a quiet spot and take a swim, Tom."

From the wagon's seat came a bitter voice. "You bully! Do you think a fight settles anything? Shame for such a disgraceful scene! If it were me I'd be hiding my face!"

Cameron met Susan's disapproving eyes and slapped a hand to his countenance, wiping off some of the mud. "Ain't it hid?" he asked. "Durned if I don't think so."

"Shame on you! If I were a man I'd——"

"Be fightin' too," finished Tom grimly. "That's the best thing you an' I do."

"Susie, git back in that wagon," ordered Old Man Follett. "When it comes time for womenfolk to mix in men's doin's I'll say so." He watched his daughter's head disappear and turned with a pessimistic gesture. "Waal, now, whar

are we? All the best land gone hereabouts. Another week's journey in this cussed weather an' no prospect then of hittin' the right place. I'm an old fool."

Tom picketed his horse and waded through the rain. The creek left the wagons and dropped over a rock declivity to the river. At the mouth was a kind of cove with the rain fog curtaining it from the houses. Cameron stripped and washed his buckskin suit. A half hour later he was in the street again, wringing wet but at least clean. There was a stove in the store he had first entered, and toward this he moved.

"Hey, pardner, wait a minute."

He turned upon a figure sloshing through the mud. When the man was nearer, Cameron saw it to be the same individual he had met in the store arguing with the woman; tall, loose-jointed, stubble-faced and with a chaw of tobacco bulging in one jaw.

"Have some? Waal, say, I see you're from the wagon train. Reckon you'll be lookin' fer land. Mebbe Abernethy's done told you it's harder pickin' than it used to be? Shore it is. You'll be travelin' plumb past Chemeketa—mebbe even as fur as the Calapooia range, afore you find anything onless yore real lucky. I'm an old-timer hyar, and I know a smart leetle valley that ain't on the main traveled way. 'Tain't but two days' travel from hyar, to'rd the Cascades. Fine red-shot soil. Grow anything. Injuns thar, but a decent show of spunk'll keep 'em humble."

"How is it you're not on this piece?"

"I'm fer Californy as soon as I c'n get a grub stake. That cussed woman won't trust me fer a nickel's wuth of anything, and I'm busted. Was aimin' to claim a section o' that land—it's two sections big about—but I'll give you the location for twenty dollars cash, and ef that ain't cheap as dirt then old Sam Warner's Injun-crooked."

The street echoed with shouting, the mud gurgled and splashed. Once more a stream of profanity, and then the Emory boys rode by. Hank Emory leaned in the saddle as he passed and stared at Cameron with his bloodshot little eyes, then at the tall old-timer. In a moment they were out of sight, the report of their progress still coming back.

"Mebbe you'd figger me not wuth my word," put in Warner. "Waal, there's George Abernethy now with his bumbershoot."

The staid governor picked his way down the muddy thoroughfare. Warner raised an arm. "George, I'm talkin' turkey to this young feller and I'd like yore say-so about me."

Abernethy clapped Cameron on the back. "It's our young fighter, isn't it? Well, whatever Sam Warner tells you is so. There's just one exception I make."

"What mought that be, George?" asked Warner, shifting his chaw.

"When you are drunk you're of no use to anybody." And into a shop Abernethy turned, smiling.

"That's right, that's right, but I'm sober'n a judge right now. Just wish I had four bits fer a drink."

Cameron made a swift decision. "Come into the store and show me the location. If it sounds good I'll pay twenty for it."

One hour later Cameron, dried and warmed, came out of the place possessing a rough chart of the hidden valley southeast of Oregon City. It was, according to Warner, not hard to find, but only off the beaten track of incoming settlers and hitherto undiscovered by them. A bowl of meadow and beaverdam land two sections in extent, roughly, and just big enough for two preëmptions. Cameron's and Follett's. Cameron bent through the interminable drizzle to the camp. Night fell suddenly without the transition of twilight. A ring of fires swayed and guttered in the chilly gusts of wind. Old Man Follett still

hung over his own blaze; Mrs. Follett and Susan were inside.

"Reckon our troubles are mostly over," announced Cameron and shoved the map at the elder. "Hyars movin' orders. We'll start out first thing at daylight. Let the rest travel another week if they want. We'll be settled in two days."

They were up before dawn, groping through the rolling mist and shivering at the raw touch of clothes and harness. It still rained; the wind came in gusts from the river. Follett fumbled around the oxen with no single word of greeting. His heart had utterly deserted him. The womenfolk were within the sodden shelter of the wagon. In this fashion they pulled out of the silent ring and rolled down the main street, hubs deep in the mire. Cameron, rolling loosely in the saddle, felt his horse rise beneath him in fright. Up through the clammy wall shuffled a nondescript character, bowed against the elements.

"Reckoned you'd be startin' real early." It was Warner, and his tongue formed words clumsily. "Im a durned fool. Got on a spree last night an' sort of emptied myself of words. When I sobered I remember tellin' three fellers about this little valley. Location an' everything. Three brash young fellers, as I recolleck, one of 'em purty heavy o' shoulder an' black-haired."

Cameron sat rigid. Treachery? What had Hank Emory done now? Only a fool would have slept so soundly through the night while any chance of crooked work were possible. He thwacked a hand against his thigh in self-anger. Warner spoke again.

"I'd hand back that twenty dollars, but she's plumb spent on grub. Funny now, how these fellers picked me up on the street and loaded me with rum. It shore looks like a deliberate job. But how'd they know I knew of any place? Waal, you travel on. I'm goin' after my hawsses. Reckon I'll guide you to that place and ef thar's trouble we'll have it out somehow. I ain't goin' to have you fooled out o' that location."

He disappeared, leaving Cameron to forge along with the wagon. The Emory boys, then, had paid sharp heed to Warner when they passed him the previous day. The bully's fertile, restless mind had noted the evident seriousness between the old-timer and Cameron; with the cunning of some Blackfoot spy he had found the rest by use of alcohol. Cameron knew he would stop at nothing, that he would bend heaven and earth to forestall the Folletts after suffering the check to his vanity. There was trouble ahead. The weary rider swung his hand to the cartridge belt. The oxen struggled up the narrow trail to the summit of the cliff while the sheeting thunder of Wallamet Falls enveloped the whole party. Warner galloped into view, his long visage set in a bilious line. "Bear off to left at the next trail!" he shouted. "Short cut. She'll be a leetle rough goin' but I jest now heard that them three fellers pulled out ahead of us. We got to overtake 'em."

All that had gone before was ease and comfort compared to this new route. Warner said it was an Indian trail. It was scarcely that. The oxen lumbered and plunged through the up-growing scrub bushes—salal, ironwood, grape and hazel—while the wagon top shook torrents of water from the fir boughs. They came to a hill and slid down sidewise with locked wheels, mud flying high. They fought across a swollen creek, the wagon and team drifting a hundred yards downstream before striking bottom. On the far side another dark forest engulfed them. Even the long-enduring Mrs. Follett cried out for fire and rest at this unprecedented misery.

But a kind of madness seemed to sway the men. They had gone beyond strict reason and traveled with that bit-

ter decision which comes in company with desperate circumstances. The rain had numbed them beyond feeling; no situation had power to discourage them more than they already had been discouraged. Follett swung the bull whip and cursed at rare intervals. Cameron's sandy mustache drooped low; the man himself shivered with a queer kind of ague. He had not been dry for seven days on end, nor had slept under any shelter, nor eaten anything save jerked venison and chicory coffee.

Warner shoved them relentlessly. It was he who knew the fords, the trails, the easier grades. Noon came in this incessant downpour, but they kept their path. The women passed out lumps of pemmican. Cameron took his from Susan with a hand that shook like an aspen leaf in the wind.

"Tom, what on earth ails you? You're sick."

Warner said. "Tech o' chill. Sun'll dry him out."

"Sun! My Godfrey!" bawled Follett. "Does the sun ever shine in this country?"

They plunged into another creek, entered another forest, climbed and descended another hill. So ended that first bleak day which darkened and disappeared, leaving the fog and rain in undisputed mastery while the wind whipped through the tree tops and snapped branches all during the night. There was little sleep to be had. Before the first gray light they were in motion, following the monotonous winding of the road until, that mid-afternoon, the trees vanished; the rain died to intermittent showers and, far above, the sun struggled to pierce the clouds. Warner got from his horse and went to all fours, searching the ground. "Hyars whar the main road and the short cut come in. Lord cuss me ef them three fellers ain't ahead o' us! Fresh hoof prints, 'bout two or three hours old."

Follett snapped the bull whip, and the wagon went on, ponderous, creaking. "Up that thar hill!" said Warner and they climbed until they were lost in the mists. Stumps and logs ended. A green, lush orchard grass sprang beneath their feet at the summit like the nap on some massive carpet. "Down thar in the pocket," pointed the guide, "is the land. But hyars hoof prints ag'in. Them rascals air ahead of us shore enough. Ef they've staked corners I reckon we're beat. That's all's necessary."

Cameron mused. "If they've only been hyar an hour or two I doubt they'd stake corners. They ain't possessed with that much patience."

Doubt swayed the guide. He bit morosely into his tobacco. "But thar on the land. That's plenty. Possession's all ten p'ints o' the law, by gee. I'd be willin' to drive 'em off, but that'd git to Oregon City in no time and whar'd you be in law? I reckon we've lost the race. Waal, you foller me down the valley a week or so and I'll find you some land."

Cameron shook his head and stared at the billowing mist. Out of that pall emerged a dull echo of voices. "There they are," he murmured. "But they ain't the kind to set in one place very long. It ain't in their blood." He turned to Follett. "Reckon I'll deal a hand in this game. We're a-goin' to scrap fer what we want. Drive yore wagon down the hillside ontil you strike the fog line. Jest let 'em see the wheels movin' and hear the team grunt. Then we'll keep goin' on around the rim until we strike a draw somewhars and drop out o' sight."

"What fer?" inquired Warner with a dubious expression.

"Strategy," replied Cameron. Follett spoke to the team and set the brakes. Down the wagon slid, with the younger man trotting in advance. As they descended, the fog thinned, and the ground below came into view until

Cameron drew up his horse in plain sight of a gleaming green bowl's bottom with a creek brawling through it, half hidden by alders. By these alders flamed a fire. There were the Emorys.

Cameron wheeled his horse back into the fog and motioned for Follett to turn. The movement put the whole group out of sight once more, but the screaming brakes echoed from one side of the bowl to the other, as did Cameron's suddenly raised voice. "Beyond the draw!" he called. "We're on the wrong side of the hill! Into that big clearin'!"

Back to them came Hank Emory's exultant shout. "Go on," directed Cameron in a lower tone. "Let 'em shout. They'll be doin' some figgerin' in a while."

And so they were. Hank Emory watched the wagon snake back to the fog-hidden upper regions until there was left only the intermittent sight of a wheel rolling mysteriously, independently along, or the queer spectacle of eight dismembered oxen legs trampling forward. Then these signs too were lost. But the noise was plain enough, receding toward a not far distant head of the valley where another low pass apparently gave entrance into another stretch of open land. Emory heard Cameron's "Beyond the draw!" and muttered a doubtful curse into his beard. "Whar's that fool goin' now? This are the place."

"Mebbe it ain't the only good land in these parts," offered one of the brothers.

"Or mebbe that drunk fool give us wrong directions arter all," added the other.

Hank trudged a ring around the circle, growing more savage of temper at each pace. "Ef I thought so I'd kill him." He cocked his head forward, but the wagon was seemingly quite far off, crawling over the pass, and he stared at the blank white wall with a growing ugliness. "Sakes, I ain't no cussed farmer! Ain't doin' us any good hyar ef they didn't mean to settle it fust. That old fool said this war the only good spot in the hull country."

A quiet suddenly descended; the booming of the wagon wheels no longer blended echoes with the clattering brook. One lone shout wafted back and that was all. Hank Emory halted dead in his tracks. "I ain't to be fooled!" he burst out. "Durned ef I'll be given the haw haw. Git yore horse, we're goin' after 'em."

"What fer? Most likely they'll be squattin' on a piece afore we c'n stop 'em."

"Then we'll drive 'em off! Didn't I say I'd get square fer that drubbin'—an' fer bein' used by that china-faced girl?" The trio tore away from the blaze; hoofs drummed in the sodden earth; the report trembled and vanished.

It all happened swiftly. At one time they were about the fire; next instant they were gone. The flame leaped and swayed, the creek worried and foamed at the gravel banks. Then, without sound or warning Cameron and Warner slipped through the befogged alders to the fire. Warner's face relaxed. "I reckon that's what you mought call playin' tag. They're off an' we're on. Ef they ain't staked corners we're in lawful possession. I'll mosey out and drive somethin' in the corners ef thar ain't nuthin' now, which will natcherly do it up brown fer us." He galloped away.

On another corner of the compass echoed the wagon again, not far off and coming rapidly to the urge of the bull whip. Cameron sang out, "Straight ahead. Come along." At intervals he repeated it to give Follett his bearings. In five minutes the vehicle dropped into view like some pioneer chariot descending from the skies, and lumbered up to the fire. Follett jammed on the brakes. "It's gettin' lighter, seems to me. Sun's tryin' to git through. Susie—maw—

come out an' git warm! Hyars a fire, and it ain't rainin' fer a minute at least."

Once more the drumming of hoofs trembled through the mist. The trio were flying back. Tom Cameron slipped his revolver around and got from his horse. "Not yet. Back in the wagon, Susie. Thar's apt to be a stray bullet or so in the next minute."

"Tom—there's no need of spilt blood. I'd rather give in and try another place."

"Our own land? I give up nawthin' to those sports."

"Right," agreed Follett, crawling from the wagon seat. "It's time to git shet o' that pack o' trouble. Git me the buffler gun, Susie."

There was a snorting of horses, a violent oath, and Hank Emory came to view as of old, his animal rearing wildly at the bit's yank and sliding to a halt. The other two brothers trailed behind. The elder bully jumped from the saddle and stood before Cameron with his red-rimmed eyes growing bloodshot. "My land, Methodist, and I'll tell ye to git off sudden." He was shaking his head like an angry, uncertain bear.

"First come first served," countered Tom.

"Which is us."

"I guess not. Wa'n't no sight of you when we came. Moreover we paid fair for the location." Then he took a bold shot. "If you wanted it why didn't you stick—why didn't you mark the corners?"

"Hey?" shouted Emory. "Tryin' to make a fool out of me, you ginger-bread dandy? I ain't traipsin' around lookin' fer corners to mark. We war here fust and that settles it. You'll go, and you'll take yore friends to boot. Fool me? I guess not! Clear out!"

Cameron inclined his ear to some not-far-off sound. "When you stepped over that draw you abandoned this piece o' land, leavin' it unmarked. Whoever reached it next had fair claim to it. That's us. Moreover we've got stakes out now on a couple corners for good measure. That settles it as far as pre-emption goes. We're in possession lawfully and aim to stay." As he finished, Warner arrived and slid from his horse. "Found one nice little pile o' rocks nigh to the summit and jest considered it as one of our corners. No sign of anything else. She's yours lawfully."

But Cameron had no attention for him. His eyes were upon Hank Emory, whose red lids squinted under the sudden rising fury. The black head dropped in unison with the gun arm. The brothers spread out fanwise.

"Ho!" yelled Follett and brought up the buffalo weapon. He was far too slow. Emory's pistol was in the air, breast-high, when Cameron shot. There was no answering bullet; the leader of this boisterous group, bereft of his animal vitality, of his huge voice and scowl, fell like a sack of meal, with never a single word to announce his passing—a faint look of surprise on his face. The brothers stood irresolute, guns half out, covered by Warner and Follett. From the wagon Susan looked compassionately down at the dead man. "Tom, Tom—I'll be forever sorry!"

"No need to be. It's been a long time brewin', and somebody had to end it. 'Twas now or later; me or somebody else; this quarrel or another quarrel. The man was made for a sudden death." He motioned to the remaining pair. "Pick him up and take him away. Reckon you'll find it inconvenient to come back."

They did as told, hoisting the body into the saddle and, supporting it between them, rode away into the mists.

As if by prearrangement the mists were suddenly shot with a gleaming light; a crack in the eternal fog widened and through it came a swift, momentary shaft of the winter's sun. It flashed down on the heavy grass with all the verdant brilliance of an April day, twinkled in the brawling creek, sparkled in

the drenched tree tops. That short bit of heat set the whole rolling valley to steaming and from the earth came a yeasty, humid, pungent smell. Follett turned his mild eyes up along the expanse of meadow with such an expression of confidence as had not been there since spring in Missouri. "Waal, hyar's land good enough. And thar's the sun."

"Worth fightin' for I guess," stated Cameron a little dourly, and turned to Susan. "I been waitin' for you to change yore mind back to where it used to be. If it's the same story as it was yesterday I guess I'll jest leave you folks and mosey along to Californy with the rest."

"Why, Tom, are you blind?" Whereupon he grinned like a schoolboy and turned to the fire with a gesture of ambition. "Jest about, I guess. Well, dad, let's get started on the cabin. It'd best be a double affair. Two families take up a lot o' room."

IMPROVING NATIONAL PARK ROADS

A NUMBER of contracts have recently been awarded for the improvement of roads in the national parks. One of these is the work on the west side section of the Transmountain Road in Glacier National Park. This has been entered into with Williams & Douglas of Tacoma, Washington. The section of road measuring about twelve and one third miles will cost approximately $869,145.

A contract for the construction and reconstruction of the Two Medicine Road, also in Glacier Park, has been awarded to the Melchert Construction Co., of Lewiston, Montana. This is a stretch of road measuring between seven and eight miles and will cost $61,500.

One of the largest paving contracts ever made with the Federal government is that with the V. R. Dennis Construction Co., of Sacramento, California, providing for the laying of about twenty miles of asphaltic concrete paving in Yosemite National Park, covering the El Portal Road and other roads on the floor of Yosemite Valley. It is estimated that this paving will cost between $550,000 and $600,000.

Congress has authorized the appropriation of two and a half million dollars for road work in the national parks, for each of the construction seasons of 1925 and 1926.

THE WEST'S OLDEST COWBOY

THE big ranch of the Smith brothers, near Childress, Texas, has on its pay roll a man who is believed to be the oldest cow-puncher riding the range today. This man is H. R. Mangum, ninety-five years old, and he is supple of muscle, vigorous, hearty, and active in the saddle.

Mangum has been in Texas, working as a cow hand, for three quarters of a century. He came originally from South Carolina. He has a comprehensive knowledge of the history of the Texas cattle ranches. In his younger days he worked on ranches in the southern part of the State and frequently went on the trail with large herds of cattle.

As the wild lands of the more western parts of Texas were opened up, he went with the venturesome cattlemen into their new grazing territory. Indian raids were a common experience to him in those days.

When asked how he managed to keep his health and activity to such a ripe old age, Mangum stated that he has not observed any set rules of living, that he went the usual pace of a cowboy in his youth, devoting himself to hard work and life in the open.

Not the Fastest Horse

by

John Frederick

Author of "In the Hills of Monterey," etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE YOUNGER GENERATION.

THE rain came down on Irvington like musketry along a battle front. It roared on the distant houses, and it boomed, cannonlike, upon the roof of corrugated iron which covered the warehouse across the street. The rain was a great boon to Irvington and a joy to thirsty farms that, all through the valley, would be drinking it in. The "tanks" where the cattle watered were filling rapidly, now. First their green-slime flats were covered with little puddles which grew to pools; then the surface was sheeted across with brown fluid, rapidly rising. For the wind hung in the southeast and hurried enormous cloud masses up to the slopes of the mountains, where, suddenly chilled, they strove to drop the burden of water in an instant. So Irvington and Irvington Valley benefited.

However, Major John Vincent was ill at ease. He stood in front of the window, glowering, until his breathing had covered it with a thick, white steam. He traced a path through the white spot with his finger, but instead of looking forth again at the picture of Irvington, Major John Vincent turned away and picked up a telegram which lay upon his desk.

Major John Vincent swore.

The little yellow slip fluttered to the floor, and the major leaned for it until the handle of his Colt made a lump in the tail of his coat. Then changing his mind, he kicked it with all his might.

Gently, as though in rebuke of such violence, it rose, turned delicately upon an air current, and came to rest against the window pane. There was a leak, somewhere. The pane was wet, so that the yellow paper instantly turned dark.

He picked it off; it hung dripping in his hand, but still he could read:

> Arriving three twenty-two. May I have an hour of your time? ARCHIBALD IRVING.

"May you have an hour of my time?" said Major Vincent with frightful irony. "Yes, you may have an hour of my time, but will you pay for that hour? No, you will not!"

He kicked the wet telegram again—this time so successfully that it soared, falling with a squashing sound into the wastebasket.

"Archibald Irving!" said the major, lighting an old black pipe. "Irving——"

His mind detached him from his office, from the rain-darkened windows, from the corrugated-iron roof that was smoking across the street—to that time when an Irving struck gold on the headwaters of the creek. No wonder they called the village Irvington when it

could never have existed except for that hardy pioneer. That was two generations ago, which in the Western States connotes antiquity. What stung the major was that Archibald Irving was grandson and now sole heir to that name and family. Hence, the kicking of the telegram back and forth.

The square-faced clock in the corner pushed the minute hand closer and closer to the appointed time. At length the major, with a tormented roar, fled from his office and started for the station. He saw the train come into view around the long, easy bend; he saw the double puff of white above the engine, heard the two ear-cracking blasts of the whistle.

It came shuddering and groaning to a halt beside the platform. A fat woman got off, her arms bulging with parcels that she dropped in the rain to embrace a worn little man. A long, gaunt negro descended from the smoking car. A plump youth with very blond hair and very pink cheeks jumped down also, came cheerfully down the platform, swinging his suit case.

But where was Archibald Irving?

Major John Vincent felt a thrill of unholy joy. Something might have happened farther down the line. He hardly knew what he could hope for—anything that would indefinitely delay the arrival of the said Archie would do.

The engine began to pant, and the wheels started slipping and grinding on the wet, sanded track. No doubt Irving would appear now, suddenly, in the act of huddling himself into his coat, with a pair of suit cases flung after him by friendly hands, followed by the cheerful voices of those who had recently been taking his money at a poker game. Once more in Irvington there would appear a man of that familiar race, tall, big of bone, capable of jaw and hand——

The major began to regret the inhospitable thoughts which had recently been making rebellion in his soul. Like all true men of Irvington, there was in him a spark of loyalty to the blood of the founder. But here was the train puffing, staggering, and now lurching ahead with gathering speed.

He began to watch with an eager expectancy. It surely seemed, in his eye, that the train was already traveling at such a rate that it insured a broken leg or a fractured ankle to any one who dared to attempt to drop to the ground. But then the Irvings were a race who never failed to do the unexpected and the startling. The major began to stand upon one foot, like a man watching his horse come down the home stretch following just a little to the rear of the leader.

Now the train had gathered such momentum that it was flying along at the rate of forty or forty-five miles the hour, and still not a sign of a descending passenger.

Obviously, thought the major, young Irving was very drunk, and had ridden past his station. The major grinned. He himself had been young, and even now his spirit was not so very old. He decided that if the boy were really of the right stuff he would go to no limit of trouble to set him on his feet in the valley and start him again toward a comfortable estate in life. However, the third generation from the pioneering stuff was apt to be——

With an oath, the major turned; a foolish, careless whistling had been dinning into his ears all this while. The whistler was the blond, plump youth whom Vincent had noted before, with a cigarette hanging from his fingers, his eyes filled with the blankness of the music-maker, while he blew with shrill power:

> Shuffle up them coffin lids;
> Bring me to them ragtime kids——

Major Vincent did not like ragtime. He was of the generation which pre-

ferred its sentimentality in a more languid form, a little sickly——

The major told himself that this smart young fellow typified the lighter, vainer, more useless generation which had come to supplant their elders——

"You're John Vincent," said the youth.

A frightful thought stabbed the major to the heart. He could not speak. The plump youth added: "I'm Archibald Irving."

The major raised a hand heavier than lead and clasped that of the stranger. Then he led him dolefully from the station platform.

"Hello, major——"

This came from somewhere and the major waved a blind hand.

"You were in the war, then," young Archibald was saying. "And you came out a major?"

"My grandfather was a general in some sort of a war," explained Vincent, "which made my father a colonel when he was thirty and so when I was thirty, I naturally inherited the title of major."

Archibald grinned.

"But where," he asked, "are the pawing bronchos standing at the hitching posts? Where are the languid cowpunchers leaking local color and tobacco; where are the gilded spurs and the six-guns and——"

"The devil!" said the lawyer.

"Oh," said Archibald, "is it as bad as that? Nothing but flivvers, now?"

The major could not decide whether or not he would smile upon such flippancy. When he had churned the handle of his own car and stepped into the front seat beside his passenger, he relaxed enough to say: "You shake a real car to pieces trying to jump from hill to hill with it, the way you have to do out here. But you take a flivver—it's just as much at home among the rocks as on the level——"

"I like a flivver," said Archibald, "because they keep you company. What does one of those big, heavy cars do but hiss at you when you pet it and try to jump out from under you? A fliv always talks right back to you. And you generally know where to find them. They may buck, but they won't run very far."

The lawyer turned a little in the seat and scanned his companion again.

"Which college was it?" said he.

"Nothing of any importance," said Archibald.

"Humph!" exclaimed the lawyer. "I hope that you didn't waste your money when you went to college."

"Oh, not at all, not at all," said Archibald. "I learned a lot in the old dive."

"In the which?" asked the lawyer. "But go right ahead. Don't let me interrupt. What did you learn?"

"To make myself at home," said Archibald, "and to take advantage of opportunities. Have you got the makings to spare"

The major grinned again and passed over tobacco sack and papers.

"Where did you learn that art," he queried, as he watched Archibald's fat fingers construct a cigarette with flawless speed. "Where did you learn that—on your uncle's allowance?"

"My allowance," said Archibald, "never got me past the fifth of the month."

"Good heavens!" cried the major. "Not on three hundred per?"

"You know how it is," confided Archibald. "You run a bit behind and borrow a trifle, and then the next month you pay it all back—which makes your credit good—you understand?"

The lawyer swallowed. He said: "When I was in college, my allowance was thirty dollars a month. And I had my fun, too!"

"Well," remarked Archibald, "you must have been a credit to your family."

The major looked askance. Archibald's eye was as guileless, as blue and as empty as the eye of a china duck.

The major concluded in his heart of hearts: "This lad is a fool and doesn't care who knows it!"

CHAPTER II.

FAMILY HISTORY.

THE rain had not stopped falling. By the time they got into Mr. Vincent's office enough had fallen to sprinkle Archibald's gray-flannel coat. But in this young man there burned a fire of good cheer with so steady a flame that it could not easily be dimmed.

"Now," said Mr. Vincent kindly, "you know that I have always been your uncle's lawyer, and that my father was the lawyer of your granduncle. So I think I can tell you to open up and fire away. Tell me about yourself."

"Why," said Archibald, "there isn't much to tell, you know."

And the lawyer believed that Archibald had scored a bull's-eye.

"At least," he continued, "I can guess why you've come here. You were disappointed by the small size of the inheritance. You naturally want to look affairs over and make up your mind for yourself."

"That's why I started," said young Mr. Irving. "But on the way I changed my mind. I like this country pretty well. I may decide to live out here."

"May I ask what you know about this country?"

"I've traveled through about a thousand miles of it on the train," said Archibald. "That's something, I suppose."

The former opinion of Vincent was reinforced.

"And you like the look of it?" asked the lawyer.

"Oh, yes. Jolly old bald-faced hills. Lots of room. There's only one real trouble."

"You surprise and delight me," said Major Vincent. "What is the only failing, my I ask?"

"There are hardly enough fences for jumping," said Archibald. "At least, not in the districts that I have seen so far."

The lawyer rose and strode to the window. Then he strode back again and sat down.

"There are plenty of foxes, though," said he.

"Why," said Archibald with enthusiasm, "that's good news, really! If there are foxes, there must be a way to have fun catching them."

"Unless they catch you first," said the lawyer.

"I don't understand," said Archibald.

"Experience is the only teacher for some," said Vincent. "So you are going to settle down out here?"

"I am thinking of it."

"There isn't much of a house."

"Oh," said Archibald. "That's just the point, you see; I want to find a simple place. Altogether, I've got about forty thousand. And that means about twenty-four hundred a year; and back East that's nothing. Out here it ought to keep a hunter and a dog or two. What?"

Mr. Vincent sighed.

"You had better look things over for yourself," said he. "Suppose you let me drive you out to your place?"

The flivver placed them swiftly in the open country. There were not enough trees to be worth speaking of. Spanish daggers were the greatest plants, and they bristled in hill and dale like wretched stakes. The drenching rain had taken from the landscape its usual burned and baked appearance, but it had turned the mud black as a mourning garment.

"Here," said the lawyer, "your grandfather's land began. Your father had that share yonder——"

The car had stopped at the mouth of a vast amphitheater, a dozen miles from lip to lip. Two little streams ran down the opposite slopes, fringed thinly with

trees, and joined in a small lake in the center of the hollow.

"Your father had that share yonder, where you see the lake—all to the north of that, with the stream running through it. Your Uncle Edward had this southern half. Your father sold his bit to the Pierces, the Dunvegans, and the rest of them—you can see their houses, yonder, where the shadows of the trees are. However, this is all old, stale history to you."

"Not at all," said Archibald. "I never heard it before—that I remember of. Never had any head for history, you see! What a fine swing for the hounds it would be, across this valley!"

"It would," said the lawyer, and set his jaw. He continued: "That left your Uncle Edward as the only representative of the family in Irving Valley. He had this great chunk—let me see—I suppose close to forty thousand acres, in all. Good acres, too. Very good acres. Why, you can see for yourself, where old Fraser has broken ground down there on the shores of the lake. You can see the blackness, even from this distance. He's just plowed it. That land had its value for cattle. Very good value. But under the plow it will be worth more than a hundred an acre. I don't mean that the whole valley is worth that. We don't know, yet. But old Fraser—the fox—has started cultivating fifteen hundred acres there by the lake. And they'll pay—oh, they'll pay big. I should say that his first crop will give him a profit of twenty dollars an acre. Yes, I should say that the fifteen hundred acres there by the lake—just that bit alone, must be worth nigh onto two hundred thousand dollars——"

"Twelve thousand a year," said Archibald, translating thoughtfully into the terms which interested him most. "Or ten thousand, putting the capital into sure things, only. Still, a man could do on ten thousand—by cutting the corners, a little."

The lawyer gave a cutting side glance to his young companion.

"I should think that a man could do on that," he agreed. Well, *you* may even have to learn to do on less."

"Oh, yes, for a while," said Archibald. "Until I turn my hand to something."

"You're going to be a money-maker?" queried Vincent with deep sarcasm. "You're going to pick up a little fortune for yourself, after a time, are you?"

"Have to have money to live happily, you know," said Archibald. "And there must be ways of doing it. There must be ways. A big country, and a pretty new one. After all, it was only fifty years ago that my grandfather came out here and found it all unclaimed."

"He was partly a lucky man and partly a great man," said Vincent. "I hope that some of his blood really runs in you."

"But it does, you know—I don't mean the greatness, but I've always had luck."

"At what?" snapped out Vincent.

"At bridge," said luckless Archibald. And he began to whistle again:

> Shuffle up them coffin lids;
> Bring along them ragtime kids——

"I suppose you're tired of all this dull talk," said Vincent.

"Oh, no. I'm frightfully interested. What did dad sell for?"

"Three hundred and fifty thousand—and because his wife wanted to go back East. By the way, do you resemble your mother at all?"

"Ringer for her," said Archibald cheerfully.

"I thought so," said his uncle's lawyer. "Very well. He sold, and that money he dropped somewhere in the East——"

"Somewhere between Forty-second and Broadway and Florida. He planted it pretty carefully," said Archibald. "He sowed it so deep, though, that it never

grew a crop for him. But he had a fine time in the planting season. Good old dad!"

And he chuckled in a mellowed appreciation of these admirable qualities in his father.

"And then," snapped out the lawyer, "your uncle came to your rescue, just as you were left stranded, and gave you two hundred a month for spending money in your preparatory school——"

"I only owed five hundred when I graduated," said Archibald.

"And what did you owe when you graduated from college?"

"Ah," said Archibald, "I didn't graduate, you know."

With this oblique answer, Mr. Vincent was forced to content himself.

"To go on with your Uncle Edward. He was rather a careless business man but not a bad one. I mean, he had good ideas. But he didn't turn those ideas into money quite fast enough. He kept taking money out of the place and putting in machinery—tractors, plows, again. He was always building a road, or putting up a better style of fence, or selling off one brand of cows and putting a fine run of high bloods in their place—or building a new addition onto the barns, or constructing new corrals. Finally he got the farming bug in his head, and that was really the finish of him."

"Ah," said young Archibald, pointing, "that black strip by the lake *does* look like a mourning badge, doesn't it? But how did the farming ruin him?"

"He started at the wrong end of farming, you know. He began by putting in machinery—tractors, plows, and such stuff. He cut big irrigation and drainage ditches, and he bought huge circular pumps which were to suck the water up from the lake and bring it onto the higher lands, even up as far as this, you understand? What your uncle was seeing was not simply that patch of black land down there by the lake under cultivation. For he had a vision of this whole valley turned into a green bowl—oranges, lemons, almonds, and fine cherries. There was no end to his dream for this valley, because he said that the slope was not so great as to prevent the checking of the entire valley for irrigation, there was good depth of fine soil everywhere, and there was a hot sun to pull trees and alfalfa up fast. Nothing needed except, of course, water, and yonder was the water and had been—for some hundreds of thousands of years."

"I begin to see," said Archibald.

"Good for you," said the lawyer bitterly. "Your uncle bought so much and got so ready for this work of his that he even went so far as to secure options on all of the lands which had once belonged to your grandfather—options on the whole valley, and those options have not yet run out—and they *won't* run out for another five years—because the old fellow gambled deep. When he had the materials all spread out and was about to actually put the paint upon the canvas, he found that the paint was not ready—and that he had to have it. In one word, he was overextended——"

"It seems to me that I have seen that word before," said Archibald innocently.

"In your third reader, perhaps," said the bitter lawyer. "However, you had better learn about these things if you expect to reconstruct the family fortunes."

"Of course," said Archibald, "I must do that. I owe it to my father and my kind uncle, you might say."

The lawyer gasped. But Archibald was merely yawning.

CHAPTER III.

"SHUFFLE UP THEM COFFIN LIDS."

"AND when my Uncle Edward overextended himself—he lost his balance, so to speak?"

John Vincent replied in a voice that

was a growl: "Young man, he went practically broke!"

"Hard luck!" said the youth.

"Robbery!" said his elder.

"Robbery?" said Archie.

"Robbery!" roared the lawyer, and he jammed in the gear-shift lever, sending the flivver away with a lurch and a roar.

"You mean, that a gun was put to his head?" asked Archie.

"I mean, that he owed a miserable fifty thousand dollars to two men. He had tools on the place—engines and machines of various sorts, tractors and plows and harrows and what not—that had a value of close to a hundred thousand dollars. The paint on them was not even scratched. He had land alone which was worth more than half a million. On top of all that, he had a good house, fine building and barns around it, and a gorgeous lot of cattle of the very first quality. Considering what *could* be done with his half of the valley, in the way of improvements, I say that your uncle at that moment was worth at least a cold million minus the wretched little fifty thousand which he had borrowed from those two buzzards!"

He raised his fist and jammed it down on the steering wheel with such force that the entire front end of the car shivered. In his day, the lawyer had been a farm hand, and he still had a mighty forearm to show for it. Pudgy little Mr. Irving gasped, round-eyed, at this display of passion and of power.

"Well," said he, "it begins to sound like a book! I think that probably my uncle did not have quite fair play!"

"You think!" exclaimed terrible John Vincent. "You think that maybe he did not have fair play? Well, young man, the value of the options on that land across the valley could be variously estimated, too. That land, as it stands, lake lands and bottom lands by the river, and all, ought to be worth about a hundred and eighty thousand dollars. But improved—I want the world to hear me stand up and shout that that same land is worth eight hundred thousand dollars—which might be stretched to *another* million.

"Now, then, my friend, I want you to contemplate the picture for yourself. Here is a man with the prospect of a million right under his nose, and the prospect of a profit of from six to eight hundred thousand dollars in addition from the lands on the other half of the valley. Beyond that, he has before him the chance of realizing a tidy dream. Not Napoleonic, maybe, but with a hope of doing the world a lot more concrete good than any Napoleon ever did—a hope, you see, of making these twelve thousand acres become a regular garden. And himself and his house in the middle of the garden like a king, with a great house—right on the edge of that lake—and he intended to have his little sailing boat and his launch on that lake. With a little clearing out of the bottom, the river could be made navigable clear down to the town—why, it would have been like living as a prince in a principality which one has built up for oneself!"

"Humph!" said young Irving.

"It doesn't seem to appeal to you greatly," said he lawyer.

"Did you say that he intended to put most of the land in fruit?"

"You don't like fruit, perhaps?"

"Twelve thousand acres of plowed ground—it would raise the very devil with any hunting, you know. A fox would just head for this valley—and the horses would be blown inside of five minutes——"

He shook his head, while the lawyer looked around with a faint smile, as though ready to be slightly amused by this remark if it were a jest. But the eye of young Irving remained as clear and as blank a blue as ever. The lawyer jerked his head back again and be-

gan to curse frightfully through his gripped teeth.

"A bad road, isn't it?" said Archibald with much sympathy.

"A devil of a road," said the lawyer.

"However," said Archibald, "he *didn't* plant the trees, after all."

"No," said the lawyer, "he was smashed just as he had the door open, and just as he was about to step forward to a great success—poor Ned! He was a fine fellow—a grand man. God bless him!"

"However," said young Archibald, "since he had only such a very short time to live and enjoy his work—it hardly mattered that he wasn't able to push it through a little earlier——"

"Young Mr. Irving, very young Mr. Irving," said the other, "may I try to make you understand that this death of your uncle was due to a broken heart?"

"A broken heart?" asked Mr. Irving. "Dash me! A broken heart? How romantic! And in my own family? No one would hardly believe such a thing. Really!"

"No doubt," said Mr. Vincent, "they would not. However, I am telling you the facts of the matter."

"Thank you a thousand times," said Archibald. "It is a lot better than a book—better than most books, anyway. Please go on."

The lawyer loosened his collar. Finally he said: "Yes, I'll get it over, done with and off my hands. I say that your uncle ran short of cash because he was simply about a year too premature in laying in his supply of tools for improving the valley lands. He had to have more cash and he went to the two richest men in the county—or in any of the five counties around you. He got twenty-five thousand dollars from Fraser, the banker, and he got twenty-five thousand dollars from Bill Watson, the rancher."

"If they were both so rich," said young Irving, "I should think that poor Uncle Ned could have saved a frightful lot of time and trouble by borrowing it all from one of them and letting the other alone."

"You would think that if you didn't know the situation. But that pair are the only two aces in this pack. They own everything on each side of the Irving Valley. They hate each other like the worst poisons. They're crooks, both of them. And each one is smart enough to do everybody except the other one. Watson knows a lot more about land and cattle; but Fraser has it all over Watson when it comes to such matters as straight finance—the getting and the letting out of money. So that now Fraser has just as much land as Watson—or very nearly as much—and in addition to that, he has his bank, which is a pretty tidy item all by itself. In a word, young man, Fraser has his hands on Irvington and about half of the country around it. Watson has the other half. Oh, there are other people, of course, and lots of them, but this pair has the choice bits, and they're picking up the rest, between them, pretty rapidly. White men are leaving Irvington and the country around it. And here's one white man that's going to go on the outward trail before long. I'm licked. The rest of them are licked. All licked! And by those two spavined, roach-backed, broken-down old scoundrels! Bah! I despise myself when I think about it!"

"I'm frightfully sorry," said Archibald, and lighted another cigarette.

"So your uncle didn't want to offend one of these ogres by doing all of his borrowing from the other. Both were money lenders, and both of them liked to be patronized. He got twenty-five thousand from each of them. And that was that."

"It seems quite complicated. So many names!" said Archibald.

