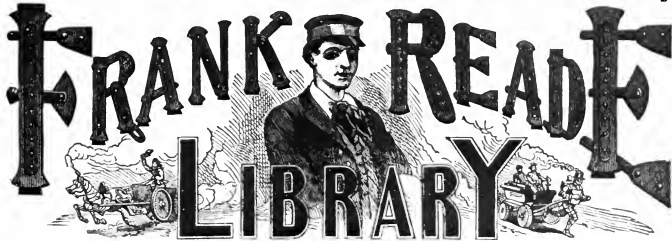


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# FRANK READE

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## FRANK READE AND HIS STEAM MAN OF THE PLAINS; or, THE TERROR OF THE WEST.

By "NONAME"



On the driver's seat sat Frank Reade, holding the reins with a firm grasp and guiding the steam giant as one guides a horse. On the coal-box in the rear part of the wagon sat Charley Gorse. "Help!" Again that appeal arose high and clear above the roaring of the flames.

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# THE STEAM MAN OF THE PLAINS;

OR,

## THE TERROR OF THE WEST.

By "NONAME,"

Author of "Frank Reade, Jr's Travels," "Frank Reade, Jr., and His Air-Ship," etc., etc., etc.

### CHAPTER I.

#### FRANK READE.

"FRANK!" shouted Mrs. Reade, from the rear of her dwelling. "Here's your Cousin Charley, from Missouri."

"All right," said a voice that seemed to come from a sort of woodshed at the end of a long yard, "I'm coming."

The door of the outhouse was cautiously opened, and Frank Reade slipped out, carefully releasing the door.

In a moment he was shaking hands with the tall, broad-shouldered western youth who had traveled from Missouri to New York to pay him a visit.

In age the cousins were alike, both being sixteen, but while Frank, born and bred in New York, and being of a studious nature, and quite a thinker, was pale, slim, and not over strong, the Missouri boy, breathing the free air of the great prairie, had grown strong and robust in form, a splendid hunter, a dead shot, and a lover of wild adventure.

The Reade family were well to do in the world, and Frank, the only child, had been permitted to have his way until he was pretty well spoiled. His father, his greatest delight was to indulge his inventive genius, and that had full play.

The moment that Mrs. Reade left the two boys alone, Frank grasped his cousin by the hand and said:

"If I show you something will you give me your word to keep your mouth shut about it?"

"Certainly," said Charley Gorse, wondering what was up.

"Then follow," said the mysterious Frank, and led the way to the wood-house.

He cautiously opened the door a little, gave a glance at the windows of all the houses in the block, to see if anyone was looking, and then hurried into the building and drew Charley in after him.

"Thunderation!" cried Charley, for there in front of him he suddenly beheld a huge figure, looking like one of the giants of old.

The western boy was startled, and might have backed out of the door, had not Frank restrained him.

"Hold on," he said, laughing at his cousin's evident alarm; "you needn't be afraid; it's only a machine."

"Phew," triumphed Charley.

"Faw!" triumphed early Frank. "It's one of the greatest inventions of the age. It's a steam man."

"And can it walk?" asked Charley.

"Walk? yes, and run, too," promptly replied Frank. "That's my invention, and nobody knows anything about it but you. If you can keep quiet over the thing you shall see whether it can walk."

"I'm too surprised to say anything," said Charley, and he walked up to the invention to examine it.

The contrivance stood in the center of the floor. Charley Gorse beheld a metallic imitation of a man. The figure was about twelve feet high from the bottom of the huge feet to the top of the plug hat which adorned the steam man's head. An enormous belly was required to accommodate the boiler and steam chest, and this corpulence agreed

well with the height of the metallic steam chap. To give full working room to the very delicious machinery in his interior, the giant was made to convey a sort of knapsack upon his shoulders. The machine held its arms in the position taken by a man when he is drawing a carriage.

There were numerous rods, doors, shafts and other contrivances which puzzled the western boy, and he turned inquiringly to Frank.

"I'll explain it to you," said the enthusiastic inventor. "Look at his feet."

Charley glanced up at the face of the monster and beheld a huge pair of glass eyes and an enormous mouth.

"Now, then," said Frank, "the lamp will be in his head, and his eyes will be the headlights. His mouth holds the steam whistle. Here, in his belly, we open a door and put in fuel, and the shafts fall into his legs and are emptied from the moveable knee-pan, and without injury to the oiled leg-shafts, for they are inclosed in a tube. That is why the fellow's limbs are so large. These wires coiled increase the power in one leg, and cause that leg to go much faster, and in that manner we get a side movement and can turn around."

"Go on," said Charley, who was intensely excited. "It's feet are spiked like a base-ball player's are spiked, to prevent the machine from slipping under speed," said Frank. "Then you notice that its legs are very long, and very far apart, so as to give it balance. This stop-look on the side will let on or shut off steam."

"Orwin!" snarled he muttered the Missouri boy.

"And will you ride on that knapsack?"

"Oh, no," laughed Frank. "I am making a low, broad, and very heavy wagon for the contrivance, and it will be finished in a few days. The hands of the man will hold the shafts of the wagon. The vehicle will carry two or three persons and hold my fuel and water, sufficient for several days, and I have made a tent-like covering for the concern so that I could sleep in the wagon if I went on a journey. Here in the knapsack are my steam valves, the top of the hat is only a stove, and the smoke will come out of that. Then there's drafts and stop-offs without number. The steam gauge is there in the fellow's back."

"Thunder!" said Charley Gorse; "how fast can it go?"

"It can go fifty miles an hour," replied Frank.

"On a level road I should not hesitate to run at thirty or thirty-five an hour."

"Can you make it stop and people in it?"

"Yes," said Frank. "Steam is a wonderful power, you know."

Charley did not make any reply, he was thinking deeply.

"What's the matter?" asked Frank.

"Hold on," excitedly returned Charley. "I've got an idea for you. What are you going to do with your machine when you get it completed?"

"I really hadn't thought about it," said Frank.

"I'll tell you what to do," cried Charley, "come back to Clarksville with me, take the whole machine with you, I'll pay the bill, and then you and I'll go out on the plains hunting and roving, dashing around in style, and racing the reds half to death, for I am sure they don't know even what a steam engine is like. You see my dad

has got a big farm, raises stock and lots of produce, and sends it to St. Louis, and as there's lots of money coming in all the while, I have everything my own way. But the reds, Sioux, Ijansa, bother me. Around the town they're peaceful enough, but if you get them out among the big game on the prairie they'll raise a rumpus. I had to travel a hundred miles by foot to get to the steam cars, and I guess the reds that live beyond Clarksville don't know much about steam inventions. I tell you I can have glorious fun!"

The blood leaped to Frank's cheeks while his cousin spoke, and an eager light danced in his eyes.

"Wouldn't it be splendid?" he said. "The level plains would be just the thing for my man, and in time of danger we could rush off with the speed of the wind."

"He was greatly excited over the idea, and he was doubtless as eager as most boys would be to see the great west—the novelist's great land of story."

"Will you do it?" asked Charley. "I've got enough money to see the whole thing put through in style. Will you go?"

"I will!" hastily responded Frank.

"And do you think your folks will let you go?" asked Charley.

"Not to carry out your idea," said Frank. "My steam man is known only to us two. We must keep the secret from everybody, and manage to slip the affair off before we go. They will suppose that I am only going on an ordinary visit."

"That's the idea," said Charley Gorse. "But, I say, does the chap take apart?"

"Yes."

"And the wagon?"

"The entire concern can be taken apart and packed in a medium-sized case," said the inventor.

"Brilly!" exclaimed Charley. "Then we can send it away a week or two before we go, and when we get to Clarksville we can put it together and start on."

"Just so," said Frank; "and if we do get out on the plains, I'll make your eyes open with wonder. I've got about a dozen different inventions, that will make the red-skins believe that they've run across the devil at last. I have made a pair of night pistols."

"Night pistols!" repeated Charley, wondering much as to his companion's words; "what do you mean by that?"

"Pistols that may be used in as dark a night as you have ever seen," said the young genius.

"And you can bring down your game with them as well as you could in broad daylight?"

The western cousin regarded the inventive genius with wonder and admiration.

"You're a smart little cuss," said he.

"I'll make the Sioux believe I am," said Frank.

"Just give me a chance to use my little inventions among them, and if you don't see fun and wild adventures, then call me a fool. I could scare an Indian out of his wits."

"You'll have a chance," said Charley; and then the voice of Frank's mother called them into the house, the steam man being very securely locked in by his inventor.

For the next two weeks the two boys were very mysterious, and the old people were wondering what was up.

They thought the mystery explained when Frank asked that he might go with his cousin to Missouri, and they freely gave their consent.

The boys were wild with delight. They fitted from the steamer to the place where the steam man poked wood, in the full glory of a cool of paint, and proceeded to execute their plans.

A strong case was procured, the huge traveler carefully taken apart, and packed away with the pieces of the wagon, and then the whole concern was strongly bound and nailed.

Frank made an engagement with a man who owned a trunk, managed to send his mother out for an hour, and thus made his shipment in secrecy, and the man of metal was started on his journey.

Now that the invention had gone, the young inventor longed to follow, and he chafed until the time arrived.

Then, well supplied with money, and carrying wonderful contrivances in his trunk, the genius and his cousin bade good-bye to the city, and were whirled away towards the setting sun.

Both were plucky, both were fond of excitement, yet still they might have turned back in alarm if they could have peered into the future and learned what terrible dangers, what wild, blood-curdling scenes they were destined to meet in the troublous west.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE STEAM MAN TO THE RESCUE.

#### "HELP!"

The thrilling cry for aid rang out over a wild scene.

An almost trackless western prairie was on fire!

The red flames leaped and danced over the tall, dry grass, carried forward by the whistling breeze.

Over the prairie, dashing along at terrific speed in advance of the shrieking flames came the steam man of the plains, cutting his way between making gigantic strides to escape the fearful enemy in the rear, the heavy wagon containing the two young adventurers fairly leaping from the ground under the pressure of the steam.

On the driver's seat sat Frank Rowe, holding the reins with a firm grasp and guiding the steam giant as one guides a horse.

At the cool-box in the rear part of the wagon sat Charley Gorse.

#### "Help!"

Again that appeal arose high and clear above the roaring of the flames.

This time it reached Charley's ears, and he gazed in the direction from which the cry came.

He beheld a sight that brought him to his feet with a bound.

At the rear, and slightly to one side of the track they had passed over, he beheld a white man in the grasp of a hairy red-skin.

The white man was on his knees; the Indian stood over him with uplifted tomahawk.

A moment's delay would be fatal.

#### "Help!"

The command pealed from Charley's lips as his rifle flew to his shoulder.

Frank pulled a rod and shot off the steam.

The steam man shivered and then stood still.

#### "Crack!"

The rifle pealed forth its shrill note, and almost at the same instant of time the red-skin fell lifeless to the ground, shot through the body by the unerring aim of the Missouri marksman.

Then Frank looked around, and found that Charley had saved a human life.

The man had risen from death and got upon his feet, and was now rushing swiftly towards them.

He was making good headway, for he was running for his life.

The flames were close behind him.

Already he could feel their scorching breath on his neck.

"Be quick, for your life!" cried Frank.

The man's feet seemed to fairly tremble as he rushed forward.

The driver of the strange concern placed his hand on the connecting rod, ready to turn on a good head of steam the moment that the fugitive was safely in the wagon.

The breeze was light, or the man could not have escaped the fire, for as it was the wind seemed to increase as it moved along in the wake of the flying man.

"Make a spurt!" shrieked Charley, casting his side saddle and leaning over the back of the wag-

on in order to assist the man when he came up within reach. "Make a spurt and you're saved."

Urged on to make every endeavor by these cries, the man dashed forward like some frightened animal.

The flames shrieked loudly and seemed to gain upon him.

Yes, see, they have crept up to the man's head, and even now their long red tongues shoot upward and forward as if to lap his shrinking body.

He reaches the wagon, stumbles; Charley seizes him and pulls him quickly into the vehicle, and with a shrill scree the steam man dashes swiftly away o'er the plains, speedily leaving the hissing flames far behind.

As soon as the man was hauled into the body of the wagon he gave utterance to a deep sigh, and then tumbled unconscious and snore-exhausted into the bottom of the vehicle.

"Let him alone," said Frank. "He's wind-broken, and as soon as he gets back his natural breathing he'll be all O. K. Just raise his head a little, so as to give his chest full play.

Charley did so.

The steam man rushed on.

The wind whistled a lively tune in the ears of the rescued man, and his chest swelled out.

In a moment after he drew a deep breath, and then he sat up on his elbow and looked against the wood-box.

"What a wonderful sight at Frank and Charley, and the very first words that he said were:

"Have you any whiskey?"

The question seemed so comical under the circumstances, that both the New York boy and the more rough and ready cousin laughed outright.

"We have," said Charley.

"Thin, for the love of God, do you pass me a dram of the best, for it's dead, and the devil's own fire, and me runnin' loike Tam O'Shanter wild the witches behind him. Musha—musha, we have no whiskey in our feet."

Charley handed him the flask of whiskey he carried, and the Irishman tipped it high in the air.

"Ah, that puts new life in me veins," he said. "Ah, that'll see how you get on now, you little scrag, said Charley. "First take your name."

"Barney Shea, o' the town o' Glonakilly, in the County of Cork," replied the other.

"Well, you've got you into this scrape that came so very near—"

Charley had spoken thus far when Barney leaped to his feet and placed his hands upon Frank's shoulders.

"Shoop the ear—sthoop the ear!" he shouted in the driver's ears. "I'm going the other way, and how'll I—oh, murdher—murdher, tare an ounce, what the devil's that?"

The sudden change in his sentence was caused by the fact that he had caught sight of the steam man, and was struck with wonder; almost fear.