The lawyer swallowed his fury and went on: "He had that money on a

short-term loan—which was a piece of folly in the first place. And I told him so. Oh, I told him so. But he was determined. He wanted to get the money, and he was always certain that the valley would turn a miracle for him. The money came nearly due, and the miracle was not happening. So your uncle got ready to raise money from another quarter to meet those two short loans.

"He had his grip packed for a trip to the East, and he was about to start when it popped into his mind that he might as well try the two old devils before he spent so much time on such a trip—when his time was doubly valuable in the valley, superintending operations. Hey—there goes old Fraser now!"

A long-bodied, dark-blue automobile whirred down the road past them, and young Irving had a glimpse of a white head in the driver's seat.

"That's his one dissipation. He loves an automobile that can jump along the road.

"Well, as I was saying, your Uncle Ned went first to find Watson, because Watson is supposed to be a little the more human of the pair. But Watson wasn't home, and so he went to Fraser, and told Fraser simply that he knew the note was coming due, and that he wanted to know if Fraser would extend it when the time came. Fraser, the villain, said that he would, and your poor childish uncle trusted to the word of that crocodile and did not get the promise reduced to writing. You see the whole conclusion, now!"

"No, I don't."

"Really? Well, Archibald Irving, when the note came due, your uncle went to Fraser and said he had come to get the note extended—and the infernal old hypocrite of course wrung his hands and swore that his heart was broken with grief, but that a number of bad deals had gone through—and that he could not extend the note!"

The lawyer paused, breathing hard, and then he went on: "Of course your Uncle Ned was not simpleton enough to have any doubts. He knew that he was about to be done, and he did not argue. He walked out of the office of the shark and came to mine. I thought the thing over and saw that it was a pretty nasty pickle. Because, you see, fifty thousand dollars is a fairly sizable loan, and it would take a long time to make an Eastern bank take kindly to such an idea. American banking is really pretty conservative. The English are your great bankers. They will gamble on long chances, but the American bank is very crusty. It can afford to be, because for a century it has had the finest securities that the world ever saw in its hands.

"I saw that there was no chance to raise a quick fifty-thousand-dollar loan in local quarters, because the only big money around Irvington was that which was in the hands of Fraser—except for the money which Watson had already tied up.

"Just there I thought that I had an inspiration. It seemed to me that Watson would nearly die of rage and of envy if he knew that the banker was about to foreclose on the valley for a wretched twenty-five-thousand-dollar mortgage. So we started over to see Watson, hoping to make him a generous Watson, not because of a good heart, but because it would poison him to think that his rival should get any advantage over him.

"And here came another blow—for we found that Watson had gone out, having been called away on business—leaving word to close down for the twenty-five thousand that was owed by your uncle on the dot!

"It was bitter, hard luck. If we could have got to Watson, I know perfectly well that he would certainly have been glad to stall off Mr. Fraser by extending money to cover both loans. But he was out of hand, and before that day

closed, your uncle's two notes were overdue!

"After that—well, there's no use going into the dirty details. Watson was away—— Ah, there he goes!"

Another long blue-bodied car lounged up the road.

"Watson changes his style of automobile whenever old Fraser does. Not that he likes cars, but because he won't have Fraser put anything over on him—even in style of cars. He duplicates Fraser's buy every time! Well, bad luck to them both! But there was your Uncle Ned, caught to rights. And the long and short of it was that he had to sell to meet those debts—oh, yes, they made him sell! They made him sell his tools, which were so new and good—though of course they only brought ten per cent at secondhand! They made him sell his cattle, though it was the off season—in a word, my son, the only people who were able to bid on a property of that size were old Fraser and old Watson, and the Watson devil was still out of the country! The result was that Fraser had nothing to bid against except his shame, and shame was never a very eloquent matter with him.

"What he did was to offer the fifty thousand for the notes, and forty thousand in cash besides, together with the home and the buildings standing just around it.

"Yes, sir, though no one could possibly believe in such a thing, I give you my word that all that infernal old skinflint would offer for an estate worth half a million in cold cash as it stood—and worth a large million in prospect—was a wretched ninety thousand dollars—of which he had to put out only sixty-five thousand in cash.

"It breaks a man's heart to think of it.

"Aye, and it broke your uncle's heart, and no wonder. He didn't live for a month after that sale. And he was like a stunned man from the day that the notes came due and were not paid!"

"Dear me," said Archibald, "if he had only had a few friends——"

"Friends? My boy, every man in the county was his friend."

"And there isn't fifty thousand dollars in the county?" said young Irving.

The lawyer caught his breath, started to answer, and then looked swiftly aside at his companion, as though for the first time he began to doubt his former opinion of the heir of the famous name of Irving. However, that doubt vanished like a cloud shadow and was gone. For young Mr. Irving pursed his lips and swelled his cheeks and began to whistle merrily:

Shuffle up them coffin lids——

CHAPTER IV.

TWO OLD SQUIRRELS.

THEY went on down to the edge of the lake and into the house that stood gloomily there at the edge of the water. They climbed up to the porch and looked through the windows, and then the lawyer unlocked the front door, and they wandered through room after room.

"Like a stable, you know," said Archibald.

"Yes," replied the lawyer, "because your uncle was a working man."

"Oh, well," said Archibald, "one needn't be so very gloomy about one's work, do you think?"

"Bah!" exclaimed the lawyer.

"I didn't quite hear you," said Archibald.

"I'm getting a cold," said John Vincent, and led the way up the stairs.

He showed the rooms in procession, one by one—big, airy rooms, with lofty ceilings and with French doors that reached from floor to ceiling in turn, filling every nook and cranny of the house with oceans of flooding light.

Very little was needed to turn that

place into a delightful home except the final luxurious touches of rugs and paintings and comfortable chairs——

"Ned wanted to wait until the valley was opened up," said the lawyer. "Then he would have furnished the house out of the income which the valley itself produced."

"Very neat, sentimental idea," said young Irving. "What's this?"

"The door to the lookout tower. That was one of his ideas. You see, the house climbs up from the lake along the side of a hillock and to the top of it. This tower rises four tall stories, or about sixty feet, from the top of the hill, so that when you stand on the top platform, you can sweep the whole country rather thoroughly. Your uncle liked that. He was in the habit of walking up and down on the platform at the close of every day, thinking over what work had been done and what work was still to do. He could see nearly every inch of the valley from that place, and he could make his plans while he walked there, or while he sat and smoked——"

"Let's have a look at his thoughts, then," said Archibald.

They slowly climbed up the winding staircase toward the roof. It was a plain platform with a plain wooden railing around it——

"A stone parapet, some day," Vincent explained.

"And a telescope," said Archibald, "to look around and see what each of the laborers was doing?"

"Yes," said Vincent, "a telescope, but not for that. He had a bit of a leaning toward astronomy. He liked to stare at the stars. And so he spent a good deal of money in having this high-powered glass—— Hey, let's get back to shelter!"

The rain turned the air suddenly black with the steady violence of its downpouring. But that rattling shower lasted only a moment. Then the changing wind cuffed the clouds apart, and the sky began to clear rapidly. For a long rain would have been an anomaly at Irvington or in the Irving Valley.

Young Archibald Irving, as the air grew clearer, marked with his eye all the features of the valley which stretched around him in almost a perfect circle with a six-mile radius. He could see every building raised on the easy slope of the valley walls. He could see every shrub, well-nigh. Altogether, one might have thought that even the heart of the fox hunter, in plump Mr. Irving, would have quickened a few beats to the minute as he stared at this wide prospect that might one day have come to him, enriched with circling rows of fruit trees, watered from the lake, and made into a garden incredibly rich by the wisdom and the vision and the practical hard labor of his uncle.

But as he walked up and down the platform, Archibald Irving was still whistling lightly until, far away on the side of the southern hill, he saw two little streaks of dark blue——

He paused for a moment and gazed at them meditatively.

"There you are!" said the lawyer, with a chuckle, as he followed the direction of Archibald's gaze. "Some day those old codgers will brain one another, they're so filled with hatred and with jealousy. Some day that's what will happen! I wish it would happen tomorrow. Because that day will set free a lot of poor, sweating devils who are in fire for them, now! They're snarling at each other up there on the hillside—you see, that's the dividing boundary between the two estates—the Watson estate and the Fraser estate."

"I don't see," said Archibald, "exactly how Watson got his share of the loot if Fraser did the buying——"

"Don't you? Neither do a lot of others, but the fact is that Watson paid about four hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars for that half of this side of the valley. And if he would

pay that price, you can make a guess that it was worth every penny of that sum. You can guess, also, about how much value could have been put on the entire valley, according to your uncle's options. But Watson could not stand the idea that Fraser had slipped in and picked such a perfect plum. Even if he paid its full value, Watson had to have his half, and he got it. But that made one more excellent reason for the pair of them to hate one another. And if they don't get their brains blown out by some maddened debtor, one of these days, they'll die of mutual poison, there's no doubt of that."

"Every man," said young Irving, "has to have his own line of sport—and theirs seems to be hating. If this platform were a little larger, one could give a very snug rag party up here under the stars, Vincent. What?"

"What?"

"Don't you dance?"

"No, no! Confound it——"

"Well?"

"Nothing. Nothing! But this house belongs to you, Irving, and if you want to, you can afford to give a rag party up here, now and then—and while you dance, you can look around at the little kingdom that might have been yours. That will make you a lot jollier."

"Exactly," said Archibald, delighted with this sympathy. "And then, I could put the orchestra down there on the lawn——"

"Where will you get the orchestra?" said Vincent. "However, that's your business. Not mine! I'm going back to town. Are you ready to come along?"

"I'm ready to come along, of course. Only—well, I'll be with you, in a moment."

When John Vincent reached his flivver, he had time to climb into it, climb out again, start the engine and let the machine idle. He had time to experiment with the degree of slowness to which he could cut down its running as it stood there; he had time to carry on this experiment until the engine actually stopped and had to be cranked and sent off again with a startling roar.

Finally he stood up on the running board, and what did he see? The long muzzle of the big telescope was pointing over the side of the high platform and was fixed upon the distant hillside——

"Irving, are you coming?" yelled the justly irritated lawyer.

"Oh—terribly sorry—coming right away——"

There was no dismay and no hurry in the voice. And when young Mr. Irving appeared at the front door again, he was not panting with his haste.

Vincent was gloomy indeed as he sent the car back toward Irvington.

"You found that telescope amusing, I suppose," he said dryly, "and you didn't realize how time was flying."

"Exactly," said Irving through a yawn. "You see, you can find out things with a telescope."

"Really? That's news," remarked the lawyer. "What sort of things, may I ask?"

"Oh, I looked at a pine tree," said the youth.

"Humph! And you saw the tree had a cone in it?"

"No, a squirrel—a pair of squirrels! I saw them very clearly—a pair of old squirrels." And he laughed. "A funny sight," said he, "to see them playing together."

He seemed so highly contented with his ride into the country, in fact, that he was still gay and smiling as he stepped from the car to the curb in front of the Irvington hotel. He was whistling as he waved farewell and thanks to John Vincent. As he signed his name on the hotel register he still smiled, and when he was shown to his room, he entered it chuckling softly.

It was a very old pair of squirrels

that he had seen on the hillside. Each of them, in fact, had a white head.

They were walking back and forth between two great, long-bodied blue automobiles—just the pair of them alone.

The most interesting detail of all was that their arms were linking jovially together, in sign of mutual happiness, mutual content!

CHAPTER V.

SPIRIT OF THE WEST.

NOW that the rain was definitely ended, the sun began to shine, doing a thoroughly Western job of it. In half an hour, all the roofs of Irvington were steaming, though there was only the slant light from the west to heat them.

From the little square on which the hotel and the other chief buildings of Irvington faces, there went up a soft, crinkling sound as the sands drank the rain water deeper and deeper. People began to come tentatively out from the houses and sit on porches. Down the streets into the plaza a horseman came at a pounding gallop, from time to time, perhaps with his poncho still furled over his shoulders.

People began to say: "This rain'll do a lot of good——"

Seated at the window in his room, tapping his plump fingertips against the broad arms of his chair, Archibald Irving enjoyed the beauty of the mist rising from the roofs and the brown swelling of the hills, beyond which Irving Valley lay—and the wrecked hopes of his dead uncle. No one could ever have guessed at sorrow so far as Archie was concerned. There was no shadow in his eye; there was no wrinkle in his fat brow. The eternal smile was on his lips, the smile of the thoughtless man.

"So this is the West," said Archie.

He got up and went to the window. The hardware store's delivery wagon went rattling and crashing by, with a freckled boy on the driver's seat. And yonder, a great five-ton truck, with bags of cement heaped heavily on it, was snorting and heaving its way across the plaza, leaving enormous indentations in the rain-softened sand.

"This is the West!" exclaimed Archie, and chuckled.

A pair of newsboys raced out to either end of the block, a pack of their wares under their arms, and they began to make skillful dissonance:

"Big train wreck—forty-two killed. Read about it now. Get it red-hot. Aw—*train* wreck. Forty-two killed!"

Tossing their voices back and forth as skillfully as any metropolitan newsies who, in the cañoned street of Manhattan, make it seem that two or three shouting newspaper venders are a whole army of prophets with a message of universal woe, so these two worked the little town of Irvington.

Archie sauntered down the stairs, and entered the lobby. In the Western hotel lobbies of which one read in fiction, bespurred men lolled about in crippled chairs, chewing tobacco, rolling cigarettes; there were many guns; there were quiet voices with a snarling menace in them.

Where were these interesting items in the Irvington Hotel?

Alas, they were gone! Yonder, two drummers sat in busy conversation—"I says to the blonde: 'Hello, cutie, are you lost?' And she says: 'Hello, big boy. You look sort of away from home yourself.'"

No, this was not Western talk; it might have been transplanted from Chicago the very day before. Archie Irving went out to the veranda. A withered, little man with a drawn, tired face, had a chair tilted back against the wall of the building. There were overalls and a flannel shirt and a ragged-looking silk bandanna to make up his outfit, together with a green, faded hat of black

felt, *not* wide of brim, and a pair of rusty spurs on his heels. He held between the fingers of his left hand a wisp of a cigarette.

This, then, was a cow-puncher! Yes, for the inside of the legs of his overalls were polished and polished again by constant rubbing against the stirrup leathers.

Alas for romance!

"It won't live," said Archie to himself, "except where a fox pack is hunting—it certainly won't live in this century."

The little man stood up and went to lean against a pillar of the hotel veranda and roll another cigarette. His pale, disinterested eyes squinted wearily across the plaza while his trained fingers constructed the smoke without thought and without haste. How much of his life must be mere matter of habit, thought Archie Irving.

Where was the bulge of the gun, supposed to be vaguely outlined near the hip pocket—usually on the right side? No, there was no sign of a gun about him. He was just a tired, gloomy little laborer, whose habitual labor happened to be the chasing of cows across the ranges.

A buckboard was rattling into the plaza and turning toward the hotel. Not the buckboard of the days of romance, with a pair of foam-freckled, little, devilish mustangs furnishing the motive power—but a twentieth century buckboard with an engine tugging the wheels along more faithfully, more swiftly, more strongly, more noisily, than any span of mustangs that ever breathed the prairie air.

The little truck came to a halt with a screech of brakes, a jingle of wire, a rattle of tin—and the lumbering driver leaped down, took a heavy sack of something from the truck body, and shouldered it around toward the rear entrance of the hotel.

"You're an old-timer around here, I s'pose," said Archie to the little cow-puncher.

"Yes, sir, I'm quite an old hand," said the little man. "Might you be a stranger?"

"I haven't seen much of Irvington," said Archie, "except the station, the hotel, and Watson and Fraser."

"If you seen them two," said the tired voice of the little man, "I guess that you've seen about nine tenths of this here country. I guess you must have seen them going in opposite directions, eh?"

"That's right. I understand they're not very friendly."

"It's the one reason that the rest of us keep hanging on here—because we got a hope that maybe one of those old boys will get enough meanness in his system to finish off the other one. They sure hate each other."

The picture of the two old men, circularly framed in the telescope, walking back and forth arm in arm, came to Archie's mind. He merely said: "I suppose that they've done each other a lot of harm, then?"

"Oh, yes! Never a month goes by that they don't get in a dig at each other."

"Like what?" asked Archie.

"Why, last month there was bidding on the work of building the schoolhouse. When Fraser's building contractor turned in his bid, Watson's contractor cut down under him pretty near ten per cent. Just for meanness, for the sake of not having Fraser's man get the job. Even if Watson has got to lose money in the job."

"They even do building contracting, then?"

"Stranger, they even do everything! Watson bought one newspaper so's he could call Fraser names, and then Fraser, he bought up the other newspaper so's he could call Watson names. Every time Fraser backs one man for Congress or school superintendent, or

something, Watson backs the other fellow, no matter how bad he may be.

"Fraser owns the big garage, and Watson owns the big repair shop. Fraser has the lumber yard, and Watson has the brick oven. Watson owns the candy store, and Fraser owns the ice-cream parlor. Fraser owns the bakery, and Watson owns the flour mill. And that's the way that it goes all the way down the line."

"But it seems to me," said Archibald Irving, "that they really own things that don't compete."

"Don't you never doubt none that they don't compete!" said the little cowpuncher with a wise shake of his head. "Fact is, if it wasn't knowed by other folks how terrible hard Watson and Fraser is competing over here, *other* folks might want to come in here and try to make a little competition—this being a growing town, like it is. Y'understand?"

Archibald nodded.

Still he persisted in seeing the picture of the two old men, arm locked in friendly arm. He could not help remembering that a garage does not necessarily have to compete with a repair shop, and a bakery does not really have to exist by cutting the throat of a flour mill!

"I disremember," said the little cowpuncher, "how long ago it was that I first got a job for Watson, but when—— Excuse me just a minute, stranger, will you?"

The little man sauntered to the edge of the porch just as the driver of the "buckboard" came striding around from behind the hotel.

"Hello, Jerry," said he genially.

The big man wheeled and crouched, and a hand darted back toward a hip pocket. But when he saw that the little fellow was standing there with his hands hanging harmlessly at his side, big Jerry straightened, a notch at a time.

"Well, you're here, are you?" said Jerry heavily. "You're here, 'Doc,' are you?"

"I thought that I would just slide in town here and rest up for a time before——"

"Before what?"

"Before I went back to ask you some questions that maybe you would be sort of curious to hear them."

Archibald backed slowly away from the line between Jerry and Doc. For he perceived that there was danger in the air—danger of a greater sharpness of edge than any that he had ever looked upon before.

"What questions, you little rat."

"Am I a rat, then?"

"You're darn right you are."

"Jerry, I am gunna get you for that."

"I am right here waiting——"

"Then take it——"

The big man, being in the direct line of Archibald's eyes, could be seen to snatch at a hip pocket and drag forth from it a gun of formidable length. But little Doc merely flicked his fingers beneath his coat and another gun twinkled on the edge of his gesture. He fired first, and Jerry dropped his gun. He began to drop by degrees, first on sagging legs, then to his knees in the sand, and lastly, he fell upon his hands.

The little man tucked away his gun with a gesture as swift as that which had brought it forth. He walked over to the edge of the veranda and said: "I had ought to put another slug in your carcass, you skunk. I hadn't ought to let you live and annoy another man the way you do me. But I'm tenderhearted, I am. Dog-gone me if I ain't a regular woman, when it comes to that."

With this quiet pronouncement, he stepped from the veranda and approached his horse. There was no haste in his movements.

By this time, Archibald was kneeling beside the wounded man, and the latter lay stretched upon his side. The hotel

proprietor came to the door of his place —another door or two slammed—and footfalls were heard as men approached on the run.

"Look here, Doc," said the proprietor in a most unexclamatory manner. "I think that you've killed Jerry."

"I hope I have," said Doc, "but I guess that I aimed a mite too low. But I still got a hope. He's needed killing for a long time."

"Here comes his cousin, Doc. You better slide along."

"I don't mind if I do. I guess that I've about used up my luck for this day."

"So long, Doc. Take care of yourself."

"Thanks, Smithie. I'll try. Give my regards to the sheriff and the rest of the boys."

Doc turned the head of his horse and departed, the horse jogging without haste down the road, and the little crowd came swirling around the wounded. The bungling hands of Archibald were pushed aside by the professional assurance of a doctor who examined hastily and then pronounced:

"A tough one like Jerry, he'll get along all right. How you feel, Jerry?"

"I feel hit."

There was a loud and general laugh. "He's got nerve, Jerry has."

"You feel hit, all right, but have you got a sinking feeling—like you was losing a lot of strength and needed a rest?"

"No. I want a drink."

"Get him a drink of water."

"The devil, doc, you know I don't mean water."

Another laugh.

"I think you'll pull through, right enough, Jerry. You just keep your head up, will you?"

"I'll need a pillow for that. Take me inside, will you. I hate havin' the sun in my eyes, this way."

They picked him up.

"What was wrong between you and Doc Swinton I thought that Doc and you was pals?"

"Oh, sure, we been working together pretty close to fifteen years, now. But the other day he went in and got him a suit of Sunday clothes to go to a dance. And he got trousers that was too tight. I told him that he looked like a sailor on shore leave in 'em. And he got to figuring on that and brooding on it, you know. And finally he up and give that suit of clothes to a tramp. And after he give the suit away, of course he got madder and madder at me for what I had said. The other night, him and me had a few words, and he quit the job and rode into town. That was the last that I seen of him until we met up, just now. My gat, it hung in my pocket. You'll find the lining of that there pocket all tore where the sight caught onto it. Otherwise I would sure of salted the little rat——"

So murmured Jerry as he was carried from the sight and the hearing of Archibald into the interior of the hotel. But Archibald himself did not follow the crowd. He remained in the open air, for he was full of thought, which was to the effect that flivvers and newspapers and delivery trucks had not yet vitally altered the spirit of the great West.

CHAPTER VI.

THE WAR STARTS.

WHEN the evening of that same day darkened, Mr. Irving hired a horse from the livery stable and rode it east along the same road over which the lawyer had driven him that afternoon. When he came to the low outer wall of Irving Valley, he turned to the right. Presently he approached a tall gate of wrought-iron work with a stone fence running back on one side and a hedge on the other, and a new-planted woodland within. He opened the gate, and now he was riding up the well-made

gravel road toward the house of Mr. Watson.

Mr. Watson built things which he hoped would outlast him and on whatever had to do with himself, he did not care what money he had to pay out. This graveled road, for instance, was not made by the easy application of a thin layer of crushed rock, followed by a strewing of rolled gravel. Instead, the road bed had been excavated to a considerable depth, and in the broad trench hewn blocks of stone were laid as the first layer. Above these blocks, there were smaller, but equally regular stones, and above these a very coarse gravel and rock bed, and above this a layer of finer gravel—finally a surfacing almost as fine as sand. Thus in five layers this road was built, and though it looked as simple as any other graveled road, yet Mr. Irving knew, by the sound which the feet of his horse made in the road, that there was rock beneath him. He could tell by the most cursory examination that this road was the real article guaranteed for a whole handful of centuries, just as he had known in a single glance that the pair of heavy gates which he had just opened were not part of some wholesale manufacture, but were specimens of handiwork, designed by an artist of price.

Against the moon, he had regard for the plantation of trees through which he was now riding, and the arrangement of forest and clearing. By the time he had come in view of the house, Archibald Irving recognized the handicraft of some expert landscape gardener—the same, no doubt, who had terraced the land near the house itself.

The house was disappointingly modest, at first glance, after an approach so imposing. When Archibald examined it more in detail, he saw that it was better than it seemed. If it was low in stature, it was wide in expanse. It was of the Spanish type which turns blank, eyeless walls towards the exterior and reserves its grace and airy charm and all its warmth of color for the patio and the interior gardens.

When Mr. Irving tethered his horse and approached the entrance, he was preparing himself ardently for the task which lay before him. At least, that task would be simplified in a certain degree by the manifest culture of his host.

A big old man with a ruddy face and a great bulbous nose and a little pair of glittering eyes came hurrying out, holding Irving's card in his hand.

"Are you Archie Irving? I am Watson, of course. My dear boy—it is happiness to have you with me! It is a happiness to have dear old Ned's nephew under my roof—come in with me—this way—mind your step down——"

Some one said that you cannot indict a whole nation; but the inverse is equally true and when a whole nation indicts a single man, he is apt to be in some difficulty when he casts up his final accounting. At least, so thought Archibald as he went in at the side of his host; he thought, furthermore, that even when a single county united in the solemn condemnation of one of its citizens, there was apt to be a bit of logic behind them all.

He masked these thoughts, which was not difficult, for Archibald had been presented by nature with one of those smooth, bland faces which reveal not a whit more than their owner desires them to show. When Archibald smiled, no one could suspect him of double dealing. When he laughed, he shook like a jelly with his mirth.

He smiled frequently, and the first time that Mr. Watson attempted a joke, Archibald laughed so heartily that Mr. Watson leaned back in his chair and let his own mind relax. He was convinced that he was dealing with a fool —just as certainly as Mr. Vincent knew.

"But," said Archibald, when he ac-

cepted his second glass of moonshine whisky, "but, Mr. Watson, I have come to see you, to-night, on a serious errand. I'd like to have a few moments of your serious attention!"

"With all my heart," said Mr. Watson. "If there is anything that I can do for you—any advice that I can give you—you may call upon me to the utmost of my powers."

"It is advice—only advice," said young Mr. Irving, "that I would like to have from you."

Instantly the warmth of Mr. Watson became treble and even tenfold. He leaned forward with actual eagerness, his elbows on his knees, like one who is hungry for the riddle.

"My poor uncle——" began Archibald, and saw a shadow like a falling curtain descend across the face of his host.

"Ah, yes, poor Ned Irving! And what of him?"

"I am sorry to say," said Archibald, "that when my poor uncle died, he was possessed by an obsession."

"Indeed?"

"That he had been unjustly treated."

"Ah?"

It was curious to see the warmth of Mr. Watson turn to coolness, the coolness of ice, and the ice to a veritable glacial chill which whole centuries of sunshine could not have penetrated.

"In fact, sir, my uncle died filled with the belief that he had been robbed, and his life work taken away from him by most thievish methods!"

Mr. Watson was silent. His face had the sympathetic interest of a granite sphinx or an image in glass. Even his bulbous nose glowed less brightly.

"And the man," said Archibald, "that my uncle accused, is a neighbor of yours, Mr. Watson!"

Twenty centuries of ice were banished from the rigid countenance of Mr. Watson.

"You astonish me, Archibald!"

"And, in fact, I have come to ask you if my uncle could possibly be right? I have come to ask for your advice in the matter?"

The final crusts of cold dissipated. Warm spring breathed in the features of Mr. Watson.

"My dear boy, ask what you will of me!"

"The man my uncle accuses is named Fraser——"

"Ah!"

"I am a stranger in this country, of course, but I thought that you might know this man. Alexander Fraser——"

"The greatest scoundrel, my boy, that ever reached the age of seventy. The greatest villain that I have ever known. I promise you that!"

"Then there may be something in what I read in my uncle's last letter."

"If it is villainy on the part of Fraser, anything is possible—I assure you."

"Hold on. I'll read you the extract from the letter."

He drew from his pocket a worn and wrinkled sheet of paper, covered with a very close, fine handwriting. He even held the folded paper toward Mr. Watson.

"You remember my uncle's handwriting, of course?"

The smile grew rigid on the face of Mr. Watson while he perused a line or two of that sheet. What he saw, he recognized. It was the true hand of Mr. Irving, so lately dead and lamented in Irving Valley, and all the county roundabout.

The youth took from his pocket a pair of spectacles—large, round, horn-rimmed. He fitted them to his nose, and he lighted a cigarette which he smoked in a lengthy holder.

He read:

"And as for your own future motions in the legal profession, when I saw that I might need further time to pay, I hurried to Mr. Fraser and told him that I might have some difficulty. He told me frankly that he would

be sorry to extend the loan at that particular time, because he had a particular need for that money and that the value of it would be much greater than its mere face—in a word, he held me up. I was very desperate, as you may judge. I knew that this was an affair in which it would be hard to interest any conservative Eastern bank, and therefore I finally offered the unconscionable money shark a bonus of ten thousand dollars cash—payable at once. And he took the money which I counted down into his hand. He took the money and gave me the assurance that the time would be extended—only, like an incredible jackass, I failed to get that assurance in writing. For the first time I tell this to you. I have been ashamed to let my lawyer know what a frightful gull——"

"Wait!" cried Mr. Watson.

He stood stiff and tall before his chair, from which he had risen, as though a hand had pulled him up.

"Do you mean to tell me—in the name of Heaven, begin that reading again."

"He took the money which I counted down into his hand——"

"Enough!" cried Watson.

He stood stiff and tall before his chair, yet it was odd that a villainy so small as this should have shocked him.

"Ten thousand dollars—quite on the side! Quite on the side!" cried Watson. "The cur—the unspeakably low cur!"

He began to stride up and down the room.

"Ten thousand! Does it not say ten thousand? Let me see the place! Ten thousand dollars—and for that too—why, confound him, I'll make him wish that he never heard that your uncle was a gull and could be plucked. I'll make him sweat for this thing, my boy. The scoundrel. The greedy fool! The traitor!"

Mr. Watson, in an enormous rage, neglected to enforce his demand for a sight of the letter, and young Archibald hastily put the envelope away—a much rubbed and worn and pocket-soiled jacket of paper.

"I only wondered," said Archibald, "if you could advise me if such a thing were really possible——"

"Possible?" cried Watson. "Yes, and probable, too! It explains many things. Let me tell you, my boy, that this man Fraser is a villain so complete that he would betray his oldest business associate for the sake of a petty profit on the side—he would—I shall let him know who I am. Advice? I tell you, young man, I shall do more than advise you. I shall fight this battle for you with my own hands!"

CHAPTER VII.

MR. FRASER.

THE light still burned in Mr. Fraser's office at eleven in the night. That was not an unusual occurrence, for the entire life of Mr. Fraser was circumscribed by the walls of that office. It was not a spacious chamber, but as Mr. Fraser would have informed you at once, a life is not to be known, whether for happiness or for value, by the trappings in which it is passed. Adjoining the office, there was a little sleeping closet—a chamber hardly eight by seven, with a narrow cot on one side. Here Mr. Fraser was in the habit of lying down when his night work kept him so late that there was little purpose in going to his home to sleep. He had a change of clothes, a razor, and other little necessities, tucked into a corner of the sleeping closet for these nights when he remained in the bank until the next working day began.

On the whole, there was only one thing that *ever* made Mr. Fraser leave the building, and that was a subtle sense of shame. Because he knew that men always pointed him out as a miser, and he did not wish to have his passion for industry still further mistaken for the same miserly instinct. So he maintained rooms outside the bank.

It was at the side door of the bank

leading toward this private room, that young Archibald Irving tapped at this late hour of the night. All of Irvington slept. Indeed, midnight was never a waking time in the town, except for gay Saturdays.

The door opened a mere inch, and a brutal voice inquired what Irving would have.

"I want to see old Fraser," said Archibald Irving.

"Are you known to him?" asked the voice.

"Tell him that I am Archibald Irving and ask him——"

The door suddenly slammed shut. Young Archibald, fairly sure that this ended matters for that night, at the least, still stood about on one foot and then on the other, uncertain whether he had not spoiled all the complicated game which he had planned. As he shifted about there, the door opened again; a dimly burning lantern showed to him a face as brutal as the voice—a broad, murderous countenance with two rat-bright eyes planted as close as possible to a turned-up nose—a prize fighter's nose. Here was a man who took pride in being dangerous and rough. He greeted Archibald with a snarl and waved the visitor in ahead of him. A chill crept down Archibald's spine as he walked in advance; he half expected to be crashed to the floor by a blow from behind at any moment.

Presently, at the end of the narrow, dark hall, on which no outer windows opened, the progress of Archibald was stopped by a door.

"Knock!" commanded his guide.

Archibald knocked and a sharp voice asked: "Who's there?"

"Archibald Irving."

"Charlie, show him in."

Charlie stepped to the fore. He said with considerable smoothness and snarling viciousness: "All the time that you're in that there room, I'm out here. There ain't no way of getting out of that without you come this way. So——"

He took a key, unlocked the door, and glared at Archibald as the latter stepped through. From the eyes of the withered little man who sat behind the great desk, a message flashed toward the guard, who now closed the door softly.

"And now, young man," began Mr. Fraser, turning slowly around in his swivel chair. "And now, young man, what can I do for you?"

There was no possible source in the shriveled soul of Fraser for any amenity other than this time-honored business form.

"Don't get up," said Archibald cheerfully, as he advanced with outstretched hand. "Don't get up, sir. Because I have come for only an instant—a little bit of advice that I hope to beg from you——"

In the first place, of course, there had not been the slightest intention on the part of the banker of rising from his place. In the second place, it was pleasant to have such intentions mistaken. In the third place, the round, plump face of jolly Mr. Irving was just the type that Mr. Fraser liked to see passing into his office—the type of the born gull. Fourthly, and most important of all—the youth had come for advice. Which meant, instantly, that he had not come to reproach or to upbraid; neither could he have come to borrow. For one does not, as a rule, come to borrow cash and advice all on the very same evening.

Beyond all this, the hour was late, and men who ask for advice at midnight usually are in trouble. But men in trouble were the special diet upon which Mr. Fraser preyed. They were the meat course in the repasts he best enjoyed.

For all of these reasons, he actually smiled upon this youth in the most kindly fashion; the hired watchdog in the passageway would have gaped with

surprise to behold such an expression upon the face of the ogre.

Said Mr. Fraser: "Of course I am glad to see the son of my old friend. Sit down, lad. Sit down! And tell me what's new in automobile fashions. No, we'll let that wait. Tell me, rather, what advice I can give you. It's a rare thing to find the youth of this nation willing to listen to advice, far less to seek for it from old men. Now, lad, I am glad to see you. Sit down. I'd offer you a cigar, but I make it a rule never to smoke or permit smoking in the office——"

Something told Archibald Irving that it would be well not to waste time. It would be well to go at once to the point. And so he went to work.

"In the first place, it is an affair which begins with my uncle, Ned Irving. You knew him, of course, and I understand that you were connected with a loan which he secured——"

The same arctic cold which had overspread the face of Mr. Watson earlier in the evening, now appeared in the eyes of little Mr. Fraser.

Archibald Irving hastened to add:

"My poor uncle, who it appears was not much of a business man, held that you, Mr. Fraser, were quite guiltless, but that you were forced to push home the deal because of business necessities."

A glimmer of light appeared in the dark brow of Mr. Fraser.

"But for Mr. Watson my uncle had a settled aversion. I am going to read you a selection from the last letter which he wrote to me—a letter in which he knew that his death was near and which he wrote solemnly, in that knowledge——"

The eye of Mr. Fraser was an eye like a hawk's, now. It fairly burned.

"I am the last man in the world," said he, "to attribute aught good to Watson. I've seen the scandalous heart in that man's breast all of these years, as the whole county will witness. I've exposed the hypocrite and held him up to the honest light in my newspaper. Ah, if your uncle could have taken warning by the experience of others——"

Just close enough to the lamp to give him plenty of light and close enough, also, so that Mr. Fraser could see the script clearly without making out the words—just at this range, young Archibald Irving held the letter. Then he read aloud:

"And so, my dear Archie, I wish you to know that I cannot put any real blame upon Mr. Fraser——"

Here Mr. Fraser broke in: "Is it written down there? Is it really written down there?"

"You can see for yourself!" said Archibald, thrusting the letter in front of the old man. But before Mr. Fraser had time to adjust his vision to the fine writing, Archibald, as though intent upon his reading, drew back to his chair with the paper in his hand. He went on:

"I cannot put any real blame upon Mr. Fraser, but the man who must be cursed now and forever is that double fiend, Watson——"

Once more Mr. Fraser interrupted, clapping his hands together.

"Is it really written down there?" cried he.

"Wait," said Archie, "and you'll soon understand why!"

He continued his reading:

"That double fiend, Watson, because I sent a special message to him and offered him ten thousand dollars spot cash if he could arrange to extend the time of the twenty-five-thousand-dollar note which he held, together with the twenty-five-thousand-dollar note of Mr. Fraser. Watson took the cash which I offered—a ten-thousand-dollar sum which I had to almost go to the devil in order to get——"

"Ha!" cried Mr. Fraser. "He got an extra ten thousand from your uncle and didn't tell——"

Who it was that Watson should have told and failed to do so did not appear,

for Mr. Fraser suddenly set his teeth, like one who had been on the verge of divulging an important secret. And young Irving hurried on, as though he had noticed nothing:

"But I was fool enough to get merely the oral promise of Mr. Watson, whom I took a frantic trip to see——"

"I remember, I remember!" cried Mr. Fraser, "that your uncle made a sudden trip from town—and I knew it was to see Watson—but I thought that he missed—ah, that scoundrel Watson——"

"But when the notes became due, I went to see Watson, and the knave simply said that he had no record of having received any sum of ten thousand dollars from me. And that, my lad, was the cause of my ruin."

Archibald Irving folded the letter and restored it to his pocket.

"So I have come to ask——"

"My boy," said the banker, "let me have a look at that page——"

"Certainly," said Archibald, and drew the letter from his pocket. But while the fingertips of the banker were already clutching it Archibald drew it thoughtfully back and shook his head.

"There is another matter on that same page," said he sorrowfully, "which is meant for no eyes but my own. I am sorry that I cannot let you see the written words, Mr. Fraser."

And he put up the letter slowly, as one who regretted.

"However, what I have come to you for is your advice, Mr. Fraser. I cannot let this wrong go unrighted. It is pretty well known that you understand the villainies of this Watson. Now, can you make any suggestion——"

"Suggestion?" cried Fraser, clasping his hands and writhing in his chair. "Suggestion, is it? Lad, I'll do more than suggest. Let me have a chance at this—scoundrel—this robber. And come to me again in a few days."

Young Archibald Irving did not seem in an aggressive humor. He allowed himself to be shown at once from the office of the money-maker. He bade the scowling guard a cheerful good night and wandered whistling back toward the hotel. When he got to it, he found half a dozen men in the act of mounting their horses at the hitching rack. He heard the news—Doc Aldrich, who had shot Jerry Swinton, had been chased and missed by the first posse, had stolen a horse to help him on his way, and now a new detachment of men was riding out to try to catch him.

CHAPTER VIII.

HIS MASTER'S VOICE.

LET us leave the chronicling of the deeds—or rather the absence of deeds—in the career of Mr. Irving and turn to other matters, just as Irvington turned, at about this time. There had been a great thrill of excitement at first. People were hungry for a glimpse of the last of the great fighting line of the Irvings, the frontiersmen, ranchers, and financiers. But after the major had had him to lunch and the people of the town—merchants and ranchers—had had a chance to examine his mild eye and his plump, easy-going face, there was a general falling off in interest.

For it was decided at once that mentally as well as physically this young man was a far, far cry from the vigorous race of the earlier Irvings who had made such great chunks of history in that vicinity. They began to look upon Archibald as belonging to that large group of men who are more to be smiled upon than respected.

Ordinarily, this would have made him well enough liked. But it was considered that mere good humor was such a falling off from the qualities which were expected of an Irving, that a general sneer began to be directed at this smiling youth.

However, he seemed oblivious to it, as he was oblivious of all that was un-

pleasant. The vigor of his apathetic calm—if one could use such a paradoxical phrase—overbore all that threatened his happiness. Money itself seemed to make no difference to him.

While it was wondered how this scion of a ruined race would take vengeance upon those who had brought about its downfall, it was reported and currently believed that young Archibald was busying himself buying a new equipment of aluminum kitchen ware through a traveling salesman who had interested him in its durable properties.

Irvington shook its hardy head and sneered again.

In two breasts, however, Archibald had planted something more than smiles and contemptuous sneers. Not that they felt less contempt, but that they felt the greater wrath. Rage burned unceasingly in the old and robust breast of Mr. Watson, and in the old and withered chest of Mr. Fraser.

A note came to Mr. Fraser in the morning mail:

> DEAR SANDY: I must see you at once. Business of the greatest importance.
>
> Can you drive up the valley this morning and we'll have a chance for a chat?
>
> As ever yours, W.