Enjoying his wonder greatly, the young driver pulled a certain cord, and forth from the giant's mouth came a huge jet of steam, accompanied by a loud, shrieking whistle that seemed to convey the idea that the steam man was suffering with a stomach ache.

"Och, worra—worra, will I ever go home!" groaned Barney Shea, and fell forward in heap on the floor of the wagon, while the loud laughter of the two boys pealed out merrily on the air.

Frank shut off steam, and the big traveler soon stood still.

Made all ways to the east they could see the black clouds rolling over the hurring prairie, but they were safe from the tongue of flame.

When the concern came to a halt, Barney tumbled head to the ground, and the steam man's face have made off at the top of his speed, had not the laughing boys restrained him.

"All wid' ye; let me go," cried Barney Shea, strutting wildly the moment the boys had not been either ridin' in the devil's coach. Musha my god, will I ever go home?"

"Cork up," chuckled Frank, who greedily enjoyed the man's consternation. "Are you afraid of my man?"

"What's that you call him?" asked Barney.

"My man—my steam man."

"What's his name?" asked Barney.

"Barney, timidly, peeping up at the tall traveler.

"That's all," said Frank.

Barney threw up his hands in wonder, and then began to inspect the machine.

The boys then inspected him.

They saw a tall, heavily muscled figure, a shock of fiery red hair, a pair of bright, twinkling blue eyes, and a pair of teeth as white as snow; in short, a fair sample of a jolly, hardy, good-natured Irishman of middle age, and evidently one who lived on whiskey and fighting, and thrived on it, too.

Suddenly he turned away from inspecting the steam man, and addressed the boys.

"I'm loing me head entirely," he said. "I'm standin' here whin I asked be going to Fort Tremont."

"What's that for?" asked Charley.

"Help," replied Barney.

"What's the matter?" asked Charley.

"An immigrint thrain," replied Barney. "They are just buyin' the Shallow Stream, where they're holdin' back a band of murdherin' and scalpin' wretches, and they've tried to arise, but the scoundrils on the road, and what did I do but drop dead asleep in the tall grass. Whin I waked up, sure the grass was on fire, and forrist me stood a red-skin, and I tried to arise, but the spalpeen laid upon me shoulders and forced me down onto me marrow bones. Jest this I heard you smashin' along and I hoilered for help. Yes know the rest, and ye can know by the same token that Barney Shea'll die for either of you."

"That's all right," said Charley. "What is this band that threatens the train?"

"White and red," replied Barney.

"Injuns and white robbers!" exclaimed the boy. "I wonder what gang it is! Have you any guide with the wagon?"

"We have no guide," replied Barney.

"Good!" said Charley. "Snap's a bull horse and a team to let. Did he mention who the scoundrils were under?"

"Ye, he did, that. He said twas Captain Sam Slesher."

"The biggest out-throat in Missouri," cried the western, "is the leader of the whole lot, and the Sioux with him are under three old-ole Sholum Alarkum, that hoodlithistry Mutoose, and the trochrooser Tolapprosser."

He then turned to Frank and said:

"These people require our aid."

"Then let's go to them," said Frank.

"Do you hold yourself ready to clean out the bull gang?" asked Charley.

"I do," said Frank. "What do they number?"

"About a hundred in all."

"And how many men has the train?" asked the boy of Barney.

"Three men to aitch wagon, and I believe its twelve carts they have," was the reply.

"Thirty-six on our side and a hundred on the other side," said Charley.

"We'll count ourselves about sixty," said the driver of the steam man. "Jump in and let's be off to the rescue!"

They then turned in, and Charley seated himself by the driver to point out the way.

The steam was let on, the man geared around to the proper direction, and then they set off across the plains, long iron legs of the big prairie traveler shooting in and out with rapid motion.

"Is it on the old trail?" asked Charley of the Irishman.

"It is," said Barney.

No other word was uttered for some time, and the steam man dashed quietly along over the smooth plains, the heavy wagon rolling along as smoothly as on a plank road.

After a mile slow fly, and then they began to discover a small patch of wood that stood by the side of a very shallow brook.

In this patch of wood, not larger than an ordinary grove, were the wagons, oxen, and people of the beleaguered train.

In all probability the robbers of the plains were concealed in the tall, rank grass of the brookside.

Frank shut off steam and leaped down from the seat, and then he saw the lid of a large trunk in the body of the wagon.

"That's the ticket!" cried Charley. "Fix the old chap up in style, and he'll walk right straight through to victory!"

## CHAPTER III.

### THE BLAZING GIANT.

THE sun was setting.

All day the faithful guardians of the train had stood watch by the sides of the besieged wagons, and for some hours Snap Carter had looked anxiously out in the direction of the fort, unmurmuringly.

"The fort's not eelvin' miles away; why in the name o' thunder don't they come?"

Every now and then a mounted steed would rise up from the tall grass, and dash swiftly away with its rider.

Snap Carter knew that a desperate band of out-throat—white men and red—lay in the woods only waiting for a chance to come. Then they would swarm upon the little band of emigrants in the darkness, shoot, stab and kill, capture, burn, plunder and destroy, and then away to their wild air.

The light came slowly down upon the wagon train.

Carter doubted the guards, prepared each man for the worst, now that all the women and children were inside the wagons, and then stole some distance away in advance of the train, wishing to be the advance sentinel of the people who looked up to him for safety.

"The old guide led the several feet from the wagons, and then his eyes caught sight of an object moving through the grass ahead of him.

Carter rested on his side, drew a keen knife from his belt, and awaited the appearance of the object.

Nearer and nearer it came, and at last he heard the sound of deep-breathing.

"Is Lajna behind on the train," decided the guide, and he grasped his rifle with a determined grip. "His career'll wind up right here."

The grass was parted, and the tufted head of an Indian warrior became dimly discernible to the guide.

With a convulsive movement, an immense twitch of the whole body, Carter flung himself upon the red-skin.

As he landed upon the bowed form of the Sioux, the latter gave utterance to a loud yell.

"That's your last yelp," gritted Carter, and his sinewy hand clutched the red-skin's wind-pipe, effectually shutting off his breath. "I'd kill you only for yelling, yer copper-colored murderer o' women!"

The guide's rifle was flung up, and then descended with speed and strength, and a sleeking thud told that the blade had sunk into the Indian's body.

But that instant a peculiar yell rang out far ahead.

Old Carter listened intently.

The cry was answered from far away toward the rear.

Carter got upon his feet.

The peculiar yell now sounded some distance off to the right.

"Surrounded!" cried the guide, and with feet steady he dashed back to the corral of wagons, flinging the sentinels the pass-word as he darted past them.

"Out with every light in the camp!" cried the guide. "We're surrounded by the moose-eyed devils. They're on all sides of us, and we mustn't show them a spark. If this black night will hold out we may be able to keep them puzzled. Show them so much as the light of a pipe and yer loss!"

"But they can't come on us from all sides, I should say," spoke up one of the men. "I think they've come on the west side."

"So they will," said Old Carter. "I'll proceed out that way, and warn yer when I hear 'em comin'." They've been waitin' for darkness, but not such black night as this. Keep yer eyes well opened."

The old guide tightened his belt and dropped to the ground.

At that moment a low sound was heard, and the next instant the thrilling cry rang out:

"The reds are upon us!"

Old Carter leaped back against the wall of wagons.

Dim forms could now be seen advancing toward the barricade.

"Fire at anything yer peepers rest on," cried the guide, and as he spoke there came a stalling interruption.

A terrible shriek rang out.

The sound was like a hoarse whistle.

Again that loud, piercing sound came to their ears.

Then they heard the noise of heavy feet rushing swiftly toward them over the plains.

A powerful light suddenly flashed over the prairie, revealing a large body of men standing and waiting in the grass.

"Fire!"

The command pealed loudly from the lips of the old guide.

Crash!

The guns of the emigrants sent forth their death-dealing storm.

The leaden ball had swept through the ranks of the motionless enemy, carrying destruction and death in its track as the bullets found a mark.

Then followed a thrilling sight.

As the cries and shrieks of the wounded and dying pealed forth upon the air, the loud, whistling sound again rang out, and forth from the darkness rushed a gigantic form with eyes of fire.

The neck and waist of the monster were encircled with a sheet of flame.

From the mouth of the blazing giant a cloud of steam issued.

Uttering fearful shrieks, the frightful-looking creature rushed among the struggling mass of

red and white rascals and pulled up with a sudden jerk.

Then the belts of fire at the neck and waist descended and suddenly sent forth brilliant balls of flame.

With reports like guns, the fiery missiles shot forth from the circles of flame and spread consternation among the wounded and demoralized warriors.

Then the white men in the marauding band were scarcely more easy in mind.

The flaming balls shot rapidly among the robbers, darting hither and thither like stars of fire.

The terrible looking giant stood motionless on the plains, surveying the scene with eyes which sent forth two long streams of light, still sending forth those awful shrieks, as though exulting in the work he was doing.

Suddenly the noise ceased; at that very moment a bright, crimson glow appeared several feet behind the blazing monster, and soon lurid light lit up the prairie far and wide.

A voice rang out:

"Carter!"

"Here!" shouted the old guide, springing forward.

"Charge the haythenish devils, an' niver lave a man o' them alive!"

The voice was Barney Shea's.

Carter recognized the familiar tones, and his eyes were turned toward the speaker.

"Clibbed guns, pistols, and knives!" he yelled. "Charge!"

Assured by the order, the men sprang among the devils, and in a compact mass rushed upon the enemy.

Red light flashed up brighter, and the scene was as bright and clear as the hour of noon had been.

With reverent cries the hardy pioneers hurried themselves upon the crowd of badly scorched wretches.

The belts of flame on the iron monster who surveyed the battle grew paler and paler, and the balls of fire no longer shot forth.

Three forms leaped past the fiery-eyed giant, and Charley and Frank, headed by the Irishman, rushed toward the struggling figures.

Pistol shots sounded with whip-like cracks, heavy guns whirled and hummed through the air, tomahawk clashed against knife, savage yells answered the English oaths, and the scene was wild and thrilling.

Charley struck an Indian down with his knife, and then a white man leaped upon him, clothed with fire from the throat, and lifted a heavy bowie for a death-blow.

With a wild, Irish yell, Barney Shea made a jump for the ruffian; a heavy stick whirled through the air, sent the life-giving man to the rascal's hand, and then descended fairly on his arm, laying him out stiff.

The Indians had been badly frightened by the giant of flame.

Totally demoralized and scared out of their senses by the monster, they did not try to fight, but made every effort to escape from the vicinity of the giant.

The enraged emigrants, on their part, tried to out them all down.

A flying hatchet struck Charley Gorse on the head, and sent him headlong to the blood-stained plain.

A rifle swung by a sturdy emigrant took Barney Shea in the stomach, and with all the breath knocked out of his body by the blow, the Irishman staggered and fell.

Old Carter leaped and pranced over the battlefield like a crazy man, shouting and slashing away like mad.

With a pistol in each hand, Frank Beede stood at hand, firing whenever he saw an Indian's top-knot.

The Indian chiefs pealed forth signal cries.

They were answered from all parts of the battlefield, and instantly the red-skins made a rush towards the stream.

"Don't let the dogs escape!" shrieked old Carter, striking down a red robber with his gun.

"Cut them down!"

The emigrants answered with a yell.

The frightened Sioux rushed madly away to the west.

The white wretches who herded with them tried to stem the rush.

The brilliant crimson glow which lit up the plain, and the sound of the firing, were all that Frank Beede thrust his pistols into his belt and dashed away to the wagon.

He seized a package from the floor of the wagon, and scattered its contents into a burning pan.

As the lurid flames again sprang up, a dark form leaped upon him.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE PRAIRIE FIRE.

Of course there was a cause for the prairie fire mentioned in the second chapter; and as the persons connected with its origin have some bearing upon the story, we shall present them to the reader.

It was close upon the hour of noon on the day which witnessed the events chronicled in the preceding chapter; when two mounted men drew up beneath the shade of two wide-spreading trees, standing like sentinels to the lower limbs of the trees, and proceeded to prepare a meal.

Very soon a merry little fire was crackling and burning, and the more rough-and-ready looking of the two travelers was bending over it, watching a venison steak.

The one who was cooking was a man of about thirty, a tough-looking nut, and evidently one of those reckless dare-devils that are always to be found on the plains. He was a hunter, trapper and guide, and was known as Dash Hallett.

The other man was about Hallett's age, but of the English race, had a fine face, wore glasses, and his English clothes, added to his voice, stamped him a genuine Londoner, with some of the fog of that beleaguered city still sticking in his throat.

This was George Augustus Fitzmoode, who had come to this country with the idea of locating coal and iron mines in Missouri. Dash Hallett was hired to be his guide, and body guard, and this was their second day out from civilization.

Of course Mr. Fitzmoode was about as green as green could be.

He had never seen a wild redskin, and he did not care to, either, now that Dash Hallett had explained to him the nature of the beast.

But he was destined to meet them very soon.

The venison was soon cooked, water was taken from the spring, and the two men sat down to eat.

A few minutes slipped by.

Then Hallett, who was a noble-looking black stallion that bore the name of Tempest, lifted his head and sniffed the breeze.

Then he sent forth a shrill neigh.

Dash Hallett rose to his feet, for to him the cry was a warning one.

A slight sound came to his ears, and looking out over the plains he beheld a distant body of men.

One keen glance told him that by their style of riding, the advancing men were of the Osage tribe of Indians, a cruel, blood-thirsty horde of wandering robbers.

"Bedlam! jump for your horse!"

As he spoke he leaped forward.

The stocky-built Fitzmoode also made a leap.

Being somewhat heavy on his feet he did not leap far enough.

He landed squarely and fairly amid the glow-embers of the little cooking fire, and immediately the red flaming sticks went flying in all directions.

Some of the huge sparks that were raised by Fitzmoode's feet flew high up in the air, and the breezy air naturally bore them out on the plains.

George Augustus soon tumbled away from the oasis.

He jumped for his horse again, and this time he got to the animal.

Dash Hallett had already sprung into his saddle.

"Monn!" he cried. "If them reds gits their paw on yer, good-bye oak mines."

"Hob up, an' open 'er eyes," growled the weak-nerved George Augustus, and hopped into the saddle lively. "For 'eaven's sake 'urry 'em, Mr. 'Allett."

"Fob!" said Dash, and turned Tempest's head on the course they were going. "Make up yer mind to ride for yer life."

As they spurred out upon the plains a loud yell came through the air to their ears.

The Indians had discovered them.

Dash Hallett looked back, and saw that the Osages were now coming onward like swarms.

As he gazed back over the plains a little fork of flame shot up.

Then another, and another still, until the eager breeze had sent the devouring element over a wide range of prairie to their ears.

Dash Hallett was a brave man, but now his cheek paled.

The prairie was on fire!

That was the knowledge that blanched his ruddy cheek.

To the men of the plains there is something horrible and deadly in a conflagration of the grassy plains.

"They know that with a good breeze it will overtake the fastest horse and outstrip the fleetest runner. They cannot battle with it, cannot strike back blow for blow in the deadly struggle, and that is why they all regard it with horror and fear.

It is a fearful enemy, and man and beast alike seek to fly from its scorching tongue of flame.

The flames spread with the red volumes of fire, the huge clouds of smoke rolling and plunging over the plains.

"Side for ye life," shouted Dash. "It's eight miles to the first of the trees. Of course the Indians. They put spurs to their horses and the animals darted swiftly away.

The shrieking cries of the pursuers could now be plainly heard.

The Osages were splendidly mounted, and seemed to gain on the white men.

There was a wide strip of land that had borne no grass, close to the trees. Of course the fire swept away from there, and thus the Osages were enabled to dash aside from the half-circle of fire and push swiftly on after the two men.

Thus the blazing flames became the pursuers of both parties.

The red-skins gained upon the whites.

Both parties were dashing along at a high rate of speed.

The grandly beautiful flames, a most thrilling spectacle, spread out in a fan-like shape for miles.

Wild animals could be seen leaping madly in advance of the flames, and natural enemies now sought flight side by side from this terrible common foe.

The tall, dry grass succumbed rapidly to the tongues of fire; the smoke rolled over the prairie in dense clouds; the frightened beasts leaped madly in advance of the fire and; the red and white mounted men were dying before its deadly breath, and altogether the scene was grand beyond description.

A loud crack pealed forth.

The leader of the Osages had fired upon the fugitives.

Fitznoodle's horse bounded madly in the air and screamed with pain.

The red-skins were within range.

The Englishman's horse was only wounded, and bounded onward at still greater speed than before.

Dash Hallett unsling a long rifle from his back, and turned easily in his saddle.

Their pursuers, numbering about a score or so, were coming on at full speed.

The red-skins were within range.

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Hallett was puzzled.

Could it be possible that they were going to let him escape without making another effort to capture him?

This thought flashed through his mind as he sat motionless on his horse, watching the reds with keen eyes.

Their steps were at some distance; in fact, until they were altogether clear from the fan-like track of the fire.

Then they made a gradual turn, and took up a course that would eventually bring them back within the half-circle again.

What could it mean? Dash Hallett was puzzled.

At this moment a low, rumbling noise, as though the feet of a thousand steeds were spurning the hard earth, was borne to the ears of the hunter.

The rumbling noise came from the extreme right and slightly to the rear.

Dash Hallett turned from contemplating the Indians, and then he saw the reason of their strange tactics.

An enormous herd of buffaloes, numbering some thousands, were rushing in a huge, compact body across the plains, hemmed in by the leading edge of flame.

Like a mighty, resistless torrent they were bearing down upon him.

"A way!" shrieked Dash Hallett, and like an arrow from a bow the noble stallion shot forward.

The Indians were now about half a mile away to the left, spurring their horses and shrieking like demons.

The buffaloes were probably a little further away, on the other hand.

Soe here appeared before him a small rocky hill, cut in two by the brook known as Shallow Stream.

Thus his course was barred by a chasm of fully twenty feet.

The Indians now changed their course and spurred towards him, while the buffaloes on their part, hemmed him in.

In a situation like this, a score of enemies on the left hand, hot for his blood; a herd of maddened brutes on his right hand; a terrific sea of fire in his rear; and across his front a chasm deep and wide.

On sped the horse; the brink of the hill is reached; the leap is before him; a desperate fight glows in the hunter's eyes, and his voice is heard.

"On, Tempest, on!"

The stallion leaps bravely out into space.

## CHAPTER V.

### CHARLEY'S PERIL.

When Frank felt himself graspen by human hands he did not lose his head.

He merely twisted his head around to find out who held him.

It was one of the white robbers.

"Die, ye cursed Imp!" cried this amiable and mild gentleman of the prairie, and lifted his blood-stained knife with the charitable idea of saving the boy all future trouble, etc.

But the plucky inventor of the steam man was too full of new little tricks and ideas to allow this.

He merely kicked the fellow heavily on the shin, giving a regular cap-lifter with the toe of his boot, and the foolish chap was silly enough to drop him, while he clapped his hands to his knees and set up a most dolorous yell.

Frank leaped backward, ripped forth a revolver, and sent a heavy ball tearing through the robber's shoulder.

The fellow fell to the ground.

Frank leaped lightly over the prostrate form and dashed out to where the battling faction were still dealing blow for blow, the brave emigrants seeking to thoroughly exterminate the cruel banditti of the plains.

The fight was now a running one in more ways than one, for the terrified redskins were trying their best to run away from the infuriated pioneers.

Barney Shea, who, it will be remembered, was knocked breathless by accident, had recovered his wits, and was upon his feet again in the midst of danger, yelling and shouting like an Indian, and laying about him with a long, heavy stick, as though fully possessed by a demon.

The cry of death of the wounded and dying, the cries and curses of the living, and the loud cracks of the firearms made up a din that was horrible, and the fighting, shooting, and stabbing, the maddened forms of the struggling men contending

bitterly for life and liberty, made up a scene that was forever impressed on Frank Beade's memory.

But as the boy reached the edge of the struggling line of battle, he heard a deep voice shouting high above the hum of the conflict.

Frank stood perfectly motionless for a brief moment, and he bent down and held his ear close to the ground.

"Tramp—tramp—tramp, came the sounds, rapid and regular.

To Frank's ears it appeared that an enemy was advancing.

Other ears were better trained than those of the New York boy, and soon a shout rang out that caused a cessation of active hostilities.

The warning cry pealed from the lips of old Carter, and the words of the guide were taken up and repeated by a score of frightened men.

Only the men who belong to those great plains of the west know the full import of that cry; only the men who have witnessed the great sight know how grand it is, and how terrible.

In solid troops they rush over the prairie, headed by a captain, and woe to the poor traveler who bars their path. Their course is as relentless as that of the wind—torrent which sweeps down the mountain side, and they sweep down all before them.

They were struck with terror.

Snap Carter's voice rang out clear and audible above all other voices.

"Dash for the woods!"

"Halt!"

The countermand came sharply upon the heels of the order.

The men had turned to obey the command of the guide, but when that ringing word saluted their ears they stood irresolute.

"Halt" again the order was given, and then Snap Carter turned upon the speaker, who was none other than Frank Beade.

"What do you—"

"Obey orders," said Frank, breaking in on his remonstrance. "Every man of you drop down here. You could never enter the little grove alive."

The men obeyed, feeling that they could well trust this determined boy.

Frank sprang back to the wagon.

He was here when he was hissing under a high pressure of steam.

In his fight with the robber who had grappled with him, Frank had upset the pack of red fire.

He turned the dial upright again, threw in another small package of powder, and then leaped up to his driving-seat.

He pulled the rod cautiously, and the man of steam circled round, and in less than half a minute was directly in front of the crouching men, his blazing eyes looking out in the darkness.

The crimson light from the powder now leaped up, spreading a brilliant glow far over the plains.

The immense troops of wild horses could now be seen advancing, the gorgeous hue of the chemical light falling with thrilling effect upon their ranks.

Frank pulled the whistle-rod, and the fearful voice of the steam man uttered a succession of loud yells.

The leaders grew alarmed when the shriek of the steam monster burst upon their ears.

Their eyes were half blinded by the chemical light, and they were unable to see the steam man, made the surroundings as light as day.

The steeds in the foremost ranks began to kick and plunge.

They tried to stop the progress of the vast numbers behind them.

As well might a few men try to hold an army in check.

In vain the captains halted. The vast throng in the rear set the same steadily onward, and the leaders were forced to advance.

The aggregated force of the numbers behind them forced the foremost ones to move on, and this they were compelled to do in the face of the terrifying steam man.

Then took place what Frank Beade had calculated upon when ordering the emigrants to crouch behind the wagon.

The vast herd of horses could not be turned by the leaders so as to avoid the frightful looking object in their path, the leaders were forced to die, and were on either side of the steam man, the army in their course following like well-trained soldiers.

Steadily upward pressed the long and wide columns, the glaring light casting weird shadows over the immense army of moving steeds.

The wounded and dying who lie beyond the steam man were not forgotten, for the steam man, for the divided ranks reunite beyond the point of division.

and tramp restlessly onward, crushing and moaning in their course. A cry of horror rings out upon the air, and Snap Carter shouts:

"All follow the direction of the gule's extended hand, and Frank's heart gave a great leap as he beheld Charley Gorse.

The Missouri was in peril. He had just got upon his feet, and was now standing erect some few hundred feet in advance of the swiftly-moving column.

"He will be murdered! he will be killed!" groaned Frank, wringing his hands together, as he took in the full danger to which his young cousin was exposed.

With the trump of doom the shrill neigh of the foremost captain rang out as he bore down upon Charley.

The brave boy stood motionless, his fine, bold face, his attitude one of calm despair.

Frank shut off the whistle, and, like one fascinated, fixed his eyes upon Charley.

Nothing could now be done to turn aside the countless steeds, and the threatened lead stood squarely in their path.

"He is doomed!" sounded from the lips of the awe-struck emigrants.

Frank's heart grew sick, but still he kept his gaze fixed upon the leaders.

Three of them sprang forward in advance of the column, and with loud screams of anger rushed upon the boy.

Firm as a rock stood Charley Gorse in the perilous path.

As the foremost stood, a magnificent stallion, named him, Charley bounded nimbly up into the air and landed fairly upon the animal's back.

A triumphant shout rang out upon the night air, and then Charley Gorse flew off in the darkness.

CHAPTER VI.

GEORGE AUGUSTUS FITZMOODIE MAKES A SPURGE.

When heavily-buried Mr. Fitzmoodie tumbled headlong to the grassy plain he was not dead nor wounded. His stirrup-strap broke, and over he fell, while his wounded and dying horse also fell.

The fall had stunned the Englishman, and as it turned out it was very lucky for him that he had been so heavily laden with arms and accoutrements, else they might have ridden him with bullets.

When they had gone by, the Englishman got upon his feet.

A few yards away lay the dead body of his horse.

The flames were rolling up towards him with fearful rapidity.

How could he escape them? The thought rushed through his agonised mind, but no avenue of escape was open to him. He was a poor runner; his breath was short; he was already exhausted from his ride, and so it was useless to think of ending the fire-frenzied flight.

What should he do? A man is forced to think fast when such an enemy as fire is threatening his life.

Fitzmoodie's eyes fell upon the body of his horse.

The creature was stone dead. In a moment a plan was thought of that afforded a bare chance of escape.

He leaped quickly forward.

The flames were close at hand. The feet of the fallen steed were extended in the direction of the advancing flames.

Fitzmoodie threw himself down behind the back of the dead horse and threw his coat up over his head.

A moment later the air grew hot and dense, his throat felt parched and dry, his eye-balls seemed to burst, and a burning sound like the roaring of great waters sounded in his ears.

Then the fiery tide swept over him with its scorching breath, and a moment later the Englishman stood over his remains.

He was forced to sit on the dead horse for some time in order to allow the hot plains to grow cool, and then he began to look about him with the idea of making tracks in some direction.

"He really don't know what h'n the world o' do," soliloquised Fitzmoodie, gazing blankly over the blackened prairie. "Ow h'am going to extricate myself from this awful situation h'i really don't know. 'Ere h'am h'i, George Augustus Fitzmoodie, left alone h'on this vast plain by h'i insensitive boy guard. H'i'ope that 'ell return, for 'pon my soul h'i think h'm lost."

He took a pull at his flask to clear his rather heavy voice, and also to raise his drooping spirit,

and, and impatiently awaited Deak Hallett's return—he having conceived the idea that the hunter would come back to look for him.

He little thought that at that very moment the man for whom he looked was hemmed in by terrible foes.

But ere long he heard sounds that told of approaching feet, and looked up with the expectation of beholding Hallett.

His eager face grew long when he beheld the Osages moving towards him.

It would have been perfectly useless to run, so Frank remained seated on the horse, wondering within himself who and what these Indians really were, and also wondering what they were going to do with him.

He could not rightly understand what they were.

He had conceived the idea that they were red negroes, and having met with slaves in the south and south-west, he was disposed to look upon a full-blooded Comanche Indian as a plantationer, a little off color.

"The Osages centered up to him, and one of the reds, leaping from the back of his horse, laid his hand upon the Englishman's face, and then felt of his nose.

"You are indignities, h'i' you please," cried out the excitable George Augustus, giving the very inquisitive Osage a violent push that sent him over.