Mr. Fraser had already dispatched a note on his own behalf to Watson, saying:

> I am going to be in the valley road this morning, early. You had better come along. I know something that you will be glad to hear. FRASER.

Now he sent off another note, saying that he would be in the valley at ten and expected to find Watson there.

What delayed Fraser so long was the little matter of Mrs. Aldrich and her farm. Since the flight of Doc from Irvington after the shooting of Jerry Swinton, Mrs. Aldrich had given up all hope and decided that she would leave that part of the country. For seven long years, now, she had struggled to keep the little farm going; Doc had helped her valiantly. He worked his hands to the bone for six months of the year, doing nine-tenths of the work around the place. In the other six months of the year, he spent his time in laboring for hard cash for others. In this way, they had made a good deal of progress, and while they continued to pay a fat seven per cent to Mr. Fraser, they had whittled off the corners of the mortgage and brought it down to a very much more reasonable sum than it had been at the time of the death of the elder Aldrich.

Now that Mrs. Aldrich wanted to move, however, she found that the little farm had, in the eyes of Fraser, apparently, a value which was only a third of that which she had expected. And this morning, with her bony, work-distorted hands clasped in her lap and her weary eyes centered upon his face, she listened while the expert pencil of the banker went swiftly down the list which she had prepared:

"Cows—good. Valuable, if you can find anybody to milk them. But where do you find that around here? Where do you find it, when they want beef cattle and are willing to use condensed milk? Plows—all ten years old and worn out——"

"Oh, plenty, plenty good enough to do all the work that a body could ask of them for another ten years!"

"Don't tell me, Mrs. Aldrich. I've attended too many sales. The value I can put on your farm is just what it would bring in the market. What *you* can make out of it with your labor and your sons—that is important to you. What *I* can make out of it is the thing that is important to me. I don't like to talk brusquely to you. But this is business. And business is business. You don't want me to *give* you money, do you?"

Oh, no; she would rather starve than receive charity. She would far rather starve!

Poor Mrs. Aldrich. Before he finished his half-hour talk with her, he had beaten down an eight-thousand-dollar farm with a two-thousand-dollar mortgage to such a degree that the poor old woman was willing to take two thousand cash and the cancellation of the mortgage in payment.

That was good business. Mr. Fraser knew that he could sell that farm in ten days for double what the widow got from him. As he buttoned up his old, threadbare motoring coat after the interview, his heart and his very stomach were warmed, as though that four thousand dollars in profit had already been eaten by him, and now was being digested and added to the stores of his wealth.

Sometimes it seemed to Mr. Fraser that his money was a sensible part of his flesh. The interest from good investments was the circulation of his blood; the growth of his fortune was the growth of himself. So that he was ever a young and growing boy. That was why the eyes of other old men grew filmed and dull, but his eye retained the brightness and quickness of a child's—or a cat's.

If his body was more starved looking than ever, on this morning, his spiritual self was fatter by the prospect of a four-thousand-dollar profit.

Then he went forth to his garage.

It has already been mentioned that an automobile was the one extravagance—even the one pleasure which Mr. Fraser enjoyed outside of business itself.

He loved a fine car with a redoubled passion.

His business was housed in a shack, his house—a mere hovel, yet the garage was a fine, new building of stoutest concrete, roomy, and complete to the latest details. There was a trench in the floor where a mechanic could descend and work at the inwards of the car from beneath. There were electric lights on long cords, tools beyond listing, well-nigh. In the rear of this garage, or rather opening as a wing of it, was fitted up a complete little blacksmith shop, with a forge and an electric bellows. If some little job of soldering or welding needed to be done, the mechanic could attend to it.

In this garage there reigned as a sort of tributary prince—almost independent of Mr. Fraser—the king, a chauffeur who was also a master mechanic. To this greasy genius, Mr. Fraser was in the habit of bowing for advice. This great man was consulted by the banker in the feverish hours of joy, trembling hope, and despair, which preceded the purchase of a new car. Once, five years before, a car which Mr. Fraser had bought contrary to the advice of this mechanic had developed mysterious ailments. The engine had not operated properly. It had coughed, weakened and stopped upon the level road. But though Mr. Fraser knew that his mechanic must probably have tampered with the fine car, yet he dared not complain. Because, ordinarily and when taking care of a car on whose purchase price he had probably received a commission from the agent, the mechanic was, beyond all doubt, an unsurpassed genius.

Sometimes for half an hour at a stretch, the banker sat awed and silent watching the strong, learned fingers of the mechanic at work in the garage. At those times Mr. Fraser dared not speak. Once a bit of advice from him had caused the laborer to leap to his feet with strong and strange curses, rush toward his rooms to pack his grip and depart. All the way to the station, Mr. Fraser had followed him, entreating. At length the genius was persuaded by the banker to return.

Yet again, a few words from Mr. Fraser had caused a great monkey wrench to fly on wings through the air straight at his head. He had ducked just in time to have his hat carried off

his head and through the window panes with a crash.

But he dared not protest. He paid for the broken window and crept away in silence.

For this mechanic *was* a genius. In vain, in vain did the stupid Watson attempt to duplicate the beautiful automobiles of Mr. Fraser. For the first month they might do well enough, but at the end of that time their engines would begin to whisper and then to wheeze—if ever so slightly. Whereas the automobiles of Fraser were ever ready and ever running like the smoothest oiled silk.

On this morning, the dignitary of the garage had just descended from his chambers above, with mid-morning tea still moist upon his lips. He answered the greeting of Mr. Fraser with a cold and distant nod and then, having paused to fill his pipe and light the same, he slid back the garage door upon its well-oiled hinges—a silent, perfect door.

Mr. Fraser paused in the doorway. Before him stood two sleekly shimmering monsters. The one was of darkest, richest maroon; the other was glorious deep blue. Which was the better car? It would be hard to tell. English craft had made the one honestly and well; German craft had put the other together with a cunning precision, like a delicate watch. Toward the blue car Mr. Fraser moved. He cast a frightened glance at the god of the region and then opened the door. He was about to settle himself in the driver's seat when a calm voice said:

"The other car this morning——"

"Surely," said Mr. Fraser prayerfully, "nothing has gone wrong with——"

"I've said my piece," said the deity in overalls. "You better take the other car."

He turned his back and folded his arms.

Mr. Fraser took the other car.

CHAPTER IX.

THUNDER AND LIGHTNING.

THE instant that he touched the self-starter, and the engine came to life, nine-tenths of his regrets fell from him. He paused, with the clutch out, and listened. It was barely audible—a subdued and distant murmur, but a murmur of boundless strength. And was there a vibration?

To nerves less sensitive than those of Mr. Fraser, there would have been none, but to him there came the faintest thrill—like the stir of a tiny current of electricity over the wire and against the skin, just noisy enough, just rough enough to make its existence known. What more could one ask of an automobile?

Mr. Fraser was content. He pressed the accelerator.

"*Don't* race your engine!" said the tired voice of the god at the garage door.

For the hundredth time he said it, and Mr. Fraser shrank small inside his coat collar. He dropped in the gear-shift lever, touching it with a delicate forefinger—the clutch came gently in, and the great car nosed its way out onto the road.

When he went from first to second, on leaving the garage, Mr. Fraser always shuddered lest the mechanic should hear a noise. And because he was so tensed with terror, he was always sure to make the gears clash a little. Then, turning his frightened head, he was sure to see the calm, scornful smile of the great man in the door of the garage.

Sometimes that smile would make Mr. Fraser unhappy for half a day, and often he dreamed at night of making a perfect, noiseless shift from high to third on a fast hill, and seeing the mechanic sit suddenly erect in the seat, filled with the wonder and silence of true applause. Or he dreamed of learning some mystery of the car's engine,

and when the great man went wrong, of pointing it out to him, calmly, without pride, but as one who knew!

For such a moment, sometimes Mr. Fraser felt that he would pay as much as half of his fortune.

On this morning, as usual, the change to second was made with a slight grating noise, and Mr. Fraser was so angered and so frightened at once that he forgot all about any further nervousness and made the next two gear shifts perfectly. Then, with oiled smoothness, the car fled down the open road. Before him a stranger's automobile appeared—a stranger's, for Mr. Fraser knew by heart every license plate in the county. No difficult task to that head of his and its stock of figures of all kinds. The specially constructed siren in the Fraser car shrieked, the big machine leaped past, a maroon streak of beauty, and Mr. Fraser swerved it closely in front of the stranger. He loved doing that. The curses from the other car never troubled his conscience any more than the curses from a heartbroken debtor.

He hit the long climb of the Irvington Hill at such a speed that he did not have to drop into fourth until he was almost at the summit. Then he went whooping over the top in such high spirits that he almost forgot all that had brought him forth on this morning until, in the valley road before him, he saw the rear of a blue machine swing out of view around a curve. It was Watson. No other car—saving his own—was cut so low, and with such serpentine grace—no other car in all the county.

So Mr. Fraser fed the maroon beauty to sixty miles an hour and leaped down the valley with the horn screaming. Ahead of him, the blue car hastened, but not fast enough. The heart of Mr. Fraser exulted in his cramped breast.

It was all very well that Mr. Watson was brave when he sat on a horse's back or when he confronted men. Perhaps such a share of courage had not been poured hot into the breast of Fraser. But when he sat behind the wheel of an automobile, fear left him. Only joy and pride in the speed which responded to the pressure of his foot remained to him.

Now, with the tail of his eye, he watched the needle of the speedometer waver to sixty-one—three—four—five——

"Give up, you coward!" screamed Mr. Fraser to the shrieking blast which combed around his wind shield.

The big blue car lounged to the side of the road, and the maroon dashed past, with the accelerator still depressing, the speedometer still rising—and Mrs. Fraser sitting back against the great soft cushion, looking straight before him, blandly impervious to the existence of the other.

He was so pleased with himself for this performance that as he let the car run on more slowly and finally sent it to the side down a narrow lane—their usual meeting place—he still found it hard to gather the proper violence of anger in his breast.

He got out from the car where it stopped, and was walking up and down as the blue machine drew up beside him. And, "Good morning, Billy," said he to Watson.

Mr. Watson, with a savage scowl, drew from his huge and ancient hand the driver's glove, but answer returned he none, except that blasting glare.

And Mr. Fraser, with the acid running into his brain as he remembered all that he had heard from young Irving, said with an evil smile:

"I've asked you out to talk to you about the unwritten laws of partnerships, Billy."

"Sandy," said the other with thunder in his voice, "I've come to talk to you about the same thing."

"Ah," said Fraser, "it's the first time

in thirty years that we've begun by agreeing with each other. Maybe, Billy, we won't *separate* with an agreement."

"It depends," said Watson, "on the thickness of your skin. But I think that I'll reach you, though as you are."

"In the first place," said Alexander Fraser, "when we started to work together, we agreed that there was a need for absolute honesty—with each other. Did we not?"

"We did," nodded Watson. And he licked his lips. "You're preparing my own ground for me, Sandy. I cannot help warning you of that!"

"Bah!" exclaimed Fraser. "We were to act hand in glove whenever a big thing came along and *never* try competition—because we both knew that competition puts down prices, whether in a hotel or a lumber yard, or in bidding in property at a forced sale. We knew that, and we knew that outside of each other there was nobody in the county that was able to give us a run for our money. So we made an unwritten agreement—we formed a silent trust—and we masked that trust by pretending to hate each other!"

Watson nodded, his eyes burning.

"I have written out the very lies about myself that you've published in your fool paper, Sandy," said Watson. "And you've done the same by me. And I tell you, man, that crooked as I know you are——"

There was a yell of rage from Fraser, but the larger man went on: "Crooked as a snake, or worse than a snake, yes. But I really have thought, all these years, that you were playing square with me. Not because you respected me or loved me. No, damn you, because there's no love in you for anything in the world except a thing of steel and wood like that car you drive—but I thought that you wouldn't dare to double cross me, for the simple reason that you never knew what money-making *was* until I showed you how we could take this county by the throat and bleed it white for our mutual benefit! I thought you were making too much money to even *dream* of crookedness——"

Another hoarse cry came from Mr. Fraser. For it suddenly occurred to him that the very thunder which had been prepared in his hand for the blasting of his enemy was now being cast at his own head. It was a species of unfairness, obviously, and it maddened the good Fraser.

"Will you stop?" he yelled. "Will you stop your lying—you that were a petty land stealer, till I showed you what *business* could do—will you stop your lying and listen to me one half minute?"

"I'll stop a minute," said Watson. "I'm in no hurry. I *need* time to tell you what I think of you. Because I'm going to make you *crawl* before I leave you."

"Bill Watson, name a single sum of money that I've ever cheated you out of?"

"I'll name one," said Watson. "A small one, too. Considering that I've meant millions to you, a sum so small that it shows that you still have the same soul of a pickpocket with which you were born. Sandy, I've made you rich—and yet you would lie to me and cheat me for a scoundrelly ten thousand dollars!"

The savage anger which had been rising in the breast of Mr. Fraser had come to the boiling point. But there was a fuel of satisfaction feeding the flame, in that he felt he could dull the edge of Watson's accusation, whatever it might be, by producing the black evidence of young Archibald's letter against his partner under the rose. Here was an accusation thrown at his own head, and in almost the very same amount.

Mr. Fraser, for an instant, was silent

with indignation. And with amazement, too. He had committed plenty of small crimes against that partnership of silence and cunning in which he worked with Mr. Watson. But all of them rolled together never reached the sum of ten thousand dollars. And he knew, as he stood there, that his silence was being taken for the confession of guilt. He knew that the wrath which made his cheek pale seemed the pallor of the coward who is caught. All of which knowledge merely served to increase his fury.

He heard Watson saying calmly: "I won't say that I'll go so far as to refuse to forgive you, Sandy. Pay back to me my share of the ten thousand that you took in. Pay me the five thousand and I'll forgive you the interest. It's not the money that grieves me, but the lack of faith in you. Pay me the money, and without any more ado, we'll be friends once more!"

Here the rage of Sandy Fraser at last turned into words. He screamed and clenched his fists.

"Bill Watson, how can such a lie come out of a man? It needs a big man like you to tell such a lie. It would break the throat of a little man!"

"Do I lie?" said Watson. "Now, Fraser, mind you that I'm a calm man, but now you irritate me a little. However, I'll hear your talk. What is it?"

"You knew," shouted Fraser, "or you guessed why I wanted to see you here, and so you coined some lie to tell me—you knew that *you'd* be accused. And so you thought that you'd accuse me first."

"Oh," said the big man, sneering. "*I'm* to be accused, then? Of what, pray?"

"Of the very sum you've named! You've taken in ten thousand dollars, Watson. And five thousand belongs to me. I'll take your check for that sum this morning."

CHAPTER X.

MIGHT OVER RIGHT.

A WILD exclamation formed upon the lips of Watson. Upon second thought, he swallowed his first impulse and walked a pace or two in silence.

"Does your guilt gag you?" yelled Sandy Fraser.

"Guilt?" howled Watson.

Then he broke into a sneering laughter and continued his pacing fiercely up and down, his face black with thought. In the vigor of that pacing, he swept back and forth between two shrubs, and each time he approached one of them, a figure among the bushes crouched lower. For here was innocent Archibald Irving, whose morning stroll had carried him far, far out of Irvington, and over the hill and down into Irving Valley, and even to the very same spot where, the day before, he had seen the two blue cars halted, where the telescope had betrayed to him the two financiers walking arm in arm. Now, he drank in their talk with avidity. Only one thing threatened to betray him, and that was a frame-shaking laughter which fairly made his ribs ache in the effort to choke it back.

"Guilty?" continued big Watson, his red nose now burning like a candle's flame. "Oh, Fraser, in pity for yourself don't go on with this talk. In shame, man, don't grovel so low!"

Fraser struck his hands together and leaped a few inches into the air, which was as far as his weak legs would propel him.

"Watson, Watson!" he yelled. "Are you to talk of shame to me? You miser! You scheming, money-loving knave! You—you—— Oh, Watson, don't dream that you're in your office now, with a poor, miserable bankrupt begging off his time of payment. You're talking to a man that knows you and reads you like an open book—a man who sees through you and despises

what he sees. Do you understand me? And you're not going to overbear me. I'll not leave this spot until I have in my pocket your check——"

"Silence!" shouted Watson.

The vigor of his roar and the fury of his face swept some of the rising color out of the face of withered Fraser.

Then Watson approached with enormous strides. He towered over the smaller man. "Fraser, you lie and you know that you lie. I want to be calm, and I want to be fair. I tell you, I understand. It was only the gold fever that did the dirty trick. It was not really you. It was just the gold fever, which upset your wits and would not let you see that by taking a little secret profit like that you were really harming yourself! But what I want first of all from you is simply an admission that you were wrong. Will you admit it?"

And Mr. Fraser like a snarling cat answered: "I'll see you——"

He answered upon impulse, and so did Mr. Watson. Except that the answer of Mr. Watson took a more physical form than mere speech. His right fist shot forward and clipped Mr. Fraser along the side of the head and dropped him to the ground.

He was not really hurt, however. It was rather shock, indeed, that had floored him. Now he started to struggle to his feet, crying:

"I'll make you groan for this, Watson. I'll make you wish to Heaven——"

But the blow which Watson struck had merely served to arouse the larger man. All the brute in him which was ordinarily expended through the machinations of his business interests, now saw an opportunity to loose itself in physical violence. He ran in and caught little Fraser by the nape of the neck, and, mouthing meaningless words of fury, began to drag the smaller man about and whack him with clumsy, roundabout blows. Sometimes it was the soft palm of his hand that struck Fraser; sometimes it was his wrist. Only now and then his knuckles got in a glancing blow.

Fraser was not badly hurt. He was terrified to the verge of death by this violent passion. He was not accustomed to being met by anything but humility and courtesy, to say the least. It was a stunned instant before he could realize what was happening, and then he shrieked loudly for help. "Murder!" screamed Fraser.

Watson's big hand fumbled for the neck of his partner and closed that screech to a mumble.

"Why don't I finish you now?" said Watson through teeth set with gratified force. "Why don't I finish you now? You rat! You rat!"

Mr. Fraser curled up in a ball and wrapped his face and throat in his skinny arms.

"Mercy, Billy!" he pleaded. "For pity's sake—don't kill me. You'll lose money by it. You'll lose money—beat me, Bill, but don't kill me!"

Mr. Watson stopped the beating, but the exercise and the morning air, and the venting of a dislike which he had felt for many years were all so agreeable to him that he now marched up and down breathing hard and spouting out disconnected phrases——

"Stand up to me? Little viper! You've needed it for a long time. Little fool—I'll teach you!"

He was like a bully in a school yard, which, in fact, he had once been. Like the typical bully, after his victory he felt no shame because of the difference between his size and that of his opponent. He was merely satisfied.

Once or twice, Fraser began to move cautiously toward a semidirect position, but the instant he uncurled, a stamping step and a snarl from Watson made him curl up again, with a whine for mercy. Watson, each time, smiled with gratified superiority.

"Very well," said Watson finally, "all that I'll do is to take your check for ten thousand on the spot!"

"I—*ten* thousand!" said Fraser. "Man, man, even if I *did* take ten thousand, only half would be due——"

"Will you try your bargaining talent on *me?*" yelled Mr. Watson.

"No!" gasped out Mr. Fraser.

And yet he could not help adding: "But I haven't a check book with me, Watson."

It was a foolish speech. Mr. Watson had known his companion too many years to be in doubt upon such a point as this. His strong hand was instantly in one of his victim's pockets, and he jerked forth the check book and threw it in Fraser's face.

"You poor, sniveling cur!" said Watson. "Now write that check!"

And Mr. Fraser wrote it.

He lingered out each detail in the unhappy business. He first had a hard time making his fountain pen flow. And then he was ignorant of the date.

"Shall I make it to cash or to you, Billy?"

"Cash," said Watson scornfully. "I'm well enough known, I suppose, to get that check cashed when I present it."

At last, the faltering pen of Mr. Fraser wrote out the check in full.

He waved it in the air until it was dried, and then presented it to the conqueror.

Mr. Watson folded it across, and scribbled his name on the back. Then he placed it carefully in his wallet, and the wallet in his pocket. And after the wallet was stowed, he patted his coat with a fond gesture.

"Not a bad profit in a single morning's work," said he. "Not a bad profit at all, Sandy. And though I suppose you are a little irritated, just now, I'm afraid that I shall have to irritate you still further by letting you know that I really don't give a hang whether you wish to break away from our partnership or not. I've been ashamed of associating with you for a long time. However, before I leave you, I'd like to know how you had the effrontery, Fraser—the infernal, absurd effrontery to accuse me of having taken ten thousand away from you. If I had pinned you down, Fraser, what sort of testimony would you have brought up against me?"

The lips of Mr. Fraser parted to answer—and the plump-faced man in the bush quivered with excitement. Here was the point, it seemed, at which his clever and tenuous little scheme was to be broken to bits.

But no, Mr. Fraser did not speak. He examined the cold eyes of Mr. Watson and told himself that the bigger man was simply attempting to draw from his victim a statement which would serve him as an excuse for bursting into another brutal passion.

Mr. Fraser's bones already ached from the thumping which he had received. So he decided that he would not risk another verbal encounter which might so easily lead on to a matter of fisticuffs. He closed his thin mouth, and saying not a word, climbed slowly into his automobile.

There, as he pumped up the pressure, his glance from time to time flickered to the side like a fox.

When the pressure gauge showed two pounds, he touched the self-starter—the engine responded with a deep voicelike hum, and then, with the gear engaged, and the car ready to leap away, he turned in the seat. A green devil was in his eyes, and Mr. Watson smiled as he saw the outburst about to come.

"I'll have the heart out of you for this morning's business," said Mr. Alexander Fraser. "If there's knife or gun or—poison in the world, I'll be after you until I have laid you—dead, Watson. Dead!"

The superior smile faded from the

lips of Mr. Watson. In spite of himself he turned pale. For he had been thinking of cuts in the business world, and he had been comforting himself with the assurance that he was so well fortified that he could stand four-square to any blows in that field. However, death had not occurred to him. Not guns—not poison! Now it flashed through his mind that the lean-faced devil in the little man would turn to exactly those weapons and no others. Certainly the heart in the breast of Mr. Watson grew colder and colder!

The maroon-colored automobile leaped down the valley, and Mr. Watson stood staring after it with a startled countenance. He reached automatically to his hip pocket and touched the handles of an emergency revolver which he always carried with him. Has there been a reason, then, for using that gun in this very scene?

Far away, the maroon streak vanished around a curve, and just then it seemed to Mr. Watson that a stealthy hand had glided up under the tail of his coat, and that his revolver was being gently withdrawn from his pocket!

CHAPTER XI.

TABLES TURNED.

SUCH a thing, of course, could not be. But after a fraction of a second, Mr. Watson turned with a start—and found himself facing a young man who held in his hand the very gun which he had just removed from the trousers of Mr. Watson himself. The youth was the simple and plump-faced Archibald Irving!

Mr. Watson found himself without words for the first time in his life; then the youth tossed the revolver to the ground behind him.

"Excuse me, Mr. Watson," said he, "for coming on you by surprise in this way. But it occurred to me—as a way of calling your attention to me—to take the gun out of your pocket, you know—because I guessed that you had one there!"

He seemed to find something so amusing in this foolish speech that he burst into the heartiest laughter.

"Young man," said the rich man, "I don't know what can have addled your wits, but——"

"The sight of Fraser wriggling on the ground," said Archibald. "That is what has tickled me so much!"

And he laughed again so gayly that he could barely control himself sufficiently to add: "Because, although you had promised to fight my battle for me, it never occurred to me that you would use your fists. However, now that you have the ten thousand, I'll be very glad to have it. Very glad!"

"Zounds, boy!" cried Mr. Watson. "Do you mean to say that you are robbing me?"

"Oh, dear no," said Archibald Irving. "Robbing you? Certainly not! But I knew that you wanted the money just because it had been extorted from old Fraser by fraud from my poor, simple uncle. And I know, Mr. Watson, that you would never dream of defrauding his simple nephew in a worse manner. You would never dream of that! The check is mine, of course!"

Mr. Watson regarded him very soberly.

"I cannot make it out," he said at length. "You have more than ten thousand dollars in your property. You are not really going to commit a crime that will outlaw you for the sake of this check of mine?"

"Outlaw me?" exclaimed Archibald, "Outlaw me?"

He held up both his hands and he rolled up his eyes, in the fervency of his protest.

"I should never do a thing which might outlaw me. I don't intend to cash the check, of course."

"You don't? Then pray, what earth-

ly good will it do you, Archibald Irving?"

"It will act, you might say, as a rein pulling on a curb, or rather—it is both check and curb in one. With it I hope to control a very mettlesome horse—yourself!"

Mr. Watson started and then burst out: "You preposterous young jackass! If you think——"

"I do not think. I *know*," said Archibald. "And there's a great difference in that. I *know* that I have you in my pocket. And I shall sell this check back to you only upon the receipt from you of a deed to all the lands of my uncle which you took from him. Every one of them, Mr. Watson! Oh, yes. Every item of the profit which you made upon that transaction of partnership—secret partnership, I may call it!"

Mr. Watson estimated the size of his opponent, and then tensed his striking muscles. He had just been using them, and he had enjoyed the exercise immensely. There lay the revolver, at a safe distance. To be sure, he was old, but he had an advantage of some fifty pounds in weight—and one never could tell.

"You young ruffian!" said Mr. Watson. "You unspeakable young cad and blackguard, I do almost believe that you're really in earnest, and if you are I will——"

He advanced a full and threatening stride, but as he came to the end of it he heard Archibald Irving say:

"Very good, Mr. Watson. Very good! I admire courage, but I hate to see a man make a fool of himself. Now, I don't want to have to strike you. I hate violence to one's elders. But if I *do* have to use my hands on you, I'll hit you within a very few pounds of as hard as Mr. Fraser could wish to turn the trick himself. *All* of me is not fat, you understand!"

He smiled most jovially at Mr. Watson, and the tall, old man wavered and looked down into the beaming face, and understood that he was beaten.

"It is to be blackmail," he said suddenly.

"You may call it that," said Archibald thoughtfully. "Yes, I don't think that I can find a better title for it, offhand. Blackmail—yes! It gives a relish to everything—for some foolish reason. I feel delighted with myself. Blackmailer! Mr. Watson, I am contented. It is to be blackmail."

"I deliver to you a deed to my quarter of Irving Valley," went on Watson, keeping a strong control over himself, "or else you let Mr. Fraser know that you are willing to appear as a witness against me in a lawsuit——"

"Precisely! You make it all so easy for me, Mr. Watson—that it is really a pleasure to rob you. So kindly give me the check."

He raised his voice a little as he said this. Mr. Watson slowly drew out the wallet, produced the precious check, and passed it to young Archibald. As he did so, he smiled sourly.

"You young fool!" he exclaimed. "Do you think that the mere extortion of a written check is enough to constitute blackmail on my part at the expense of Fraser? Don't you suppose that I can convince any judge that it was merely a little practical joke and that I didn't——"

"A *very* practical joke," nodded Archibald. "And the judge will be pleased to learn how Fraser screamed for mercy——"

"Ah, well," said Watson. "There may be something in what you say."

"Besides, Watson, such affairs are not very thoroughly appreciated in this country, and if the people ever suspected what you are, they might raise a little mob——"

"Bah! I have heard such talk before. Maybe in the old days. But the automobile has brought law too close to the heels of the lazy rascals. They know

better than to take any liberty in their actions in these times!"

"I cannot convince you, then? Well, I think you may stub your toe on these same Westerners, one of these days. Because they seem to me just as hardy in flivvers as they ever were in buckboards. Thank you for the check, Mr. Watson."

"And what else will you have?"

"At your leisure, I shall have the deed to that land. For which I now pay you in advance—this brand new dollar!"

He tossed a folded dollar bill to Watson, but the latter, turning a dark crimson, allowed the money to fall unheeded to the ground.

"You may mail the deed to me—no, better still, you can send it by messenger. You will have time to see a lawyer and have the deed drawn up. There is the value received, lying at your feet. I shall expect to have the deed in my hands by two o'clock to-morrow afternoon, or else I carry this check and the story concerning it to the afternoon paper—I believe that Mr. Fraser controls that paper?"

Mr. Watson slowly bowed his head. He had been trying to estimate just what damage the publication of that check would do to him, and finally he decided that the boy was right. Even by as small a cable as this, he had Mr. Watson tied hand and foot, and there was no escape for the older and wiser man.

"Good morning, Mr. Watson!"

Young Archibald Irving turned and sauntered away. The fallen revolver lay in his path. He kicked it skillfully over the top of the shrubbery and out of sight. Then he went whistling on his way, not too briskly, but walking as one who enjoyed scenery more than exercise.

"And I thought," murmured Mr. Watson, "that he was a soft-headed young fool! I thought that!"

He turned up his eyes as though to call Heaven to witness that such had indeed been his very thought. Then he stooped and picked up the neglected dollar bill. This, no doubt, was the effect of an absent mind.

He folded it with care, and stored it in his wallet. Then he went back to his automobile. Sitting in the driver's seat, he allowed his eye to run caressingly over his quarter of the valley. It was all in sight. A great wedge of that valley, its nose lying blunt against the lake which was to supply with water the splendid pumping plants of Mr. Irving——

Mr. Watson shook his head and sighed. It was too bad to see all of these slipping through his fingers. But long ago he had decided that finance was a gambler's game and that one must learn to take all losses with the philosophical calm of the real gamester. Here was a pretty severe tug at the strings of his purse. But after he had twisted his mouth into a severe contortion or two, he lighted a cigarette, started his car, and drove it thoughtfully up the lane, turned it, and sent it down hill again.

He saw young Archibald Irving standing by the side of the road, resting his hand upon his walking stick. Young Archibald waved and nodded with the brightest and most dispassionate of smiles.

And Mr. Watson put his foot on the brake, so that the car slowed, with the faintest of groans.

"Look here, my son, you'd better ride to town with me."

Said Mr. Irving: "You're ten thousand times kinder than I deserve. But I really like this spot very well. I think I'll stroll along and see what I can see." Mr. Watson released the brakes, grinned broadly, and let the car roll on. The simplicity of this youth was much, much deeper than its surface valuation.

As for Archibald, he walked on through the valley until he came to a

small clump of trees, and here he decided that he would sit down in the shade, since the morning sun stood high and hot in the heavens.

He advanced a step or two past the margin of the wood, when he heard something stir before him, and looking sharply up, he had a very fine view of the round, black mouth of a .45 caliber Colt held in a firm hand. Behind the gun and the thin, strong hand there was the meager face of Doc Aldrich.

"Well, well," said young Archibald, "of all the men in the town, *I'm* the lucky one!"

"Stick up your hands, kid," advised Doc Aldrich.

"Sure," remarked Archibald pleasantly, "any little thing. You don't seem to have grown much thinner, though, since I saw you last."

"Just stow that yap," said Doc unkindly. "Talking bothers me while I got thinking to do."

And he began to do his thinking with the tips of his fingers, running them through the clothes of his victim.

CHAPTER XII.

PRIVATE FIREWORKS.

WITH his plump arms extended above his head, Mr. Irving said:

"Have you got everything?"

"You leave that to me!"

"But my arms are aching. There's a little automatic just under the pit of my left arm. You'd better take that while you're about it."

There was a grunt from Mr. Aldrich. He reached in and drew forth from the described position a gun not much larger or thicker than a cigarette case—but with a black muzzle which seemed to mean business, decidedly.

"Now, if you don't mind taking the point of that Colt from the pit of my stomach," suggested Archibald.

"Look here, kid," said Doc Aldrich, "you're full of gab, but them that pack *this* kind of guns ain't to be fooled with, and I know it A big bow-wow gun like the one I pack, why, it's a kind of honest way of dying. But a sneakin' little pinch of poison like this here—no, you may be an Irving, and you may look like a simp, but you sit down there and turn your back to me while I go through your stuff. And don't you forget. I'm a hoss thief, now. And so I might as well be a murderer on the top of it!"

With this dour warning, he made Archibald turn his back and sit down, after which Doc Aldrich placed himself in a cross-legged position and began to go through his loot.

He maintained a little monologue as he did this:

"I never took to blondes, none."

"She's the sister of a college friend of mine," said Mr. Irving. "I carry her around with me, to get used to her crooked smile and——"

"Will you shut up? I need silence, while I'm thinking!" And Doc Aldrich resumed, aloud: "Forty-two bucks! For an Irving! Why, it's hardly worth taking!"

"I hear that Jerry Swinton is doing pretty fine," said Archibald.

"Yeh. That's fine, ain't it! I done a lot of worrying about that big fool, for a while. Dog-gone him, though, I aimed to kill him, that day. He'd riled me so. Now you shut up your talk and lemme think!"

He continued: "Hello—what's this here? Ten thous—holy mackerel! Ten thousand berries is promised by Mr. Fraser to—why, dog-gone my eyes, I never seen such a thing. Ten thousand iron men is the medicine that old Doctor Fraser prescribes for Mr. Watson. Him that he hates so bad! Ten thousand! It'll about soak up all of the profit that he'll make out of skinning ma! Ten thousand—but look here, Mr. Man, how come that Watson puts his

name on the back of a check and then hands it to you? Are you maybe his office boy? Shut up and don't answer. I just want to think!"

"You could think all day," said Archibald, "and you'd never guess. You see——"

"You poor sap—turn around, will you?"

But Archibald persisted in turning and even in rising to one knee, though with a guileless smile.

"I want to explain," said Archibald, "that——"

"Explain the devil!" exclaimed Mr. Aldrich. "I want your back turned, or——"

"Hey?" yelled Archibald.

"You bone-head, will you turn around?"

"I'll be good!" cried Archibald. "But keep that gun finger of yours away from the trigger of that gat. Because there are five little chunks of lead in there all labeled: 'Home and mother!' And they touch off with one squeeze of the hand!"

"Do they?" murmured Doc in admiration. "Oh, I guessed that it was a little pet, all right. All in one squeeze? I would admire to see what they would do to a gent——"

And he lowered his own gun to the ground and stood up with the automatic, looking for a target.

"They would cut a man right in two," said Archibald, stepping forward conversationally. "I'll show you——"

"Look here," said Doc, "will you stand back, you young fool? I don't aim to do you no harm. I got to have a little cash, and I guess that you can spare yours about as well as most men that ain't worked for what they've got. But if you press me too close—I'll use your own gun on you!"

He barked this last as Archibald answered: "You see that I've got my arms raised, don't you?"

And still Archibald drifted closer.

"I see a plenty!" said Doc. "But what I want is distance." And he yelled: "Keep back, or——"

And he added: "Why, you're *crazy!* Take it, then!"

And he pressed the fatal trigger. Five reports rang out upon the air, so quickly that they tripped upon the heels of one another. Before Mr. Archibald Irving could take two full steps forward, those five shots had crackled, and each at point-blank range.

Mr. Aldrich, his face twisted in ardent dislike of the work which he was doing, expected to see the last of the Irvings drop dead to the ground, but Archibald did not drop.

Instead, he swiftly crossed the scant half stride that separated him from the muscular little body of Doc Aldrich. Just as the last echo barked back at them in a roar from the trees, a neatly compact fist landed beside the point of the jaw of Doc Aldrich.

At this, red flame spurted up before Doc's eyes. A sledge hammer was clapped against the base of his spine; a strong stick was whanged against the back of his knees, and the whole earth rose to strike him in the face with violence.

He slept.

When he awakened, a wet handkerchief lay across his eyes.

"Poor kid!" said Doc Aldrich.

"Which kid is that?" asked the voice of him that should have been dead.

Doc Aldrich sat bolt erect. "You ain't a ghost?" he demanded. "Oh, holy smoke, how everything is spinning around in front of me. Where do you carry that sandbag? Up your sleeve?"

"Here," said Archibald, and closed his right hand.

As a great artist of the squared circle has said: "It's all in the way you hold your hand. You bust your bones, or you bust the other fellow's bones. It's all in the way you hold your hand."

The way that Archibald held it was

the right way. Doc Aldrich, who had once been a featherweight and had aspired to walk to fame along the rosined pathway, saw and at once understood.

"I seem to remember," said Doc. "It was a straight right with a little poison on the end of it—a little hook, I mean."

"It was a right cross," said Archibald. "And it happened to hit the button——"

"Not a button, but a buzzer," said Doc Aldrich, "and you still got your foot on it. Look here, kid, where did you learn all that nasty stuff about crosses that was never found in any church? Might I be permitted?"

"You might," said Archibald, and proffered his left arm.

Upon the apparent fat of that arm the fingers of Doc Aldrich closed.

"All right—ready," said he.

The fingers of Doc began to bulge outward. A quiver ran through the sleeve. Suddenly, it appeared to be filled.

"Holy smoke!" murmured Doc Aldrich. "And yet you look—oh, well, this ain't so bad. I thought that it was some boob that had sandbagged me, but I see that it's one of the Irvings—the last of that name."

"I thank you very much," said Archibald.

"All I would like to know," said Doc, "is how long does a noose need to strangle you, or would the boys give me a long-enough drop to break my neck. I hate the long wait. I'd like a running start when I'm on my way."

He added thoughtfully: "How much reward have they put up for me?"

"None that I've heard of," said Archibald.

The little man sprang to his feet in a fury, though he was still so dizzy that he staggered and kept his balance with only the greatest difficulty.

"No reward on me?" he shouted. "No reward? Ain't a good man-sized gun fight and a hoss stealing—ain't that worth a reward in this man's country, now I ask you?"

"It seems hard," said Archibald, "not to recognize talent like that!"

"They'll bump me off like a rat," said Doc Aldrich. "There won't even be no newspaper clipping. Ma's heart will be broke, and no mistake.

"Look here," said Archibald, "what makes you so gloomy? Is it time for me to take you to the caboose?"

"No," said Doc Aldrich sourly. "After me trying to blow your mid-section loose from your ribs, it's time you kissed me good-by and told me to beat it. It's time for you to do the fairy godmother——"

"Close up that talk," said Mr. Archibald Irving politely, "because you rattle, Doc. I needed some of the things in that wallet. And so I had to tag you. Which I admit was a dirty trick. But as soon as that bump wears off your jaw, I hope that you'll forget about it."

A dark flush covered the face of Doc Aldrich.

Then, in silence, he began to roll a cigarette. He lighted it and smoked slowly, growing still redder and redder.

"It seems to me," he said finally, in a husky voice, "it seems to me, as how I've made a skunk out of myself!"

"Tush!" said Archibald. "Hand me the makings, will you? By the way, here's your gun."

And from the ground he raised the Colt, and holding it by the long, gleaming barrel, he placed the handle in the grip of the little man.

Mr. Aldrich took the Colt with due reverence, and then shoved it slowly into the holster. He took off his hat and scratched his head, filled with thought.

He said at last: "Mr. Irving, I suppose that I'm about the first man in the county really to meet you. I would sort of like to shake hands in honor of the day."

"Tickled to death!" said Archibald.

CHAPTER XIII.

A PARTNER.

AFTER a little time Archibald said: "There stands only one charge against you, Doc."

"Hoss stealing. That's all. Ain't that enough? Outside of shooting down a man——"

"The man you shot down won't press any charge against you."

"Good old Jerry. No, he'll only wait till he gets well and then, as soon as he's in practice with his gun, he'll come to blow me in two!"

"And as for the horse stealing, I think that a hundred dollars would settle that for you."

"And where am I to get the hundred? Take it from ma, and her about to sell out to Fraser?"

"We'll send word to her to hold on and not to sell. Any forced, quick sale to that pirate is sure to be a heavy loss. And as for the hundred, I'll find it for you."

Doc Aldrich inhaled a long breath.

"This ain't a fairy tale," said he. "Also, I am awake. Go right on talking, Mr. Irving. I'm having a wonderful day dream. You give me a hundred, which squares me with Thomas for swiping his horse. And then——"

"And then," said Mr. Irving, "I buy some groceries, et cetera, to-day, and I move them into the old house by the lake. And you come in there to live with me."

"Say," said Doc Aldrich, "would you mind telling me what you take that makes you this way? But what's my job to be in that house?"

"Keeping my neck from being broken."

"Do I smile when you say that?"