"H'i h'am a true born son h'o' h'old h'i'and, sir, h'and you must not pull a h'Englishman's nose."

Probably the Osage was not aware of this interesting fact.

As he rose, he leaped to his feet, pulled out a long knife, and would have made very short work of the Londoner had not one of the chieftains interfered.

The Cockeyney was bound with a rope, although he protested loudly against it.

"H'i'ts a h'insult," he declared, turning toward the chief. "H'i' your lordship h'i' objects to my trespassing h'on your land, h'i' h'am willing to compromise the matter for any amount, but h'i' decidedly h'i' object to being brutally 'anded."

"Ugh!" grunted the gaily bedecked leader of the White Guard. "White man, talk heak like square Ugh, no urave. He chicken heart, but no we hurn him! Ugh, whogho! He make good h'i' and roost like chicken. His heart will not burn, and me, Wotsoopoken, great chief of Osage, h'i' not h'art h'i'!"

Then to his braves he shouted: "Ah-kela-kala-qua!"

The astonished George Augustus was hurried along and set about his grooves from which the Cockeyney had started was reached by the savage band.

They immediately tied the speculator in cord from top to toe, and placed his arms and legs in twigs and branches around him, filling in the bottom part with dry leaves.

Then the indignant George Augustus began to get frightened, and lifting up his voice impressively, he addressed his captors.

An Indian is ready to be talked to death at almost any time, for cresty is only next to heroism in their estimation; therefore, they listened attentively, while the eloquent George Augustus spoke:

"Your lordship h'and gentleman h'all," began the Londoner. "H'i' am yes that the first step you are about taking is h'i'legal, h'and h'i' h'i' is known to the British Consul the h'insult—h'i' I repeat it, sir—the h'insult would be wiped h'out of your blood."

"Your blood," said the chief of the British lion, "is h'amiable lo long h'as 'e is left h'alone, but h'i' you h'arouse him h'i' in this manner, beware! H'i' warn you h'again. The British lion will roar; h'i' will soon get a wiggle-waggle, h'and then look h'out for 'is teeth. H'i' h'am 'elipse, but though h'i' cannot fight for my rights, my people will not be slow h'i' in h'assessing them; shut h'up that of my 'ead, h'and the speed h'i' action h'o' h'an h'i'indignant h'and h'outraged people shall prove to you that the British lion h'i' not to be trifled with. Release me this very moment, h'i' the h'insult shall be h'ersudicated with blood—my lord, with blood!"

The Indians had not the faintest idea what it was all about, but they sent up an approving shout, and that of my 'ead, h'and the speed h'i' action h'o' h'an h'i'indignant h'and h'outraged people shall prove to you that the British lion h'i' not to be trifled with. Release me this very moment, h'i' the h'insult shall be h'ersudicated with blood—my lord, with blood!"

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and determined to push on in their westward course in spite of the white and red robbers of the plains.

The steam man stands just within the shade of the trees that grow on the outskirts of the grove.

Frank Beade is full of business, polishing and oiling his machine, getting up steam, and arranging the wagon for a journey.

He had a great number of emigrants lay sleeping beneath the sods of the blood-stained prairie, and yet there is no sorrowing for them, "for," said Snap Carter:

"The steam man is in the flame with their boots on, and his own guns s'ween their fingers, an' that's the way I want to die when this old rover is called for. They give up the ghost while they are depending on a hair, and I let 'em croak and young uns, and so that's nothin' to cry about."

The rest seemed to share the sentiment of the old guide.

Consequently the reader would not have been impressed with melancholy ideas could he or she have looked upon our friend Barney Shea.

The rollicking Irishman was seated astride an empty box, scraping away with might and main upon a half-worn decent sort of fiddle, and occasionally breaking cut with snatches of Irish love ditties or songs of Erin's glory.

The fiddle was Barney's most valued piece of property.

He carried it everywhere with him, and as he was constantly on the move, the fiddle had traveled a deal in his day, but still the music was able to draw very good music from its worn strings.

He was just breaking out with some Irish ditty when Frank Beade approached him.

"'Tis 'o' the morning to ye, me fine goodness," said Barney, ceasing his scraping.

"The best of it to you," laughed Frank. "What are you going to do with yourself?"

"'Whin' you ye man?"

"Faith, I s'pose I'll be ather trampin' along wid you 'til the toad."

"Why 'ere the morning to ye, me fine goodness?"

"Go wid ye?"

"Yes; I am going to hunt Charley up, if he is to be found, and I want somebody along to help me."

"You'll get any pay for keepin' with the traids, do you?"

"'Twill the h'ap'orth."

"Then you'll let me see anything," said the boy.

"Come with me."

"An' ye'll bring me back to the traith whin I want ye to?"

"No, me," said Frank, "but I don't believe that you will let me see anything."

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CHAPTER VII.

BARNEY SHEA TAKES A RIDE.

Mourning dawned bright, clear, and glad over the plains.

The emigrant train had been well guarded during the night, and now the victorious pioneers came forth from their short sleep reinvigorated,

trunk stretched away before them, its expense only broken by a little grove which appeared not far away.

No sign could be seen of Charley.  
"You must make for that island" (the name given to the little grove that dot the plains), and have some dinner under its trees," said Frank, who was getting hungry.  
"That's sensible," approvingly said Barney. "No incidents have been crying out to me for the past hour, so they have."

In a few minutes the steam man dashed up to the island and came to a halt in the shade of its trees.  
Barney and Frank leaped to the ground, the Irishman holding his fiddle and his bow in his hands.

"I'll get the dinner," said Frank.  
"And I'll be after playin' ye a chune," said the jolly Irishman. "I'll use this black log here for a saw."

He seated himself astride of the black log, as he supposed it to be, and had just got his fiddle into position when a chorus of loud yells rang through the grove; the log raised up with a jerk, and before Barney knew what was the matter, he was speeding over the plains on the back of a wounded black buffalo, while a party of well-mounted Indians dashed after him with cries of hate and vengeance.

"Hoora!" roared Barney Shea, throwing his leg under the buffalo's belly. "Come on, ye thimbletongued spalpeen! Listen while I play ye a chune that'll warm the cockles of yer heart."  
And with the red-skins in hot pursuit, Barney Shea, safely mounted on his woolly steed, put his fiddle in position and played "The Heart That Once Goes Through Tam's Halls."

"Och!" cried Barney, "this is illigant, intirely."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE LIVING BRIDGE.

When Dash Hallett clinging like a cat to his back, the brave horse leaped far out from the brink of the rocky chasm.

There was a ringing and buzzing sound in the hunter's ears as he fell, while a powerful whirlwind through the air, and then there came a sudden shock as the stallion landed safely on the opposite side of the leap.

Dash Hallett was safe!  
He leaped from his horse, and the noble animal, thoroughly exhausted, rolled over on its side and gasped for breath.

The noble performer did not fly; but that last tremendous leap, succeeding the long and severe run, proved too much for the stallion, and Tempest was dying.

Dash Hallett looked back over the sloping ground and yawning abyss, but no sign was to be seen of the red-skins.

"They had turned back in order to escape the doubtful chances of death that awaited them at the leap."

The mighty thundering sound that boomed out heavily on the air, told him that the immense phalanx of buffaloes were still rushing on in advance of the flames.

"Curse the reds!" savagely muttered the hunter, as he gazed upon the form of his dying horse, and braced a spear from his quiver, when he had come on, for I should have knocked over enough of the wretches to avenge Tempest, and poor Fitzmould, too! I'll hang on to this crew until I wipe every link out. Poor old Tempest! we've been travellin' together many a year, and now we've got to part. Curse them Otagies! I swear I'll stick to 'em as long as there's a single red murderer left alive for me to pick or draw out of 'em."

The horse breathed heavier and heavier with each breath, and in a few moments rolled over and died.

"Gone!" said Dash Hallett, looking sorrowfully at his dead companion. "Well, it only makes a longer list again the reds, and I'll die tryin' to square the debt."

The thundering boom of the approach of the thousands of rapidly approaching hoofs told the hunter that the herd was swiftly approaching the edge of the awful chasm, hemmed in by the fast-falling wall of fire.

Hallett knew by experience what must surely happen.

He removed the saddle and bridle from the body of the dead horse, and took them with him to a secure post behind a tall and strong tree which sprouted up from the crevices between the rock.

Nearer and nearer sounded the thundering tread.

Thousands of horny hoofs were beating the plains.

A continued roaring sound, as of the voice of

a mighty mountain torrent, rang in the ears of the watching hunter.

Dash Hallett knew that flying before a prairie fire as they were, it would be vain for any of the herd to stop or stand, but he trusted the progress of the main body, as the throng in the rear still rushes onward, and the leaders are compelled to advance, even though destruction be at their heels.

The hunter had peeped over the edge of the chasm, and knew full well that many of the herd must be forced over the brink, only to fall through the empty space, or crash headlong against the rock-lips on waters which appeared below.

Silently he watched for the appearance of the brute army.  
The thundering tread approached nearer still, and the foremost ranks, an array of splendid bulls, ran at full speed up the shelving hill to the brink of the abyss.

As the foremost ones arrive there they rear on their hind legs and attempt to turn back from the awful chasm.

Ah! there is no possible retreat now, no chance of escape!

The terrified leaders shrink back from the brink with terror.

The solid ranks behind, terrified by the near approach of the prairie fire, dashed forward with irresistible speed.

The doomed bulls, standing on the very brink, rear and kick, hiss and gore, and in their way, attempt to do the certain death that awaits them.

They are fighting against fate!  
The crowd in the rear, maddened and desperate, spurred on by the singing flames, rush on to the brink with petulant and the aggressive force hurle the struggling leaders successively into the rocky stream where certain death awaits them.

The maddened followers rushed blindly on, and dozens at a time were hurled into the gulf by the steady pressure behind.

In a few moments hundreds had fallen from the brink of the precipice.

The chasm became closed with the bodies of the dead and wounded buffaloes, and in less than three minutes the largest portion of the mighty herd of the plains was dashed by the condensed hunter for the carcasses of their fallen companions had afforded them a path across the abyss.

"By Jupiter!" muttered Hallett. "There's more good buffaloes gone to thunder than I'll ever kill in my days. It was wonderful—wonderful. By Jupiter, that's the first time in my life I've seen a living bridge."

The buffaloes continued rushing past Hallett's resting-place for some time, and after them came numerous other animals, driven from their lairs and haunts by the prairie fire.

While they were passing by, Hallett noticed that several bears, grizzly and black ones, formed part of the flying avalanche, and he could not help shuddering when he reflected on a man's chances for life among the terrified host.

"They'd chaw him up in just two quivers of a lamb's tail," said Hallett to himself.

When they had all gone by, Hallett arose to his feet and gazed wonderingly after the swiftly-moving columns, for it was as wonderful a sight as he had ever beheld.

The afternoon was on the wane before he was enabled to get away.

"Five miles to the lone tree from here," muttered the hunter, as he tightened his belt. "Well, there's something of a storm coming up, and this is the best place I could find for shelter, so I'll tramp to the big oak."

He shouldered his rifle, and tramped away, just as the sky grew dark with a long, black cloud.

A few minutes more, and he was at the traveler's head, but the storm or shower fell further away. Steadily onward tramped Dash, and just as nightfall came, he rested himself under a wide-spreading branch of a noble oak that had stood the storms and blasts of fifty long years.

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Scratch—scratch—scratch!

The hunter listened keenly, and he knew very well that some animal was crawling over the tree in his direction.

He at once decided that it must be one of the bears he had noticed among the flying avalanche of wild beasts.

The sounds drew nearer and nearer, and the man of the plains checked his knife with his hand while he placed his other hand on the barrel of his rifle.

He carefully drew the weapon up in front of him as he crouched in the fork of the branch, and felt with his fingers to see that it was in good shooting condition.

His knife was loosened in his belt ready for instant use.

The scratching sound ceased as the foliage of the fork was stirred, and two piercing bright eyes flamed for a moment upon the waiting Hallett.

"A low growl rang out with a rumbling note. "A black bear!" decided Dash Hallett, as he covered the space between the two flaming orbs with his rifle. "Take this pill, ye varmint!"

He pulled the trigger.  
There was a flash and a report, and then came a growl of fury.

Hallett knew what that meant.  
His mark was so accurately aimed as he pulled the trigger, and the bullet which was aimed to go between his eyes, had taken lodgment in the creature's body.

The infuriated beast was crawling toward him. This he could tell by the near approach of the flaring eyes.

Hallett placed his gun behind him, with the strap securing it to his shoulders, and drew his keen knife.

The weapon was long, heavy, sharp on both sides of the blade, and the end had a point like a needle.

Grasping this formidable weapon firmly in his strong hand, the hunter awaited the time to strike!

The bear slowly drew near.

At length Hallett could make out the huge outlines of the long dark body.

It was a black bear of unusual size, and, now that it was wounded, would prove an implacable enemy.

The bear was advancing cautiously, probably feeling insecure on account of the wound it had received.

At this time Dash noticed that the tree was shaking and trembling.

Soon a thundering rumbling came to his keen ears, and he knew that the hard plain was vibrating beneath the tread of thousands of advancing hoofs.

He thought that the buffaloes might be coming back again, but that idea was soon knocked in the head, for he was enabled to locate the direction of the sound.

It came from the direction of Shallow Stream, and a few points off the course he had taken.

"Either buffaloes or wild horses," decided Hallett.

All this time he kept his eyes fixed upon the slowly advancing bear.

At length the latter was within reach, and with all his force, Hallett struck at the full neck of the growing bear.

The point sank deep into the neck of the beast, and hastily withdrawing the heavy weapon, the hunter lunged forth again and again, at the broad mark, until the blood was hoard falling upon the leaves.

Louder and louder sounded the regular tramp—tramp, of the on-coming horde.

Whatever they were, the advancing columns were bearing down upon the tree.

The bear's many wounds rendered it doubly savage, and it crawled more quickly upon the hold hunter.

Hallett was forced to retreat, little by little, step by step, until he had reached the end of the bough.

On came the enraged bear.

It was useless to think of striking at the monster now, so daring Dash Hallett laid his hands on the bough, and swung by his arms from the limb.

Swiftly on came the thundering army of moving animals, the foremost ones rapidly advancing on a line that would bring them fairly under the tree.

As they drew near, the bear cautiously crowded towards the hunter's hands.

Brins stretched out his neck and made a most vicious snap at the man's fingers.

Hallett let go his hold.

He fell squarely astride the back of one of the steeds, and at the same moment discovered the

fect that the horse had another rider, and that rider, who proved to be Charley Gorse, cried out: "Easy, there, mister, you're darned near broken on this child's head."

"How the deuce is that?" cried Hallett.

"He had kept on the stallion from force of habit, although the maddened brute leaped and pranced fearfully."

"How's what?" demanded Charley.

"That's you're among this drove o' wild horses!"

"Easy enough!" said the daring boy. "I was in a tight scrape, and I got out of it the best way I could. Nothin' when you get used to it."

Then he told Dash, in brief terms, what had taken place that evening at the emigrants' camp by the Shallow Store, and in return Hallett gave him a rough account of the thrilling dangers he had passed through.

"But this won't do," said Hallett. "We must get this animal away from the herd, or our lives may be lost. Hold on to my clothes with all your grip, and dig your knees hard in the horse's ribs."

Charley obeyed.

Hallett leaned forward, caught the stallion by the nose with his strong right hand, pulled the horse's head around, and at the same time yelled again.

The animal bounded away in advance of the herd, and under Dash's grip, followed his nose, so that in a few moments he was on an exactly opposite course, and in return Hallett gave him a rough account of the thrilling dangers he had passed through.

Goed to a perfect frenzy by the shouts and the bestowal on him by his fearless riders, the noble stallion sped over the hard, level plain like some living star, the white foam streaking his sides as he dashed madly on through the closeness of the herd.

On—on—with the shrill whistle of the prairie winds in their ears, until suddenly the good steed uttered a neigh of terror, and stopped so suddenly that his riders were hurled to the ground.

CHAPTER IX.

GEORGE AUGUSTUS FITZNOODLE.

"Hi ay!" indignantly cried the muck-worked-up George Augustus Fitznoodle, as the noble steed approached him with the torch blazing in his hand, "I'm really a good deal of a put-into practice the 'orrible h'American custom of cremation, do you?"

Now that really was the full intention of the torch-bearer, as he plainly knew, and the Cookney was blustering about, of course he could not answer him.

He bent down and inserted the blazing stick between the leaves and twigs which formed the base of what seemed destined to be poor Fitznoodle's funeral pyre.

"O'ld h'on—'old h'on!" vociferated the alarmed Englishman. "Hi! can't stand that, 'ere sort o' thing, you know. Hi! h'm not going to be cremated, you know."

How he was to prevent it did not appear very clearly to the Londoner, but he was bound to buster and blow while he had any breath left in his body.

The torch set fire to the small staff at the base of the pile, and the little tongues of red flame began to dance and leap around the Englishman's form.

"O'oh, dear—'oh, dear!" he groaned, as the little flocks of flame began to strike him up to the forehead, and he was the very bottom of my 'eart that I'd never left 'old h'England to come to this blasted 'eathen land, prospecting for iron and coal. O'oh, my legs—'oh, my legs."

He turned to the grinning chief, the great and proud Motzer-Ponn, and cried out appealingly to him:

"Won't your lordship 'ave the kindness to stop this h'inamous proceeding?"

"Ugh, who?" contemptuously grunted the noble chief, crying the pleading Fitznoodle with unbounded delight. "White man, he bes' talk all same like squaw. Him them all same like papoose's heart! Why him sing death song, and then cry like squaw! Ugh!"

The idea of singing his death song was evidently a great compliment, when it is considered that the red chieftain referred to the Cookney's high flown speech.

The flames began to grow very uncomfortable, and the suffering George Augustus renewed his curses upon his stupidity for leaving his native land.

But a mighty power intervened to save the Englishman's life.

The sky had been for some time overcast, and now the storm, of which Dash Hallett had felt a

few straggling drops, bust over the heads of the warriors and their joyful prisoner.

The rain descended in torrents and drenched them all.

Of course the fire was almost instantaneously extinguished.

Motzer-Ponn gave orders to clear away the twigs and stumps, and other stuff around the fire, and the Englishman, Fitznoodle, and the relieved Londoner was cut loose from the tree to which he had been bound.

The storm was furious, but, like some very heavy shower, it spent its fury in a very few minutes, and then all was as calm and serene as it was before.

But the nice little amusement of the fire-loving Motzer-Ponn was frustrated. The surrounding warriors, however, so desirous of burning the prisoner at that time was knocked out of time, although the warriors kindly suggested that they might also the poor fellow up and cook him at leisure, little by little.

This proposition was, however, rejected by the high and mighty Motzer-Ponn, who called a very wet council of war to decide what was to be the fate of the prisoner.

Every savage warrior, important or inferior, had to have his say, and that say amounted to just about so much, whether it contained more or less.

They all knew what would be the ultimate and inevitable decision arrived at, but for all that they had to talk.

Power was in part and parcel of an Indian's character, and he always seems ready to hire a bail.

When he saw the savage red men collect around him in solemn council, the ever ready George Augustus took advantage of the opportunity to ventilate some of his private views.

It would happen that your lordship's followers have not united h'n their h'expressions of h'opinion," said the consequential George Augustus, waving one hand toward Motzer-Ponn in dramatic manner. "Now, h'i h'i might suggest the h'idea, would it not be an h'advisable step h'on your lordship's part to h'appoint a sort of h'archdeacon to h'adjust the h'idea?"

"Ugh!" grunted Motzer-Ponn.

"Ugh!" murmured the warriors.

"Ugh!" were very much pleased with George Augustus Fitznoodle's oratorical style of speaking, but what it was all about they had not the faintest idea.

"Shall Motzer-Ponn, chief of the great Osage, be heard?" demanded the chieftain of his dusky followers, speaking in the Osage tongue.

"Ugh!" was the speaking wisdom, decide the fate of the captive?"

"It shall, let him speak," returned the wild warriors of the West.

"Ugh!" was the chieftain. "Brothers, we have lost some of our noble warriors since we left our council fire."

"Ugh!" grunted the noble red men.

"We shall be asked for them when we return to our village," said the speaker, "and if we are almost empty handed the squaws will laugh at us, the papooses shoot arrows at our scalp-locks."

But then the prisoner, who was bound, began to torture, to sport with, to insult, to burn him, then they cannot laugh at us. Let us carry the white orator to our village, and then we will give the white man the honor of the council fire, and are gone to the berry hunting grounds. Motzer-Ponn has said his say!"

The wild savages set up a shout of approval.

By order of the chief they bound the poor Englishman to a horse, strapping the bound man securely to the steed.

"Er, hi! say, 'old h'on!" remonstrated the punished George Augustus, as he felt his head touching the horse's neck. "Hi! I'm not used to playing Masseppe, you know. I can't allow this sort h'of thing, you know. It's almost enough to give a fellow the cerebro spinal-meningitis, you know!"

The Osages didn't know anything about the disease.

They took up their course for the village of the Osage tribe, distant twenty miles, and with the bound Fitznoodle riding passively in their midst they coursed over the plains.

On—on, through the pitchy darkness of that memorable night, never drawing rein until the village was reached, where, amidst the greatest possible amount of noise, bustle and confusion, George Augustus was handed over to the widows of the slain men.

The widows were three in number, and they all made a rush for George Augustus as soon as that person was placed on the ground, and in a moment their fingers were in his wool.

With a yell of agony the Englishman sprang to his feet.

"Ladies," he appealingly cried, holding out his hands to the dusky beauties; "h'i h'i 'h'ad-dress' ladies! I beg of you to give compassion h'on h'an h'innocent man. Hi! h'i 'ave done h'anything whatsoever to provoke you, h'i h'i 'ave wronged you, h'only name the reparation, make you good, with your power h'i'll assure you that it shall be made."

One savage beauty understood a little of English, and she spoke up boldly to the creaking George Augustus.

"You marry Shoofuguy?" she asked, striking herself on her breast to make him understand that by Shoofuguy she meant herself.

"She asks you if you'll make her good husband, all same like dead warrior."

"Certainly," said George Augustus, thinking of the cremation scene. "In fact, I'm willing to marry the lot of you."

The lovely Widow Shoofuguy proclaimed the fact that the prisoner had consented to be her husband.

Immediately the other two widows raised a great cry, and each in turn demanded the prisoner as a husband.

The beautiful Widow Shoofuguy threw herself in front of the two other George Augustus, and with a loud yell, drew forth a knife.

The other two widows also drew weapons.

The warriors stood gloomily aloof, for they dared not hinder the women, who were now engaged about of defiance rang out, three blades flashed in the firelight, and on the three widows closed in combat.

CHAPTER X.

HAULING WATER.

It is doubtful whether Barney Bree was one more surprised than was Frank Beade over what had taken place.

He had seen a sudden chorus of wild yells, he had seen the form of his rollicking companion suddenly rise upon the back of the wounded beaver had mistaken for a black log, and then, with a great noise, many oaths, curses, and a barney, he could utter a word, there was Barney, skimming over the plains on his unusual steed, followed by a yelling band of well-mounted Indians.

He stood gazing in astonishment at the strange scene, the melodious strain of "The Harp that Once Through Tara's Halls" came to his ears on the breeze.

He recognized the fact that his friend was in peril, but still the idea of a man being so reckless, so full of a devil-may-care sort of spirit, as to be adding when pursued by a horde of mortal enemies, was enough to convulse him with mirth.

But he cut short his laughter, and with one leap, sprang up to his seat, seized the reins, lit on steam, and dashed swiftly away on the track of friend and foe.

The ground was very level, and allowing the Steam Man free rein, the boy turned in his seat and carefully examined the rifles that were always within reach.

He saw that they were well loaded and in good condition for service.

Then he leaped down from his position to the body of the wagon, and from his store of strange articles, which were placed in a trunk, drew forth a powerful little battery, with numerous connecting wires.

The battery was placed in a secure place, and the wires were strung about the outer framework of the wagon in such a manner that any person placing his hands upon the vehicle would be likely to touch one of the connecting strands.

Then all the wires were placed in the neat binding posts of the battery, and securely secured down.

Then the liquid lightning was poured from several bottles into earthen cups, and then covered up, with the wires protruding through little holes and the powerful battery was in perfect working order.

"It's always safe to be as well prepared as you possibly can be," soliloquized the young genius, climbing up to his driving seat once more and resuming the guiding reins. "If any of my enemies should become too familiar, I shall certainly have to shock their modesty, and y' shape their white bodies."

The Steam Man was running along at a high rate of speed.

Far away the jolly Irishman was speeding along on the back of the wounded beaver, adding along like mad.

The Indians were after him at their best pace, their wild steeds vaulting over the smooth surface on a dead run.

Frank glanced around him and beheld, far off



to the right hand, another band of mounted men, and even at a distance he decided that they were white.

They only numbered four in all, and were galloping toward the Indians.

"They must be the white robbers whom we fought last night," said Frank to himself, as he regarded the party, "and these Indians are their machine. I am glad that I fixed up my battery. These white men do not stand in fear of my machine."

The white men spurred rapidly towards the Indians, and as they evinced no alarm at their approach, Frank decided that his guess had been the right view of the matter.

A small grove appeared, and Frank slightly reduced his speed as he dashed past it, then he depended on a full load of steam and the observers went flying over the plains at the rate of fifty miles an hour, the air whistling merrily in the driver's ears.

In a very few seconds the red and white brethren of the plains were overhauled, and jumping down behind the bullet-proof seat the young driver picked up a rifle and began blazing away into the crowd of the flying men.

At the very moment that he fired the first shot, the buffalo tripped and fell heavily to the ground, and away flew Barney Bess through the thin air, and soon landed with still clinging tightly to the treasure fiddle and bow, and picked himself up in time to see the Steam Man of the Plains crash like a living steam engine through the ranks of his enemies and dash down upon him.

Frank had charged his enemies without fear, for he knew that the red-skins would be too much terrified and surprised to do him harm, and the white men he was willing to run his chances with.

He went rushing through the thunderstruck crowd of mixed red and white men in gallant style, the long legs of the flying machine making headway through horse and men with ease, sending them flying right and left, and leaving maimed and wounded horses and men scattered far and wide over the plains as he rushed on in his swift course.

The Indians, those who were injured by the steaming of the Steam Man, seemed lost in wonder and fear.

It flashed through Frank's mind that his advent had been a surprise.

As the thunder of their horses' hoofs upon the prairies prevented the Indians from hearing the mighty tread of the steam giant, and when he made his sudden leap into their very midst, spreading death and destruction through their organized ranks, they were at a loss for some time to account for what had taken place.

However, as soon as they had recovered the use of their frightened senses, they were tall and red, rushing away as fast as their body-crested horses could carry them, while their white brethren in vain endeavored to restrain them.

A scared Indian is probably two degrees more obstinate than an army mule.

These fellows listened to no words, but got away lively.

Meantime, the Steam Man was rushing down upon Barney Bess.

The surprised Irishman had been taken aback by his sudden fall and the equally sudden advent of Frank and his machine, and stood fairly in the track of the flying iron foe.

Frank reached for the lever to stop short, but before he could touch it, the Steam Man came down in his face, ran away, and was gone altogether, not minding a few feet from Barney. Something was the matter.