"You do not, I hope. The fact is, Doc, that I've started playing a game with a pair of tigers, and if one of them tags me, it will be with a paw that will tear me right in two. Do you understand? There are two men in this county who will very shortly want my scalp. One of them wants it already."

"Then why not hang out at the hotel, where you'll have a crowd around you to watch what might happen?"

"A Western crowd," said Archibald, "makes a pretty good audience for a shooting, but it isn't apt to take a hand. Not until the bullets begin to come its way. No, I prefer to be off by myself, and not have to keep my eye on every face in that same crowd we were speaking of. I'll stay out in the house by the lake, and you'll mail to Thomas a hundred dollars which I'll give you. Then we'll both keep our eyes open; because we're going to need vigilance, I can tell you!"

"Captain," said little Doc Aldrich, "you give the orders, and I'll try to keep step."

The buckboard and team which Archibald Irving hired in Irvington was loaded heavily. Then he drove slowly out the dusty way to the valley, and over the edge of the valley wall and down to the edge of the lake. Here, safe from all observation, he and the waiting Doc carried the provisions into the kitchen. Presently the fire was burning in the stove and Doc Aldrich was preparing to eat his first real meal in some time. His hundred dollars and a letter to his mother had been entrusted to the mail. There was nothing remaining except to wait.

When the sunset came, Mr. Aldrich said: "Only I don't see why you should sit here where they'll expect to find you."

"What do you suggest, Doc?"

"Why, I suggest the last place where they'll be expecting you. Come in the back yard of the man that wants to get you the most. He'll never expect you there in calling distance of him, will he? Go right up and sit down under Watson's window."

"Watson?" cried Archibald. "Who

under heaven has mentioned his name?"

Doc merely grinned.

"It's all right," said he. "I'm blind. I ain't seen nothing. Or if I did, I suppose that he *gave* you that check all endorsed so pretty—for ten thousand iron men!"

Archibald was forced to light another cigarette.

"It gives me a queer tickle in the innards, Doc," said he, "for you to read my mind like this. In the meantime, it is getting dark enough for a pretty respectable murder. And I think there's something in what you suggest. Let's leave this house, and leave it now."

"The more pronto the better."

They left the house and took a boat which was moored at the edge of the water. This boat they rowed in leisurely fashion, like men about to do a little fishing, along the surface of the lake. Opposite the next point, they paused, as though this place suited them. A moment later they were rowing on again.

Among the trees near the house, a solitary watcher had observed all these motions of the shadowy pair. As soon as he had satisfied himself that they were merely fishing and not apt to return for some time, he curled himself up under a tree and proceeded to the enjoyment of a quiet pipe.

In the thickening dusk at the farther end of the lake, the prow of the borrowed boat grated sharply among the pebbles of the beach. A moment later, the two rowers were away up the valley side through a winding trail, with Doc Aldrich steadily cursing all traveling by foot.

When he paused to pant and rest he asked:

"About that damn automatic. You always carry it filled up with blanks?"

"I always do," said Archibald.

"Now look here, Irving. You're a fine feller, and all that, and as clean as a whip, and most probable you're smart, for your own section of the country. But that sort of thing ain't apt to get you along very far around here. It really ain't! If you pull a gun in the West you want to know beforehand that you *have* to pull it. And when you have to pull it, shoot to kill—shoot mighty straight and you be particular about the killing. Blank cartridges ain't never used out here except on the stage!"

"I'll tell you," answered Archibald Irving. "If I pulled out a real .45, I could not hit the side of a barn with it. And I would not really load an automatic any more than I would load a garden hose with poison—because I would be too liable to spatter lead all over the bystanders."

"But why carry it at all?" asked Doc, nodding his agreement with these last two remarks.

"Because," said Archibald, "at close quarters—like a poker game, a little gun like that talks twice as loud as a big one—because it always comes from an unexpected place! And it isn't often, really, that a man really has to shoot—if he has the nerve to hold his gun steady and look the other fellow in the eye."

Doc Aldrich started to answer with some heat, but he presently changed his mind and shook his head.

"All right," said he. "Every man's way is the best way for him!"

In the meantime, they had climbed up the valley side and they were fast approaching the cloud of trees which grew upon the new estate of Mr. William Watson. They did not turn in at the great wrought-iron gates. Instead, they climbed the huge wall, and so found themselves within the park.

"Here," said Archibald, "we're trespassers, and the owner of the place has a perfect right to use guns on us. Moreover, Doc, in case you have any doubts about the matter, I want to tell you that in case Watson should see me

here, or have a hint that I am on his ground, he would move heaven and earth to get me, and salt me away with lead. And he would not stop with me. He would be perfectly glad to remove any others who happened to be at my side. D'you understand?"

"Like I had read it in a book," said Doc Aldrich, grinning.

"And where'll we go now?" asked Archibald.

"Up as close to the fire as we can get," said Doc. "Right up toward the house, but watching our step pretty careful, if it's just the same to you!"

And that was exactly the manner of their procedure. Stealing from tree to tree and from shrub to shrub, they drew nearer and nearer to the flaring windows of the big house. It was still not quite the utter black of the night. Out of the western sky enough light was reflected to outline everything in distinct hoods of black. The shining of the stars was still small and uncertain.

By that same glimmering light, the active eye of Doc Aldrich now made out something which lived and moved before them. He gripped the arm of his companion, and pointed. What they saw was indeed worthy of their wonder, for the man ahead of them was moving exactly as they moved.

"It means mischief," whispered Archibald. "And unless I'm badly mistaken, Watson should be glad that he has me for an enemy. I think that we may be the savers of his scalp to-night."

"What'll we do?" whispered Doc. "Move out of these crowded quarters?"

"We'll have a better look at our friend, yonder."

And to the amazement of Doc, Archibald began to slip forward.

"With no bullet in your gun——" gasped out Doc.

Archibald struck away his restraining hand and wormed his way ahead. He was no trained hunter, but instinct has planted in the heart of every man enough skill in this game of life and death called trailing. He stalked the shadowy form of the stranger in sufficient speed and silence, until he came up behind the very bush that sheltered the other from the light of the window of the big house, just ahead. Here, most opportunely, the other turned his head.

At once, Archibald Irving was aware of the blunt nose and the whole brutal profile of Charlie, the watch dog of Mr. Fraser.

His presence there was self-explanatory. This was to be Fraser's way of getting revenge for the blows which he had received that same morning!

Archibald straightened to his knees.

"Charlie!" called he softly, and stretched forth the automatic. "Charlie —up with your hands——"

Charlie turned, or rather, he whirled, with his fist prepared.

Oh, well for Archibald had he taken the advice of Doc Aldrich, given so heartily on this same day. But there was no bullet in his automatic to arrest the lunge of the brute before him. And something told him that it would be useless to fire a blank at this charging creature. He raised the gun to use it as a club, but a ponderous fist dashed into his face as he did so, and flattened him against the earth.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHARLIE COMES ACROSS.

THERE was no possibility of resistance. That blow was dashed home with far too much accuracy. It flattened Archibald and shocked every whit of consciousness out of his brain. Charlie dropped his knees on the chest of his helpless enemy and clapped the muzzle of his revolver against the temple——

A half of a second and Archibald should have been winging his way toward heaven. But Charlie recollected

that this was not the only duty on which he had started forth, upon this occasion. He altered his mind and, gripping the gun by the barrel, he prepared to batter out the brains of Archibald Irving.

He swung the gun up once, to freshen his grip and give himself a surer aim, just as the golf player waggles the club before striking home. As Charlie raised the gun the second and fatal time, he received a clip from the steel barrel of a Colt leveled along his own skull and sent home with terrible force.

Charlie dropped flat and limp upon his first victim.

When Charlie recovered himself a little, he heard a faintly groaning voice saying: "God bless you, Doc! But I wish that you had got here a second quicker. I think the brute has bashed in all of my ribs with his knees. What a filthy beast it is, Doc! But I hope that you didn't smash his skull."

"I didn't," said Doc. "It was like banging a chunk of stone. That head of his must be reënforced with ribs of steel. Steady, sonny. Don't try to move about too lively. This little baby has got six chunks of lead all labeled, 'Home, James!' So watch yourself, lad. You can sit up. But don't fumble for either of those hidden guns. Because I have them both!"

Charlie made no answer. He sat up and hung his head in a sullen silence. When they ordered him to rise, he raised his voice and made most startling answer:

"Look here," said he, "I can see by the way you talk that you ain't been invited in here any more than I was. Now, you two leave me be and beat it, or I'll raise a yapping that'll bring every man in that house out here with shotguns. And that's what old Watson trusts to—shotguns!"

Archibald felt a tremor of uncertainty run through him. And certainly he would not have known how to answer this sudden and unexpected challenge. But Doc Aldrich had no such doubts. Before the wide mouth of Charlie had finished this speech the steel muzzle of a Colt was jammed between his lips, splintering one of the front teeth.

"Why, you fool," said Doc, "do you think that we're amateurs, maybe? You murdering swine, you're Charlie Bostwick, ain't you? You're Fraser's man, ain't you? Yes, sir. Well, Charlie, I'm Doc Aldrich. You disremember the day that you handed my ma some of your lip at Fraser's office. But I ain't forgot. So watch yourself, old son, and stand up and come along with us nice and polite. Because it wouldn't hurt my feelings *none* to have to blow your head off, old-timer. Do you hear me talk?"

It was apparent that Charlie *did* hear. He arose most meekly and walked slowly ahead and away from the house of Watson.

"Where shall we take him," asked Doc in a whisper, "and what shall we do with him?"

He was surprised to find that Archibald had lost all of his calm surety. He was fairly trembling with excitement.

"We'll take him to that little deserted shack halfway down the hill," said Archibald. "And fast, Doc—fast! I think that I know why Charlie was up there! If I can get a written statement out of him—oh, man, I hardly had dared to hope for anything like this. God bless you for sending us up here to the house of Watson!"

"I dunno that I follow your drift," admitted Doc. "But I fail to see what you get out of this Charlie."

"Let me do the thinking for both of us, for a while," said Archibald. "There's the shack. You can see the angle of the roof of it just beyond the wall of the Watson place."

It lay, in fact, hardly more than a furlong along the valley from the edge

of the Watson place—too close, perhaps, considering all the dangers that were surrounding Archibald and his companion at this moment. Young Irving could not wait.

Into that ruined little shell of a house he led Charlie. With a handful of dry, dead splinters, he kindled a tiny fire, and by the light of that he surveyed the stolid face of Charlie.

"Now, Charlie," said he, "I'm going to ask you to write down a little confession for me. And when you've written it down, I'll turn you loose. I'm going to ask you why you went up to Watson's house?"

And Charlie said calmly: "Me girl is doing the cooking there. I was goin' up to see her, you know."

Doc Aldrich laughed aloud.

And Archibald answered: "Do you usually wear three guns when you go to call on your girls?"

"I wear three guns day in and day out," said Charlie. "I need 'em and I wear 'em. And that's all there is to that!"

"That's all there is to that," mocked Doc Aldrich gloomily. "But I'm wishing, now, that I had the half of the names of the men that you've had the butchering of, you black swine!"

The broad upper lip of Charlie curled in sullen scorn, and he shrugged his shoulders.

"You'll never have the knowing of that," said he, "unless I tell it to you, some time, when I've got my fist fixed in your windpipe, chokin' off the air slow and gradual!"

He was not a pleasant man, this Charlie. He had the look and the voice and the snarl of a brute, and his little pig eyes burned and glittered at the two strangers.

Said Archibald Irving: "All that I want with you is a little scribbling on a sheet of paper, Charlie."

"I can't write," said Charlie.

"You lie," said Archibald calmly.

"Do I lie?" answered Charlie with a gust of fury. "You can beat me or shoot me or throw me to the dogs, but I'll talk to you no more and I'll pleasure you in nothing. And that's the end of that!"

Archibald Irving stood back and whistled.

"Dear, dear," said he, "what a violent man! I think that we had better begin with tying him, Doc."

"Aye, and we should have done that before if——"

Charlie had seemed curled in composure against the wall of the building, with the light from the little fire playing with a flicker of shadow across his face, but now he leaped into action and headed with a bound for the door. Doc Aldrich had his back turned at that moment, in the act of dragging a length of cord from his pocket. When he whirled, there was nothing but time for a snap shot—and Archibald Irving in line for the bullet as well as Charlie.

No doubt Charlie had counted upon this fact. He made only one mistake, which was in taking Archibald Irving a trifle too lightly, a mistake in which he could have been forgiven, having mastered him once so easily. He picked his time for his rush when there was nothing between him and his freedom saving the plump form of Archie. Then he charged like a maddened bull, prepared to smash his way to freedom with a single stroke of his massive fist.

He was not at all prepared for what followed—which was the delivery of a straight right of the neatest and cleanest variety. It lodged not on the chin but on the side of his face, so that Charlie was not stunned. However, his charge was checked and he was put back upon his heels, and before he could right himself, two more blows followed —two blows which Doc Aldrich thought he recognized, because they were delivered with a rise and fall of the puncher's body. And the fists, snapping

across the shoulders of Charlie, landed squarely home.

Still he did not drop to the floor, but he staggered drunkenly back until his shoulders struck the opposite wall of the house. And before he could right himself again, Doc Aldrich had secured the hands of the warrior with a stout twine. And then another length of twine was passed around his ankles. He lay secure and easy. Sitting, now, with his shoulders against the wall, he glared with unabated ferocity at his captors, and regardless of the blood that flowed down his face. Doc Aldrich, at the direction of his companion, swabbed the blood away.

And he made free comment as he worked:

"Here's where the first one landed. Oh, a pretty neat one. If you had diagramed that punch and laid it out with a surveyor's line, you couldn't have hit a straighter punch! It just split the skin over his cheek bone. And here's where the left cross got in. It must of busted a tooth inside his face and cut the cheek against it. And here's where the other—the right cross, got in—oh, Charlie, did you know what hit you, that time? Ain't it a beauty, that punch? And where does he pack them beauties? You should feel his arm, boy, and then you'll understand, just the way your brother Doc understands!"

Archibald Irving said: "It looks to me as though you have him cleaned up enough now I didn't want to have him in such shape that any of his attention would be taken away from what we're going to do to him. I wanted him to have all his wits free to concentrate on this. Just help me off with his shoes, Doc, will you?"

Doc, bewildered, obeyed. Shoes and socks were tugged from the feet of the prisoner.

"Now," said Archibald Irving, "we don't want to try any of the things that Charlie mentioned as not caring about. We want to try something which is entirely new. And I don't think that our friend has mentioned fire, do you? Draw him up to the blaze, Doc, and toast his toes for him until he finds his voice!"

He seasoned this remark with a broad wink at Doc; the latter responded with a flash of joyous understanding in his eye. He freshened the little blaze, and then the naked feet of Charlie were dragged closer and closer to the fire.

"Take it easy, Doc," said Archibald Irving. "He might as well have it slowly. Then he'll appreciate the full beauty of being as warm as possible——"

Here he actually brought the horny bottoms of the feet of Charlie in touch with the flame. There was a gasp and a snort, and Charlie's feet were violently jerked back.

"Tie him bodily to that board," directed Archibald calmly. "We can't be bothered with his twistings and turnings. We'll have some talk out of this lad, or else we'll leave only a cinder of him behind us. I'd as soon burn him as a slice of bacon!"

"I b'lieve you!" gasped out Charlie. "You *would* torture me—and you one of them fine Irvings!"

"I'm a degenerate son, not worthy of those brave and bold men," said Archibald Irving blandly. "But every man must live in his own way, Charlie, as perhaps you yourself know. Don't be too hard upon me, Charlie. But tell me that you will write out the truth of why you went to the house of Watson. And in the first place, tell us what that truth is!"

"Never," said Charlie.

"Doc, we'll give him to the fire right, this time. The pig needs singeing before he'll believe that I mean what I say. Besides, I'd be rather glad to give him sore feet——"

"Hold up," snarled Charlie. "I never

seen such a devil in all my born days. I'll tell you what you want to know! I come up there not really to see the cook, though I know her. But me and the gardener—I used to know him in Fulsom. Him and me done a stretch there together, once. And I thought that maybe all of that heavy silver in the Watson house might be sneaked out, some night——"

"A very broad lie, Charlie," said Archibald Irving. "You would never have gone stealing through the grounds to talk to him. You would have made a convenient meeting place. Now, tell me the truth!"

He added: "And this is the last chance I give you. You talk out the truth this time and then write it down, or I'll burn you so that you'll never walk again—before I give you another *chance* to talk."

The sweat rolled out upon the forehead of Charlie.

"Nothing that I say can please you none!" muttered he.

"You're wrong, Charlie. The truth will please me a very great deal. So let me have it, and at once. I can't waste any more time——"

Charlie was silent; it was plain that he was in the greatest distress. He said, at length: "Mr. Irving, it was the old man that persuaded me to it. I don't mind fists. And I've used the sandbag here and there. But I hate guns——"

"So much that you carry three of them. But continue, Charlie. This is not a promising start."

"It was that old rat, Fraser. He got me to do it. Partly by begging me, and partly by giving me—offering me, I mean——"

"Search his pockets," said Archibald.

And the willing Doc extracted from the pockets of the writhing victim a thick wad of bills.

"Fifteen hundred in hard cash!" said Doc presently.

"Was Watson's life worth that much to Fraser?" asked Archibald.

"How did you know?"

"That confession," said Archibald, "is enough to hang you, my friend. There are two of us to swear to it. And by far the best thing that you can do is to sit down at once and prove yourself a literary artist—I have a bit of paper here, and a pen. You can write small on it, Charlie——"

Charlie, without a word, allowed his head to sink.

"Free his hands," said Archibald, and the thing was done. "Right here by the light of this little fire, Charlie."

And so there it was that Charlie wrote out his confession, pushing the pen with a reluctant shudder across the surface of the paper, writing small but clearly enough. And at last he ended and signed his name—his true name—a name which was strange in that county which had known Charlie so long.

"Now we are going to leave you tied here, and we are going down to see Mr. Fraser. What is your signal with him, Charlie?"

CHAPTER XV.

THE COUP.

IT was a long time since Mr. Fraser had slept; now he had fallen into a doze over his labors in the office that night. All the night before, he had not closed his eyes, beyond a moment here and there; this night a burning anxiety had kept him awake in spite of his weariness. However, fatigue will have its way. And at last Mr. Fraser's head bowed low, and lower.

He was on the verge of complete slumber when he started to his feet with his heart thundering. There had been a heavy knock on the street door—a heavy knock which was now repeated twice, a long interval between each stroke.

Mr. Fraser's eyes gleamed. If you

have seen the glittering eye of the ferret when it rushes in upon the nest of birds, you have an idea of the picture which Mr. Fraser made as he hurried down the passage. At the outer door he paused:

"Is it you, Charlie?" he asked eagerly.

For answer, there was an inarticulate snarl that made Mr. Fraser shudder with pleasure. Such was the voice of a man who had succeeded in the business which was in hand for this evening.

He unlocked the door, but first of all he opened it only a crack to make sure. But just as he released the door a trifle, two heavy shoulders were thrust against it. The edge of the door leaped out of the hands of old Mr. Fraser, and he found before him the proscribed Aldrich, and Mr. Archibald Irving—that simple youth!

"I've brought a little message to you from Charlie," said Archibald.

"Close the door," said Mr. Fraser, wringing his hands. "All is lost. I see in your faces that all is lost! Close the door. Gentlemen, gentlemen, did the dog talk? But come in quickly—you'll find that I can listen—to reason—to a great deal of reason!"

You observe that the mind of Mr. Fraser moved a little more quickly than that of Mr. Watson. Mr. Watson had to have defeat explained to him with a chart, but Mr. Fraser recognized it while it was still upon the wing, so to speak.

They all sat together in the office.

"We will let Charlie speak for us first," said Archibald. "I'll read this aloud, Doc, if you'll keep your eye fixed on this slippery old devil. I beg your pardon, Mr. Fraser, but the truth will out, you know!"

As Mr. Fraser made no answer, but sat with his chin fallen upon his chest, a deplorably sunken figure, Archibald read deliberately and slowly:

"This evening, right after supper, when I come on for night duty, Mr. Alexander Fraser, of Irvington, that I work for, called me into his office and said that he had a job for me that was worth a lot of money and wanted to know if I could use five hundred——"

"It's enough!" said Fraser, groaning. "That is enough. I——"

"And now," said Archibald, "Mr. Watson is dead. For fifteen hundred dollars—— However, when you hang, Mr. Fraser, you will pay the right price, all of it!"

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen!" said Mr. Fraser. "You will be reasonable, I know!"

"Reasonable, if you wish reason. For Mr. Aldrich, here, we'll have to have the mortgage on his mother's ranch, and a little capital to run on——"

"It shall be done," said Mr. Fraser, with a groan. "It shall be done!"

"My own price is smaller."

A light of joy appeared in the eye of Mr. Fraser.

"My own price," said Archibald, "is only the return of properties which already belong to me, by right. You committed a legal theft. Now I grant you permission to undo that wrong. And you will make over to me by your deed, all of your properties in the Irving Valley."

"What?" screamed Fraser. "A million——"

"Is it worth as much as that?" said Archibald, grinning. "But still, I'll have to have it. If you have made certain improvements in the meantime, I am very sorry to take those along with the land.

"Man, man, I said I would listen to reason, but——"

"You fool," said Archibald sternly, "do you think that the murdered man on the hill——"

And Mr. Fraser collapsed.

For a whole hour he was busy in his office writing out and signing certain documents for the benefit of Archibald

Irving. When he was ended, the two men stood up for their departure, leaving the banker sitting with fallen head beside his desk, and his hands pressed against his face. More bitterly than half his blood he begrudged the acts of justice which he had that night performed.

"And, by the way," said Archibald from the doorway, "I ought to tell you, lest you have an unnecessary weight on your conscience, that our friend Watson was not murdered, after all. It was only the good intention that Charlie confessed, if you had had the patience to hear the confession through. Good night, Mr. Fraser."

But Mr. Fraser did not lift his head. He was a thoroughly beaten man.

The rehabilitation of Doc Aldrich was a matter that was never thoroughly understood, because Archibald Irving's part in it was wisely concealed from the public gaze. It was known, of course, that Thomas had withdrawn his charge; and that he had been paid in full the value of the stolen horse. It was further known that Jerry Swinton was unwilling to pursue any legal action against his conqueror.

The greatest mystery, however, was the transfer of the lands of the Irving Valley back to Archibald Irving. To this mystery not even the lawyer, John Vincent, became an initiate.

Two afternoons after the interview between Mr. Fraser and the two who carried Charlie's confession, a pair of interviews occurred all in the same hour.

One took place on the hillside above Irving Valley, where Mr. Fraser and Mr. Watson met by accident. And Watson took the first step.

"Sandy," said he, "if I tell you that I'm sorry for what happened between us—and if I tell you that I got as bad a licking as you did, will you forgive me?"

"Billy," said Mr. Fraser, "I've had it dinned in upon me that I've become an old man, but I would give up a million dollars to know how *you* lost your share of the valley?"

"It begins," said Mr. Watson, "with a plump-looking young man——"

"Young Irving, of course."

"Aye, that very man."

"Watson, we used a silent partnership before. But from now on I think that we'd better take advantage of an open one. We'll *need* it, if that young devil begins to operate in the same county with us, unless we're to have our shoulders driven against the wall."

Mr. Watson nodded gravely.

"It's true," said he. "He has the real touch of financial genius—and youth on his side against us, to say nothing of a grudge which is as sharp as a razor blade."

At the very time that this conversation was taking place on the side of Irving Valley, Mr. Archibald Irving had stepped into the office of Vincent, the lawyer.

"And how," said Vincent coldly, "has the time been running on with you. Fox hunting?"

"A rotten country for running foxes," said Archibald. "I've just been all over the valley. As a matter of fact, I've decided to go on with my uncle's schemes there. All of them, Vincent. Even to the building of the last fence. Foxes be darned. There is too much money in that ground."

"Ah," said Mr. Vincent, for as yet not a whisper of what had happened had gone abroad upon the air of Irvington. "Ah, Archie, you are contemplating buying out the two owners, then?"

His dryness did not seem to affect the youth.

"As a matter of fact, I have agreed with them on that point," said he. "I have bought them out already."

And he placed the deeds upon the desk.

Mr. Vincent looked through them as fast as he could, for his head was swimming and a black mist was whirling before his eyes. He said at length:

"Merciful Heaven, Archie, I never dreamed that you had really inherited any fortune other than this of your uncle."

"I haven't," said Archibald.

"But it says here—for value received—on both deeds—and—what under heaven can it all mean?"

"Why," said Archibald, "as you know if you've ridden after a fox, it isn't always the fastest horse that is in at the kill. And it isn't always money that has the highest value. However, I think they are both satisfied with their half of the bargain, and I'm sure that I am satisfied with mine!"

FARUNAWEAP CANON FOR PARK RESERVE

AN area forming a part of the Parunaweap Cañon, adjoining the Zion National Park in Utah, was temporarily withdrawn from the public domain a few weeks ago, pending legislation to make the area a part of the park.

The land affected comprises approximately 6,400 acres, unappropriated and unsurveyed, and 3,480 acres in a petroleum reserve. Some very interesting prehistoric ruins and Indian graves have been discovered in the Parunaweap Cañon and this fact has resulted in the decision to make the track a part of Zion National Park, provided that Congress will pass the necessary legislation. The order withdraws the land from settlement, homestead and other forms of entry to which the public domain is subject.

PIONEER RECALLS ARIZONA'S FIRST JURY TRIAL

REMINISCING about the early days of Arizona, Jeff Nelson, who first went out to Flagstaff in 1883, recently told the following anecdote in connection with what is believed to be the first jury trial conducted in that State. At that time all of Flagstaff was comprised in the section known as Oldtown. The case was of a gambler who had shot and killed another gambler.

As soon as the jury was seated, one of the jurymen drew a big bottle of liquor out of his pocket and after taking a goodly swig, passed the bottle around. After two or three had taken a drink, the judge, who had noted with alarm the rapid vanishing of the contents of the bottle, called out: "We'll adjourn this court right here, so we can all get a drink."

"But what about the prisoner?" inquired one juryman.

"Well," suggested another juryman, "why can't he have a drink, too?"

Thereupon, judge, jury, and prisoner adjourned to a near-by bar, where they all had two or three stiff "jolts." Then they returned to the courtroom and the trial was resumed. The prisoner was found to have killed his opponent in self-defense and was acquitted. Thus was rough-and-ready justice dispensed in the Arizona of the early '80's.

Out of the Zoo

By
Frank Richardson Pierce

Author of "Dogs Are That Way," etc.

THE musical voice of the falls blended with the wind sweeping lazily through the tops of the firs and cedars. Now and then a salmon leaped from the seething pool just below the falls. This, for perhaps a half hour, was the only sign of life except an energetic chipmunk engaged in rustling for a living.

The appearance of the buck was unheralded by the slightest sound. One moment there was space between two firs; the next moment he filled it. He weighed close to two hundred pounds, and many a hunter had spent days in an effort to bring him down, that his noble head with its almost perfect spread of antlers might lend distinction to living room or den. It was spring, therefore the closed season. The buck seemed to realize he was safe from man and his rifles. Yet he sniffed for natural enemies. Of late a cougar had been stalking him from time to time. Caution held him for an interval, then he stooped and drank from the pool.

An abrupt snapping of a twig caused him to leap from the spot. While he was in mid-air, a rope was dropped over his antlers and slipped about his neck. Despite his struggles he was held relentlessly. "I got him!" yelled a triumphant voice. The woods, apparently so completely deserted a moment before, seemed filled with men.

The buck continued to struggle as the rope slackened slightly. His lungs sucked in the life-giving air. Men warily approached and further secured him. Capture, not death, seemed their motive. He was like an outlaw who was wanted alive, rather than dead.

The men—there were five of them—were panting heavily from the struggle when they finally ceased their efforts and rested. "Lord, what a beauty!" one exclaimed. "It seems a shame to take him from all this!"

With a wide sweep of his hand he indicated the peaks above them capped with snow, tipped by the first light of a new day; the falls where the mist took on fantastic shapes before vanishing against mossy cliffs to gleam like diamonds; the hurrying stream with its leaping salmon; the forests that it had taken nature hundreds of years to create.

"He belongs here, he's a part of it!" the man added. "It's like taking a knife and cutting something from a picture; something that gives life to the entire background."

"Now, now, Bill!" exclaimed one laughingly. "You are getting sentimental in your old age."

"No, not sentimental, but practical,

Fred. Well, now that we have him, the next thing is to get him out. The real work begins."

"Huh! Remaining absolutely still all night long without even a smoke is the hardest work I've ever done," another protested, then picked up an ax and commenced to clear the way.

The buck had ceased his struggles. Into his eyes had come a living fear of the unknown. All day the men worked, and by night they had reached a skid road where a truck waited. For the first time in his life, the buck experienced the unpleasant scent of burned gasoline and oil from a motor's exhaust. It caught the delicate membranes intended for forest scents, and stifled even as the rope had done. He tossed his head and gasped, then as the truck got under way he experienced a measure of relief. All night they traveled, and by morning had reached the pavements of a great city.

Presently the truck stopped; other men hurried out and looked upon him with approval. He caught a cougar scent and struggled ferociously to escape. On this came other scents; the wolf, the skunk, the bear, and odors utterly foreign, yet hinting at nameless dangers.

They carried him to an inclosure, where he saw pens containing elk, other deer, though smaller than himself—cages filled with pacing animals that walked, walked, forever walked, yet never reached the journey's end.

Trees grew about, but they were smaller than the trees he had known all his life. The grass was greener than that of his mountain pastures, yet it lacked a sweetness and was considerably shorter. There was none of the brush on which he browsed.

"Better put him into that pen," a voice with a ring of authority directed; "I didn't think you boys could capture him alive. He's great!" The man's admiration increased, yet exultation waned slightly. He looked toward the distant mountains. Another day was dawning. "It seems almost a shame," he mused. "Still in a few weeks he'll be begging for candy with the rest of 'em!"

They released him a few moments later, leaped back, and awaited results. He struggled to his feet and looked about with terror-filled eyes. He was free except for an intricate fabric of almost invisible substance fastened to square, green posts. A doe regarded him curiously. She was a dispirited creature, utterly lacking the vivacity of the mate he had known the previous year. She seemed to lack strength. The buck sensed it even as he appraised his own situation. He felt the numbness go from his legs, and the old strength and quickness return.

A vagrant breeze came from somewhere, carrying a vague scent of the freedom of lofty peaks, mountain meadows, and misting falls forever fed by melting snows. The call came faintly at first, almost indistinct, then it seemed to grow in volume until it fairly seemed to thunder. The buck lowered his head in answer. This was not his life, to be caged and looked upon by passing thousands, to smell forever the scent of burned gasoline, pavements seething under summer suns and soot-filled air. A mountain empire had been his to roam, and they were offering in exchange a sickly doe, a dozen fir trees, and a plot of dirt. Yes, it was dirt beneath his feet, not the green lawns he saw about him with the little "Keep Off the Grass" signs.

His hoofs had trod the forest floor too many years to submit tamely to such as this. There was the power of steel springs in his slim legs, and the muscles made strong by running from valleys to mountain peaks suddenly grew tense and obeyed his will. With lowered head he rushed the length of the pen straight into the intricate fabric. He felt it give beneath the heavy impact of his body,

then it held and threw him back. Twice he repeated the charge. Each time he was hurled back in defeat. Panting from his efforts he lurched away to rest. The doe came forward and sniffed as if offering her sympathy and understanding.

Later in the day men came with cameras and cranked or snapped him from various angles. Other men wrote minute descriptions of his size and weight. By evening hundreds had visited his pen, and the following day thousands came. They pressed in on all sides with their white faces and staring eyes. From them there was no escape, no matter where he turned. The fabric that held him within also held them without. It was strange, smaller than anything he had seen, yet stronger.

He sought and found a degree of seclusion among the trees in the center of the pen. It was a miserable existence. It was reflected in the moody eagles sitting humped up on their perches, dreaming of the fathomless blue through which they had once soared; the pacing cats and the polar bears splashing about in the lukewarm water, seeking solace from the heat. Only the buck, fresh from the forests, retained the full measure of his wild spirit. He joined the doe and watched for possible danger as he had watched in the forest.

There was a strange similarity between captivity and wild life. In the forest, and above, he had his places of rest. There was one, beneath such a tree as this from which he could look down and see what took place below, yet remain unobserved. That tree was living, like himself. The tree reflected captivity, the foliage lacked the life of the trees remote from pavements; the trunk was smoked from many chimneys; the new leaves lacked the freshness of the forest trees.

This place had its living stream as did the forest. In the forest the stream flowed one way day and night, never halting, never complaining, always musical. The stream of the city flowed toward offices in the morning, then flowed backward in the evening, a slow-moving, harsh stream, bubbling with discontent, leaving the heavy odor of burning gasoline—fumes that wilted living things slowly but surely.

The scent of it never left the buck's nostrils, except when the wind blew strong from the northeast, or in the early morning hours when he watched dawn break. Here, too, there was a similarity. Creatures of the night slunk into their lairs with the approach of day, creatures of light came forth eagerly. It was the same with forest folks and with humans. Those hours the buck enjoyed. They were all too brief, for the tide commenced to flow cityward immediately.

The second week of his captivity, a doe in the adjoining pen died. He sensed the reason—too many faces pressing against the inclosure; too many cars had paused and thoughtlessly watched the deer while throbbing motors fed a steady stream of foul air. The buck felt a strange madness stealing over him. He wanted to charge and charge at everything about him—the trees, the pen, yes, even the doe. Anything to answer the incessant call of freedom that came each night from distant peaks.

The third week, a young buck in an adjoining pen suddenly charged. He backed against the wire, and bounded the length of the pen before he struck the green post. The post stood rigid, and the buck dropped to the ground and remained still. An hour later men entered and carried him away.

It was moonlight! Such a night as he had known previous to the day of his capture. Then he had roamed the upper peaks and had descended to drink from the pool. The doe's luminous eyes came from where she lay beneath the tree. A

vagrant breeze stirred the dust about her nose, and when she breathed, a portion entered each nostril, but she seemed indifferent. Her spirit was gone. She was waiting! Waiting for the faces pressed against the wire, the shimmering heat of the pavements, the foul air and death!

Then the tips of the soot-covered firs stirred and nodded as if in assent to some silent message borne on the breeze from distant peaks barely visible in the moonlight. The breeze increased and the sickening scents of the city vanished. In their stead came the freedom of open places. There was the scent of firs drenched by a passing shower, of cedars and meadows wet with rain, or perhaps dew; the buck could almost hear the music of the falls. At night, when the flow of water grew less, the note changed as if the tumbling waters were slumbering after the rush of the day's work.

The buck lifted his nostrils and sniffed, and peaks, valleys, and forests whispered a command—a command to live within their limitless domains. The moon slipped from behind a cloud and filled the inclosure with its soft light. The doe stirred, as if feeling the spell. She stood up where she could breathe and not inhale dust from the hoof-beaten dirt.

The buck started up as if obeying the silent call of the night; the muscles of his shoulders grew tense. For the first time since the day of his arrival the fence was put to the test. He narrowly missed the green post in the madness of his charge, and as a result there was less "give" to the wire. Something snapped, and his antlers broke through. In panic he again lived the terror-filled moments when he had been roped. More strands snapped before he had freed himself and backed off. There was a gaping hole in the fence almost large enough to admit his shoulders. He sensed the closeness of freedom, and something akin to madness possessed him. Straight for the hole he charged, gaining momentum with each bound. His head and shoulders struck the surrounding strands, then broke through until only his hind quarters remained within. He twisted and turned, and with a final lunge was free. Crimson stained a number of scratches on his coat where broken wire ends had cut deep; he was so stunned from the impact that he staggered and fell to his knees. A car swinging around a curve narrowly missed hitting him. He flung himself back against the fence, trembling with fright, then once more it became quiet. He looked at the doe. She had been long in captivity, she was afraid to venture forth. The foul air, staring faces, the closeness of the pens to city traffic, had surely done this thing.

The buck turned to leave, then again hesitated. She had timidly thrust her head through the hole, then came the dainty forelegs, and finally, with a graceful lifting of hind quarters, she had joined him. Without hesitation the buck headed toward the mountains, the doe followed. The click of their hoofs came steadily on the pavement. Most of the city slept, yet a thousand dangers lurked—for creatures of the city night life were abroad. They drove their cars with blinding headlights and furious speed; trolley cars clanged and rumbled at the most unexpected places. Here and there they found clumps of shrubbery in which to hide and rest a moment.

Hour after hour the pair traveled, the buck leading, the doe following. They were still within the city limits when the sun came over the peaks. The city stirred like some sleeping monster, and the rumble of its living became a sullen roar. The buck leaped a fence and vanished within the brush of a vacant lot. A moment later the doe, too, was hidden from view.

The zoo keeper was aroused at daybreak by the excited voice of a keeper. "That buck got away, and the doe went with him. I told you the pens were too close to traffic.

The superintendent hurried to a kennel and unleashed a dog. The dog sniffed along the sidewalk a moment, then struck off at a brisk pace. At times the scent was strong, and he followed swiftly. Again he experienced difficulty in his quest. Hour after hour he stuck to the trail, while men with ropes followed him. It was late afternoon before his lagging pace suddenly quickened. He had caught a fresh scent. This time it came from the air, not the ground. With a throaty cry of triumph he was off on the run.

As the buck had done hours before, the dog leaped the fence and plunged into the thicket. The doe leaped up a few feet ahead of him. Then the buck appeared almost magically in his path. The dog snarled in fury and launched himself at the buck's throat. The movement had been instinctive; in obedience to an impulse that had come down through successive generations from ancestors that had run in packs.

The buck's antlers moved swiftly and caught the dog's charge in the final bound; the noble head lifted with sudden fury, and the squirming dog was tossed high into the air. The buck rushed toward the spot, his sharp hoofs ready to stamp the life from his attacker. The dog whimpered from surprise and the pain of his fall. He squirmed deeper into the thicket as the hoofs came down again and again, and presently he was safe. For a long time after the buck had left the scene, the dog panted from the shock. Then he wagged his tail and crouched in shame as the keeper approached. "Got the worst of it, eh?" queried the man pleasantly.

The tumult of small boys in chase came from a point ahead. The man broke into a run and reached the group. "Deer just ahead, mister," said one.

"Sure, son, they do that when enemies press too hard." The keeper changed his plan quickly, hailed a passing car, and was taken to a boat house some distance away. "Want your fastest launch," he said.

A few moments later the craft was speeding down the lake. Through binoculars he caught sight of the buck. For several moments he stood on the shore alone, then the doe joined him. The buck plunged in and began swimming. The shadows of late afternoon were already falling across the water; the trees and the mountains on the opposite side were mirrored where the surface was still. The launch cut deep into the water, hurling back waves on either side.

The zoo keeper stood in the bow with coiled rope. In another minute he would reach the buck. He looked at the forest-fringed shore and felt the coolness of the timber in contrast to the hot pavements he had left; beyond lay rolling timbered hills, and beyond them the mountains with snow-capped peaks and meadows—freedom. The spell of what the buck was fighting for caught him. He wondered if he were true to his trust or not, but somehow he didn't care. "Way nuff!" he snapped.

"How's that?" queried the man at the wheel in surprise.

"Way nuff. Let her drift, and we'll watch a sight that'll do both of us good."

The buck pushed steadily toward shore, his hoofs found bottom. He made his way to a sandy beach, the water cascading down his flanks. Then he turned and looked back toward the swimming doe. She fell as she gained the shore. The buck waited for her to regain her feet and feel the strength of her freedom. He vanished amid the firs where awaited the coolness of the forest, the sweetness of pure air—life. The doe followed.

Your Dog

By David Post

Author of "The Basset Hound," etc.

THE DACHSHUND

LAST week in announcing this article about the dachshund I spoke of the breed as one of the hound family. That is how this dog usually is classified, but in reality it is probably a combination of hound and terrier.