With a very anxious look on his face, the inventor cast his eyes over the entire machine. As he stood there he could see nothing amiss.

He leaped to the ground.

He hurriedly ran to the giant, expecting to see some of the valuable machinery either broken or out of order.

Such an event would have been a great calamity to the boy.

If anything was broken it could not very easily be replaced, and even to have any of the delicate mechanism twisted would be a serious thing.

"Hold hard!" cried Barney Bess, as Frank examined the Steam Man. "These white devils are coming down like the old Nick upon us."

Frank wheeled.

The white horseman, four in number, were springing towards them.

They had their rifles in snar hands, and they looked dangerous.

Frank seized one gun, gave another to Barney, and placed himself behind the body of the strong weapon.

"Fire!" he commanded, and two reports rang out.

Frank did not like to take a human life, so he aimed for the shoulder of the foremost rider, and

beheld with satisfaction that the man's arm fell limp and useless in his side.

Barney was not an extraordinary shot with the rifle, although he could handle his neat black-thorn stick with skill. His bullet found quarters in the man's forehead, at a horse instead of a man, and resulted in the wounded animal wheeling about and galloping madly away.

The others seemed to lose all relish for charging, and retreated as fast as they could with accord they wheeled also, and followed their flying comrade.

Frank watched them until their forms grew dim in the distance, and then he turned to the motionless giant.

He resumed his examination of the Steam Man and soon discovered that all parts of the machinery were in perfect order.

Then he examined the boiler, and he instantly discovered the cause of the stoppage.

There was not a drop of water in it!

"Gin slings and powder for monkeys!" cried the Irishman, looking into the smoky hollow of brass, "how the devil's that, Masher Frank?"

"In honest I know," said the mub-puzzled young man, and then he ran back to the wagon.

He lifted the cover of his water-tank, and was surprised to find that it came up without unfastening, as it should needs have done; he then saw that he had neglected to properly latch the cover, and that the water had all been bounced out while journeying across the plains during the morning.

Part connecting along the shaft connected to the two important parts, the boiler and the water-tank, and of course the supply had ceased, and power gave out as soon as the water in the boiler was used up.

"What'll ye be after doin'?" asked Barney. An idea flashed through Frank's brain.

"To you see that grove?" he asked, pointing to the one he had recently passed by, and which was between a quarter and a half mile distant.

"No," said Barney.

"I'll take this bucket," said Frank, "and be lively as possible in bringing me a pail of water."

"There's a spring there, I don't know?"

"There may or may not be," said Frank, "but those islands generally have a spring. Harry, for there's no telling how soon those white men may return in great numbers, and my little steam man ain't a stop until he's had a big drink. Lively now."

"I'll be back in a jiffy!" cried the willing chap; and seizing the pail he started for the little island on a slow trot.

"I must be ready to get up steam at shortest notice," muttered Frank. "I'll have everything in readiness."

He attended to his fire, kept everything up as great a heat as he dared to, and anxiously awaited Barney's return.

So soon as his trudging from the grove, and by the manner in which he carried the bucket, Frank knew that he had obtained the water.

The Irishman made good time with his load, and soon handed the precious liquid to Frank, who dumped it into the tank with a great deal of satisfaction.

Barney happened to look away over the great plain and beheld a number of horsemen advancing, distant at the time about a mile.

"Look!" he said.

"I thought so," said Frank, bringing a small telescope to bear on them. "Those white cut-throats are returning reinforced, and if they get here before steam is up we are lost."

He opened the valves of the furnace, and the water boiled rapidly.

The horsemen came up swiftly.

"Jump in," said Frank. "Be careful not to touch those wires. Hold your gun in your hands and be ready to die, fighting to the last."

The man drew near the steam gun as he in the valves; the gauge rose rapidly, and the steam giant lifted one foot from the ground.

On came the outlaw.

The horseman leapt; he named the other one in turn, and the giant strode forward, and with rapid accumulating power his feet rose and fell; just as the band were dashing down upon them the man drew near the steam gun at a tremendous speed, skimming the prairies like a bird on the wing.

#### CHAPTER XI.

##### THE SUTHERN BATTERY.

The Indians and white men spurred their horses after the Steam Man.

The old fellow was getting ahead like a good one, the rapidly increasing power of the steam gun shown by the rapid motion of his long iron limbs.

But the prairies horses are remarkably fleet, and some of them are trained to do and dare almost anything.

Two of those were rushed forward by their riders, white robbers, and the fastest steed dashed right up the side of the wagon, so that their breasts came against the wires that were strung around the vehicle.

They dropped lifeless in their tracks.

The wires were connected with a Buntzen Battery—a terrific power, strong enough to kill ten men, with the force of electricity generated by two coils of liquid.

"A sorry form!" cried Barney Bess, laying down his gun and holding up his hands in astonishment, "that bates the story of the Kilkenny cat."

"It had full power on," said Frank Reade, looking with satisfaction at the wonderful battery, "it would have killed ten horses with one shock."

"What a shocking thing!" said Barney, fairly stumbling into a run. "Ah, look at the red and white haythins. Come on, ye coppery divils, ye black-hearted white haythins! Come on, and we'll fight the whole 'tills' crew of 'yer."

Which was probably meant for "Kit and crew," but Barney meant all the same anyhow. What the rollicking son of Erin wanted with the red and white "haythins" was a fight; in fact, that was all he wanted, and all the same.

If he could have had his choice in these matters, he would probably have preferred fighting with enemies; but the main thing was to get into a rumput, be it with friend or be it with foe. The idea was not to be fighting in either case, and that's all he cared about.

But the reds and whites were unable to come up with the prancing monster of the plains, even had they wished to, which was rather doubtful, for they were brought to a sudden standstill by the fate of their comrades.

The manner in which the horses had been struck did not appear to be rather doubtful, for they were brought to a sudden standstill by the fate of their comrades.

"Where are we goin'," said Barney Bess.

"I'm not to get out around in a wide half-circle," said Frank; "that will bring us on the track of the herd of wild horses. I'm not going to give Charley up."

"Oh, no—oh, no!" said Barney. "He was a fine lump of a gooson, so he was."

"He was a good boy," said Frank.

"Do ye mind one thing, and that's not two, but the same!" said Barney.

"What's that?"

"I'm divilish hungry, so I am."

"So'm I," said Frank. "We'll soon get to a grove, and then if it will we'll eat our dinner without being interrupted."

The Steam Man was now making splendid time over the level ground.

"You see me, Frank," "I must stop at some grove to fill my tanks with water."

"Ay, ury a bit, udher so d' loike certin' wather in a bucket half a mile, under such a rate hot sun as this same," said Barney. "Not, yes run short agin, ma bouchal!"

Frank laughed.

"For four you get killed, I'll reduce the power of the battery," he said, bending down and turning a screw. "Now it will tickle you gently as you take it."

"Ay, loike Scotch snuff," said Barney, and placed about the same. "Och, howly murder, I'll ever get home."

For the foolish fellow had received a shock that was powerful enough to double him up like a jack-knife.

Frank roared.

"Ow—ow! tare an' ones, masha—masha, my God!" was all poor Barney could say, for although he was very little hurt he was very much frightened, and, as he was some time before Frank could explain to him the nature of the battery, and the action of its power.

"Oh, yes, and do not try to reason any such nice idea into the head," said Barney. "I know what the stuff is, ye so. It's nothing more nor less than the divil's whisky ye have in that nose counterpane. The only thing that's odd is that ye drink it through yer fingers. Oh, I can philosophize, and so forth."

Frank was much amused over Barney's comical idea, and gave up the idea of trying to instruct him.

At length the long-for sight greeted their eyes.

A large grove appeared, and the Steam Man was headed for it.

"I must keep me eyes open when I sit down to play ye a ebune this time," said Barney. "It only nades one more of them caused bufflers to smash me with a fiddle and bow, and that would never do, me bo."

They soon reached the grove, and found that pure water was plentiful.

They put away a very substantial sort of a dinner, and soon took the trail again.

Before them stretched away the broad path of the stampeding army of horses.

On—on, mile after mile gliding from under the throng fast of the Steam Man.

Suddenly Frank shot off steam, and the iron man came to a halt.

"What would ye be ather?" asked Barney.

"Look at that warrin' of grass bent down at the side," said Frank, pointing away the track made by the doubly-loaded stallion, when he was forced to run from the herd by the strong hand of Dash Hallett.

"At least one of the horses has out away from the main line."

"It looks mighty that way," said Barney, with his eyes following the course. "Do ye mane that the oratur will along in a sort of sign course?"

"Yes, I do," said Frank; "and is it not mobby looked upon?"

Barney scratched his head.

"I'll nae to philosophize a bit on it," he said.

"Well, but what is your advice?"

"Consarnin' what, me gossoon?"

"Why, about the course," said Frank; "which way shall we go?"

"To mane whether we shall keep on ather thim wild horses or take the chances to go ather thim men?"

"Yes."

"Thin I advise ye to do as ye think best yourself," said Barney, who did not rate very high in Frank's opinion.

"I can fight the case of Kilkenny; but may odd Nick fly away wid me if I can name the course."

Frank Reade was really puzzled.

He did not know what to do, for there was nothing, not even the slightest thing, that could turn the balance of opinion one way or the other from the center of doubt.

As he may have kept on with the herd, or he might possibly have turned that leader aside by some mane," mused the boy. "I think I'll take the chances and follow the course of the single horse!"

"He turned to the wagon.

"Have ye decided on the course?" asked his companion.

"Aye."

"Which one?"

"The single track."

"Faith, I was of the opinion that I'd follow that myself, ony way," said Barney.

"But now that ye—worrin'—worrin', was there ever such an illegant cautioner for fightin'?"

"Oot yer eyes formin' yer, wa' boncheal!"

As the Irishman spoke, the report of a gun rang out in the distance, and looking around, Frank Reade could see that one man, mounted on horseback, was flying from several Indians, also mounted.

The fugitive was keeping up a running fight with the red skins, and was having a lively time dodging the bullets that were sent to him in return.

Frank jumped into the wagon and seized his powerful telescope.

He hastily adjusted the sight, and brought it to bear upon the single horse.

"A cry peaked from his lips."

"It's Charley!" he shouted. "In with you, Barney, and away to the rescue!"

The shrill whistle sounded forth in piping notes, the long legs shot in and out, and the Steam Man of the Plains dashed off to the rescue.

Charley Gorse was maintaining a very unequal combat, and when he heard the voice of the Steam Man it sounded like the cheer of all an old friend to his ears.

As the iron monster dashed from the shady grove, the Indians caught sight of the unusual sight.

They had never seen anything in the steam line before, and in all probability would have been fearfully frightened by an ordinary railroad engine, but with their gaze rested upon the iron man of immense stature, who was rushing towards them at such a terrific pace, their wonder and fear were unbounded.

They didn't care about meeting the huge old fellow.

They made up their minds that he was a "bad crowd."

They pulled up so short that they nearly ended their necks, and the voice of the chieftain hastily stammered forth a frightened order.

His followers were not long in obeying the command of their chief.

They turned tail and fled at the very top of their horses' speed, not pausing once to see whether they were pursued or not; and when the Steam Man halted at the spot where Charley was stand-

ing, there was no one to battle with, and Frank Reade allowed the old fellow to utter a prolonged whistle of triumph.

In a moment the two boys were shaking hands heartily in their own minds the course had no doubt that they would ever meet again.

"We must not stop here," said Charley. "There are two men in danger; they are among the steers. Drive fast, as I direct, for astartee they die!"

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE LOVELY WIDOW SHOFFUGRY.

The lovely Widow Shoffugry stood firm and steadfast on her guard as the two other squaws rested upon her.

She was a sorsomer of the very first water, and she didn't propose to back down even against numbers.

She held her neat toothpick firmly in her right hand.

Her left arm had a sort of padded mantle wrapped around it, and this arm she held across her breast as though designing to use it as a shield.

The two squaws closed in upon her.

The lovely Widow Shoffugry had a pair of eyes that were useful as well as extremely ornaments.

She contrived to see both blows aimed at her by her foes.

The nearest one she blocked with her bearded shield, the knife turning off from the beads and shells as quickly as upon a plate of steel.

The other squaw was a little behind her ally, and the lovely Widow Shoffugry very promptly kicked at her.

It was not remarkable for elegance, this kick; it was not gandy, but fitted in an extremely neat manner, for it was planted in the stomach of the on-coming squaw, and the latter soon lay on her back.

As she lay on her back she had jumped up and struck her on the back of the head.

Then the lovely Widow Shoffugry turned her undivided attention to the other lady.

She did not depend solely upon her own resources now, for she could expect no help from her friend until the latter was refilled with wind.

Poor George Augustus Fitzmoode stood hard by, gazing at the unbounded astonishment upon this strange scene.

The idea of these women fighting was new to his civilized mind; he had heard of such doings in Africa, but he did not know that America had Amazons.

It was scarcely of material interest to him which way the battle terminated, for the idea had impressed itself upon his mind, and that the result was that he had to wed one of these copper-colored fire-eaters, or else burn at the stake.

"Hand h'! I prefer matrimony to cremation," said Fitzmoode, watching the battle between the two women, and at length coming to the conclusion that he preferred the lovely Widow Shoffugry to the others, on account of her beauty.

She proved a perfect sorsomer, and got in the first cut at her foe.

The latter became more wary.

Mother-Ponnm and his braves stood by, and murmured approvingly when an extra fire-thrower was used.

The lovely one was equal to a Fourth ward rough.

She was a stabber, and she was a biter, and she deserved to be fought.

She pnt in a sudden left-handed blow of her fist, knocked her enemy just a trifle off of her balance, and then she clipped at her three times with her knife in less than four seconds.

Down went the enemy.

In a tice the lovely Widow Shoffugry had her by the throat.