As its name indicates, the dachshund is a German dog and is used in Germany to hunt especially the "dach," an animal resembling the badger. It is employed also in unearthing foxes and in driving wounded deer out into the open. One would not suspect the mild-eyed, short-legged, plebeian-looking dachshund of a tenacious fighting spirit, but it will go fearlessly into a burrow in pursuit of the dangerous badger and will drag its foe out. It can move with speed, too, driving rabbits within gun range. At this work it is almost as good as the beagle, and it displays much more gameness.

In disposition the dachshund has the virtues of the hound and the terrier. It is amiable, very affectionate, proud, self-reliant and courageous. On the other hand, it must be said that it is jealous and obstinate.

There are two varieties of dachshund, the smooth, short-coated one, and the long-haired. In this country only the short-coated dachshund has won any popularity.

Naturally, perhaps, the American and German standards for the breed differ. We judge the dachshund by its approximation to the following standard:

Head—Long, narrow and conical, with a well-developed peak to the skull. The muzzle should be long, and there should be no "stop" between the eyes.

Eyes—Moderately large and, when the dog is at rest, showing intelligence and affection. When the dachshund is angered, the expression of the eyes is one of fury.

Jaws—Strong, level, and square to the muzzle.

Teeth—Level, with canines slightly recurvent.

Ears—Long and moderately broad, soft, and pliant. Set on the skull fairly high, they should hang close to the head.

Neck—Moderately long, strong, and well-muscled.

Chest—Broad, deep and wide. It should come within two or three inches of the ground. The breastbone at the front of the chest should be rather prominent.

Body—Very long, with well-sprung fore ribs, short back ribs, and slightly tucked up waist. The loins should be muscular and arched; the shoulders and

the hindquarters should have very strong muscles.

Forelegs—Very short, strong and muscular and having plenty of bone. The elbows should turn outward, while the knees bend inward so that the ankles are very close together. The large, round, strong forefeet should be heavily padded, and should turn outward.

Hindlegs—Viewed from behind the dog, the hindlegs should be almost parallel. They need not have so much bone as the forelegs, and the hind feet are a little smaller than the fore ones.

Stern—Long and strong, and tapering, with a pothook bend near the tip. The tail should be carried downward.

Coat—Dense, soft and glossy. The skin should be soft and pliant; that on the skull should be loose; sometimes it is wrinkled.

Color—Black-and-tan, dark cherry and red are the most favored colors. The color of the eyes and nose should be in accord with that of the coat of hair.

Weight—From 17 to 24 pounds.

Height—From 7 to 9 inches. The height at the shoulders should be one third the length of the dog from its nose to the root of the tail.

In next week's issue of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE another foreign hound will be introduced to you. Be prepared to make the acquaintance of the Norwegian elkhound.

CATTLE DISABLE PLANE

WHEN Charles Mayse, a commercial pilot of Tucson, Arizona, flew to Stafford to visit his mother a little while ago, he parked his airplane in a stretch of pasture land near her home. When he started to prepare for his return journey, he found that he would be delayed for two days because the cattle had eaten the flippers in the tail group of his machine. Mayse's explanation was that the animals have a great fondness for the sizing used in the linen covering of the planes.

TEXAS CONSTABLE'S HORSE KILLED BY RATTLER

A HUGE rattlesnake is reported to have attacked and killed a horse belonging to Constable Dunnahoo, of Manchaca, Texas, a few weeks ago. The rattler got into the stable where the horse was kept and bit the animal so severely that it died within a short time. Dunnahoo also entered the stable a little later and was attacked by the snake, which he described as five feet two inches in length, with fourteen rattles. The constable finally killed the reptile with a big stick.

The Runaways

By

George Owen Baxter

Author of "Fire Brain," etc.

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters

SAMMY MOORE runs away from his severe Aunt Claudia with a violin-playing tramp who had heretofore been accompanied only by Smiler, a white bull terrier. "Lefty" is a red-headed, left-handed young gentleman of the road, who is given to making weird fabrications concerning his past life.

Twice the two avoid capture by farmers who would like to collect the reward offered for the return of Sammy. Quick thinking on the part of Lefty and quick acting on the part of Smiler save them.

Lefty, Sammy, and Smiler reach another town by riding the rails of a train. Here Lefty becomes "Uncle Will," Sammy's blind uncle, creating a hard-luck story that, together with his violin playing and Sammy's voice, opens the town coffers to them.

As they are counting the loot that they have so easily acquired by playing on the town's sentimentality, Jake, Lefty's hunchback enemy, enters their room. Tremendously strong and ruthless, he is the one person of whom Lefty is afraid. Jake demands almost all of the money and Sammy, thinking to use the latter's voice to his advantage. Jake is finally reduced to accepting half the money, and that only.

Lefty, Sammy, and Smiler leave immediately, but Jake overtakes them in an automobile. There is a mad race with Sammy fleeing in horror from the hunchback. He hits the river just in time; Lefty is there with a canoe, and they leave Jake cursing on the bank.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN ESCAPE.

WE had the current with us. Lefty's legs may have been tired, but his arms were fresh. He made that canoe talk, digging in deep with long strokes of the paddle. He took her right out into the middle of the channel, where the current would foam us along at a good clip. So we went tearing around the next bend and out of sight of Jake.

Just as I was about to thank my stars that we were out of range of him, Lefty turned the canoe to the side of the river where the current was almost dead, and there was nothing but standing water. Right in there, where the bank threw down a shadow as thick as ink, he began to drive the canoe upstream!

He hollered to me to take a paddle and help him. I did what I could, shortening the paddle up so's I could use it, but I wondered what he was about. He didn't say a word, and enough had happened that night to keep me thinking without asking any more questions, so we slid along very easy, making fine time, except where the roots and the limbs of trees bothered us. When we were about a mile from the spot where we had seen Jake last, Lefty caught hold of a bush and steadied the canoe for a minute while we rested.

He said that Jake had seen us scoot down the river, and so he would be sure to start in that direction after us. Now every mile we put behind us was better than two, because it would bother

Jake a lot, to begin with, and besides that, it would puzzle him to find out where we *had* gone.

We kept on digging along, doing three miles an hour in the shadow of the bank where the water was the stillest, and we steadied along at this for about two or three hours. Then the water ahead of us slid out into a long, narrow lake. That made our going pretty easy, of course. The best of it was that there was a good strong wind now snapping into us from the rear. That helped us along almost as much as the paddling.

Finally, Lefty took our two coats, pinned them together and stretched them out on the two paddles. Then he fixed those paddles up against the ribs of the canoe. Lefty and me stretched out back of the middle of the canoe. It steered; all Lefty had to do was to trail a hand overboard a mite, that kept us headed right along.

You've no idea till you've tried what a lot a small sail like that will do. It just foamed us through the water. Lefty said that we must be doing about eight or ten miles an hour. It seemed a lot more than that, because it was like sitting down in the blackness of that water and racing.

We began to feel better, now that we had the cool of the night blowing in our faces. Finally with a feeling of satisfaction Lefty said:

"Well, who would have it any different? Starve one day, live rich the next day; lie around with your pals one day; try to cut the throat of an enemy the next. And that's the way that it runs all the time—Sammy, would you have it changed?"

"Well, when you come down to think about it, I don't suppose that I *would* have changed it, though I still felt pretty queer in the knees. I told Lefty that I would as soon get along without any Jake in my world, and he even laughed, at that, saying maybe Jake was only the salt that made the meat of a tramp's life better.

It was the beginning of the day, now. We seemed to be sailing into the sunrise. Lefty dropped his cigarette overboard, and we both lay back to enjoy it. It got brighter and brighter. Then we both looked up and said "Oh!" at the same minute, for we seen a great, big cloud hanging in the sky, turned to a big lump of flame from head to bottom—yellow-red it was. It seemed to light up the whole world the minute that it caught on fire.

The whole side of the sky began to be ribbed out with gold and red, and where you hadn't noticed any clouds at all, you could see long fingers of them stretched across the curve of the sky. The lake in front of us turned so wonderful that you wouldn't believe—the little waves being indigo on one side and gold on the other—and then snakes of red went wriggling over everything, once in a while.

Even the shore seemed to change, and every time that there came a gap in the trees so that you could see a meadow you felt that right there was where you would like to put a tent and stay the rest of your life. Pretty soon we came in sight of a town. Lefty and me just looked at one another, because it looked just like it was the finest town that you ever seen. Then—bang! The sun came up.

All that fineness faded off quick as a snap. All you could think of was the emptiness of your stomach.

Even Smiler seemed to feel it; he shoved his nose into the hand of his boss as much as to say: "All this is very fine, but it ain't raw meat—not half!"

Well, we fetched on by that town; a couple of curls of smoke were beginning to twist up from over the roofs, and we skated on down the lake with the wind getting stronger every minute.

We were shivering pretty much about

two hours later; the sun was behind a cloud, and the face of the lake was all wrinkled and black with the wind, when we came to another town. I mean, we came to a couple of wharves sticking out into the lake and some powerful poor-looking houses behind them.

I wanted to go on for a better place, but Lefty said: "No, right here is where we stop. Those wharves are too big to be needed by only those shacks; there must be a little town beyond. You come along. Some time you'll see that the biggest and finest-looking town ain't always the best."

He was right.

Down there by the edge of the water, he washed the shadows off his eyes and the gray out of his hair. We got cleaned up and brushed up as good as we could and climbed up the bank, through the woods and right into as good a town as you would want.

It wasn't slicked up like the last place we was in. It looked more like Gunther—the sort of a town that you could be comfortable in and wouldn't have to wear a coat and a necktie all the time. We went right to a hotel, and we said that we had been canoeing down the river and our canoe had sprung a leak. We had barely got into wading distance of the shore when she went down and she took our baggage with her.

We got a room and settled down for a rest after we had had a breakfast. That was a breakfast and a half, too! There was everything from bacon and eggs down to hot cakes with maple syrup. I put away a couple of stacks of them before I lost that gone sort of feeling.

I had a snooze then. When I woke up, it was afternoon, as I could tell by the way that the sun was sliding into the room and by the warm, lazy feel of the air. You can always tell that way. Right then, Lefty came in. You wouldn't have knowed him!

His clothes had been a little messed up from the work that we had been doing lately. There he was rigged out in a fine, new brown suit about as fine as a body could ask. He had a lot of bundles over his arms and in his hands that he dumped in the room. He sat down by the window, lighted a cigar and turned it around slow and easy in his mouth while he blew out rings.

"Well, partner," says Lefty, "things are beginning to look up!"

It tickled me a good deal to have him talk like that; him being what he was and me just an ornery kid. I didn't say anything. Mostly, when you begin to get warm in the middle of yourself, it is a good thing not to talk, because usual you will say something foolish. The brightest boy I ever knew, he never would do no talking at all except to say: "Gimme——" whatever it was he wanted. Usually he got it, too, because it looked like he wouldn't ask for a thing that he didn't need. But I never had talent for silence like that.

After a while, I got up. Then I could see that Smiler had a new, green patent-leather collar on. He seemed awful proud of it and grateful.

"Well," I said, "you and Smiler certainly look fine!"

"Rustle among those packages," said Lefty. "Maybe you'll find something for yourself there."

The first thing I saw was a cap; it fitted me perfect; it had a leather visor and everything. Then I found a big cardboard box with a suit in it of gray tweed. And *that* fitted me perfect. And then there was a couple of flannel shirts, tan-colored, square-toed buckskin shoes, as supple as could be and as strong as iron. There were stockings wove extra double across the knees and the toes. You could look around a long ways before you could find an outfit like that so sensible! You wouldn't be afraid of sitting down on the ground in those clothes. They were loose and fine for climbing trees, but

just as good for walking right into church, if you had a necktie on!

I seen my old trousers lying on the floor with the two patches on the seat looking up at me.

"Jiminy! Lefty," said I, "I never was togged out like this. But how could you spend so much money on *me?*"

"Why, you damn little fool," said Lefty, "ain't it just as much your money as it is mine?"

CHAPTER XV.

HAPPY DAYS.

I ASKED Lefty what would we do in that town. He said nothing except enjoy ourselves. Which we did it fine! Only, what a lot of money it cost! Lefty bought us a good buggy with a tough-looking buckskin horse to pull it. He wasn't very big, that horse, but tough as iron, and he had the way of those mountain roads so thorough that nobody could ever expect him to trip up. There were two suit cases. One held all of our clothes, packed in tight. And the other one held some pots and pans that Lefty got, and then there was places for spices, and such things. Besides that, we had potatoes, bread, flour, coffee, tomatoes, bacon and baking powder all the time along with us. And a few jars of jam to fix us out for a dessert at the end of the meal.

When we got through collecting these things, we found that the clothes and horse and buggy—which was secondhanded—and a new pocketknife for me and a lot of other fixings, had all cost up around six hundred dollars! It was like throwing money away, spending that much in two days, but everything that Lefty got was mighty good. He was that way. When he got me a knife, he didn't stop asking until he got the best steel that there was and then a handle that just fitted my hand fine. It cost him two dollars and a half—just for a pocketknife! And it took near an hour of his time to choose it, but that didn't matter. He would get nothing but the best for himself or me. It was surprising to watch him. If a clerk said: "This is good enough for a boy!" Lefty would say: "I've noticed that boys give things harder wear than men do."

That was the way with Lefty. He didn't always ask me what to do with the money, but whatever he spent, he spent just as much for me as he did for himself, which was something extra special, you might say, and a thing that most folks would never bother themselves about doing. It made me feel mighty good about Lefty.

When he got all through, he said: "Counting out everything, and hotel bills and meals, and cigars and cigarettes and all, there is just a bit over two hundred dollars left to us. We've sunk in the rest. And there is the list of what I've spent. I want you to look it all over."

I got a little hot in the face and told him that I didn't doubt but what he was honest.

"It isn't that, Sammy," said he. "I want to *stay* honest. I've started square with you, and it tickles me a good deal to keep on being square. If you start in trusting me too much, maybe when we make a fat haul, some day, I'll take most of the profits and put them away for myself. The best way to do these things is to do them like a business. Here we are, you and me, in partnership. We're wandering musicians, aiming to make the public pay a little more than theater prices to hear our performances, and everything has to be done the same for both of us."

He never changed a mite. Right up to the end he was always just as honest and as fair.

We started across country in that rig, the buckskin stepping along. Our plan was like this: When we came to a town we would stop somewhere near

and get fixed up in our old clothes. Lefty would blacken his eyes, put on the smoked glasses and make up his hair gray. He would go in with me in the evening when it was dark enough to cover up any rough spots in his make-up. We would work the town as well as we could, while Smiler stayed out and took care of the horse.

Sometimes there was two or three days in between towns. We didn't care how long it took from place to place, except when we eased across a piece of real flat desert with nothing but sand for drinking water. In the main, we kept to the hills or mountains, where we would find good wood and water—the main things for camps.

Lefty got a big .32 rifle for himself. He got me a .22, which I could shoot pretty good. I always had a hankering for guns and such things. Lefty improved me a lot by teaching me to shoot low, and how to allow for wind, and why things at a distance always seemed farther off than really. Sometimes we would go along for three whole days, never doing a stroke of business, just shooting, lying about in camp, Lefty telling yarns and me listening hard.

I got to like that life awful well. Aunt Claudia would have said it was the natural devil in me. She said there was a natural devil in every man. But I reckon that everybody likes to be lazy if he can. It was particular easy for me to loaf and beg because the right or the wrong of the thing sort of all lay on the shoulders of big Lefty, if you know what I mean.

Pretty soon I got to see that there was as much difference between towns as between people. Some towns are open and easy; some towns are hard and mean. Some towns had prime cooking, and some towns lived on boiled pork and boiled potatoes, something terrible to see. Some towns have big trees for shade, and some cut them down for wood; some towns have constables that are earning their salaries, and some have constables that are just hanging around smiling to get votes for the next election time.

Lefty was a great one to notice the differences right away quick between those villages. He would take a good look, and then he would say: "We're gunna be jolly and happy beggars."

That was for the hard, mean places. Then we would go down and sing Irish jig tunes; I would dance some jigs that Lefty had taught me, and wind up with a "buck and wing," my feet going so fast that you wouldn't hardly believe it!

I worked a good deal to get those steps down pat, but it was easy to work for Lefty. He never praised you much, because he knew how things had *ought* to be done. Neither did he keep on panning you, but he did everything gradual. One of his favorite sayings was that all the time in the world was not used up yet!

He would sit for half an hour and watch me trying a certain twitch or step in a "buck and wing." Some of them are mighty uncertain and hard to do. He would go through the thing for me, slow, half a hundred times, while I was trying to follow him. I've seen him take off his shoe and sock to show me with his bare foot how the heel and the toe had to work in the making of a rattling good step. He never tried to have me do a lot at once, either.

In the mean towns, we acted very gay, and in the happy, easy-going towns, we always were special sad; Lefty would pull out his face very long and get afflicted with heart trouble.

He would say: "You got to give people what they haven't got. In the long run, it is better to give them tragedy. That's what pays. You may raise a crowd with a comedy any time, but a street comedian gets paid with pennies, and a tragedian gets paid with dollars. There's the difference!"

It was true, too!

You could depend on a mean town having a constable with a hungry look; he would tell you to run along or you would be locked up for vagrancy. At the best, he would ask you questions and write down all of your answers. That was very embarrassing and kept Lefty inventing new lies wonderful fast.

When I remember how jolly and happy those days were, it doesn't seem like I can go on to tell what happened next. I suppose that you got to come to the end of happiness, no matter how fine it is, and you got to tell about the blue days that followed.

I would like to quit writing right here. Or else, I would like to go on and tell about all the good times that we had, one by one. There were enough of them to fill a book. But the whole thing has to be wrote down.

It was the fall of the year; the night was turning chilly. We had come out of a crossroad town where we had worked pretty hard; our pick-up was only about twenty dollars. Even that was enough to keep us going along pretty smooth. We had come up out of the hollow where the town was. Through a gap in the woods I saw Lefty stop and look up and stand there a long time. I stopped, too, and listened to the way that the ground was making a crinkling noise as it drank up the rest of the last rain. I looked around me, but I could see nothing for Lefty to watch except some geese flying south across the face of the moon.

Right then I guessed that there was trouble lying ahead of us.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOME.

SINCE Lefty didn't say anything right then, I didn't ask. We went on to the camp; Smiler came to meet us with Tippety behind him. Tippety was the horse, you know. He and Smiler had become great friends. Being always together, they had got to know each other pretty well, and they were like pals. If you saw Tippety out grazing, you could be pretty sure that Smiler was along somewhere lying down in the grass. Sometimes Tippety would wander off a long ways from the camp to graze, but all that Lefty had to do was to go and holler for Smiler or whistle. Smiler would yip and pretty soon, here he would come, looking back over his shoulder at Tippety who would be behind him as comfortable as you please. It was a funny thing to see; pretty, too!

Smiler wagged his tail for Lefty, but he seemed not to see the dog nor the buckskin, either. He just walked into camp and while I made a fire for our regular midnight coffee, Lefty dropped his chin on his fist and studied. When he got half a cup of hot coffee inside of him he said:

"I think that we'd better head south."

I said was there any very good towns down that way.

"Too good for you and me," said Lefty very solemn.

He looked up into the sky again. There was nothing flying against the moon, this time, but out of the sky I heard the cry of the wild geese, the coldest and most mournful sound ever made to come falling through the night.

It muddled me up a lot to have Lefty acting unhappy, that way. I didn't say anything, and pretty soon he went to bed. I didn't get much sleep, I was so worried.

When morning came, we packed up and headed Tippety south, making a bee line over the hills and camping next night in the mountains. Right while we were starting the fire, a buck jumped out of the brush and stood too scared and surprised to move, for a minute. I had a chance to scoop up the .22 and I fired without hardly

aiming. That buck made three big jumps, and then just dropped over dead.

Even that didn't rouse Lefty much. I wanted the skin off that deer, because it was the first that I had ever shot, but Lefty hadn't any heart in the work, and finally I said: "I don't really care much about the hide, and it's getting pretty late——"

You know how you say things when you really don't mean them? But Lefty quit right there and took me at my word.

We had broiled venison steak that night—almost the best thing that there is in the world. Particular when you pick it right off the tree, as you might say. That supper didn't mean much to Lefty. He would forget to eat after a couple of bites, and begin to look at something ahead of him.

The next day we headed down out of the mountains. The way that Lefty drove poor Tippety was a shame to see. He was in a hurry; he would near have killed a horse that wasn't as tough as Tippety. That buckskin wouldn't drop. The last mile that he had done that day his knees was still coming up high, and his step still had a lot of spring and snap to it.

Finally, Lefty brought that horse up on the edge of a valley. It was dished out there before you, very pretty and complete. It looked like a picture. Lefty, quite a-thrill, sat there in the rig, and he dragged off his hat, letting the wind ruffle his hair. His face looked mighty queer.

I said: "Lefty, are you maybe sick?"

He said: "This is home!"

And me having been thinking that he would never be bothered with such an idea as "Home!" It was a shock to me—the first shock, with a bigger one coming. You would never have tried to tie Lefty down to any one place. He should have belonged to the whole wide world! Now that I saw him weakening, I begun to have a lot of fears of him.

Even Smiler noticed that something was wrong. He put his paws up on the back of the seat and whined right in the ear of Lefty.

"That's home," said Lefty. "That's Perigord!"

He said it soft and low, the way that you would speak of your dead mother, or a couple of dead aunts, maybe.

There were hills, pretty steep on the sides, but not too steep for the cows to be grazing along them, sprinkling little spots of color all over. Outside of those hills there were mountains right in a circle all around you, going right up to snow all the year round. Underneath the hills, that valley spread out smooth and gentle, coming down to the banks of a river that went moseying along, taking its time, looking at everything, spreading itself out for a nap in a string of ponds, and then turning in for a real sleep in a jim-dandy lake that was about half of the length of that valley. Then it started on again, sneaked around the lower corner of the valley and dived under the hills and the foundations of those mountains, so that it could get away.

All over the floor of that valley there were patches of trees stuck down here and there. Inside of every patch, nearly, you would see the roof of a house—red or yellow, mostly. A pair of white roads streaked along on each side of the river; down by the side of the lake there was a little town standing. It was wonderful how clear you could see it, looking down, like that, in spite of the mist rising up out of the valley like steam in a glass.

You could look right through that mist and see the town, as if it was lying behind a handful of blue smoke. You could see the sun reflecting from the steeple of the church; the weathercock on the top of it was just a little diamond of light. You could see the streets,

too, and the houses, a good ways apart from one another, with orchards in every big back yard.

Lefty looked more foolish than a man ought to, just on account of a little old town like that. Then he threw up a hand and hid his eyes.

"I'll never go back!" said Lefty, almost crying.

He give Tippety a jerk, turned him away and drove him right on down the road. Pretty soon we had a wheel in the ditch at one side of the road, so that I could tell that he was driving blind. It scared me, too, the way that it does when you see a growed-up man acting like that.

It was pretty lucky that we didn't hit any trees or a rock, because, though Lefty was looking straight ahead of him, he didn't see anything. Tippety came into a little round clearing with a wall of trees all around him and being tired, stopped.

"Hello," said Lefty, as cheerful as a man that had an arm cut off. "Hello, here we are in a place made to order for us. A pretty good camp, eh?"

I didn't stop to find out if he meant what he said. I was so glad to see him *trying* to be happy, that I tumbled out of that rig and had the fire started in about a jiffy. I rattled the pans and the pots out from the back of the buggy.

All at once I saw that Lefty was standing there with one of the tugs in his hand, stabbing away to make a knot and tie it up, but not making progress at all. Then he let that tug fall, and he said: "You start things. I'll be back in a minute. I think that I saw a rabbit out yonder that would look pretty good in a stew to-night."

He went off without his rifle, and a man don't go shooting rabbits with a revolver, unless he has lots of ammunition and is an extra special fine shot, which Lefty was not. I saw right away that he was going to go down into the valley, in spite of what he had said.

I sung out as cheerful as I could: "All right, Lefty. But come back quick, because the coffee is gunna be boiled pretty sudden!"

He didn't answer me, only said to Smiler: "Go back! Get away from my heels!"

All the courage and the happiness leaked right out of me. But I kept on bellowing away and singing because I knew that if I stopped making a noise, once, I would be lost. I had a supper just about cooked up when I had to stop because of the way that Smiler was acting. He had come sneaking back into the clearing with his tail between his legs, and he lay down over under a tree, put his head down on his paws and flattened out his ears. Every now and then he gave a shiver like he was sick at the stomach.

I went over to him, finally, and though he never did like me to touch him, I couldn't help reaching down and patting him a mite. Well, sir, that dog raised up his head and looked at me with terrible sad eyes, and he actually give my hand a lick or two.

Not that I mattered. But being down low like that, a little attention from me, even, helped him not to feel quite so sick. Well, I was just as sick as he was. Or sicker. I figured that here was the plumb end of our good times.

Finally I left the coffee to boil and went along with Smiler, who had followed me to the edge of the clearing and whined. I said: "Sure, you come along too, if you want to. He's a lot more likely to come back for you than he is for me!"

Smiler was ahead of me in one jump —not too far, though. He just danced along on his toes, like he was held on a leash, and he kept looking back to me to tell me please to get a wiggle on and hurry along, or we would lose him.

I let Smiler lead along.

It was turning dusk. The sun was down. The west end of the valley was

dark, but there was still some red behind my back, and the lake in the hollow hand of the valley was like an apple, yellow and red, very dim.

We went down the slope and hit the town. The streets were all dark. We came along past the houses with their windows lit, the sprinklers all swishing on the lawns, a different smell out of every garden and a different smell out of every kitchen. You could tell just what was happening—cabbage—the burned smell of a good steak—onions fried—onions boiled—coffee—and the best of all was bacon, which is the sweetest thing there is, when you are that hungry.

Then Smiler ducked back quick behind me, and I knew that Lefty must be just ahead.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE GIRL HE LEFT BEHIND HIM.

IT was scent telling Smiler that that was as far as it was safe for him to go. When I got to the place where the dog had stopped, I couldn't see a thing. There was just a hedge in front of a little house. But when I slid through a hole at the bottom of the hedge, I saw him right away. He was standing up close to a window at the side of a house. I slipped around behind him, very soft, to see what was holding him there. There was a kitchen, and a woman walking around inside of it.

I got just a flash of her sailing by the window with a steaming pan of something in her hands. Lefty folded his hands over his face and dropped his head. I thought it was most likely his mother or something, that he should of been taking care of, instead of bumming around the way that he was doing.

Then I saw that woman come sashaying back across that window again, with a heaped-up white bowl of something good to eat, her face red and happy, the back of her white apron all sailing out behind her.

Right then all of my sympathy for Lefty jumped away from me; I almost had a contempt for him. It was not a woman at all; it was only a girl, only a pretty girl, with her hair done up into a knot at the back of her head, all flushed up and happy because she was taking into the dining room something that was good to eat.

This was the thing that had brought Lefty a hundred miles across the mountains; this was the thing that had made him run off from Smiler and me and come down into the valley! A girl!

I have seen boys act foolish about little girls. But a man acting that way about a growed-up girl was something almost too much for me. I tried to make it out, but I couldn't.

"Jiminy! Lefty, what's the matter? You've pretty near broke the heart of Smiler!" I said, going up to him. He didn't give a start, he was only sort of dazed. He took me by the arm, and he led me over by the hedge saying: "I don't know what to do, kid. I don't know whether to go in and see her—I don't know whether I'd dare to do that!"

I said: "If she's as mean as that, let's get out of this here Perigord and get away into the mountains again."

"You don't understand," said Lefty. "She's not mean. Only, she's too good to be true. Too good for any man to stand up and lie to her. The way that I would have to lie if I went in to see her."

"Then don't lie!" I answered.

He *did* give a start, then. Finally he said: "I'm not sure but that you're right. And yet—how could I do it? How could I go in there and tell her what a useless, worthless loafer I am?"

I said: "Here's Smiler. Are you going to speak to him?"

He answered: "The devil with Smiler!"

It pretty near finished Lefty, so far as I was concerned. You wouldn't believe that a man like him could talk that way! But he was all upset. It was easy to see that he was in love. And from all that I can make out, there ain't anything half so unreasonable and mean and selfish as that. Poor Smiler stayed there in the background wagging his tail in a hopeful way every time he heard the voice of his boss. He never got noticed.

Lefty was thinking things over. At last he said: "We've got to bluff our way through. Look here: You're a boy whom I've been giving music lessons to. Singing lessons, and your rich parents, in San Francisco, have sent you out with me through the mountains to recuperate—you understand?"

"Why, Lefty," said I, "have I got the lingo that would go with polite folks that have a lot of money?"

"No," said he. "That's right."

"And do I look as if I had ever needed any recuperating in my whole life?"

"Don't make things any harder for me than they are," said Lefty. "It's not so easy to make up a lie that will stand telling in front of her!"

Then he thought for a minute and he said: "Yes, that will have to do. You have had scarlet fever and been pretty sick. And the doctor wanted you to have a long vacation and have your strength built up. You haven't a very polite lingo, as you say. We'll explain that. Your father is a farmer in the San Joaquin valley. His brother died, left him a lot of money—and he went to San Francisco and built himself a fine house there."

"Why do I have to be rich at all?"

"Because your dad has to foot the bill for this vacation. Why else would I be wandering around through the hills with a kid of your age? You understand?"

I said that I did.

"Did you ever hear much about San Francisco?" said he.

I remembered something out of a geography book.

"It is out in Mexico," I told Lefty. "They have the bullfights there and just——"

He gave a groan.

"California, you young idiot! And I haven't much time to tell you about it. But in case she should ask you any questions, ever, you remember it is like this."

He was so excited that he began to draw a map on the ground with his finger. How could I see that map in the dark? Love makes a man like that, you know, sort of crazy.

"Here's a big bay. Berkeley over here. And Oakland. Boats go across. Big ferry boats. Take people to San Francisco. That town is out here on a peninsula with the Golden Gate at the end of it. Some of the big streets are Market Street and Kearney Street. Y'understand?"

My head was spinning, but I said I did.

He stood up with a big sigh of relief.

"All right," he said. "Then we'll go in. Her name is Kate Perigord. One of her ancestors was the frog that found this valley and settled it a long ways back. He gave his name to it. And you've heard me speak of her often, you see?"

We were almost to the house by that time.

"And what about Smiler?" said I.

"Come along with me. Here, Smiler. Come here!"

Smiler just turned himself inside out at being taken back into the company of his boss. He wiggled his tail so hard it made his head all shake, he was that glad. He wiggled so hard that when we stood on the porch, his feet kept moving a little and scratching. And Lefty rang the bell.

"There's that boy with the milk," sang out a girl's voice. "I'll give him fits for being so late, you better believe!"

"It's her!" said Lefty very hoarse. "Kid, be my true friend; you stand here and let her see you first, will you?"

Now, wasn't that disgusting?

But I never seen a woman yet that ever made me back up, excepting Aunt Claudia, who had the right of whacking me, and used it so good and plenty. Down come this girl with her heels tapping along the hall and pretty soon the door was snatched open.

"Billy Murphy," she sings out, "you little rascal, what made you so late with —oh, you're not Billy Murphy at all, are you!"

Well, it was pretty easy. Even when she yanked the door open and acted like she wanted to eat me, you could tell that she didn't really mean nothing by it. Her voice kept as soft as anything. And now she was laughing down at me and blushing a little. It seemed a lot more natural for her than the other way of acting.

She was what you might call pretty. She had yellow hair, quite a lot of it, and blue eyes, and altogether she looked healthy and fine. I didn't feel near so hostile toward her as I would of felt to any other girl, hardly. I pulled on my cap and I said: "Are you Miss Perigord?"

She said that she was. And then I stepped back a little.

"A friend of mine is here that wants a lot to see you," said I. Lefty came up a step with his hat crumpled all up in his hands. He just said: "Kate!"

She leaned a hand against the door and says "Billy!" in a whisper.

Turning around quick I called Smiler. For the first time in his life that dog—dog-goned if he didn't mind me!—came down the steps along with me.

The door closed when I got down to the foot of the steps; I didn't have to turn around to see whether Lefty was inside or not. I just knew!

What beat me more than almost anything was for her to call him Billy. I knew a pie-faced butcher's son in Gunther that was called by that name. We had a good fight once, and what I give him was enough to cure him of a name like that. There is only one thing worse —Willie. I never could understand why women got to put a "y" or an "ie" on the end of a name. What would I have thought, say, if Lefty had called the Smiler "Smilie?"

"You can't beat womenfolks. They are naturally queer and have to take roundabout ways to get at everything!

I sat down on a stone in the garden, and Smiler came right up and pressed against my knee. Now and then he would give a quick look up and give his tail a waggle, like he was saying: "Well, you're still here. I got you still, and you're something, though you ain't very much!" Then he would fix himself again, all rigid, and stare at that door, saying as plain as day: "Why the devil don't he come out? What's holding him? Say, Sammy, shall we go in and see if he is in trouble?"

CHAPTER XVIII.

SMILER TAKES THE FLOOR.

THE door of the house busted wide open, and the girl ran all the way down the steps.

"Heavens!" she exclaimed. "How rude I have been! And where could he have gone?"

I got up and came into the light. She caught my arm and took me into the house.

"I don't know how it was," she said. "The wind must have slammed the door, and so you were shut out. And I was so excited about seeing Billy again——"

Oh, well, what was the use? You

could see that she had been crying. There was two streaks down the front of her face. It wasn't the heat of the kitchen stove that had made her red and shining.

She carted me down the hall, saying that she had a room where she would be awful delighted to have us, and then: "Why, Billy, you haven't told me the name of your pupil!"

There was one thing about Lefty's lying that you had to admit. If it wasn't so exciting, it was mighty quick, at least. He had been saying "how do you do" to that girl and hugging her—and also he had been cried over some. Yet he had managed to tell about me all in between the important spots of what was happening to him. I appreciated that real well.

A wild look in Lefty's eyes told me that he was stumbling over a little thing like a name. No, it wasn't that which was bothering him, but a great, big lot of useless emotion—love, that he was packing around loose inside of him. So I cut in quick and easy and said that I was Sam Jackson, and that I was pleased to meet her, which she was the same to me. We went up the stairs. And the bathroom was here—and our door was right next, so it would be handy—and would we mind a double bed? No, we wouldn't—and how stuffy the room got with the window down—which she raised it, or started to, only Lefty beat her to it. They gave each other terrible sickening smiles while that was going on——

Anyhow, we got up to the room safe. And then would we wash our hands and come downstairs because the boarders was all through with their supper, by this time, and there would be a pair of places laid for us?

Then she noticed Smiler. He had turned himself so small that you could hardly see him. All he wanted to do was to disappear complete, if only he could just stay around at the heels of his boss. He had managed to sneak in through the front door and trailed us right along.

"I forgot," said Lefty, real cruel. "I forgot that you don't allow dogs in the house."

"I can put him out in the back yard to keep company with old Bruno," says Kate.

"We have no muzzle for Smiler," I put in quick, seeing Lefty look wild again.

"Oh," said Kate, "is this a fighting dog?"

She lifted her eyebrows and pulled herself together just as though she had said: "Poison."

It made me mad—awful mad. Now, what good is a dog for, if it won't fight?

I saw red when I saw that look on her face, and I couldn't help busting in: "No, ma'am, he ain't a fighting dog; he just inhales the other dog, and that's all there is to it. There wouldn't be much pain for Bruno!"

Lefty gave me one terrible look, as if to say: "Now you have stabbed me to the heart!"

"H'm!" said the girl. "He don't *look* so terrible vicious."

"Ma'am," I said, "a sawed-off shotgun is mighty peaceful looking, too, unless you stand in front of the muzzle with a pair of eyes looking down at you."

I thought poor Lefty would die. I hardly cared if he did. I was just wild to think of him turning against old Smiler like that for the sake of what? A girl! You wouldn't believe it if you hadn't been right there to see.

"As dangerous as that?" said Kate Perigord. "Well, I just don't believe you! Nice old doggie, you're not so savage, are you——"

She stretched out her hand and leaned over——

"G-r-r!" growled Smiler, and seventeen green devils jumped right up and

shined out of his eyes. All the fur along his back stood up so's you could see the skin under it.

"Smiler!" Lefty yelled.

Good old Smiler gave one quick glance at his boss' face, and one quick waggle of his tail. Then he turned around again and faced the girl.

He knew she was dangerous. Don't you tell me that he didn't. He had seen her take his Lefty right in her hand, snatch him into the house and keep him there some mighty long seconds. He liked her about five hundred times less than he had liked Tiger.

"You don't have to speak to him like that, Billy," she said. "*I* am not afraid of him!"

Now, wouldn't that beat you? She was big enough, you know, but sort of soft like a baby around the mouth and the chin. Taking her all in all, she looked like the kind that would cry easy and laugh easy. But here she was not backing up a step from that man-eating dog!

She said: "I have never hurt that dog. And he won't hurt me. There's no reason why he should!"

You see how she reasoned? Like a baby! She hadn't hurt poor Smiler, when all she had done was take away his boss, which was more to him than both lungs and his fighting teeth!

"Good old boy!" said Kate Perigord. "*I* am not afraid of you. *I* think you're just a sweet old thing——"

It was disgusting to hear that talk; it was something else to see the devil dancing in that dog's eyes.

"Kate," said Lefty, "don't—for Heaven's sake! I tell you—the brute is really dangerous—but if you insist, I'll sort of introduce you——"

She staggered me again—like a swift right hook coming when you're expecting a straight left.

She said: "Just leave it to me, Billy. *I'm* not worried by your silly dog. I've never been bitten yet. And I won't be bitten now by a dog that I've never harmed. Good old Smiler—that's a sweet puppy—will you shake hands with a new friend and get a——"

"Grr-r-r-ah-h!" growled Smiler, backing into Lefty's legs.

He stepped out of that quick, though. Perhaps he was lifted at the end of Lefty's toe. I give you my word that just for growling a little at that girl, Lefty kicked that dog right across the room, throwing him into the opposite corner.

It happened that I was standing in that corner. Smiler gave me one look and one waggle as he crushed up against my legs, whining—saying as plain as day: "Stick with me, Sammy. The boss is plumb crazy. Stick with me and help to see me through. But I won't see that snake around him——"

I was so wild that I couldn't even yip for a minute. Just as I was about to turn loose and blast that Lefty away from a lot of poor ideas, and maybe hurt that girl's ears with a kind of vocabulary that she never heard before—well, right then I was stopped by somebody else taking the wind out of my sails.

It was the girl!

She said, all trembling because she was so mad: "Billy Chelton, I've never seen such a brutal thing in my life! And I'll never see such a thing again. You—you ought to be horsewhipped—if I were a man—kicking a poor little puppy senseless——"

There was seventy pounds of that puppy standing between my legs, with a weather eye out for Lefty, just shaking with eagerness to put a tooth in the girl that was standing up for him——

It was just flabbergasting!

"Oh, Kate," said Lefty, "I love that dog better than my own flesh. How can you talk like that about him? Only, I really thought that the white devil might hurt you——"

"Stuff!" said Kate. "It is brutal

treatment which has ruined the disposition of that poor little dog!"

Then, it seemed to me that I got a great, big light busting all over my mind; I saw why that girl loved that scamp, Lefty. She was one of them that can't love anything but a lost cause. And Lefty was a lost cause, you see. This mean dog was a lost cause. And the meaner and stranger and wilder things was, the more she would love them!

CHAPTER XIX.

A GREAT IMAGINATION.

WHEN an idea like that comes bulging its way into your head without being invited, it sort of takes your wind. I only followed in a general way what happened after that. Kate got more merciful to Lefty when he called the dog over to him. Smiler came over and had seventeen conniption fits.

When Smiler wanted to make friends and tell his boss how sorry he was that he had done anything wrong, he would go through all of his tricks. He would walk on his front legs and then on his hind legs, lie down like dead, turn a somersault over in the air, and always wind up by sitting up and begging. He did all those things, one right after another, very quick. Lefty just gave him a grin and said, "Good boy, Smiler!"

That was the signal that everything was forgiven. Smiler dropped down on his haunches, began to sweep the floor with his tail and worship Lefty with his eyes.

Kate saw that she had followed the wrong lead. It was pretty nice, I had to admit, to see the way she said that she was sorry that she had said so many things, some of them not being deserved.

We all went down to the supper table, with the Smiler quite considerably in the house and in the party. I should say that he was!

He was extremely polite to Miss Perigord, having had his lesson. Smiler would stand around out of her way and not even notice that she was in the same room with him. The more distant he got, the more friendly *she* got. She would drop down on a knee while she was passing back and forth from the dining room to the kitchen. She would call him pet names, which made him roll his eyes over at Lefty mighty sick. She would offer him cake, or even meat, but Smiler wouldn't notice her any more than if she wasn't there at all.

"I *can't* understand it!" said Kate. "I've never had a dog treat me like that before, and I won't stop until I've found out what there is about me that he doesn't like. Oh, I know what it is! He doesn't like white! And white *is* a strain on the eyes, isn't it? I'll see!"

You couldn't stop her. She tore out of the room.

Lefty left off eating, and *he* got up and began to pace up and down the room.

He would say: "Now, you're a bright kid, Sammy, but I want you to tell me, man to man, did you ever see a girl like her before?"

I could only grunt.

"Tell me the truth! Can you see anything wrong in her? Could you *change* anything about her? I just ask you that—could you *change* anything about her? No, you could not. Her hair and her eyes match just exact. And her height is perfect, for me, and she's twenty-two, which is the perfect age for a girl—young but not kiddish—full of sweetness. What a heart of gold she has! Tell me, Sammy, could you imagine her improved?"

What could you say? Or what could you do except to pity a man that had it as bad as all that?

Back comes the girl, in another minute; she had put on something in green and yellow gingham very easy to look at, and crinkly.

"Now see if he still doesn't like me!" said Kate.

As hard as the girl looked at Smiler, Smiler looked over to his boss, and his boss looked at Kate. It was like a circle. Smiler wouldn't let himself see that girl for half of a second. He had been kicked on her account once and he wasn't taking any chances!

Finally I told her that it was no good feeling so bad; nobody in the world could do anything with that dog excepting Lefty himself; that I had wasted more hours than you could shake a stick at, but that it didn't make any difference. She felt a little better after that. We settled down then and finished supper.

It was an extra fine supper. After cooking at camp fires, a little home cooking tastes almost too good to be true. As a cook, Kate was something extra. You see, she ran a regular boarding house there and supported herself pretty good. She did all the cooking herself and just had one girl servant to do all the cleaning and such. She was extremely cheerful about it, telling us what a fine gang of boarders she had, making her work nothing more than a lark, because they was all so nice. If she could afford it she would want to keep them all for nothing, just for the pleasure of their company.

There was a school-teacher who knew about everything that was to be knowed, and though she was only about forty years old, she was teaching the eighth grade, so you could see how clever she was. There was a female doctor who was the grand prize, who stayed there because Kate did little extra things for her such as running errands any time of night or day, carrying up her breakfast tray to her bed and waiting on her. There was an old building contractor who had retired from business; he was just lying around, taking things easy; he could tell most wonderful yarns about what he had done. There was a bricklayer who was a fine fellow, Kate said, outside of getting drunk every Saturday and spending all his money, owing her about three weeks' rent. There were six others, about the same kind.

It was a sight to see her telling how grand all her boarders was. Every once in a while Lefty, who was listening very serious, would wrinkle up the side of his face that was towards me and wink. I could hardly keep a straight face.

After a while, I went on up to bed, and Lefty and Kate stayed downstairs. Right in the middle of getting into bed I remembered that poor, old Tippety was up there in the hills with half of his harness on. I slid out and dressed and sneaked out of the window. I got to Tippety in about an hour.

You would have laughed to see him. He had that harness all wrapped around his feet; it had tangled him up and tripped him, and he had fallen down. Almost any other horse would have set to work to kick right out of that harness, but Tippety was no fool. He just lay there and he had eaten away all the grass that was near him by the time I come up.

He give me a whinny as much as to say that he hadn't seen anything better than me for a long time. I got his feet unwrapped, after a while, and he got up and gave a run around and kicked up his heels. He was a fine, little horse, tough as iron and nice as pie! When he had run the kinks out of his legs, he came back to me, and stood there and let me harness him up.

I drove him back down the valley to the town. I took him into the first livery stable and left him mighty snug, stamping in his stall and trying to stand on his nose in the feed box, he was so anxious to get that barley all down in one swallow.

I wanted Lefty to know what I had done, so I hurried back, feeling pretty

proud of myself. Thinking he would be about ready to go to bed by this time, I went around to the back of the house to climb up over the kitchen porch.

Just as I turned around the edge of the hedge I saw them sitting in a hammock stretched between a couple of apple trees with the moon throwing a black dappling of shadow all over them.

It came over me that they would think that I was spying on them, and I would rather have died than to have them think anything like that. So I dropped right onto the ground and flattened out there.

Kate was saying: "That must have been wonderful, Billy dear!"

"Oh, no," said Lefty. "But the gate receipts were rather pleasant."

"I suppose that the papers were filled with the story the next day, about how well you played!"

"I paid no attention to that. These little provincial reviews, Kate——"

"Oh, but people in big towns are just the same as people in little towns!"

"Don't you think so! When we're married, our first long stop will be Paris, and there I'll show you the difference!"

"Paris!" cried Kate.

"As soon as the kid is really well and I've sent him home."

"He doesn't seem sickly, does he?"

"No, he doesn't. But that's the way with lung trouble. Very often there's a sort of hectic flush——"

I couldn't wait any longer there. I began to worm my way back behind the hedge—mighty hot. I was so ashamed of the whoppers that Lefty was telling that poor girl. I would never have believed it! Telling lies to some is real fun, because it's a sort of a sporting proposition, but lying to her was all the world just like taking candy away from a baby.

As fast as I could shinny up the column on the front porch, I got back into the room. When Lefty came in, I breathed deep and regular like I was asleep. I didn't dare to wake up, because if I had, I would of told him to his face just what a low sneak and crook that he was.

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

INDIAN BELIEF SAFEGUARDS COYOTES

THERE are more coyotes in the Klamath Indian reservation in Oregon than in any other part of the Northwest. This is due to the fact that government trappers are prevented by the Klamath Indians from carrying on their work against these animals. The Indians believe that men are changed into coyotes after death and they see in the coyotes that infest the reservation, members of their tribe who have gone to the happy hunting ground.

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND SILVER FOXES FOR OREGON

SILVER fox breeders in Prince Edward Island recently shipped what is probably the most valuable consignment of fur-bearing animals in the history of the fur industry. The shipment consisted of one hundred black and silver foxes, all of which were purchased by a company operating a large fur farm in Oregon. The value of the shipment was estimated at one hundred thousand dollars.

Pioneer Towns of the West

Omaha

By Erle Wilson

Author of "Seattle," etc.

IN 1803 when Lewis and Clark were penetrating the wilds of the unknown West their boats were borne by the waters of the Missouri to the present location of Omaha, Nebraska. Here the explorers made camp, later describing the site in their journal as "a high, handsome prairie, with lofty cottonwoods in groves near the river." This beautiful spot was situated on the west bank of the Missouri River, about twenty miles above the mouth of the Platte.

A quarter of a century after the pioneer explorers camped on the grassy plateau a trader put up a cabin there. This was Omaha's first building. A short time later it became a licensed Indian post; it played an important part in Western history during the exciting days when the discovery of gold in California called forth the great pilgrimage to the Pacific coast. Along with the Forty-niners came the Mormons on their way to Salt Lake City, and to break the long overland journey they established winter quarters near the pioneer Nebraskan town.

In the midst of these frontier movements Omaha began to thrive. As early as 1854 it was plotted, the selected name of "Omaha" being that of a tribe of Indians who had wandered from their original home in Minnesota to Nebraska. The town was chartered as a city in 1857, lots being given free to settlers who would build on them. During the Colorado gold rush of the following year Omaha was the foremost trading post in the West.

Prairie freighting and Missouri River navigation made this city a trade center from its earliest days. In 1860 the first telegraph line entered the town, connecting it with St. Louis. The first rail of the Union Pacific Railroad was laid in Omaha in 1865, this line being completed four years later. Two important military stations were established in the pioneer town, these being Fort Omaha in 1868 and Fort Crook in 1888. These forts still exist, Omaha being at the present time the headquarters of the Seventh Corps area of the United States Army.

To-day Omaha, with its population of 204,382 people, is a thriving metropolis. One reason for this activity is the fact that it is nearer the geographical center of the United States than any other large city. This so-called "Gate City of the West," the nation's fourth railroad center, is located on thirteen national and interstate high-

ways, and is the midway point on the transcontinental air-mail route.

Situated in the heart of the great corn belt, Omaha is the third corn market in America. It is one of the three largest live-stock and packing centers in the country and the greatest butter manufacturing center in the world. It leads in production of pig lead, is third in the manufacture of packing house products, as well as the third largest fur market west of the Mississippi River.

Elevated 1,123 feet above sea level Omaha has a healthy, dry climate. This city is unique in the fact that it has no tenements or slums, and that nearly fifty per cent of its citizens own their homes. Within its limits are twenty-three public parks connected by a boulevard system. In Elmwood Park is located one of the finest tourist camps in the United States. Omaha also has the best one-mile race track in the West.

This city has supervised playgrounds, efficient public schools, and is the location of Creighton University, the University of Omaha, the Medical College of the University of Nebraska, as well as a Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

Omaha has the commission form of city government, and municipally owned water, gas and ice plants. James C. Dahlman is the mayor of the city, having served in this capacity for eighteen years, or six terms in the last twenty-one years.

Other prominent citizens of Omaha are John L. Kennedy, president of the Omaha Chamber of Commerce, financier, active civic worker and former congressman; Ford E. Hover, banker and chairman of the executive committee of the chamber of commerce; Carl R. Gray, president of the Union Pacific Railroad; Walter W. Head, bank president and past president of the American Bankers' Association; Gilbert M. Hitchcock, former senator and publisher of the *Omaha World-Herald;* and Doctor Harold B. Gifford, eye specialist of national reputation.

In next week's issue Fort Smith, Arkansas, will be described.

AIRPLANE TO AID PLACER REGION

A REPORT from Spokane, Washington, states that an airplane which can carry fairly large loads of steel, pipe, implements, provisions, and other supplies is being used for the purpose of developing a rich but inaccessible placer mining section in the Clearwater country around Iron Mountain, Montana, and extending into northern Idaho. More than a month is required for the transportation of the needed supplies for the enterprise.

WESTERN CANADA'S SUNFLOWER CROP

DESPISED as a worthless weed a few years ago, sunflowers have developed into an important silage crop in western Canada lately. Last year, Alberta produced a sunflower crop of nearly two hundred thousand tons. Two dollars a ton was the estimated cost of all production. Considering the high food value of the crop, agriculturists consider it the cheapest silage or fodder crop that can he raised.

WS
WB

The Gunless Sheriff

By
Albert William Stone

Author of "Shot in the Lock," etc.

IT wasn't so funny that "Blazer" Coakley should unlimber his brace of six-guns on election day and proceed to let daylight through certain and sundry portions of Bill Sawyer's anatomy. Blazer Coakley had a temper that flared on any and all occasions, if conditions were right, and Bill Sawyer had a habit of being mighty annoying when he had a few shots of Lone Mountain moonshine in his system. It was the sort of combination that made for an eruption as naturally as dynamite explodes when you touch off a percussion cap in its immediate vicinity.

The funny thing about it was that Sam Monk should have been elected sheriff that very day, on a law-and-order platform. You get the funny part of it when you understand that Sam's election was due to Blazer Coakley's personal work and political influence. It helped to carry Sam into office about a lap and a half ahead of Pete Galloway, who was, in consequence, defeated for the first time in fourteen years.

In other words, Sam Monk was now faced with the uncomfortable job of arresting the very man responsible for his election—for violating the first plank of the new law-and-order platform. That being that any Carson County citizen caught trying to make a sieve out of any other citizen, regardless of sex, race, or previous state of inebriety, must tell a jury of his peers how come.

Pete Galloway kept office one week after election day. When the new sheriff ambled in to take over the official badge and other equipment appertaining thereto, Pete gave a mean grin that exhibited most of his stumpy teeth.

"Reckon yuh'll enjoy yuhr first official act," he remarked amiably. "Knowin' yuh'd want th' job as th' new law-an'-order sheriff, Sam, I thought I'd leave th' arrestin' o' Blazer Coakley to yuh. As the author of the law-an'-order platform, Blazer will shore appreciate the honor—same as yuh will."

It was Pete's idea of a joke. Blazer Coakley had punctured quite a number of citizens in his career. He was quicker on the draw than most, and a dead shot. While Sam Monk had the reputation of being the most peaceable individual in the stormy history of Carson County, or of the whole Hardscrabble country, for that matter. He carried his pacifism to such extremes that he was never known to wear a gun, his theory being that it was six shooters on the hip that landed so many residents of Lost Springs on the south slope of Evergreen Hill.

"It's the gent with the gun that gits

hisself punctured liberal an' frequent," Sam phrased it. "Nobody's goin' to draw on a hombre that's plumb unarmed."

As Sam had lived to the ripe old age of fifty-two without smelling powder burned in his specific behalf, his theory appeared sound. He was bald-headed and thickset, with shoulders like a barn door and arms like a gorilla's. He kept his gray mustache turned up at the ends in open defiance of Carson County tonsorial fashion. He had a mild blue eye and a stubborn-looking chin, which he kept shaved so clean that it shone in the sun. His bowlegs attested the years he had punched cows from the back of a cayuse. He never talked unless it was necessary.

Ten minutes after Pete Galloway had taken his personal property and departed, the new sheriff telephoned Blazer Coakley's ranch. The chink cook told him that Blazer was out in the corral roping himself a horse, preparatory to riding up Bearcat Gulch on a tour of inspection.

"Tell him I want to speak to him," the sheriff directed.

When Blazer came to the telephone he was a trifle impatient at the summons.

"Hello!" he snapped out. "What's wanted?"

"It's Sam Monk," the sheriff replied. "Jest took office, Blazer." The two had known each other all their lives, having ridden herd together many a time in their puncher days. "Thought I'd better tell yuh, so yuh could ride in an' see me."

"Oh," said Blazer, a little less abruptly, "it's yuh, is it? Glad yuh called. I'll ride in an' have a talk with yuh when I get time. Some matters we'll want to go over, I reckon."

"Better come in right away," Sam suggested mildly.

"Can't. Got to look over some o' my stuff up the gulch. I'll try to make it next week—say about Tuesday mornin'."

The sheriff coughed apologetically. "Better make it *this* mornin'," he said. "It's that little shootin' affair of 'lection day, Blazer."

"Well, what of it?" Blazer's tone wasn't quite so cordial. "I can't give any more attention to it—not now, anyhow. Sawyer dead?"

"Not that I know of."

"Then what are yuh botherin' me about it for? I reckon I'm gittin' tenderhearted in my old age, or I'd have fixed him right while I was about it. Maybe I was thinkin' about our law-an'-order platform." The rancher laughed at his own joke. "I'll see yuh next week."

He was about to hang up when the sheriff's voice, suddenly transformed, stopped him.

"Yuh don't seem to git what I'm drivin' at, Blazer," it said. "I'm orderin' yuh to come in an' give yuhrself up. Savvy? Right away."

The announcement appeared to stagger the man at the other end of the wire for a moment. He breathed heavily—so heavily that the sheriff could hear him. There was an ominous pause.

"Let me get this straight," Blazer said presently. When occasion demanded he could talk as straight as a college professor. "You mean you're trying to arrest me for shooting Bill Sawyer on election day?"

"That's it exactly."

Another pause. Then: "I suppose you're joking, Sam. I'm sure I *hope* so. But if you're not, I'm telling you right now that when any two-bit sheriff arrests *me*, it'll be when I'm tied hand and foot and clean loco in the bargain. Savvy, Sam?"

He waited. Sam cleared his throat with a rasp that tickled Blazer Coakley's ear.

"I savvy this, Blazer," he said slowly. "I savvy that I was elected sheriff o' this county to maintain law an' order.

Don't make no difference how much I owe my election to yuh, neither. Yuh pulled down on Bill Sawyer, an' maybe he'll die; I dunno. Anyhow, yuh've busted th' law, an' I'm givin' yuh this here chance to give yuhrself up peaceable. If yuh ain't in my office by noon, sharp, I'm comin' after yuh."

"Then come shootin', yuh——"

The sheriff hung up, and was therefore spared the string of epithets poured into the mouthpiece by the hot-tempered Blazer Coakley. It lacked two hours of noon; the Coakley Ranch was only four miles away. Coakley would have plenty of time to ride into Lost Springs if he cared to give himself up, or to prepare himself against any effort the sheriff might make to take him by force. Knowing Blazer as he did, Sam Monk did not waste any time contemplating the possibility of the latter alternative. He busied himself about the office, his eyes troubled and his chin set stubbornly.

"Slim" Warner, the hold-over deputy, sauntered in shortly before twelve o'clock. Slim wondered if the change of administration would make any difference in his connection with the sheriff's office.

"Howdy, sheriff," he greeted elaborately. "Anything yuh want me to do?"

"Stay here an' watch things a spell," Sam returned. "I'm goin' out to arrest Blazer Coakley fer that 'lection-day shootin', I reckon—that is, unless he comes in an' gives hisself up by noon."

Slim nodded. His former chief had talked it over with him. They had wondered if the new sheriff would have the temerity to attempt the arrest of the most powerful man in Carson County.

"Better heel yuhrself good," Slim advised briskly. "Coakley's a stem-winder with his guns. Likewise," he added, his recklessness due to the probability that his job was gone anyhow, "he's got some funny ideas about friendship. If he gits th' drop on yuh he's apt to shoot yuh full o' holes first, an' then reproach yuh with bein' a durn pore friend afterward. What's more, that outfit o' hisn would do anythin' fer him. You'll have to arrest th' hull bunch, I reckon. An' that outfit has got a prejudice ag'in bein' arrested, any time, anywhere."

"I reckon I oughta know him pretty well," the sheriff said dryly. "An' I don't aim to take no gun. If I can't arrest a respectable citizen like Blazer without usin' a shootin' iron, what's the use of this here law-an'-order thing we been talkin' about?"

This time the deputy stared, open-mouthed.

"Mean to say you're goin' to tackle Blazer Coakley without a *gun?*"

"That's what I mean." The sheriff stepped outdoors and critically inspected the cinch strap of his sorrel cow horse. The amazed deputy followed him out. "I reckon Blazer ain't goin' to crack down on a gent that don't pack a gun. It ain't my fault if Blazer happened to be th' first to run foul o' the law ag'in shootin' humans in Carson County."

"No, an' maybe it won't be yuhr fault if he starts shootin before he finds out what a peaceable sheriff is tryin' to arrest him," Slim Warner retorted scornfully. "I'm right here to tell yuh, sheriff, the gent don't live that kin keep law an' order in Carson County without burnin' powder. It ain't natural. How d'yuh reckon yuh'll ever take 'The Roper that a way?"

"The Roper don't use no gun either, most of the time," the sheriff said stubbornly.

"He's a dog-gone good hand with a rope, though. An' he works from cover. Yuh ain't aimin' to take Blazer Coakley Roper' that a way?"

The sheriff looked at his big silver watch. The hands pointed to exactly twelve o'clock. He swung into the saddle and gathered up the reins. His star gleamed on the lapel of his cor-

duroy coat. He pulled his sombrero low over his face.

"Keep house until I git back," he ordered the deputy shortly. "So long."

Slim Warner watched him gallop down the road. His face was a study.

"A lot like a sheriff *he* looks," he muttered. "No gun, no cartridge belt, no nothin'. He's got about as much chance of arrestin' Blazer Coakley as his hoss has of crossin' th' Mojave without water. If Blazer don't shoot him full o' holes before he finds out he ain't heeled, he'll laff hisself to death. Which is this fool sheriff's only chance, I'll tell a man."

The deputy went inside the office and prepared to await the news from the Coakley Ranch.

The Coakley Ranch, of vast acreage and vaster cattle herds, lay on both sides of the road for a distance of so many miles that nobody but the county assessor ever took the trouble to count them.

The space between the lower boundaries of the ranch and the town of Lost Springs was rolling, so that the road was a series of rises and dips. Chaparral grew thickly on both sides, the territory being unfenced. It was midsummer, with the fall round-up still some weeks in the future. The spring rains were so far behind that the dust lay inches deep. Sheriff Monk and his sorrel horse were covered with it. He looked like a snow man on a snow horse. The officer's turned-up mustache was white with the substance, and his seamed face was caked.

The ride to the Coakley Ranch occupied but a comparatively short time. The sheriff was thinking busily as he galloped along. Blazer Coakley had had his chance to surrender peaceably, he told himself. If he had to submit to the indignity of an arrest, it would be his own fault. What was the matter with Blazer anyway? Hadn't he instituted this era of law and order himself? Hadn't he expressed himself as disgusted with the lawlessness of the whole Hardscrabble region—and hadn't he selected Sam Monk, known far and wide as one who scorned to pack firearms, as the logical candidate for sheriff under the new régime?

Now Blazer, himself—the first to break the law—would also be the first to resist the penalty. The new sheriff felt a dull sense of injustice over the whole matter. Elected on his promise to do his duty, he must now lose a valued friendship because he would keep his promise.

"It ain't right," Sam Monk muttered as he rode toward the ranch. "It's plumb wrong. But I gotta do my duty, friendship or no friendship. Law an' order; that's what they elected me for. I gotta do what's right."

Topping a rise he came in sight of the huge adobe ranch house, sitting a quarter of a mile back from the road. It was a rambling structure, big enough to hold a dozen good-sized families. The bunk house, also of adobe, was sprawled a hundred yards away, with the great corral well to the rear. The rancher's big barns and feeding pens occupied several acres of ground. Prosperity fairly exuded from all over the entire property.

Smoke curling lazily from a rear chimney of the ranch house constituted the only sign of life. The corral was empty, likewise the pens. The sheriff guessed that the entire outfit, probably accompanied by Blazer Coakley himself, would be out on the range. Coakley owned several hundred acres of hay-bottom land in addition to his grazing acreage. It was the height of the haying season; a large part of his force would be engaged in gathering the winter's feeding crop.

"Blazer oughta hang onto his temper, dog-gone him," Sam Monk thought as he surveyed the scene. "Now I gotta

ride all over this place, looks like, to find him. He——"

Engrossed in his thoughts, he failed to note a slight movement of the chaparral at his right. Suddenly there was a whistle close to his ear. Before he could whirl to ascertain the cause, something settled as gently as a light garment over his head, resting on one of his immense shoulders. He shrugged and made a movement to rein in his horse. The next instant his arms had been pinned to his side as tightly as though they had been caught in a vise, and his legs described a grotesque arc in the air as he was jerked unceremoniously clear of the saddle. His horse reared as his fingers lost their grip on the reins. Then he went over backward, striking the ground with a plop, the soft dust flying upward in a choking cloud.

"What the——"

His sputtered oath was smothered as his body was snaked deftly across the road and into the shelter of the chaparral. Then something struck him a terrific blow on the head, dazing him. He was dimly cognizant that his horse had wheeled, snorting in terror, and was galloping back the way it had come.

He regained his senses slowly, to find a pair of black eyes regarding him with sinister interest. The eyes belonged to a tall, bronzed individual who stood almost over him, legs wide apart, hairy chaps concealing the greater part of them. The tall man was hardly more than a mere youth, possibly twenty-five years old, with an unshaven countenance of incredible hardness. A superbly-groomed horse, the satin of its coat gleaming dully through the dust that coated it, stood by. The lariat that had brought Sam Monk low still dangled from the saddle horn.

The stranger, who was palpably a Mexican, was flashing angry eyes at the man on the ground. As the sheriff's senses grew clearer he observed that the other was holding a revolver trained directly upon him.

"So!" the Mexican exclaimed when he saw that his prisoner had regained consciousness. "I have had all thees trouble for nothing, eh?" He kicked the sheriff smartly in the ribs. "I have search you for money, and I find—nothing! What kind of reech Americano you call yourself, eh? To ride through thees country and have no money? You theenk I am a fool?"

The kick had not hurt particularly, but the sheriff resented it. With the other's gun trained upon him, however, he was at a distinct disadvantage.

"A feller don't carry a lot o' money around with him in this country, if he ain't a plumb idiot," he rejoined thickly. That his captor was the notorious Mexican bandit known as The Roper he had little doubt. His reputation was unsavory in more ways than one. The muzzle of the revolver looked ugly, but no uglier than the evil grin that twisted the bandit's thick-lipped mouth.

"No? Then perhaps he have mooch money which he have left behind him at home, eh?"

The sheriff wriggled into a more comfortable position, disregarding the quick movement of the other's gun hand. He now observed that they were in an open place in the chaparral, the growth standing thickly all around and reaching an extraordinary height. They were as effectively screened from view of the road as though they had been shielded by a stone wall. The sheriff guessed that they were far enough away from the highway to make reasonably loud talking by the bandit safe, also.

"Well, now," he said slowly, his wits gathering with cumbersome deliberation, "I dunno. Some might call it much money, an' some not. All depends on the p'int o' view, I reckon."

The captor's smile became more evil, and his eyes squinted down the gun barrel.

"You theenk to play with me," he said with a sneer. "With me, who have kill ten, twelve, fifteen gringos! One leetle pressure with the finger, like thees, an' what have become of you?" Suiting the action to the word, he pulled the trigger, and a bullet spat into the ground within an inch of the sheriff's head. A thin spiral of smoke curled from the revolver's muzzle. "It is so that I treat the—what you call—*cheap skate*—who theenk to mock me by riding abroad with the pocket empty. You see?"

The sheriff was considerably surprised to discover that his close proximity to death had not frightened him in the least. A psychologist would have said that his lack of imagination was the cause. Sheriff Monk knew nothing of psychology. He only knew that a slow anger was beginning to kindle in his breast against this malignant outlaw, who was known to have killed, without compunction, at least a dozen white men. That he was being played with, and that the outcome would be inevitable if the bandit's sinister intention was not frustrated, was of such absolute certainty that a more imaginative man would have been terrified.

Not so Sheriff Monk. Deliberately he rose to one elbow, his mild blue eye hardening with indignation.

"Yuh don't look altogether like a plumb skunk," he said with scorn. "I ain't got no money, an' I don't pack no gun. What d'yuh want to fool with me for? It ain't no crime for a man to go about his business without carryin' money in his clothes, is it?"

The gun muzzle had followed him unwaveringly when he rose to his elbow. The outlaw's grin had vanished, but his yellow teeth were still exposed in the snarl that had replaced the smile.

"It is to mock me, The Roper, that you come this way with no money, an' with no weapon in your hand," he said. "You theenk to fool me, señor. But The Roper, he is not fool so easily. For the one who try it there can be but one punishment. The snake do not always strike, but shall he live because of it? And the so-cunning gringos shall he be permit to live because he have no gun in his hand? Oh, no!"

The man was working himself up into a rage. The sheriff could see the other's thin finger fairly trembling on the trigger of his weapon. Craft was no part of the sheriff's mental equipment, but in the face of what he recognized as impending death his mind moved with unaccustomed swiftness. His life would mean nothing whatever to the desperado that stood over him.

"Wait a minute," he said persuasively. "Let's talk this over. Maybe we kin arrange this money business. Suppose yuh let me write a note to somebody back in Lost Springs. Yuh kin hold me here while we're waitin' for the money. How much yuh wantin'?"

He had opened up a new line of thought. The Roper lowered his revolver a little and sneered.

"Ransom, eh?" he taunted. "And for why should The Roper put his head in the noose for ransom? Again you try to mock me, señor. There is no way to collect, as you well know. The Roper is not a fool. His safety lies in the open spaces and the mountains.

"Maybe yuh're right," the sheriff assented, "but there oughta be some way out o' this mess——"

"There is," The Roper interrupted, raising his revolver again and drawing a deliberate bead on the body of the captive. "You are right, señor. There is a way out—for you—and you are about to start on that way." The outlaw's black eyes were cold as death itself as he squinted along the blue steel barrel of his weapon. "You have made mock of me——"

His hand flew upward from the concussion as the revolver barked spitefully. It was purely by instinctive reac-

tion that Sheriff Monk had thrust his body to one side simultaneously with the spurt of flame. Had he not been possessed of steel-hardened muscles, perfectly coördinated, the leaden pellet would have buried itself in his breast.

Those muscles now flexed with uncanny swiftness. Before the startled bandit could bring his hand down again the thick shoulders of the near-victim were at his knees; the mighty arms of Sheriff Sam Monk were crushing The Roper's legs, encased as they were in the hairy chaps, in a viselike grip. The bandit gave a startled yelp and brought the gun down on the other's back, pressing the trigger as he did so. The bullet zipped viciously as it ploughed into the ground. The next instant The Roper lay flat on the ground, with an enraged white man reaching for his throat.

The outlaw had not eluded arrest in a frontier country for two years without reason. He was as resourceful as he was treacherous. In the hands of this powerful white man he was helpless, but he retained the presence of mind to keep a grip on the handle of his gun. As the other's great fingers were about to close on his throat the Mexican gave a desperate lunge and succeeded in wrenching his gun hand free for the fraction of a moment. He clapped the revolver against the sheriff's side and fired.

The Sheriff grunted with the impact. The bullet had torn through his right side, burning like fire. Involuntarily he loosened his grip. Like a cat, the outlaw wriggled free and sprang to his knees. The white man was sitting back on his haunches, blood oozing redly through his flannel shirt, and shaking his bald head as if to free his brain of the mist that engulfed it. He was clearly *hors de combat* for the moment. The Roper's teeth were bared in a wolflike snarl.

"So you thought to kill me, eh!" he cried. *"Now——"*

He fired, but his aim was uncertain. White dust flew from the other man's coat as the bullet ricocheted from his left shoulder. He fired again as the sheriff plunged toward him, arms extended like a bear's paws. The pair fell to the ground, struggling.

This time the sheriff reached The Roper's throat with his right hand, and gripped the gun with his left. He squeezed until he felt the slender form under him go limp. Then he rose groggily to his feet, legs wide apart and body swaying. There was a crimson stain on the left side of his shirt in front.

"Good boy, Sam!"

The voice came from behind him. He heard it dimly. An arm encircled his shoulders as he was about to fall. As through a haze he saw the body of the bandit suddenly come to life, struggling with uncanny swiftness to one knee. He saw the spurt of flame as the bandit's revolver spoke. It spurted upward, not toward him. Then his own senses reeling, he was conscious that the man on his knees had fallen sidewise and lay, a grotesque heap, sprawled out on the ground.

A thin spiral of smoke curled up toward his own face as he slumped forward in the encircling arm. A voice growled affectionately into his ear.

"It's a dog-gone good thing *I* had a gun, anyway, yuh old fool," it said. "Another minnit an' yuh'd have gone with the murderin' son-of-a-gun."

But Sheriff Monk was for the nonce beyond the pale of reproaches. He felt vaguely grateful for the complete oblivion that suddenly enshrouded him. His saviour eased him gently to the ground and began an exploration of the region under the gaping hole in his shirt.

When the sheriff regained consciousness he was lying on a bed in what he instantly recognized to be the spare bed

room of the Coakley Ranch house. He had been out a long time, it seemed, as he was in what appeared to be a nightshirt, with bandages bound tightly around his side and across his chest.

Husky voices were coming from the next room, the door to which stood partly open. He recognized that of Blazer Coakley.

"Yes, sir. Tackled that murderin' coyote barehanded. Pretty near got him, too. Good thing I happened along with my gun, or we wouldn't have no more sheriff than a rabbit. Nobody but a man built like a rattlesnake would have had any life left in him after that chokin' Sam give him. No, sir. You oughta see his throat——"

"I saw it." Sam recognized the other voice as that of the Lost Springs doctor. "How did you happen to be riding that way, Blazer?"

There was a pause. The sheriff lay very still. He was in the house of the man who had saved his life, and he still had an unpleasant duty to perform.

"Why, yuh see, it was this way, doc." Blazer's voice had an indefinable shamed quality to it. "Remember me shootin' Bill Sawyer 'lection day? Well, Sam called me up this mornin' to tell me to give myself up by noon. Said he'd be after me if I didn't. I kinda went off th' handle—*yuh* know that dog-gone temper o' mine, doc—an' told him to come shootin' when he tried it."

"I see," said the doctor's voice. "And he was coming gunless after the best shot in Carson County, I suppose.'

"He shore was." The man in bed could hear Blazer Coakley chuckle. "I saw his hoss toppin' th' rise jest as the murderin' greaser roped him out of his saddle. The hoss galloped back down the road. I reckon I never would have found Sam if the greaser hadn't have started shootin'. I followed the sound —got there jest in time——"

"Where were you heading for when you saw Sam roped out of his saddle?"

"Who—me?" There was another embarrassed pause. "Well, between you an' me, doc, I was on my way to Lost Spring to give myself up. But don't yuh ever breathe a word to the old son of a gun, see? Let him think he put it over. I'm givin' myself up to him as soon as he's able to travel ag'in. Wonder how he's comin' now?"

When the pair tiptoed to the doorway and looked, Sheriff Monk was breathing tranquilly, his eyes closed.

"Sleeping," the doctor whispered. "When he wakes up he'll be all right."

"Fine!" exclaimed Blazer Coakley.

"And as for Bill Sawyer, you won't have to give yourself up," the doctor added. "He got drunk again yesterday and shot himself accidentally. Bill's dead by his own hand."

The sheriff regained the sanctity of his office three days later. The bandit's bullet had struck a rib and glanced off, while the wound in his side proved to be superficial. Slim Warner saluted him enviously.

"There's about eighteen thousand reward out fer The Roper, dead or alive," he said. "I reckon yuh're the only man in the country that ever captured a cutthroat like that greaser without usin' a gun. How in thunder did yuh do it?"

The sheriff settled gingerly into his chair. "Used my hand," he said briefly. "An' my head." He grinned up at the deputy. "But I reckon yuh was right about this gun-packin' business, Slim, after all. A sheriff needs to burn a little powder now an' then, jest for appearances."

"That's right," agreed Slim.

"So I reckon yuh better go down to th' hardware store an' pick me out a brace o' .45s. You know more about 'em than I do—now."

"That's right," repeated Slim Warner. "But yuh'll learn, sheriff."

"Yuh're dog-gone shoutin' I will," Sheriff Monk declared fervently.

A Knife in Time

By Ray Humphreys

Author of "The Mutt," etc.

GOOD mule skinners were at a premium with the Q B freighting outfit, or Tom Morgan couldn't have held his job ten minutes.

Tom, drifting in from nowhere, had fully demonstrated to McCarthy, the wagon boss, that he could handle a six-mule hitch. He seemed to have a way with mules; he also had a sheath knife in plain view.

"You're hired," said McCarthy. "I'm needin' good men to handle that Red Cliff ore contract—but what's the idea o' that scalpin' knife ye're carrying there?"

The stranger had just grinned and shrugged, which made him look more insignificant than before—for he was undersize, underweight, and altogether unattractive.

"No idea," he answered with a grunt back.

"Then scrap it, fer this is no fightin' outfit," advised McCarthy, "an' a knife——"

"I always carry it," said Morgan, with such evident finality in his words that McCarthy swallowed what he meant to say. After all, a driver was a driver, and Morgan had proved he could handle the ribbons. The matter of the knife could be postponed a while at that, for the Red Cliff contract would brook no delay, and three six-mule hitches, minus drivers, were eating their heads off in the corrals.

"Pick your team," said McCarthy, as he showed the new driver the surplus animals.

"I'll take any of 'em," said Morgan indifferently; "mules is mules, boss!"

So Morgan came to work for the Q B, the biggest freighting outfit in the Colorado Hills. The Q B handled ore and timber contracts, conducted a number of stage and freight lines, and occasionally worked big grading jobs.

The knife that had attracted McCarthy's attention when he hired Morgan, speedily put the new driver in bad with the wagon crews, who viewed him askance.

"A knife thrower, eh?" commented "Big Jim" Williams. "The little runt ain't man enough to fight his battles like a white man. He must be a fine feller!"

"Him and his sword," said another driver bitterly. "I'd not trust him far behind me back!"

The remarks were meant for Morgan to hear. He did. He reddened, protested, flared up—but the persecution did not cease. It grew worse as the days went on. Finally McCarthy, the wagon boss, grew desperate. The men were goading Morgan to violence, and the wagon boss trembled to think what would happen if Morgan sent his knife flashing home on some unlucky teamster. Murder—perhaps a lynching, afterward—and scandal, and "Old Man" Ashton, the wealthy owner, fuming in from Denver to find a new wagon boss.

"Still," debated McCarthy, "if I can him there'll be a six-mule team in the corrals idle, and the ol' man will raise Ned ef he sees that!"

So, seeking a solution to the trouble, the wagon boss went to some of the skinners.

"Ye'll have to stop baiting that runt Morgan," ordered McCarthy, "or thar'll be plenty o' grief and some jobs open, too! Ye're drivin' him wild with yer talk an' I can see him gettin' to th' breaking point. He ain't harmed any of you that you should rag him like that?"

"No, he ain't," said Joe Myers, "but that's the way them knife fighters do; they lay low until their chance comes, an' then they tickle a man's backbone with the blade when he's least expectin' it. This little rat we got will do that an' the boys hate him fer it!"

McCarthy was still without a solution. He tried to pacify Morgan, but Morgan was bitter, too. He said he was being persecuted, and McCarthy couldn't deny it. What McCarthy could and did do, moreover—was to warn the runt against violence in no uncertain terms.

"We're a peaceable lot," said McCarthy, "an' the ol' man, especially, is against trouble—says it brings bad repute on the outfit an' sets towns against us. We gotta toe the straight and narrer here. Mebbe the boys are carryin' their joke a bit too far against you—but never you mind. If you weren't such a good driver——"

"I understand," said the runt sourly.

Three days later Ashton, the owner, struck camp. McCarthy offered up a silent prayer. True, the corral was as empty as ever Ashton had seen it—not even a sick or lame animal in camp; still McCarthy trembled. The bad blood between Morgan, the knife carrier, and the rest of the men, was reaching fever pitch. Even the cook and his helper had started to discriminate against the runt. If there is one place where persecution actually hurts, it's in the mess room of a freighting outfit.

Ashton had come to praise, not to find fault, much to the surprise of McCarthy.

"The Red Cliff people tell me we're more than caught up," said Ashton, "and that is good news to hear. Over on the western division we have landed a good dirt-hauling job that will keep every man and mule in the Mesa region on the job all fall, and further——"

Here the boss' face beamed with pride.

"Monte Vista has just paid us a fine compliment, McCarthy. They've asked me to bring down five of our best hitches for a special freight-wagon race for their rodeo, next week—which is showing their faith in the Q B, and is a big ad for us, too. They've offered a prize of twenty-five dollars to the winning driver——"

"Too bad," said McCarthy, "that we're all tied up here, and you say the western division is goin' to tackle a dirt-haulin' contract——"

"Already started," said the big boss crisply, "but that doesn't cut any ice. You have the pick of the stock, McCarthy, in this camp—and the drivers, too—so you'll pick five outfits——"

"But the Red Cliff job——" began McCarthy.

"We're caught up now, and we can catch up again if we have to," said Ashton. "You leave Evans in charge here and bring down five of the best hitches to Monte next Wednesday. It'll take you a day to drive over, so leave here Monday morning—see that every wagon is tiptop, every mule in good shape, every driver——"

"Yes, sir!" said the wagon boss.

When news of the race, and of the boss' unusual interest in it, spread through the camp, the drivers went wild with excitement. McCarthy found himself besieged by every one of the thirty-odd skinners on the division. He saw Ashton safely on his way, and then set to work to pick his rodeo team. The first driver he thought of—and there was nothing strange about it, seeing he had the best working hitch in camp—was "Runt" Morgan. But the wagon boss was too canny to write Morgan's name down heading the list. In fact, he debated for a long time about writing Morgan's name down at all. Finally he reached a decision.

"If I'm boss here, as I'm supposed to be, Morgan will go, 'spite all heck—an' if I ain't boss here, then the sooner I find it out the better fer us all!"