She contrived to say something that was as good as Greek to Fitzmoode's ears.

"She's probably calling h'on'er h'enemy to yield, quarter or no quarter," said Fitzmoode to himself, and he was about to rise.

The prostrate woman mittered something in a half-choked voice, and was immediately released.

As she got upon her feet, the other squaw—the one who had been knocked breathless by the foot of the lovely Widow Shoffugry—regained her breath and her feet, and made a desperate charge upon the latter.

"She's a very disagreeful h'all this h'is, to be sure," mittered the scandalized George Augustus. "H' wonder h'ly they really 'ope to be called responsible members h' of society h'ly they h'ave done this!"

Why it h'ad no sense, h'ly never heard h'anything so scandalous. H'ly really 'ope this good-looking one may be victorious, for, from my soul, the h'other's the most vicious-looking wretch h'ly've ever met."

He regarded the lovely widow approvingly as she struck an attitude of defiance, and of defiance also, and not her bow with fearless mien.

The latter struck quick and sharp, a perfect shower of blows, but they were all cleverly caught on the braided shield.

The pinky Widow Shoffugry waited for a good chance, and then she slashed her opponent across the face.

Then she kicked, and punched, and stabbed her all at one time, much after the Bowery boys' plan.

The widow wanted her in less than three quivers of an eyelash.

The same ceremony was gone through with her with the nervous conquered foe, and then the victor stood erect.

She cast her flaming eyes about her, and they rested upon the form of George Augustus Fitzmoode.

She swooped down upon him.

Fitzmoode willed.

She grasped him by the hair and lifted her knife on high.

Fitzmoode bellowed:

"For Eavan's sake, go h'easy!" he cried, expecting every moment to feel the keen point of the blade in his heart.

"H' m' prepared to fulfill h'all my h'engagements. Don't strike; h't'm not h'injured."

But she didn't have any intention of killing the prize she had fought for, she only wanted to place her hands upon him, declare him to be her property by the act, and to defy all other claimants or disputants by virtue of her brandished dagger.

But she was too much of a terror for any one else to trouble her, and not a voice was raised against her mere proclamation of possession.

"Ye man now!" she said, looking down with softened gaze upon the countenance of the somewhat rascled Fitzmoode; "ye b'long Shoffugry, and me take ye to wigwam. Ye come!"

"With the greatest pleasure h'imaginable," said George Augustus, with the expression of a man who is about to swallow a dose of jalap.

"H' m' h'always h'at the command of the fair sex."

And then the lovely Widow Shoffugry lost no time in yanking him off to her wigwam.

As the ladies departed the Indian party rode was aroused by loud yells from without the village, announcing the approach of some of their tribe, and also denoting the fact that a number of prisoners were being brought in by the retreating warriors.

But to explain how all this came about, the author must leave the Indian village and take up another thread in the warp of the story.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE MOST PITUL—THE CAPTURE—THE ESCAPE.

The reader will remember that in a previous chapter the horse that bore Dash Hallett and Charley Gorse stopped so suddenly as to cast both riders to the ground.

Charley was half-strung, for his head was not quite so hard as the flinty surface it had come in contact with, and he lay perfectly motionless for some time.

Dash Hallett had kept hold of the flowing mane of the stallion, to which he now clung with a desperate grip.

It was a pity that that one could scarce have seen ten feet ahead.

The stallion was shivering from head to foot with some great fear, and had not the hunter gripped him by the nostrils, the steed would have dashed away.

Dash Hallett was a man of experience in such a matter as this, and he knew that there must be sufficient cause for the great-errand alarm of the stallion.

He looked for Charley.

The latter got up from the ground with his head to his breast.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"I don't know," said Dash. "There's some good cause for the critter gettin' scared; no previous h'ill hold on to him while you walk on—don't move too quick—try and find out the cause."

Charley placed his hand to his pocket and pulled forth a six-barreled revolver of splendid make, and holding this firmly in his hand, walked slowly and carefully ahead.

It was well that he did go out slowly, else he h'ad got his tail taken.

He had advanced about ten steps.

Then he saw that he stood on the very edge of a chasm.

He peered out into the gloom, and glanced be-



they were tough, and took a long time to get softened, and it was early dawn before he was enabled to stretch them apart and free his hands; but he fought them off.

With great caution the boy secured the rifle and powder-flask of the sleeping chief, and with the determination to do or die, opened the door. He saw one of the horses gone under his hand, with a rope halter hanging from its head, and, like a flash, Charley mounted the steed and was off.

Instantly the alarm was sounded, and soon his partners were after him; but Charley had got the start and he kept it.

He had thrown his pursuers off the track once, and they had discovered him again while he was resting in a grove, but he was up and away before they reached him.

For miles he had maintained a running fight with them, and might have gone under had not Barney and Frank, together with the terrifying steam man, arrived to save him from his foe.

He allowed his horse to scamper off, while he and Frank mounted the steed, and while flying along, made out their plan of rescue.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### FRANK READER'S GENIUS.

THE summer sun was slowly sinking behind the western hills.

The Osage tribe, in a holiday sort of attire—that is to say, they had on extra leathers, etc.—gathered in solemn silence in their villages.

The hour had arrived when, according to their deliberate decision, the white prisoner was to die. The chieftains, prominent among them, the great and mighty warriors, Motzer-Ponum, it is a large circle around the wide-spreading roots of an old tree.

This tree was to be the stake at which the white man was to perish.

An order was given.

"Let Schorumann and Scholentzer, our two most trusted braves, bring before us the white man, while others bring the dry brush wood," cried out Motzer-Ponum.

The two chosen braves departed on their mission, and several of the younger warriors hastened to procure the wood, and heap it upon one side of the tree.

By the time that the fuel was collected, the two braves returned to the tree, conducting the bound form of Dash Hallett.

The prisoner was a little pale, but otherwise he was the same devil-may-care rover of the plains. He glanced scornfully upon the chieftains, and cried out to them, in the language of his own people:

"Let me at liberty, and give me but a single weapon—a knife—and I'll fight six of your best warriors."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Motzer-Ponum. "And in that way you would cheat us out of our coveted pleasure. Oh, no; you shall burn!"

"Bah!" cried Dash, who hoped that they might be taunted sufficiently to dispatch him with their weapons, whereby he would escape the agony of the fire. "You are a set of squaws. I have killed dozens of your bravest men, and some of them died like a porcupine might die—crying for mercy and begging for their life. I have out their hearts out, and they were not like those of yours. We are done, and some of us were even blacker than the prairie dogs."

Several of the braves and warriors set up an angry yell at these taunts, but Motzer-Ponum prevented them from using violence to the prisoner.

"Do you not see that the white man wishes to amuse your anger?" he said. "If you kill him with your hands, then he escapes torture of the fire."

They saw through the dodge then, and fell back in amazement.

The wood was now brought forward, and Dash was securely bound to the tree.

The dry brush was piled up around him as high as his breast.

Then the warriors drew knives and tomahawks and, at a signal from Motzer-Ponum, began their wild war-dance, the chosen braves Schorumann and Scholentzer, leading the fantastic measures.

When the preliminary dance was ended, the chief called for the fire-brand, and one of the bravest squaws, and the lower widow Shoff-fug, however—advanced to the tree with a blazing torch.

"It's good-bye with this chap now," soliloquized the hunter as he said, I never done anything worse nor puttin' a few red coases under the ground, and I don't think that counts again me. I wonder how long a fellow feels the fire?"

"Let the torch be applied," commanded the

chieftain; but the words were hardly out of his mouth before several of the tribe set up a cry and pointed toward the western plains.

The widow passed, with uplifted torch, and then allowed the blazing brand to fall to the ground.

Alone, and apparently unarmed, Frank Reader was advancing toward the tree.

Of course the Osages did not feel much alarmed by the advent of a single boy amid their armed numbers, but they were certainly a good deal surprised.

Not so much, however, as they were destined to be before our hero got through with them.

The brave young traveler advanced straight to the front of the chief and breast, cast one glance at the surprised prisoner, and then gravely saluted the terrible Motzer-Ponum.

The latter, his vanity much tickled by the profusion of Frank's salutation, bowed low in return.

Frank then spoke to Dash Hallett.

"You understand the jargon used by these Osages?"

"I do."

"Then act as my interpreter," said the boy, "and if we fail to pull the wool over their eyes, then call me a fool."

"Fire away," said Dash.

"Tell them that I'm some mighty medicine-man or other," said Frank: "you know best what to say."

"Obtain, listen," cried Dash. "This young brave, the son of the moon, the grandchild of the sun, and the mother-in-law of all the stars, is the greatest medicine-man known to the world, and now desires to prove to you that the Great Spirit is frowning upon your tribe."

Of course the red-skins were properly impressed by the ringing and high-sounding tidings given to our hero by the easy-spoken Dash.

Who wouldn't be?

"Have you told 'em?" asked Frank.

"Tell them I have sent them by command of the Great Spirit."

"What for?"

"All right," said Dash, and in sound Osage informed the Indians of the very important fact.

"He must prove his title," said the chief.

"How do you do so," said Dash.

"How?"

The hunter turned to Frank.

"They want to know how you are going to prove that you're the best."

"Oh!" said Frank. "Well, in the first place I shall let a knife drive fair and square at your breast. It's a trick knife, so don't allow the set to frighten you. After I hurt the blade at you, I'll make it stick fast in that tree."

"If you can do that, you'll make the reds open their peepers," said Dash.

"That's what I'm here for, said Frank, "You don't know me yet."

The hunter then spoke to the Indians.

"This great and mighty relative of the sun and moon and the little stars," said the trapper, "will throw a knife at my heart with all his strength. He will cast a spell over the knife, and it will not hurt me in the least. He will call the weapon and hurl it at its tree, and the blade will sink into the bark."

A murmur of applause greeted this piece of intelligence, and the Osages looked expectantly at Frank.

The boy drew a short, heavy dirk-knife from his breast, taking great care not to touch any of the numerous wires which crossed his body.

He let the dirk sink.

The dying sunlight glanced along the blade, and then the young warrior planted his right foot firmly, between his knife and the stem of his left hand, point reversed, and hurled it at Dash Hallett's breast.

The blade flew swiftly through the air.

The point struck full at the broad breast of the undaunted Dash, rebounded from his bosom, and fell with a cheery ring to the ground.

The Indians didn't say anything, but they looked at each other.

Frank stepped forward, picked up the knife, planted his foot firmly, and then hurled the dirk at the huge tree.

The point struck into the bark and wood, and the shaft quivered like an aspen.

Then the redskins did shout.

They sent up a mighty yell of unbounded delight, mixed with a little superstitious awe, and regarded our hero very much.

Frank pulled the knife from the tree, walked up to the chief, and took the latter's hand in his.

He lifted the blade and struck a slight blow at Motzer-Ponum's bare arm.

The point pierced the flesh, and a tiny stream of blood trickled forth.

The chief did not murmur, but regarded the boy wondrously.

Frank then put the dirk in the leader's huge paw.

"Tell him to strike lightly, as I struck him," he said to Dash.

The latter communicated the desire to Motzer-Ponum.

#### CHAPTER XV.

##### MOWSHER A BINDER.

"I SHALL do so," said Motzer-Ponum.

He held Frank a hand in his own, and struck lightly at the boy's bare arm.

Another tiny stream of blood followed the blow and Motzer-Ponum seemed triumphant over the fact.

Frank stepped back a dozen paces.

"Now tell him to hurt it at my heart," he said to Dash.

The latter obeyed.

The chieftain, in common with many of his tribe, was an expert knife-thrower, and when Dash shouted out the command of the boy-gentle, the redskin leaped to his feet and hurled the knife with rapid aim.

The flying knife spun over in the air, and the point struck fairly against the breast of the unerring Dash.

Then it rebounded and fell to the ground with a musical clang, while the boy stood smiling and unharmed.

They were going to say that Motzer-Ponum turned pale; but an Indian don't turn pale under extreme terror.

But he did get sickly-green-looking around the gills, and stood regarding the youthful medicine-man with wonder and fear, while the warriors and braves set up a shout that testified their approval.

"That's darned clever, youngster," approvingly remarked Dash Hallett. "You're a team and a horse to look; no mistake about that. Can you do any trick more?"

"If it is needed, I can," said the boy; "but I think I've done all that is necessary. Who is this coon?"

An Indian of middle age, having a very odd sort of head-dress, and covered from head to foot with rattles of snakes, bones of animals and various other charms, was approaching the group.

"That's old man," said Dash Hallett, with a comical grin. "Is a brother of yours."

"How?"

"He deals in magic."

"Oh, he's a tricked man."

"Keep your eye skinned, my boy, for he's got'n to do-pu-er."

"I'm not afraid of him."

"But he can do things you can't begin to make out."

"I can return the compliment," said Frank, "and beat him, too."

"Don't make any mistakes," said Dash.

"I'll not," said Frank. "Fear not but that I will save your life."

"I hope so," said the cool card, as though Frank were speaking of a very small matter.

"What is his name?" asked Frank.

"His medicine chap?"

"Yes."

"Mowsher Abiner."

"Mowsher Abiner?"

"That's it."

"What does it mean?"

"He devil himself," said Hallett. "This chap is the greatest medicine-man on the plains to-day, and there's mischief in his eye now, so keep cool and keep him silly if you can."

Mowsher Abiner now approached the boy and gave him a keen glance.

I may as well keep on good terms with him if I can," smiled Frank. "Please present my compliments to him."

"Most mighty Mowsher Abiner," roared out the prisoner, "this great and illustrious relative of the sun, moon, and stars, greets you."

Mowsher Abiner acknowledged the greeting by a profound bow.

I am pleased to meet my young brother of the art," he smiled. "What wants he of the tribe of Motzer-Ponum?"