So the list of lucky drivers was posted:

NEESON
BUCKLEY
DWYER
FLYNN
MORGAN

What a howl went up—not only from the drivers who were not included, but from Neeson, Buckley, Dwyer, and Flynn, as well. The quartet objected to the fifth man, Morgan. McCarthy was ready for the protest.

"You fellers," he told the aggrieved foursome, "go with me an' Morgan, or you don't go a-tall. I'll choose four others! That's that. Are you going, or are you ain't?"

"We'll go," they agreed.

As for the howl from the camp in general, the wagon boss ignored it completely. With the five men he had picked he set to work polishing up mules, harness, and wagons. The rest of the crew, under Evans, the assistant wagon boss, went sadly back to the task of hauling ore.

"That knife thrower will ruin 'em all," said Jack Engels. "He'll lose—an' then he'll knife the winner!"

"Liable to be a killin'," admitted Dick Galvin; "the runt is off his feed—seein' th' cookie ain't rationing him accordin' to Hoyle—an' McCarthy pickin' Morgan to go!"

When Monday morning came, Morgan's six were the first ready, and when the wagon train pulled out, early, his black, mealy nosed hitch was third in the caravan. McCarthy rode in spruced-up grandeur on the first wagon with Flynn. Every mule in the outfit had been carefully curried, the harness trappings glinted in the sun, and the great wagons rolled without a single, solitary squeak or squeal.

In Monte Vista, Tuesday, the outfit rested and policed up again. When Wednesday and the race came, the Q B freighting company's representatives in the rodeo were spick-and-span and ready. The big boss, Old Man Ashton, was on hand, of course. He inspected the turnout and approved—to the delight of McCarthy. Then Ashton gave the drivers a little talk.

"While I want every man to do his best to win, and give the crowd a good race, I don't want any dirty work," said Ashton. "I don't want any pinching or jockeying that might cripple a team of leaders or smash a wheel! The track is just wide enough to accommodate all five hitches abreast, and every man must keep his place. He'll draw for place, and he must hold that position through the race!"

The driver nodded. After the old

man and the wagon boss had retired to talk over other matters, Flynn and Dwyer suggested a few side bets. Neeson and Buckley agreed. Nobody spoke to Morgan, the knife fighter.

"Reckon my grays is the fastest, ef they wanta work," said Flynn, and he laid his bet accordingly.

"We're all about even," said Neeson, "but I got purty heavy wheelers, however——"

And he bet on himself, of course.

"Huh," muttered Morgan, completely left out, "I ain't got no chance to gather up no money exceptin' the prize. Waal, I'll take that. If Imp and Blackie ain't the fastest leaders in this bunch I'll eat my hat! An' I'll wallop the swing and the wheelers to keep up with 'em. They'll have to do it!"

Just as the race was called, the big boss, Ashton, came up, mounted on a sorrel mule, borrowed for the occasion.

"The committee wants me to start the race," he explained, "so to be in style I'm going to do it from mule back. When you hear the revolver shot, go!"

"Excuse me, sir," said Morgan, leaning down from his wagon seat and staring hard at the sorrel mule that Ashton rode, "that mule, sir—he's a bad un—if I were you, sir—I'd——"

"Mind your mules!" said Ashton crisply, coloring under the driver's warning, "I can handle my business!"

Flynn and Dwyer and Neeson and Buckley exchanged glances and smirks—the knife thrower was getting in bad already. Flynn shrugged as he recalled that the big boss had ordered clean driving. Otherwise he and Neeson would pinch Morgan out of the race for sure, seeing that Morgan had fourth place from the rail between Flynn, who would drive the outer circle, and Neeson, who had drawn third place. Dwyer had the rail and Buckley was second from the pole.

At a word from McCarthy the five wagons rumbled out on the half-mile track to be greeted with a great cheer. The band was playing, and the leaders of the hitches danced and shied, none more than Imp and Blackie, the leaders of Morgan's hitch. The burnished mules, the trim wagons and the sparkling harness made a splendid impression on the crowd. Ashton, on his sorrel mule, swelled up with pride.

McCarthy, leaning over the rail, reflected that pride. Flynn, Dwyer, Neeson, and Buckley bowed and smiled at the applause as they maneuvered into position. Only Morgan took his place silently and calmly. He had made up his mind to win, despite all odds. He'd show his tormentors something!

As the wagons lined up, Ashton dropped in behind them, on his sorrel mule. It wouldn't be safe to be ahead of those thirty fidgeting mules and five heavy wagons! So he pulled up about five yards behind the line and raised his revolver. The five waiting racers just filled the track, from fence to fence, Ashton noted. Possibly each driver had six feet leeway to each side—but that was nothing for experienced skinners, barring accident. A rodeo official, in the judges' stand, nodded. Ashton pulled the trigger:

"Bang!"

At the shot the five drivers whooped and whirled their whips, careful to avoid each other, and the race was on. The mule teams, as Neeson had said, were very evenly matched. Where one driver had a pair of light, fast leaders, another had a faster team of wheelers, but no hitch could be faster than its slowest team, and each driver was burdened with certain animals that handicapped him. The result was that the five swept down the track in almost perfect alignment. Dwyer, on the inside, with the advantage, had his leaders a head to the front, and that was all.

The excitement was tremendous. Cheers and whoops rocked the grand stand. McCarthy grinned happily as

he leaned over the rail and sniffed the dust kicked up by the start. His grin left his face suddenly when he saw through the settling dust a sight that made his heart jump! The big boss, Ashton, was in trouble.

The sorrel mule wanted to race, too; it had taken the bit in its capable teeth and bolted, along with the rest. It was trailing Morgan's wagon now, threatening, it seemed to McCarthy, to run into the wagon at every great jump it took. Ashton was helpless to stop it.

Morgan, on his part, was unaware of Ashton's danger. Morgan, bent on winning the race, was bawling at his swing team, Satan and Tar Baby, who were tying up his hitch for him. The leaders, Imp and Blackie, were stretching forward, eager to go, the wheelers, hardly larger than the rest of the hitch, were equally as anxious to run, but the swing team was shirking. The wheelers were on the swing's heels, and that would never do—so Morgan yelled and sent his whip whining out over the glistening backs. Meantime the big sorrel, with Ashton, was bumping the wagon tail.

Then, as McCarthy and others who had seen the freight owner's plight, held their breaths, the big sorrel saw an opening and made a dash between Neeson's wagon and Morgan's. Neeson looked down to see his boss go flying past, face white, jaws set, eyes staring. Neeson, with an oath, jerked his animals slightly to the left to give the sorrel more room; Morgan, watching his swing team, didn't see Ashton until the big boss and the sorrel were even with his swing team. They were even only a moment, for the big sorrel galloped ahead the next instant, gaining a position out in front of the five teams.

The spectators, seeing this, sighed in relief. The man on the mule could beat the wagons to safety now. Even McCarthy was relieved, for he was afraid of a jam as the sorrel went through the line. If Ashton could stay on, the sorrel would undoubtedly beat all the wagons home. Interest thereupon shifted from Ashton to the racing wagons again, and the crowd saw that Morgan's team was forging ahead, was even now with Dwyer, on the rail. The other three teams had dropped behind about half a mule's length. Morgan, however, was watching the big boss, out ahead. If the sorrel should stop, it would be Morgan's hitch, or possibly Neeson's, that must strike him! Morgan's face twitched, but nobody was close enough to see that."

Then, without warning, the unexpected happened. The sorrel mule, seeing a piece of paper on the track, shied violently, and Ashton slumped in his saddle, lost a stirrup, fought for his balance, lost that, and tumbled off—all in a shorter space of time than it takes to tell it. A groan went up from the stands, for it seemed to every one that the man must be crushed, in a minute, under the racing wagons. No driver could halt in time.

To McCarthy, who had climbed to the top of the fence to see, and to Morgan, who had already seen, the situation was worse than that, if such was possible. Ashton had not fallen on the track, where *expert* drivers *might*, by a miracle, avoid him and sweep to both sides. Instead he was bumping along, one foot caught in a stirrup, at the heels of the sorrel mule—powerless to help himself!

Morgan had waited only a second; in that second he had glanced at Neeson, to see that Neeson had turned his head away. No help there! Flynn, on the other side, was a team's length behind, and Morgan couldn't see his face. It didn't matter. While the crowds gasped in horror, Morgan swung down from his seat, worked along the pole between the wheelers, slid out over the back of Tar Baby, one of the swing team, while the hitch went on at a tre-

mendous gallop. Then, by sheer luck, or nerve—perhaps both—by clinging to straps, and a leap, reached the back of Imp, the off leader, and perched there for breath.

It was heroic work, but what could the daring driver do to help Ashton? To the crowd it seemed that Morgan's exploit was in vain. Mounted on one of his leaders he might reach for Ashton if the hitch overtook the sorrel, but even at that he could not disentangle the unfortunate owner in time to save him from the mess that would follow the overtaking of the sorrel. No, Morgan's work was in vain. Even McCarthy, the wagon boss, groaned with that realization. Morgan was trying, but unless the sorrel and Ashton parted company before Morgan's hitch overtook them, there seemed no chance.

On swept the five wagons, but a bit slower, for the drivers were tugging at the reins like madmen, hoping against hope. Morgan's wagon, driverless, was swaying a bit, for the swing team was acting up again, and Morgan ahead, on a leader! Morgan, however, was fumbling at his belt. The next minute he reached down in a wide swoop of one arm and the crowd thought that he, too, had fallen.

He was up again in a twinkling, though he repeated his strange gestures several times. Suddenly, McCarthy saw the flash of a blade, and understood. Even before that, Morgan had freed his mule from the traces. The little black leader leaped out, ahead of the rest of the team, in a race that had never before been equaled on a Colorado rodeo track. The whole crowd cheered wildly.

The other leader, Blackie, bewildered by the loss of his mate, hesitated, and then swung to the right, with the crazy swing team following. Flynn's yell came first and then the crash as Morgan's unguided hitch messed into Flynn's grays, and the two careening wagons met with a shower of sparks and splinters and a thud that seemed to make the track tremble. But Morgan, on Imp, was out ahead now, trailing the sorrel runaway.

Ashton, still snagged by one foot, had ceased to struggle. McCarthy, the wagon boss, unmindful of the terrible crash of two of his crack hitches, was wondering if Ashton was alive. And if he was, what chance had he now that the sorrel, mulelike, had swerved in toward the rail, directly in the path of Dwyer's hitch, which seemed to be running away, too?

Morgan, urging Imp on, glanced back over his shoulder and estimated his distance. His first idea had been to crowd the sorrel to the upper rim of the track, safe now since the collision of the black and the gray hitches, there to reach down and cut the stirrup strap.

The sorrel had spoiled that plan by heading in toward the rail. There was no time to cut the man loose, then dismount and carry him out of the path of the three remaining hitches. There was hardly time for anything—yet Morgan's mind raced as fast as any mule team had ever raced. He sped ahead and came abreast of the sorrel. The next minute the crowd was treated to a sight seldom seen except in a circus—Morgan had transferred from the black mule to the sorrel, and going at a good gallop!

The next minute the teamster's hat was off, and he was beating the sorrel on the left side of its head. The sorrel turned and headed for the upper edge of the track, still dragging the fallen rider. Then, out of the path of the racers, Morgan tried to stop the sorrel, but the sorrel, with a mouth like a tin bucket, was not stopping—so Morgan stooped swiftly. Again the knife blade flashed in the afternoon sun—and the ordeal for Ashton was over. He lay still, where his mad ride had ended, when Morgan had cut the strap. Morgan, on the runaway sorrel, went on down the track.

The nearest spectators swarmed out to lift Ashton.

Twenty minutes later, McCarthy, half out of his mind, found Morgan, the knife thrower, sobbing in a back corral, where rodeo officials had dragged the body of Blackie, Morgan's near leader, after Blackie had gone down in the crash of the two six teams when Morgan had cut away from his outfit. McCarthy shook Morgan by the shoulder, and Morgan looked up, to see a strange expression on the wagon boss's face.

"Yuh bawlin' over a daid mule when the big boss is half kilt and Flynn is in th' hospital?" cried McCarthy, in a peculiar voice that he had tried to steady, but couldn't. "You're a fine knife fighter! Say, you come along with me —right now—I been lookin' high an' low fer you!"

Morgan got up, like a man in a trance. He wiped a sleeve across his eyes. Blackie dead—his wagon smashed—Flynn in the hospital—misfortune in plenty! He followed McCarthy blindly to the hospital tent, where Ashton, his face and hands bandaged, but apparently not badly injured, smiled weakly at him. Flynn, also bandaged, and on another cot, grinned, too, but Morgan hung his head.

"Here's the blamed little knife thrower," began McCarthy, and at that Morgan's head came up.

"Knife thrower!" he cried. "Say, ain't nobody ever goin' to let up on that? That knife came in handy to-day! An' I carried it just fer such a case! I never threw no knife—I never hurt any one —but I lost a team o' four mules in th' Carolinas oncet—slipped over a ledge—the leaders did—an' I could of saved the wheelers ef I had a knife. I didn't —an' since then I've carried that knife——"

"Thank God for that!" said Ashton, speaking softly from beneath the bandages that all but masked him. "Your knife saved me to-day, Morgan! Flynn has been telling me about you, in the last five minutes—about your misunderstanding with the boys in camp. He says they had you wrong—and that was before you explained why you carried that knife. That explanation straightens out matters, I guess, but say——"

The big boss paused a moment. "Are you going to continue to carry that knife," he went on, "or are you going to put it aside now that——"

"I'm gonna carry it!" said Morgan doggedly.

"Fine," said the big boss, "an' nobody will ride you for it, either, for it won't show if you wear a coat. As assistant wagon boss over on the western division, where there is a vacancy—you'll be expected to wear a coat at all times. The Q B company insists on its officials doing that!"

Morgan took the bandaged hand that the big boss extended to him, and he tried to say something appropriate.

"That sorrel mule, sir," he stumbled, "I knew he was wrong—he had a white streak in his eye, over the eyeball—bad sign—an' so—an' so—well——"

"You gonna hold th' boss' hand all day," demanded McCarthy finally, "with Flynn an' me here waitin' to shake with you? An' about a thousand people outside waitin' to do th' same—includin' Neeson, an' Buckley, an' Dwyer?"

"Let 'em wait!" grinned the new assistant wagon boss happily. "Times like this don't come every day!"

Out of the Snow

By

Reginald C. Barker

Author of "Big Bait," etc.

"WHAT in the name of common sense," demanded old Tim Connor, "will the likes of you two do all winter alone in a cabin at Faraway Lake?"

"We have heard," replied a pretty girl who stood, pen in hand, before the register in the office of Trinity Center's only hotel, "that both black and silver foxes are to be found in the vicinity of Faraway Lake. My husband thought it would be nice to spend a winter in there and catch me a set of furs."

"There you have the whole matter in a nutshell," murmured a tall young man with a pussy willow mustache.

"Of course," pursued Mrs. Featherstone, "we shall have to employ a mountaineer to guide us to Faraway Lake and help us to build a cabin, and later to show us where to set our traps to catch the black and silver foxes."

"There's Bill Clancy and Joe Piper," said the old clerk thoughtfully. "I heard they were figuring on trapping somewhere near Faraway Lake. They might pack you in."

"Of course, you guarantee this man Clancy to be reliable."

"He'd oughter be," said Tim Connor dryly, "he's past sixty and unmarried. But Bill wouldn't consider going any place without Joe. You see, they've been pardners for twenty years. Here comes Bill now."

Followed by a gust of keen air, a heavily-built, grizzly-bearded man entered the hotel office.

"'Taint necessary to build no cabin at Faraway Lake," stated Bill Clancy, when the matter had been explained to him. "There's an old one there that Joe an' I built ten year ago. Barrin' the matter of a few shakes on the roof an' a busted window, it's as good as the day we built it."

"How much will you charge to guide us to this cabin and later to show us where to find the black and silver foxes?" asked Mrs. Featherstone. "You see my husband has promised to catch me a set of furs."

"For which purpose we have brought with us six steel traps," Mr. Featherstone informed the old trapper.

"Only six!" exclaimed Bill Clancy.

"You see, Mr. Clancy," explained Mrs. Featherstone, "we consider that the skins of six black or silver foxes will be sufficient to make me a set of furs."

"Well, ma'am," replied Bill Clancy judicially, "I ain't never seen a lady wearin' a set of black nor silver fox furs, so I don't know whether or not

six will be enough, but we'll pack you in."

Mrs. Featherstone had to admit that old Bill Clancy was right next morning, when turning in his saddle he said, as he stretched out his arm in a gesture that took in the snow-clad summits of Mount Hindman and Steel Mountain, "The sight o' them peaks allus makes me think that I ain't so much after all."

As the sturdy mountain cayuses climbed higher and higher up the eighteen-inch-wide trail, there was unfolded before the tenderfeet such a panorama of beauty that they could only gaze with wondering eyes, from which they constantly had to wipe tears caused by the strong, golden sunlight and the keen wind which whipped through the narrow pass.

That night they made camp at the foot of a cliff that was ribboned with foaming waterfalls. Their source was in the fields of eternal snow that lay silent and cold beneath the moon two thousand feet above the campers.

The big camp fire was built of the whitened skeletons of stunted Alpine pine that, perhaps twenty or fifty years previously, had been swept by avalanches from the crevices in which they had found holds for their gnarled and twisted roots. With tongues grown strangely silent, their faces gleaming white in the firelight, the tenderfeet sat side by side and listened to the two old trappers' tales of the black and silver foxes who lived above the timber line in the heart of the Sawtooth Range.

"It ain't no place for a woman, though," stated Bill Clancy, "least of all for the likes of you. It gets so dog-goned lonesome at times that a feller c'n hear himself think."

"I want a set of furs," insisted Mrs. Featherstone, "and I told my husband so. But he said that they would cost thousands of dollars. Then one day I cut out this clipping from a newspaper and showed it to Wilfred. And we decided to come and catch the foxes ourselves." She handed the old trapper a clipping which he read aloud.

"It is estimated by trappers that there are at least five thousand foxes in the Sawtooth Range. Of this number a large percentage are doubtless of the black and silver varieties."

"Now, it's like this," remarked Bill Clancy, when one morning a few weeks later he stood beside his packed cayuses in front of the renovated old cabin on the shore of Faraway Lake. "I've done all I can do. The rest is up to you. I'm going to leave you a couple dozen extra traps, for when winter shuts down in earnest, time is going to hang heavy on your hands. Before I go, though, there are a few things I'm goin' to tell you for your own good.

"The first is this: Don't go to climbin' around these peaks after the snow gets deep, for you might start a snowslide that would be the death of you. Anyway, there'll be no need for you to leave the flat country, for with the comin' of the deep snow the fur-bearin' animals will leave the heights and hunt rabbits among the black pines that grow around the lake.

"Fu'thermore, don't get to quarrelin' when the loneliness and the silence work your nerves to a frazzle."

"Sir!" exclaimed Mrs. Featherstone with uptilted chin.

"It's no use gittin' riled at me, ma'am," soothed Bill Clancy. "You and your husband are in here to stay until spring, an' seein' as Joe an' I are in a measure responsible for you bein' here, we aim to keep an eye on you."

"We are perfectly capable of taking care of ourselves," asserted Mrs. Featherstone icily. "If we require your assistance, we will inform you of the fact."

"No, you won't," contradicted the old trapper. "My cabin is forty miles from Faraway Lake. Inexperienced as you

are, it would probably cost you your lives to try and find it."

"One of us will drop around every week or so," shouted old Bill Clancy just before he disappeared around a bend in the trail. But he might as well have saved his voice for neither of the tenderfeet replied.

"What in tarnation you ever brought 'em in here for, is more'n I can figure out," grumbled Bill Clancy's partner when the old trapper reached the cabin they had built on Dead Ox Flat.

"Well, you see, Joe," replied Bill Clancy judicially, "a winter trapping in the mountains will l'arn 'em lots of things."

Thin ice was fringing the shores of Faraway Lake before Bill Clancy decided to visit the cabin where he had left the tenderfeet.

"Hello," he shouted. "Hello!"

Only the echoes of his own voice answered. No smoke came from the chimney of the cabin to advertise that breakfast was being prepared. Yet the rising sun was beginning to gild the placid waters of Faraway Lake.

"Pshaw!" muttered Bill Clancy. "They're probably not up yet." Picking up a handful of grit he threw it at the tiny window.

On the roof of the cabin a pine squirrel broke into excited chattering, but that was the only sound.

In sudden anxiety the old trapper threw discretion to the winds and pushed open the cabin door. Stepping within he cast a quick glance at the double bunk. It was empty. But his fears were allayed when he noticed that the stove was still warm

"They must have made an early start," he muttered. Then as his gaze wandered to the ceiling he gave an exclamation of surprise.

For before his eyes there hung the largest otter skin Bill Clancy had ever seen.

"Tenderfoot's luck, by the eternal!" gasped out the old trapper. "The big otter that I've been trying to catch for five seasons. At the sound of a footstep outside the cabin Bill Clancy turned.

Could that unshaven, begrimed, tattered specimen of a man be the young dude old Bill had left in the cabin but a month previously? Could that sad-eyed young woman with strands of hair blowing across her scratched cheeks, be the self-assertive, young Mrs. Dora Featherstone? Old Bill Clancy was not quite sure about that.

"Well, I'll be durned!" exclaimed the old trapper. "You two sure look like you'd been through the war."

They grabbed him then, one by each hand, and tried to tell him how glad they were to see him, but they talked so fast and interrupted each other so often, that old Bill Clancy could only guess at that which had happened.

"Hold your horses," he said at last, "and let's get at this thing right. One of you at a time now, and tell me what seems to be the trouble."

"It's been nothing but trouble ever since we came up into these fearful mountains," explained the young woman. "The morning after you left us we spent all day setting out our traps. Then next day we went to get our foxes, but there were not any, not even a single one! Of course, I was bitterly disappointed, but I could have stood it, only while we were away from the cabin, some animal got into it and scattered the flour and sugar all over the floor and ate up most of the bacon. After that we tried to catch fish, but we couldn't find any angleworms, and the fish wouldn't bite our artificial baits. I don't know what we would have done, if we hadn't met that otter and shot him. He didn't taste very good."

"You mean to say that you *ate* him?" inquired Bill Clancy with popping eyes. "You ate an *otter!*"

"We had to eat something," was the naïve reply, "and there is nothing else around here."

"Nothing else!" said the old trapper with a snort. "Why, doggone it, the lake is full of rainbow trout half as long as your arm, and the woods are full of rabbits, and there are blue grouse as large as tame chickens on the ridges at dawn. Besides, the deer ain't gone down yet, for I saw two four-point bucks on my way here from Dead Ox Flat. Now I'll tell you what to do. The lady here can get the stove to going while—what do you call him—Wilfred—and I go down to the lake and catch a couple of rainbows for breakfast."

They stared at Bill Clancy, wide-eyed, for the old trapper spoke about catching a couple of trout as coolly as though he was about to give an order in a restaurant.

"I'm coming too," declared Mrs. Featherstone. "There'll be plenty of time to cook them—when we get them."

Skeptically they watched the old trapper as he cut into a rotten log and dug out a half dozen fat white grubs of the hammerhead variety. Silently they watched him bait a hook and cast his line far out into the shining waters of Faraway Lake.

A minute passed and another, without a ripple appearing in the still water. Mr. Featherstone looked at Mrs. Featherstone and winked, but she was too hungry to smile.

Then it happened.

The tip of the rod in Bill Clancy's hand bent until the light rod was an arc; suddenly it straightened, and out of the depths into the frosty air leaped a shining thing of silver curves. Slap! The big rainbow trout hit the water, then leaped again and again and again in an effort to shake the hook from his lips. But as calmly as though he were certain of the outcome, old Bill Clancy puffed at his pipe and took up slack and took up slack, until at last the great trout lay, a thing of speckled beauty, on the white sand that formed the beach of Faraway Lake.

"I reckon that'll be enough for a while," said Bill Clancy, "he'll turn the scales at five pounds."

For three days old Bill Clancy made camp near the cabin on Faraway Lake. During those three days he performed many feats of woodcraft which caused the tenderfeet to regard him with wondering admiration.

Among the rocks of the high ridges he showed them where the grouse came at dawn to eat the blue berries of the low-bush junipers and to pick up the gravel from the crevices among the rocks. On the north hillsides he pointed out the bedding places of deer. He went alone one day and shot a big buck, packed him to the cabin, dressed him and hung the venison beneath the overhanging dingle. He proved to them that it was not a bear which had ravaged their cabin during their absence, but a wolverine.

The first snow of winter came while old Bill Clancy was still at the cabin. In the white carpet he pointed out various tracks, and explained the different imprints as from the lake to the top of Seven Mile Hill he reset the line of traps.

"We can never thank you enough," said the tenderfeet, before the old trapper left for his cabin on Dead Ox Flat. "We'd surely have starved if you hadn't come to help us."

"You'd have made out somehow," answered Bill Clancy grunting, "I've been living in the Big Hills more'n forty years and I ain't never starved yet."

Weeks passed; the big snow came to Faraway Lake, covered the ice, and sifted down through the pines for hours and days without ceasing. At last the cabin was completely hidden. At night a tongue of yellow flame shot high above the single joint of stovepipe that projected above the white mound, and

struck terror to those of the four-footed folk who each night passed that way.

"It has grown strangely silent, Wilfred," whispered Mrs. Featherstone one night, "and we are very far from home."

"We made a mistake in coming so far from the settlements," acknowledged her husband with a sigh. "We are not cut out for this kind of life."

"All our traps are covered with many feet of snow," said his wife, "and all the time I seem to hear voices calling. I'm sick and tired of it all and I want to go h-h-home."

"All right, sweetheart," said Mr. Featherstone as he tried to comfort her, "we will go home. I shall go and get Bill Clancy; he'll get us out of the mountains somehow."

"You don't know where his cabin is," objected Mrs. Featherstone. "You would become lost and die in this awful storm."

"I can find the cabin," asserted her husband. "Bill gave me a map for use in case of emergency."

"You can't leave me alone here, Wilfred," said his wife in panic at the thought.

Her husband did not answer, but arose and, opening the door of the cabin, stood looking out into the night. It was snowing very fast. Some of the snowflakes drifted past the man at the door.

Suddenly he felt his wife's arm around his neck.

"It's an awful night, dear," she said, "let's both go in the morning and find Bill Clancy."

"Listen, honey," he said. Standing side by side they held their breath.

Somewhere out in the wild, white night foxes were barking.

Forty miles from Faraway Lake in a gray old cabin on Dead Ox Flat Bill Clancy awoke out of a deep sleep. For a moment he lay still, then with an elbow he prodded his partner in the ribs.

"Joe," he said, "I heard somebody callin'."

Sitting up in the bunk, Joe Piper scratched his tousled hair with one hand while with the other he reached for his pipe.

"Huh?" he said. "Must have been a fox barking."

"No," said his partner with conviction, "it wasn't any fox."

"Must have been," insisted Joe. "What else would be out in the storm?"

Old Bill started to reply, then suddenly he raised his hand.

"Listen," he said, "there it is again."

" 'Magination," said Joe, "you been thinkin' thoughts you shouldn't think."

"Forty years on the trap line don't leave a man much 'magination," said Bill Clancy. "Let's go down an' call on them tenderfeet."

He reached for his mackinaw.

"Maybe we'd better put a few furs in our packs," suggested Joe. "We can spare 'em."

"You're gettin' old, Joe," said Bill Clancy, "I can make it alone."

"Partners, ain't we?" demanded Joe, and he stuffed into his pack a lynx skin, gray-furred and silkily-soft.

Old Bill Clancy took from its nail the skin of a cross fox with mottled gray fur as soft as spun silk and a tail like a white-tipped plume.

"Furs for a lady," murmured the old trapper as he and his partner stepped out into the night and the storm.

Heads bent into the driving snow, amid a darkness so thick that they could not see a yard ahead of them, with the unerring instinct of homing pigeons they struck a course through the smothering storm toward the cabin at Faraway Lake.

Dawn of the next day found the partners on the top of Seven Mile Hill from which in clear weather they could have looked down on Faraway Lake.

Now all they could see below them was a wide sea of mist, gray and forbidding.

Taking turns at breaking the trail through the mushy, fresh snow they swung down the hill in a silence that was broken only by the crush, crush, crush, of the webs.

It was noon when they reached the place where the cabin had stood.

Above the snow stuck six inches of stovepipe out of which smoke was pouring furiously.

Like two snow men the old trappers stood before a hole in the snow about the size of a wash tub. Beyond it lay the door.

"You rap, Bill," said Joe nervously.

Bill rapped.

The door swung inward, and Wilfred Featherstone stood before them with his sleeves rolled up—a frying pan in his hand.

"We got 'em, Bill," he yelled, "two of them, and one's a silver gray!"

"Huh?" exclaimed the two old men in unison, as shaking the snow from their clothes, they doffed their fur caps and entered the cabin.

Hanging from a rafter were two fox skins; one of them was a common red, but the other was a pelt of most lustrous texture, a trapper's dream of silver hoar frost gleaming through ebony fur.

"We were just about crazy with loneliness," explained Wilfred Featherstone, "and had almost made up our minds to try and find your cabin and get you to take us out of the mountains, when right in the wildest hour of the storm we heard the foxes begin to bark."

"They most gen'rally do," said Bill Clancy, "when it's storming."

"So we decided we'd visit the trap line once more," Mrs. Featherstone took up the story, "and those two foxes had dug down through five feet of snow and got caught in the traps."

"Yeah," said Joe Piper as he stroked the shining fur, "that's the way of a fox."

"It's made such a difference to us," went on Mrs. Featherstone. "Why, both Wilfred and myself were getting so terribly lonely that we had begun to fancy we could hear voices calling out of the snow. But since we caught those two foxes we haven't heard the voices, so I guess it must have been just imagination, or over-strung nerves, or something. Don't you?"

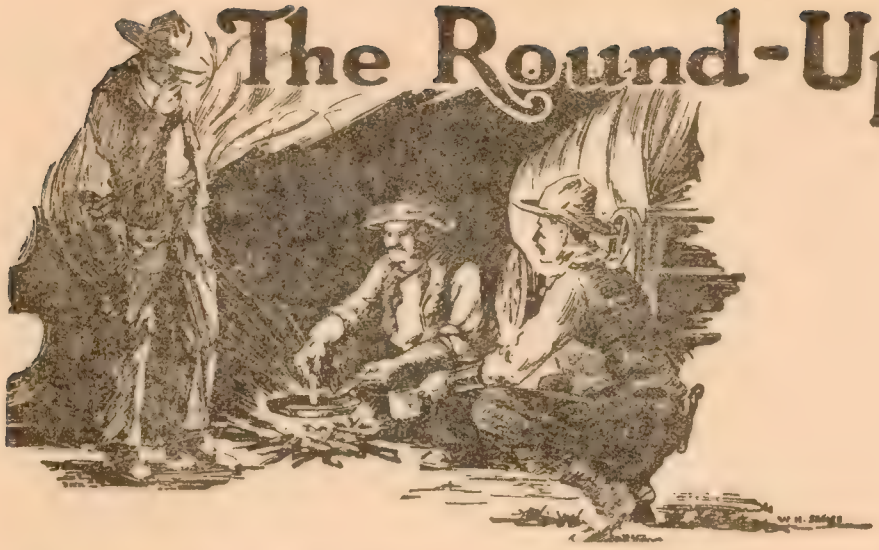
The two old trappers shuffled their feet and looked at one another in silence for a few moments; then Bill Clancy spoke.

"You'll have to figure that out for yourself, ma'am, for Joe and me don't know."

MORE LAND FOR HOMESTEADS

A CHANGE in the boundaries of an experimental station under the jurisdiction of the department of agriculture in New Mexico was recently authorized. The station comprises 199,490 acres, and the new arrangement adds 5,060 acres and excludes another 11,678 acres. All the land involved is unappropriated public land in Doña Ana County. The station was originally created for the purpose of conducting experiments in the improvement of native pastures and the breeding of horses for military purposes. The public land excluded from the reservation will be thrown open to homestead entry through the general land office of the department of the interior.

The Round-Up



SAY, folks, here's Max Coleman, who is goin' to give a mighty informative talk on homesteadin'. He sure seems to know the game, does Max, that is, judgin' from what he was handin' us over that there chuck wagon wheel, while the cook was gettin' things slicked up after supper and the boys was brightenin' up this fire.

Well, here's Max:

"BOSS OF THE ROUND-UP AND FOLKS: There is probably no business where a little cash money goes farther than in homesteading. If those who are so eagerly contemplating the venture will listen to the experience of those who have spent the best years of their lives at it, and then profit by what they are told, many financial failures will be averted.

"Years ago I worked in Texas as a cowboy until I had saved three thousand dollars. With this sum, my horses, and a bunch of mortgaged cattle, I went to New Mexico to homestead, so as to get a ranch free. I found all the good places, that is all where water was easily available, filed on. I came upon numerous desirable locations provided I could water them, so finally I filed on a quarter section, about eighty miles directly east of Roswell.

"I pastured my cattle and hired a well-driller. Also, very foolishly, began building a house and put in other improvements, hauling all supplies from Roswell.

"In twelve months' time I had spent two thousand dollars, had drilled three wells, and barely had enough water for household use. I then, by accident, met a Mexican who was proving up on his claim. He had a dug well which had an inexhaustible water supply. I gave him a pair of horses to move with and four hundred dollars in cash for his improved place, which made the headquarters for a fine ranch. I relinquished my claim to the government.

"When the six hundred and forty acre stock-raising law passed I sold out the place I had bought and tried it again, sixty-five miles northwest of Magdalena. There I found a section, seemingly made to order—timber protection, and open range around it. I spent eighteen hundred dollars trying to water that land, then again struck a

Mexican with an improved, lived-out claim and plenty of spring water. I bought the Mexican out for a thousand dollars.

"Since then, I have been over homestead lands in Arizona, Wyoming, Idaho, Oregon et cetera, and after a lifetime spent on the frontier my advice is: don't, unless you have capital. You can work for wages in some city, or, if you want the outdoors, go to a logging camp, and soon save enough to buy a place, unless, of course, your health is at stake, or you want to homestead just as a side line. A soldier boy can homestead very well, as he only has to live on his claim a few months. There are also some irrigation projects that are fairly safe if a man is practical, but here again a few dollars in cash is very useful.

"Understand I do not say, mind you, a person cannot make a go of it at all, as I see young fellows tackling it every day. But in the long run, instead of geting it free, they will give up about three years of their lives, and be out about twice the money they generally figure on, and undergo numerous hardships.

"I do not care to start a controversy as to the best sections in which to locate, but if a person is determined to homestead, and will be satisfied with nothing else, the most promising place I know of at the present time is in southeast Oregon, Malhuer and Harney Counties, headquarters, Burns. There are lots of locations in New Mexico, but the water is dangerous; Arizona is the same way. The most deserted and finest open country, in my opinion, is close to the line of British Columbia and Western Alberta. This is too isolated for me, but to those who are hunting that very thing, and want to trap and fish, it should appeal."

Now, we'll take another trail altogether. Just got a letter from Hector J. Padrés, Cananea, Sonora, Mexico. It's got a statement in it that the writer wants printed. We're always glad to oblige, when we possibly can. So here goes:

"DEAR EDITOR: We handle your magazine in our news-stand department in great numbers. We buy from the Los Angeles News Co. Your magazine is very well sold here as there are many Americans here; not only they, but also the prospectors, cowboys, and trappers of this country buy it. The Mexicans, funny as it may seem, like Western stories very much. Perhaps it is because the stories are short, well printed and easy to read. There is hardly a Mexican that does not know how to read English, on account of being so close to the border. Cananea is the largest mining town of northern Mexico, having huge copper beds and a very large and up-to-date smelter. It is a town of fifteen thousand inhabitants.

"I write this letter to ask you a favor. A very interesting event occurred a few days ago worthy of notice. I would appreciate if you would insert the following in the miscellaneous department of your magazine.

"A raffle was held in Cananea, Sonora, Mexico, to decide the right to acquire title to the richest silver and lead ore deposits in Sonora and northern Mexico. It is valued at many millions of dollars. The Sonora Development Company, controlled by Charles McKinnis, George Wyman, Frank Wyman, A. A. and Geo. H. Carson, all rich business men of Los Angeles, California, drew the lucky numbers.

"The drawing was participated in by a huge number of Americans, Germans, Spaniards, Italians, and Mexicans. It was the most exciting of any similar event in the State of Sonora, Mexico."

Well, them be glad tidings for us, we'll say to you.

Again, we will take to a very different trail. This time it's crows we're after. "One of the Gang," who hails from Cincinnati, Ohio, speaks thusly:

"BOSS AND FOLKS: Sure does seem funny that Mrs. L. May can't get a crow in Illinois. I lived there for fourteen years, and crows sure were a pest there in summer or winter. If she will get in touch with some one in or around Morris, Illinois, it will not be hard for her to get a crow, as there are lots of them in that neighborhood. It will be best for her to get a young crow, as they are easier to train. As for the splitting of a crow's tongue, so that the bird can be taught to talk: A small coin is used for this purpose. Try it with the edge of a brand new dime, lady"

Miss Helen Rivers, who conducts this department, will see to it that you will be able to make friends with other readers, though thousands of miles may separate you. It must be understood that Miss Rivers will undertake to exchange letters only between men and men, boys and boys, women and women, girls and girls. Letters will be forwarded direct when correspondents so wish; otherwise they will be answered here. Be sure to inclose forwarding postage when sending letters through The Hollow Tree.

WELL, quite a few arguments has took place under the branches of the Old Hollow, but never before has the question ariz as to whether there are cowboys and cowgirls. Considering the number of 'em as has had their say-so to the Gang, it beats me as to how such a question could come up. But it has come up, and it is now up to you, cowboy and cowgirl Gangsters, to prove that you're still with us and very much so. Read this letter, declare your identity, and settle the argument.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: We were discussing the West a few days ago, and our conversation led to cowboys. A friend, who claims to have been a resident of Texas and New Mexico, declares that there are no longer cowboys nor need of any. She says that the fencing of ranches has eliminated the necessity of riders except what are known as "line riders," and these are just ordinary farm hands, who include line riding in their daily duties. She also states that the men of the West are no more clever with guns than are any of our Eastern men.

Will somebody familiar with ranch life set us right on the subject? MISS V. A. S.
Care of The Tree.

Girl hikers, attention!

DEAR GANG: I'm an outdoor girl, fond of travel and adventure. Have seen quite a bit of this continent. Love to hunt, fish, ride, and hike. Is there a girl near my age, twenty-four, who would like to hike with me down into the States, or perhaps we could get a little car or motor cycle and go that way? I want a pal who is good-natured and not afraid, one who would stand by me as I would her. As a destination for the trip I had California in mind.

I will leave my name and address with Miss Rivers and will welcome letters from girls who love outdoors and animals, especially horses, and girls who don't get lonesome the moment they stray from a city street, and who are willing to start on a trip which has been accomplished by a good many girls before, so why not by us?

YANKEE-CANADIAN.
Care of The Tree.

Another nature lover writes:

I love the outdoors, especially the mountains, don't see why any one would want to live anywhere else. It is not from choice that I live in a city. I have camped, hunted, fished, and lived out in many wild and woolly places along this coast. Those were happy days! I would love to correspond with other nature-loving sisters, who are living where I

would like to be. Tell me of your work and pleasures, and I will imagine I am there, too, enjoying them with you. I am just a lonely widow of thirty-six years.

MRS. I. F. STARMER.
207 North Ninth Street, San Jose, Calif.

This letter is from a lonely brother twenty-one years old who doesn't stay in one place long enough to make friends.

DEAR HOLLOW TREE: I travel from place to place with my mother and father; we follow the fruit, picking different fruit as the season brings it in. We are always busy if we want to work, because we are old-timers in this, and know always where to go and when.

We have a large auto with everything for camping. Our life is the happiest life to live. We have our radio with us and listen in to concerts and so forth, going on in your large cities. For the next two months we will camp at Modesto, California, on a large fruit ranch; we will stay there until the peaches are picked, then we move over to pick grapes at another large ranch. After that we go to Oregon to pick apples. When the apple picking is over, we fish and hunt until spring, then off on our long journey to Mexico and as far east as the State of Colorado, then turn and start back.

With all my traveling, seeing new faces and new places, I am lonely. I want a friend to write to. FRUIT PICKER.
Care of The Tree.

Fruit Picker has promised to keep me posted on changes of address.

"If you're desirous of hearing all about California just get the old quill to working," said the Gangster whose letter follows.

DEAR HOOLLA: I live in the San Joaquin Valley of California, where the Sun Maid oranges are grown. I was raised in the open country on the north plains of Texas, and since I have moved to this State sure do miss my old pal, Booger, my saddle horse. I have ridden horseback all my life. I am not a cowboy, but just know enough about that life to know it is a hard one and takes a real he-man to stand it and make a success of it.

I have made one trip back to my native State, but don't think I will want to go back there to live, for California is the most wonderful State I have ever seen, and have roamed over several.

Any one want to exchange nature pictures?

SUNSHINE LAD.
Care of The Tree.

"I live in a beautiful Western State near the Garden of the Gods, Royal Gorge, Skyline Drive and other interesting places and have snaps I would like to exchange. I was here when the terrible flood struck the Arkansas Valley in 1921 and have some pictures of that, too. Am anxious to receive letters from sisters in this and other countries. Will some one who is interested in astrology write?" Gladys Phillips, 2511 Third Avenue, Pueblo, Colorado, speaking, folks.

Mrs. Margaret Cox, R. F. D. 17 C, Arcata, California, says she's a long ways from her folks and would like to find some pen pals. She's twenty-nine years old and an Easterner, but has lived in California about twelve years. If any one cares to hear about the wonderful redwood belt in which she now lives just drop her a line.

Gloria is also an Easterner who moved westward to the Golden State. She's twenty-two and likes all kinds of outdoor sports. "Am perfectly green about ranch life and am very anxious to know about it, so here's a chance for some of you cowgirls to do a lot of explaining," she writes. Address Gloria in my care, Hollow Tree sisters.

Florence and Irene Tormey, 5627 Brooklyn Avenue, Seattle, Washington, want some correspondents; they will send information and views of Washington and Puget Sound.

"Will you please find a place for a lonely Irishwoman in your Gang? I enjoy reading the letters in The Tree. One week I read one that made me feel that although lonely myself there are others worse off than I am. Write Mrs. Helen Shadwell, 110 South Peabody, Port Angeles, California, who is hoping for friends."

"I have trapped in the Dakotas and Minnesota and know a good deal about the different fur bearers there. If any one of the Gang is interested in that part of the country drop me a line and I will do what I can for you. Would like to hear from trappers or those interested in the out-of-doors, as that is the only place I am at home." Send letters to William D. Camp, 3723 Pacific Avenue, Tacoma, Washington.

Charles Elden, 2205 Holmes Street, Kansas City, Missouri, wants a real partner for a touring trip, a young man who can drive a Star car, and who would consider remaining in the West if the opportunity arose.

DEAR MISS RIVERS AND GANG: I used to live on a large cattle ranch in Montana. The scenery there is the best to be had anywhere. There is hunting, fishing, and almost any diversion to be had. The ranch was situated at the west end of the historic Lost Lake of old Indian and pioneer fame. We had nearly two thousand head of cattle besides the saddle horses. It is still the largest ranch in the country, but no longer belongs to my father.

I will give information about ranch life and about Montana, also nursing, as that is my profession. My husband is an invalid and would be glad to hear from some Hollow Tree brothers. We are both young, aged twenty-four and twenty respectively. Let's hear from Gangsters all over.

MRS. GRANT BRYANT.
Box 293, Sandpoint, Idaho.

DEAR GANG: My brother-in-law is totally blind. He is twenty-nine years old, married, and has two lovely children; he loves to mingle with people and can converse on most any subject. He does not know that I am writing this, but I am sure it will be a most pleasant surprise to him if he receives any letters. I can assure you he'd appreciate and answer all who wrote him. Hoping the Gang are generous with their letters, especially those in the West. Address Henry Driskell, Wheaton, Ill.

WILD GAME STILL TO BE FOUND

IT is estimated that more than six million people engage in hunting during the open seasons in the United States. According to estimates by the Biological Survey, the United States—not including Alaska—has at present between four and five thousand head of buffalo, eighty-five hundred moose, fifty-two thousand elk, seventy-five hundred antelope, and seven thousand mountain goats, totaling upward of eighty thousand of these varieties of wild game.

NATIONAL PARKS WINTER ATTRACTIONS

DURING the past winter, the use of some of the national parks of the West as fields for winter sports has been emphasized more than ever before. The opportunities they offer for such pastimes as skiing, snowshoeing, tobogganing, skating, sleighing, et cetera, are drawing more and more visitors each year. Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado now has a definitely established winter season. So has Mount Rainier Park, Washington. The Yosemite, Sequoia, and General Grant National Parks in California are also attracting greater interest in these winter sports.

Where To Go and How To Get There

By John North

It is our aim in this department to be of genuine practical help and service to those who wish to make use of it. Don't hesitate to write to us and give us the opportunity of assisting you to the best of our ability.

Address all communications to John North, care of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

FISHLAKE NATIONAL FOREST

WITHIN the national forests of Utah practically all of the high-forested mountain ranges of the State are to be found, and the Fishlake Forest is situated upon two plateaus separated by sunken valleys. The mountains are girdled by a zone of piñon and juniper in the dry, rocky foothills, but they rise to such heights that their main bulk is in the zone of aspen, fir and spruce.

The great rugged peaks which are found in the mountainous regions of national forests in other States are lacking here, the grandeur of the mountains consisting mainly in the deep cañons that cut into the plateaus. The hillsides are well covered with trees, brush and herbage; cattle fatten here all summer. The time has gone when the range was for the strongest man and was crowded with herds belonging to everybody and nobody, when competition for the growth was keen and fights were frequent, the weaker man invariably having to "move on." The Forest Service has changed all that, and the permit system protects the small stock raiser, who now has equal rights with his more powerful competitor. No more stock is allowed on the ranges than there is feed for, and one sees contented cattle and bands of fat sheep on the mountains and in the meadows. The grazing is regulated so that there is an abundant crop each year, and the forage areas are no longer reduced to dust beds as they were in the old days when it was "first come first served," the big herds leaving nothing for the little ones.

Fishlake Forest derives its name from the only mountain lake of any size that exists in Utah. This is Fish Lake, lying in a depression among the mountains. It is five miles long, a mile and a half wide, and is well stocked with game fish.

The Fishlake Forest is crossed by a road from Salina to Emery. In the early days a Spanish trail went through

the pass which has always been a favorite route across this range, but the present road runs straight up the deep, rocky Salina Cañon, utilizing an old abandoned railroad grade in part, and passing through a country of rocks and stunted junipers and piñons for a large part of its length. There are no inviting stopover places on the route, but the road is excellent and the whole section is interesting to pass through. Toward the summit the cañon gives way to an open, rolling, sagebrush country, the descent being by Ivie Cañon to Castle Valley.

Fish Lake is reached by a road branching off from the main Sigurd-Loa Highway near Burrville. Its water is extremely clear and cold and contains a wonderful growth of aquatic vegetation forming extensive and beautiful marine gardens. Trout is abundant, and many enthusiastic fishermen find good sport here every summer. Boats and guides are available; there is a good hotel for the accommodation of those who do not care to camp out. The camping grounds, however, are considered quite excellent, and are under the direct supervision of the Forest Service.

The motor tourist visiting these regions is advised to carry a reserve supply of water and to keep the gasoline tank as full as possible, as the supply in small hamlets sometimes becomes exhausted during the height of the travel season, the price rising rapidly as the distances from the railroad grow longer. It is also well to see to it that the tire equipment is good, and that the car is mechanically fit for long and hard going.

The cool climate and abundance of pure water make Fishlake National Forest an ideal place in which to spend a vacation. Summer homes may be built here, many attractive sites having been set aside for this purpose, the annual rental of which ranges from ten to twenty-five dollars.

Information in regard to camps, home sites, trips, hotel accommodations and other phases of life in this forest may be obtained from the Supervisor, at Richfield, Utah.

A GIRL'S HOMESTEADING EXPERIENCE

DEAR MR. NORTH: I have been reading the interesting experiences of homesteaders in your department of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, and I want to add mine.

In 1908 I homesteaded about sixty miles from Minot, North Dakota, fourteen miles from a little burg there which later became the county seat, and for about six years that was my home.

I was a healthy, happy girl, fond of dancing and of outdoor life. I loved nothing so well as a ride over the prairies after the cattle. My parents had homesteaded two years before I did, so I chose a mile strip three miles from them, built a shack for fifty dollars, and had a ten-foot well which happened to strike a spring of crystal cold water. My cow pony and I were great pals.

I would give anything if I could live that life over again. I got fifteen hundred dollars for my land, besides the stock that grew, and a husband who was a wonderful pal until he was taken by the flu. I now live in California, but the longing for a ride over those prairies cannot be quelled. My filing cost me fourteen dollars, and proving up thirty dollars. I cooked on a cook car for a threshing crew one fall, and made enough to live on during the winter. I had about twenty tons of hay and forty acres of flax.

I would love to make a trip through Montana and Dakota again. The deserts of southern California and Arizona don't have much attraction for me. I am now in the Mojave Desert, but am going to leave for the North.

Success and good wishes to Mr. North, the WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, to the old-timers, and to WESTERN STORY readers from

EX-HOMESTEADER.

Mojave, Calif.

Many thanks for the experience and for those good wishes, which I take great pleasure in passing on, knowing that they will be fully appreciated.

MISSING

This department is conducted in both WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE and DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE, thus giving readers double service, is offered free of charge to our readers. Its purpose is to aid them in getting in touch with persons of whom they have lost track.

While it will be better to use your name in the notice, we will print your request "blind" if you prefer. In sending "blind" notices, you must, of course, give us your right name and address, so that we can forward promptly any letters that may come for you. We reserve the right to reject any notice that seems to us unsuitable.

If it can be avoided, please do not send us a "General Delivery" post-office address, for experience has proved that those persons who are not specific as to address often have mail that we send them returned to us marked "Not found." It would be well, also, to notify us of any change in your address.

Now, readers, help those whose friends or relatives are missing, as you would like to be helped if you were in a similar position.

WARNING.—Do not forward money to any one who sends you a letter or telegram, asking for money "to get home," et cetera, until you are absolutely certain that the author of such telegram or letter is the person you are seeking.

KINNEY, E. M.—Your wife can give you news of advantage to you. Please write to her at Gen. Del., Akron, Ohio.

MOSSBURG, JAMES, formerly of Dillon, Mont., was heard from in Nevada last year. He is about seventy years old now. Any information about him will be appreciated by his niece, Miss Birdie Mossburg, 4923 N. Madison St., Spokane, Wash.

D. R. S.—Am working at the City Cafe in Bayard, Neb. Please write to me there, if you cannot come to see me. Hazel.

CHARLES, C. S.—In 1923 he was with the King-Allison Shows, and was later heard of in Albion, Ind. His wife will be very grateful for any information giving trace of his present whereabouts. Please write to Miss Charlotte Kimes, Box 124, Mason, W. Va.

SHEA, MIKE.—Several years ago he lived at the Hotel Philadelphia, Philadelphia, Pa., and it is thought he may now be in Buffalo, N. Y. His nephew, Mr. Frank Phillips, 1946 Ossington Ave., Oakwood Ave., Toronto, Can., is seeking some word from or about him.

WILSON, CHARLES.—Everything is forgiven. Please come back or send for me. Mrs. Katarine Procopio, 1839 S. 17th St., Philadelphia, Pa.

DELVEE, GEORGE, and his sons, **DAVID** and **NELSON,** left their home in Topeka, Kan., thirty-seven years ago. Any one knowing them please write to Mrs. Carrie Moody, sister of the boys, at 725 Soldano Ave., Azosa, Calif.

"WESTY."—Please write to "Tan" and me. You can write home or care of this magazine. R.

POINTER, JOHN FRANKLIN, ALMA, LEON, and **FLOYD.**—Have had no word from or about any of them for ten years. It is thought they are now in Oklahoma. Their sister, Bertha Tate, 617 E. 12th St., Kansas City, Mo., is anxious for some news of them.

MILLER, ROSCOE, of Carcin, Ky.—Just found out about your letter, but have never received it. Please send your address to Kido.

HENSON, HARVE.—When last heard of he was working in the coal mines near Washington, Ind. He was raised on a farm near this same town, has always lived in this locality, and is about seventy years old now. Mrs. Anna Harding, 918 Marietta St., South Bend, Ind., would like to learn of his present whereabouts.

TAGUE, GEORGE WM.—In Nov., 1920, he was in Saginaw, Mich., but has not been heard of since. His friend, Frank Austin Murphy, 54 Sterling St., Rochester, N. Y., would like to hear from him.

TOLLIF, SIMONSON.—He was born in Norway fifty-seven years ago and immigrated to the United States in 1896, locating at Warren, Minn., and has not been heard from since. He is six feet tall, weighs about one hundred and seventy pounds, has a dark complexion and blue eyes. Any one knowing of him at this time please write to his son, S. Tollifson, care of Can. Nat. Rys., Fire River, Ont., Can.

ALLEN, B. W.—Please advise the remedy that cured the disease you were suffering from. W. Bruce, 369½ E. Morrison St., Portland, Ore.

SHEPPARD, GEORGE, was born in England, came to New York when fifteen, and later settled in Texas. He is now deceased, and I am very anxious to hear from any of his relatives. Amos I. Sheppard, Route 5, Corsicana, Tex.

TANNER, DICK, who hailed from Cork City, Ireland.—He served, for a while, as steward on merchant-marine ships. His brother Michael will appreciate any information sent him, care of this magazine.

WEBB, I. JAMES, of Cairo, Ill.—If you care to renew your friendship with the girls you met on Long Island, please write to Kathleen, care of this magazine.

RANEY, JAMES R. (deceased).—His daughter would like to hear from any members of the Raney family. Mrs. M. Raney Owen, Box 30 B, Boerne, Tex.

HOOVER, MAY or **Mrs. JIM TAYLOR,** formerly of Italy, Tex.—She is thought to be in Memphis, Tenn., at the present time. Any one knowing her please communicate with her cousin, Fallie R. Balnum, 803 N. Walnut St., Vicksburg, Miss.

ATTENTION.—Will occupant of lower berth 6, car 48, Pennsylvania train, Cleveland to New York, June 30th, drop a line, giving his address, to his breakfast acquaintance with whom he discussed the occupant of upper berth? Address Pittsburgh, care of this magazine.

FRANK, V. A.—Will forgive everything, if you will come right home. Elsie.

OSBORN, J. M., left Missouri about twenty-five years ago, going to the oil fields of Texas. He was five feet three inches tall, about sixty years old, and has blue eyes. He was found dead near Richmond, Tex., and the authorities are endeavoring to find his relatives. Any one who knew this man please write to the mayor or sheriff of Richmond, Tex.

BOB.—Have some news for you. Please write to your friend Murphy.

EDER, JOHN, was in New York City in 1892, later moving to Hartford, Conn., and was last heard of in Los Angeles, Calif. His son Arthur was adopted by Mrs. Gilde, of Hartford, Conn., and is now about thirty-five years old. Any information regarding either of these men will be appreciated by Marion C. Stiles, Box 176, Verdugo City, Calif.

GATES, WARREN.—Please communicate with your sister-in-law, Mrs. F. H. Harris, Rt. 5, Wellston, Okla.

WALKER, WALTER JAMES.—Last heard of in Wallace, Idaho, about two years ago, when he was using an assumed name, and was running a donkey engine, hauling logs. He is thirty-seven years old, about five feet six inches tall, has black hair and gray eyes. His niece, Lois Norton, of Garnet, Mich., would be very glad to hear from him.

HARRIS, GEORGE.—Important that you write to your wife. Everything is forgiven. Maggie.

DIMOND, BYRON A., often known as **B. A. LeANDO.** He is five feet tall, rather stoop shouldered, has dark hair and dark eyes. He sometimes travels as musician with a road show or circus. His sister, Mrs. F. E. Wade, Rodney, Mich., would be grateful for any information as to his present whereabouts.

STEVENS, G. M.—He is fifty years old, tall, of light complexion, has blue eyes, and his hair is slightly grayed at the temples. L. E., care of this magazine, is seeking information about him.

JANES, CHARLIE.—His home, originally, was in Birmingham, Ala., although he has recently been seen in Brent, Ala. He is of medium height, has blue eyes, and light complexion. Any one knowing his present address please write to L. Busby, Jasper, Ala.

ASHLEY, J. W.—We have moved to 810 Campbell, Kansas City, Mo. Mattie Bryan.

HARNETT, JOHN and **MARSHALL, Mrs. J. J.**—Please write to F. A. H., care of this magazine.

DUBOIS or **WOODS, ARTHUR.**—He left his wife in Calgary, Alta., Can., on Sept. 30, 1924, and has not been heard from since. She has heard that he is now in Luther or Butte, Mont. He is twenty-four years old, five feet ten inches tall, of dark complexion, and is of French-Canadian descent. Will any of his acquaintances, knowing his address, please notify his wife, Mrs. Arthur Dubois, Gen. Del., Toronto, Ont., Can.

JOHNSTON, JERK, of Pittsburgh, Pa.—He left his home in June this year. His wife is sick from worry about him, and will appreciate any information sent her. Mrs. J. Johnston, 13 Baxter Place, Pittsburgh, Pa.

FRAZIER, HARRY, formerly with Bernice Allen Shows.—He is short, of medium build, and has dark hair. Any one knowing his present whereabouts please write to B. Willard Colbert, Box N-Radio, U. S. S. "Arizona," care of Postmaster, San Francisco, Calif.

GORDON, ELLA, nee **BELLGARD,** of San Antonio, Tex., was last heard from in Kansas City, Mo., in 1924. Her only sister will be very grateful for any information. Ruby Lee Shuffield, 313½ E. Cone St., San Antonio, Tex.

McCUTCHEN, J. A. MIKE.—He was in Knox Co., Tex., in 1923, but has not been heard from since. Any one knowing where he is now located please advise his brother, W. D. McCutchen, No. A, Lampasas, Tex.

BERT J.—Please don't let pride keep you away. I want you back and believe in you. Write to me, care of this magazine. Mrs. G. M. Jukos.

MONTGOMERY or **MITCHEL, MALCOLM.**—If you haven't forgotten your school chum please write to Alyce Malcolm, 1324 N. Jackson St., Roseburg, Ore.

ALLEN, BOBBIE or **RIPLEY, Mrs. JIMMIE,** formerly of St. Louis.—Have heard of your misfortune and want to help you. Please write to your pal Francis, care of this magazine.

THURMAN, HENRY, was last heard of in Hasse, Tex.—His daughter earnestly desires information concerning him, and will be grateful for any word sent to Hubert L. Driskill, Box 144, Santo, Tex.

JOHNSON, Mrs. ELSIE.—Have lost your address. Please write to Vera, 6336 87th St., Portland, Ore.

HAYES, BILL.—He is seventy-three years old, six feet tall, slightly bald, and has blue eyes. He was last heard of in San Bernardino, Calif. Any one knowing his present address please write to Mrs. G. M. Stewart, Gold Beach, Ore.

SCHWARTZ, JOHN H., is anxious to get in touch with any of his relatives, as he has not seen or heard from any of them in many years. Any one interested in the family please write to him at Erie, Ill.

BLACK GANG, U. S. S. "Connecticut."—Any one who belonged to this ship between 1921 and 1924 please write to M. A. Henze, Box 39542, San Quentin, Calif.

BEN.—Your sister, Bettie, is anxious to hear from you. Letter sent to my last address will be forwarded on to me.

LaVERE, SARGENT.—His last known address was St. Louis, Mo. His dad will be very thankful for any information as to his present whereabouts. P. H. Sargent, Box 393, Yale, Okla.

ELDER, K. N., Memphis, Tenn.—Please write to Francis, care of this magazine. Am very anxious to hear from you.

BAGBY, Mrs. MATTIE, formerly of Metcalfe Co., Ky., was last heard of at Smith's Grove, Ky., about nine years ago. Her daughter, Mrs. Sally Hubbard, Argo, Ill., wants to find her, and will be grateful for any assistance.

HOLLIDAY, ELLEN, WILLIE, FANNIE, and **ARNOLD.** About six years ago they were all living in Cleveland, Ohio, with their father. Their brother is anxious about them, and will appreciate any information leading to their present whereabouts. Pvt. Andy C. Holliday, Third Engineers, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii.

DEE, CLARENCE, is very anxious to get in touch with any of his relatives, as he was adopted when only two years old, and although he has been told that his parents are deceased, he is still of the opinion that this is a mistake. If any one knows any of this family, will they please communicate with Clarence Sitzer, 711 E. Lee St., Nevada, Mo.

YORK, GLADYS, recently of Dallas, Tex.—Your chum, Olive, is anxious to hear from you. Please write to Mrs. Reese J. Fryer, Box 561, Wortham, Tex.

CLOUTIER, HENRY.—Do you remember our old call "A-A-?" Please write to your pal, Ralph Schourup, 687 Garfield Ave., Pasadena, Calif.

HAYWARD, GRACE M.—Am well employed and want to help you. Please write immediately to J. S. H., care of the Aromina Mfg. Co., Cleveland, Ohio.

SCHAFFER, HARRY K., was living in or near Philadelphia, Pa., in 1919, but has not been heard of since. Joseph Carpenter, 704 Elm St., Toledo, Ohio, would be pleased to hear from him, or from any member of his family.

KNAUBER, LINA, nee **VON der WALL.**—About seventeen years ago she owned and operated a saloon on 182d St., New York City, left her by her deceased husband. Any one familiar with the present circumstances of this woman please write to R. Duttine, care of this magazine.

FARRAR, JOSEPH.—Last heard of in Westlake, Ore. Please write to your friend, Jim Fitzgerald, care of this magazine.

BROWN or **WOOD, CLARENCE EMERY,** whose home was in Dearborn, Mich., has been missing from his home for several weeks, and his mother is very much worried about him. He is five feet four inches tall, weighs one hundred and twenty-five pounds, has brown hair, brown eyes, dark complexion, and a scar across the front of his head. Any one knowing where this boy now is please write to Mrs. Wm. E. Brown, 213 Orange St., Wyandotte, Mich.

GATES, CHARLEY, FRANK, HARLEY, or **GEORGE G.**—Their home, originally, was in Merrill, Wis. In 1905 they moved to Greenriver, Utah, and have changed their residence again since that time. Any one knowing them at this time please write to Perry L. Gates, care of this magazine.

NYMAN or **NEWMAN, JOHN EDWIN WALTER.**—About a year ago he was working in a machine shop in New York City. He is six feet tall and twenty-five years old. Any word pertaining to his present whereabouts will be gratefully received by his mother, Mrs. Matilda Nyman, Box 21, City Mills, Mass.

SMITH, BUNKER, or **THOMAS, EMMA J.**—Please write home to your mother.

WILSON, BOB.—He left Little Rock, Ark., in March, 1925, with a stranger, who was to employ him in a near-by town. But he has not been heard from since. Any one knowing where he is at present will confer a favor upon his own people by writing to his brother, S. R. Blanton, 500 Morgan St., Knoxville, Tenn.

GARON, STELLA, formerly of Detroit, Mich.—Your friends, Lulu and Pete, want to hear from you. Please write.

KNIGHT, N. L., was known to have been in Pittsburg, Tex., in May, 1925, but has moved on, neglecting to leave his forwarding address. His friend, L. I. Pharr, Lucy, N. M., is very anxious to find him, and will appreciate the assistance of any one knowing him.

HOP, FRISCO, McCARTY, and **ORVARK.**—Have news for all of you. Please write to me at once, addressing mail to Garfield, Kan. Jack True.

CLARKE, JOHN STANLEY.—On October 4th, when last heard of, was working on a boat out of Seattle, Wash. He is thirty-three years old, five feet ten inches tall, clean shaven, and has brown hair. His mother still addresses her letters to the hotel in Seattle, Wash., where he has always called for his mail, and as none are returned she is of the opinion that he is receiving them. If any one knows anything about him will they please relieve his mother's constant worry by writing to J. B. Clarke, Tey Brook, Kelvedon, Essex, England?

WELCH, R. W.—Family is all well, with the exception of worrying about you. Please write to father at once. L. W.

MAGAVNES, ANTONA, of Norway.—He made his home in New York City, before the World War. After that he joined the army and was sent to Camp Wheeler, Ga., but has not been heard from since. Evelyn Akins, 2320 N. Myrtlewood St., Philadelphia, Pa., would be grateful for any news as to his present address.

BRIGHAM, FRANKLIN WILSON, left Melrose Park, Ill., in September, 1907, and his brother is still seeking information which may enable him to find Franklin. Any helpful information will certainly be appreciated by Elmer N. Brigham, 553 Markham St., Toronto, Can.

SHEPLER, REGINALD.—Have some important news pertaining to your own family. Please write to F. McAdams, 375 Fulton St., Jamaica, N. Y.

GLEASON, LEO, when last heard from was working on a farm near Kalamazoo, Mich. His mother has died since his disappearance from home, and as he is one of her heirs, he will learn some news of personal interest if he will communicate with his brother, George Gleason, Box A, Wahiamega, Mich.

McCOMB, JENNIE SPARKS.—In 1913, when she was twenty years old, she left her home in Kalamazoo, Mich., starting West. Any one knowing her whereabouts at this time please write to John A. Doelle, 255 Houseman Bldg., Grand Rapids, Mich.

ALGER, GLADYS.—She was last seen in Laramie, Wyo., in the spring of 1919. It is thought she has married since and moved to Illinois, but this information is unconfirmed. Any one knowing her address at this time please write to Gordon F. Martin, 308 N. Grand St., Sedalia, Mo.

RAYMER, LILIAN MAY, CLARENCE O., and **GEORGE,** were born in Pennsylvania, and later lived in the same State with an aunt by the name of Skinner. Knowledge of their present address is desired by Thomas E. Collins, Ketchikan, Alaska.

McCLELLEN, Sergt. AUGUSTINE, Coast Artillery Corps, U. S. army, was last seen at Chin-Wang-Too, China. An old friend, Jack Lisenbee, Versailles, Ill., wants to hear from him.

SANDWORD, ALBERT WM., electrician, is anxiously being sought by his mother, Matilda Sandford, Curtis St., Denver, Colo.

KONDRIT, JOHN.—He is five feet eight inches tall and weighs about one hundred and sixty pounds. He left his home in Jacobs Creek, Pa., in the fall of 1913, and has not been heard from since. His sister is very ill and wants to hear from or about him. Mrs. P. A. Branthover, Box 4, Jacobs Creek, Pa.

FLETCHER.—My last hope was in you. There will be no reprimand if you will please come back. Mother.

C. L. F.—Mother and father are separated. R. F. is in the navy. Please send me your address, so I can write you particulars. Allie Dyer, Box 155, Mancos, Colo.

ANDERSON, CHARLES.—His mother last heard from him in 1920, when he was living in Detroit, Mich. He is thirty-eight years old, six feet tall, has blue eyes, long features, and a fair complexion. Any information sent to Mrs. W. J. Pope, 9 Simpson Ave., Toronto, Can., will be very much appreciated.

BAINES, GEORGE, who was in the 4th Field Artillery in 1915.—Please write to your friend, Arno B. G. Fritsche, Supply Office, 9th Field Artillery, Fort Des Moines, Iowa.

"BEFORE I BEGAN TAKING Fleischmann's Yeast my face and chest were in a terrible condition with pimples. Finally one day a young woman asked me if I had ever tried Fleischmann's Yeast. After all my failures I thought I might just as well experiment some more . . . After taking Fleischmann's Yeast for three or four months my skin began to be softer and better to look at. Soon my friends began remarking about the change. Now I am in a perfectly healthy condition."

BEATRICE COHEN, Toronto, Ont.

All Around You People Know This Secret

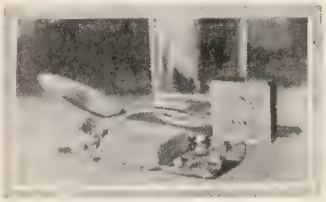
Clear eyes, strong bodies, a new zest in living—all through one simple fresh food

NOT a "cure-all," not a medicine in any sense—Fleischmann's Yeast is simply a remarkable fresh food.

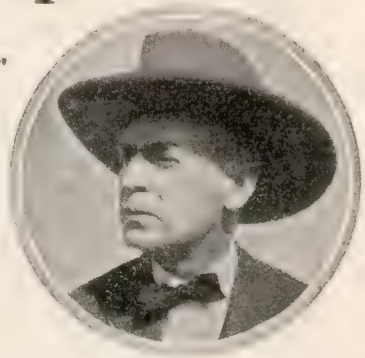
The millions of tiny active yeast plants in every cake invigorate the whole system. They aid digestion—clear the skin—banish the poisons of constipation. Where cathartics give only temporary relief, yeast strengthens the intestinal muscles and makes them healthy and active. And day by day it releases new stores of energy.

Eat two or three cakes regularly every day before meals: on crackers—in fruit juices or milk—or just plain. *For constipation especially, dissolve one cake in hot water (not scalding) before breakfast and at bedtime.* Buy several cakes at a time—they will keep fresh in a cool dry place for two or three days. All grocers have Fleischmann's Yeast. Start eating it today!

And let us send you a free copy of our latest booklet on Yeast for Health. Health Research Dept. Z-22, The Fleischmann Company, 701 Washington Street, New York.



This famous food tones up the entire system — banishes constipation, skin troubles, stomach disorders.



"I WAS A CHRONIC SUFFERER from constipation and a slave to cathartics for years. A cousin induced me to use Fleischmann's Yeast. He had taken a trip to Europe, and while in Germany he had visited a specialist for stomach trouble and constipation. This specialist informed him that the real treatment for his case was to be found in his own country—just plain Fleischmann's Yeast . . . I now have no more headaches. My body is all cleared up from pimples and all other eruptions of the skin. That dull, hazy and dizzy feeling that used to pass over me several times a day and ruin my life, efficiency, and disposition, has entirely left me."

M. A. ZEFF, Electra, Texas

After Death—What?

That's the mystery. But don't get excited. You don't need to worry if you play the game square. You were given a good body to care for on earth. You were told to spread happiness, but *keep your body clean.*

Are you doing it? You are not. You've gone in for every possible kind of self-indulgence. You never stop to consider the consequences. Are you playing the game square? You're cheating both your Maker and yourself.

HOW TO LIVE

Cut it out, men! Why not be square shooters? Don't you realize what it means to you? Do you know you will really enjoy life better and live longer? Sure, you have to give up some things, but think what you get in return: I would give up a dime to get a dollar any day. The difficulty is, you are so chuck full of germs and decayed tissue by now, it would take you years to even get back to normal.

But listen, fellows. There's a short cut. I found it. I've been showing others how to take it for nearly 15 years. And not only do I chase those disease bugs out of you—and clean all that rotted tissue out of your body, but I put good solid tissue—live, animated tissue in its place. I build out your shoulders—I deepen your chest—I strengthen your back—I give you arms and legs like pillars. I teach you how to breathe so that your lung capacity is doubled. Every time you take a breath, you draw rich pure oxygen down into every last minute cell of your lungs. This loads your blood with red corpuscles which fly around your body in jig time, clearing the cobwebs out of your brain, toning up your liver, your kidneys and the muscles of the very organs themselves. In less than no time you'll feel the thrill of life shooting up your old spine. You'll feel like fighting a wild cat. You will have the flash to your eye and the snap to your step that will make people stop and say: "There goes a real He-man; Boy! but he has pep."

Is it worth it, fellows? You can bet your Sunday socks it's worth it. And the best of it is—it's a sure bet that you'll get it. Remember I don't just promise these things. I guarantee them. Can you beat that? Try and do it. Are you with me? Of course you are. Well, let's ride.

EARLE E. LIEDERMAN
The Muscle Builder
Author of "Muscle Building," "Science of Wrestling," "Secrets of Strength," "Here's Health," etc

Send for my new book

"MUSCULAR DEVELOPMENT"

IT'S FREE

It's the peppiest piece of reading you ever laid your eye on. I swear you'll never blink an eyelash till you've turned the last cover. And there are 48 full-page photos of myself and some of my prize-winning pupils. This is the finest art gallery of strong men ever assembled. And every last one of them is shouting my praises. Look them over. If you don't get a kick out of this book, you had better roll over—you're dead

Come on then. Take out the old pencil and sign your name and address to the coupon. Snap into it. Do it now. Tomorrow you may forget. Remember it's something for nothing. All I ask is 10 cents to cover postage and wrapping. No strings attached—no obligation. GRAB IT!

EARLE E. LIEDERMAN
Dept. 411, 305 Broadway, New York City

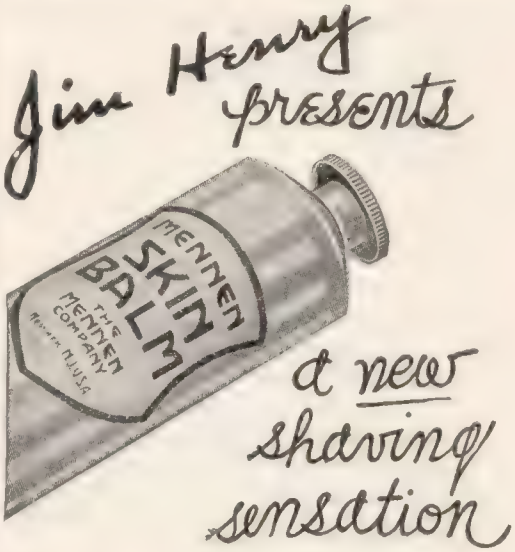
EARLE E. LIEDERMAN,
Dept. 411, 305 Broadway, New York City

Dear Sir:—Please send me without any obligation on my part whatever, a copy of your latest book, "Muscular Development." I enclose 10 cents to cover postage and wrapping. (Please write or print plainly.)

Name.....

Street.....

City.....State.....



I know just how Fulton, Langley, Bell and Morse felt when people scoffed at their ideas.

I came in for a good deal of kidding myself eleven years ago when I predicted that shaving cream would knock hard soaps through the ropes.

Now that I'm introducing another revolutionary product, I find that men take me seriously. And when they *try* this new preparation their fulsome praise makes my sales talk sound as conservative as decisions of the Supreme Court.

Yes, Mennen has another winner. Mennen Skin Balm is fracturing every record of sales growth ever made in the man field.

One demonstration forms a lifelong habit. This is how it goes:

You squeeze a little of the silky balm from the tube (no bottle to leak or break). You rub it for half a minute into the skin just shaved.

First you feel a tingling bite, instantly followed by a surge of cooling comfort. Then you smell a brisk, refreshing odor that clears your head and delights your nostrils.

No trace of Skin Balm is left, but there has been definite antiseptic action, and your skin looks and feels better than ever before.

Get a big 50c tube of Mennen Skin Balm at the drug store and call on me for your four bits if you aren't happy with your purchase.

Jim Henry
(Mennen Salesman)

MENNEN SKIN BALM

8 Men out of 10

Picked the Duofold Blindfolded

From 11 New Pens of Different Makes

"I believe that the hand can tell this super-smooth writer sight unseen," declared a Duofold owner—and he proved it!

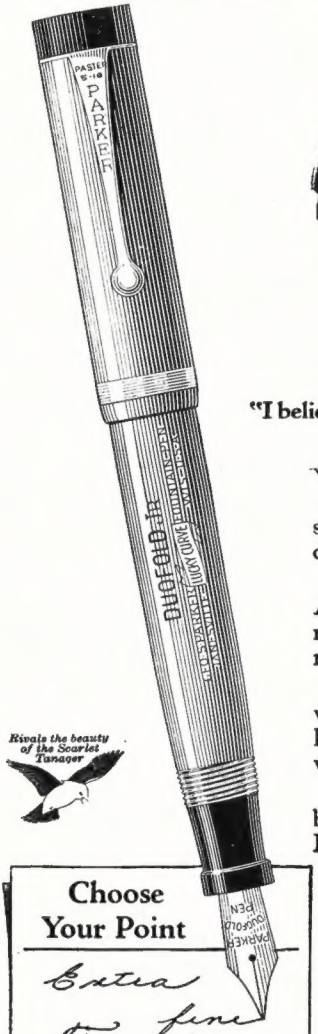
YES, ten men, chosen at random, agreed to make this test and were blindfolded. One by one, in the presence of several witnesses, they were handed 11 large new pens of different makes, obtained from pen dealers' stocks.

Each man wrote with all 11 pens on an ordinary note pad. And one by one he laid them all aside until only a single pen remained in his hand—the pen he ranked as the smoothest, most inspiring writer.

Then the blindfold was removed. And man after man, with but two exceptions, glanced down to behold in his hand the flashing black-tipped lacquer-red Parker Duofold, with the point guaranteed, if not misused, for 25 years.

Never before a pen selection so unbiased as this. No one behind a counter to urge this pen or that. Not even the Duofold's famed name or handsome color visible, to sway the hand's Simon-pure judgment.

You, too, can tell this super-smooth point with your eyes shut. Step to the nearest pen counter now and try it.



Rivals the beauty of the Scarlet Tanager

Choose Your Point

Extra fine
Fine
Medium
Broad
Stub
Oblique

THE PARKER PEN COMPANY, JANESVILLE, WIS.

NEW YORK • CHICAGO *Duofold Pencils to match the Pens* SAN FRANCISCO

Lady, $3; *Over-size Jr.*, $3.50; *"Big Brother" Over-size*, $4

THE PARKER FOUNTAIN PEN COMPANY, LIMITED, TORONTO, CANADA

THE PARKER PEN CO., LIMITED, 2 AND 3 NORFOLK ST., STRAND, LONDON, ENGLAND

Parker Duofold

LUCKY CURVE

OVER-SIZE $7

With The 25 Year Point

Red and Black Color Combination Reg. Trade Mark U. S. Pat. Office

Duofold Jr. $5 Intermediate size

Lady Duofold $5 With ring for chatelaine

Shave *every* day—be comfortable

COLGATE'S

softens the beard at the base

YESTERDAY~

When Judge Confucius Pitkin was President of the Common Council there were more whiskers in the State of Maine alone than it would be possible to find within the borders of the Union today.

The Judge himself had no more use for a necktie than a fruit peddler has for a blue sash. If it had not been for a certain incident early in his career as a parent he might still be looked upon with disfavor by the haberdashers.

One afternoon while he dozed in an easy chair his first-born son, whose fists were full of taffy, climbed upon his knees and engaged in certain playful exercises that caused his honor to become a changed man. His whiskers had to go; but it was all for the best.

Our pictures of him "with and without" show why a clean shave daily has become a business as well as a social requirement.

Judge Pitkin, finding comfort in the regular use of Colgate's Rapid-Shave Cream, looks younger now than he looked when it was necessary to enter an automobile by a back door. With the millions of other men who have become acquainted with its merits, the Judge could tell

~TODAY

you easily why Colgate's Rapid-Shave Cream is vastly better than anything else you have ever tried for softening your beard.

It makes an exceptionally fine, moist lather, which goes to the base of each hair and emulsifies its oily coating. This permits moisture to penetrate and soften the beard where the razor's work is done. Your first experience with Colgate's will convince you of its great superiority.

Colgate's needs no rubbing in with the fingers. Press a bit of it upon the end of your wet brush, then work up the lather on your face for an easy shave.

There is no after-smart or unpleasant dryness. The skin is soothed and refreshed when you have finished shaving with Colgate's.

Let us send you a trial tube of this marvelous Cream. Please use the attached coupon.

Colgate & Co.
Established 1806
NEW YORK

COLGATE & CO.
Dept. C
581 Fifth Ave., N. Y.

Please send me the trial tube of Colgate's Rapid-Shave Cream for better shaving. I enclose 4c.

Name.....

Address.....

.....

In Canada
COLGATE & CO. Ltd.
72 St. Ambroise St., Montreal

A coarse inefficient lather, which fails to reach the base of the hair.

Colgate's fine texture lather, which softens the hair at the base.

Truth in advertising implies honesty in manufacture