"My liberty."

"And wherefore?"

"Because the Great Spirit is angry."

"Has been on the Great Spirit's list?"

"He has."

"Is he a great medicine?"

"Yes, he is."

"Is he in the world?" confidently asserted Hallett.

"Greater than Mowsher Abiner?" demanded the coppery trickster.

"Even so," said Dash.

"I would be pleased to witness a portion of his superiority."

The Osage medicine-man evidently regarded our hero with some contempt.

"He wants a sample of your power," said the hunter to Frank.

"Tell him I will now salute him as the male descendant of the sun, moon, and stars salute each other," said the humorous genius, to whom Hallett had made known the high-sounding titles bestowed upon him. "Also say that I shall expect him to return the salutation in the same manner."

Deah called this out to the Indian medicine. The old man bowed, and, dodged with great gravity to the north, east, and west, and then seized Mowsher Abiner's body with his two hands, and forcibly span the medicine-man around three times.

When he was released, the Indian fraud nodded similarly in front of the white fraud, and then placed his hands upon the boy's body, as Frank had done with him.

Here, however, the imitation came to a sudden end.

As soon as he touched Frank's body, the great and mighty Mowsher Abiner yelled out like a bull, and leaped four or five feet straight up into the air.

He came down with a thump.

The braves and chieftains could not restrain their mirth.

Even old Moteer-Pouum himself, although he tried to look dignified and grave, grinned all over his broad face.

The medicine-man was mad.

He was ripping mad.

He was a great sight more mad than he was frightened or hurt, and as the laughter of the much-tickled Indians rang tauntingly in his ears he leaped to his feet and drew a long knife from beneath a sort of pocket which adorned his loins.

With blazing eyes he leaped upon the brave boy.

Frank, firm and undaunted, stood directly in his path.

Not a muscle quivered as he faced his wrathful enemy.

The keen knife was lifted on high, and was then driven straight at the very heart of the young marauder.

The absence of death enthralled the lookers-on, as the point came steadily down against the young breast, as Frank Beside stood with his right foot firmly planted.

He recoiled slightly as the blade struck him, and then stood firm again, while the enraged Mowsher Abiner roared hoedling to the hard earth, the hilt of the knife still clutched in his strong hands.

The blade of the knife was unstained, and the boy stood unharmed, looking down upon his prostrate rival with mild contempt.

"By thunder!" gasped Hallett, drawing a long breath, "I thought we was both of us gone that time."

"Didn't I say that I could beat the very devil himself?" smiled Frank.

"I reckon as how you make out to do it," grinned the hunter.

Mowsher Abiner now picked himself up from the ground, and stepped down against the young Frank was ready for him again, but he had nothing to fear.

Mowsher Abiner was a sadder and wiser wren than he had been, and with a shrug he crept up to the boy's foot and bowed die doated head in token of submission.

"He's knuckled under!" cried Deah.

"Does he give in to 'em?" cried Frank.

"Clean gone," said Hallett.

"Then bid him depart to his wigwam."

Deah complied, and the quashed dealer in mud slunk away.

"Now tell them anything awful that you can crack up in order to make them out you free," said Frank.

"Heven 'F' roged Dash Hallett. "This is mighty medicine-man commands you to release me at once, or he will cause the Great Spirit to hurl down a mountain of fire upon your village."

That settled it.

In less than a minute the brushwood was scattered, and the knifes of the chieftain out the prisoner's hands.

"Follow a few feet behind me!" commanded the boy, and at a leisurely pace walked off to the west.

Two minutes later a loud chorus of cries rang out, mingled with commands, and a large body of white and red horsemen galloped into the village from the east.

"Hurry quick, yunker," called out Hallett to the boy. "There's danger behind."

"Then out like thunder," cried Frank, and at good speed he dashed ahead towards the grove at the west. Dash following.

There was danger behind!

## CHAPTER XV.

## THE DESERTS.

It must not be supposed that the band of red and white brigades are to be dropped from the story.

Other events have crowded them out for a while, but we now come upon them again.

Some ten miles to the north of the place where the emigrant train was first attacked by these Braves, we come across the stronghold of the band.

A low range of hills spring up from beside a drawing stream.

These hills, long, low and rocky, are full of hidden passes and chasms, intersected with many cunningly concealed paths.

A few hundred yards up from the bank of the noisy stream, a pathway, guarded by a tall sentinel, conducts us to an open glade on a rocky plateau.

This plateau, some fifty feet wide, and fully a hundred feet long, is dotted with numerous roughly built huts of hewn logs, the cracks and spaces filled with mud and bark, and square holes covered with daylight serving for windows.

A stunted tree, low and broad spread, covers part of the little rocky plain, and beneath the far-reaching branches reclines Captain Slasher, the leader of the ruthless band of cutthroats, bandied together under the name of "The Brethren of the Plain."

His is a splendid looking fellow, this terrible Captain Slasher, and looked as though he had been a gentleman in his time. He was tall and broad shouldered, with flashing, devil-may-care black eyes, and a general expression of boldness.

He really was as fearless a freebooter as ever rode the plains.

Around him sat or reclined numerous members of the mixe band—red and white.

Sholom Alarkum, the head chief of the treacherous Sioux, who had combined with the white men for murder and plunder, and Tolahaffer, the second in chief, were seated near the white captain, also indulging in the weed. Some men could also be seen in the huts, busy at cooking.

Around him sat or reclined numerous members of the mixe band—red and white.

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Previous to their hostile battle with the sturdy and brave, the robbers had gathered over a hundred strong. Now they did not muster more than perhaps two-thirds that number, and not a few of these were wounded.

His chief companions had struck boldly and well in defense of their rights and their loved ones, and bandaged limbs bore evidence to their desperate resistance.

"I say 'em!" said Captain Slasher, turning to his brother devil, "we must recruit our band in some manner."

"Why?"

"We are not strong enough to attack a decent sized party on the plains, unless we could take them by surprise."

"That's the way," coolly said the savage, who, along with his followers, had learned to speak good English while with the white men. "You must always wait for darkness; you ought never to strike till the sun has set down. Then they sleep hard, like dead, and you can kill men and women without taking a blow in return."

"Poh!" disgustedly cried the other, turning up his white countenance at the red man's talk. "I could not fight that way. In fact, it is not fighting at all. I like to face my foe, weapon in hand, and strike blow for blow, send back shot for shot, but to sneak in the dark—bah!"

"It's a safe way," remarked Sholom Alarkum.

"Yes," said the outlaw captain, "and it's quite as well."

The sentence ended abruptly.

A peculiar call came echoing up the rock-formed pathway that led from the bank of the stream to the stronghold.

The two chiefs looked at each other.

"That's Muteer," said the captain.

"Yes," said the chief, and he's bringing in a prisoner.

"Is the deuce can he have chased upon?" was the mental query of the captain.

In a moment ringing footsteps were heard upon the rock pathway.

The good-looking Muteer, one of the most cruel and unconscionable dogs in his whole white race, came up the path, leading a strapping white man by the arm.

"Ho—ho!" cried Captain Slasher fixing his piercing eyes upon the face of the tall white prisoner. "I think I have seen this man before."

"That's the fellow that attacked the emigrant train," said the other.

"With the emigrant train," said the other.

"He fought well then."

Muteer now came forward and placed the prisoner before the two leaders.

"A prize for you, captain," he said. "I got him down."

"It's a wonder he didn't get you," said the captain, smiling, as he noted the tall form and broad shoulders of the man.

"You don't get Muteer so easy," proudly said the Indian.

"Well, my man," said the captain, speaking to the prisoner, "what have you got to say for yourself?"

"Nob," said the fellow.

"Speak!" commanded the captain.

"I suppose you remember me?" grinned the other.

"Rather," dryly said the captain, removing his cap and disclosing a black and blue mark on his head. "I think I love you for this beauty spot."

"I guess you're about right," said the man, with a broader grin. "I struck against you then, and now I've come to say to you that I'll strike for you."

"What do you mean?"

"What I say."

"Have you deserted from the train?"

"I say."

"To join us?"

"That's the idea."

"Do you mean it?"

"I don't know 'bout the best man in the world to josh with about such a matter," said the prisoner.

"Licht," said Captain Slasher. "Your head is on straight. But what is your motive in doing this?"

"The same motive that moves the world," said the other. "Money."

"Go on," said the captain. "I'm listening."

"Well, you see," began the fellow, "I drove one of the teams from the place where the train started, and I happened to find out that one of the regular express wagons that cross the plains under a strong guard was not ready to go out, and that the agent of that big firm—what do you call 'em?"

"Wells, Fargo & Co.," put in the captain.

"That's it, Wells, Fargo & Co., put aboard a lot of money in one of the strong boxes they use. They had an idea that old Carter could take the money through just as safe as their express could, and I was one of the men that helped to stop the specie in a wagon."

"I am getting interested," said the captain.

"I thought I could wake you up," grinned the teamster. "Well, I didn't like my work any the way I was getting on, and I thought I might like to have a crack at this pile of money."

"I heard Snap Carter talking 'bout your hiding-place, and so I had no trouble in finding you. That's all I got to say. You know, I expect once that I am no slouch, and therefore you needn't be afraid to admit me in your band."

"Have you ever been a rover before?" asked Captain Slasher.

"Well, to tell you the truth," proudly admitted the teamster, "I have been a burglar in my time. I tried honest, and it didn't seem to agree with me. I can't sleep well nights. So I've made up my mind to try the old life again. The devil and I seemed to get along very well together, and I think I'll resume work for my old master."

"On that point," said the captain, "I'll follow the eyes, and then bestowed a smile of approval upon him.

"I'll like your style," he said. "I think that we shall get on together first rate, and if we improve continually I'll soon raise you."

"Then I may consider myself a member of the band?"

"You may," said Captain Slasher. "We have two motions: one, 'Die for our Brethren,' and the other, 'Death to Traitors.' Beside that, we have pass-words and signs which you will learn, but you shall get the rest of our law, and if we improve. When our band is once entered, there is no such thing as leaving it again; and should you desert as, the most horrible torture, the most terrible death, shall be yours, white or red, on devise, shall be your doom!"

"I shall stay as long as I am treated in a half-dozen manner," said the teamster. "I mean business with you, not treachery, so I have nothing to fear."

Very nearly all the men in the band were now collected in a large circle around the speakers, listening to the conversation.

"You are sure that you are dealing fair with me?" demanded the captain.

"Of course I am."

"You are sure to come as a friend?"

"Certainly," said the other, looking wonderingly at the speaker. "I have told you nothing but the truth."

"Lair!" cried the captain, his eyes blazing like

coals of fire. "You are speaking with a double tongue, and your treachery is well known to me. Take him, my brave boys! Seize the traitor! Tie him up to this tree, and I'll send six bullets through his black heart!"

The order was instantly obeyed. Even had the teamster been disposed to fight with his enemies, it would have been worse than useless to have offered the slightest defense.

He was seized by a score of hands, thrown to the ground, securely bound, and was then tied to the tree.

All this had taken place in the space of about two minutes, and he had the desecrated coat fairly comprehend what had happened to him, he was tied securely to the trunk of the tree, a host of threatening-looking faces surrounding him, and the reckless leader of this bloodthirsty crew standing before him with drawn and cocked weapon in his hand, ready to carry out the terrible threat he had made against his life.

It was enough to make a man's head swim with wonder and excitement, for the change was as sudden as unexpected, and as terrible as complete.

"Now, traitor, you shall receive a proper reward for your act," cried the captain, lifting his pistol to a level with the trembling body, and fixing his flashing eyes upon the man's face. "You meant to betray us, and you are doomed!"

"I suppose it's no use me saying a word about the matter," said the man, looking unflinchingly at the muzzle of the weapon covering his breast. "You've got an idea in your head, and all I can say won't prevent you from shooting."

"Do you mean to tell me that you did not come to betray me to my foes?" cried out the leader of the outlaws. "Do you not know the amount that you were to receive for your act?"

"I should say not," replied the cool card at the tree. "In fact, I've not received any offer, for the very good reason that I had no such intention. Pop away, and be hanged to you! I've always wanted to die with a bullet through my heart."

"Fool!" cried the threatening captain, still pointing the pistol toward the apparently doomed man. "Confess your intentions of treachery, and I will content myself with your confession, and sending you back to my foes as a warning that my faithful spies are everywhere."

"You go to the devil!" cried the prisoner. "I'm only told to reply to your questions, and to make up lies even to save my bacon. I've stole, and I've stabbed, and perhaps I've killed, but I've never allowed myself to talk crooked. You've heard me, and my goose is cooked, that's all. Bang away!"

The ferocious gleam departed from the eyes of the captain, and he allowed his hand to fall to his side.

His langh rang out loudly, as if it were a signal; the men sprang forward and released the surprised teamster, and with shouts, welcomed him as their comrade.

The man could no more understand this change than he could the preceding one, and he looked inquiringly at Captain Saasher.

"Oh, that was a little game of mine that is practiced every time any one comes to join us," said the latter. "You see, the government is trying to wipe me out, and the only way they can do so is by getting on to the secret service men among my boys. I always put this dodge into practice, and it works as good as a charm. If the man is a spy he falls in the trap, confesses, begs for his life, and gets a dose of bullets in his body. I know you now, and accept you a member."

"Oh," said the teamster.

"What's your name?"

"Jack Beales."

"Well, Mr. Beales, I welcome you as one of the Brethren of the Plains, and feel confident that you will make a good addition to my crowd of comrades."

"Thank you," said Beales.

"Follow me. I want to have a talk with you for awhile," said Captain Saasher; and with Sholar Alarkum, the teamster and the cruel leader at his heels, the leader of this very select party led the way into one of the numerous huts.

The redskins, true to their early training, very discreetly withdrew from the foot of the hut.

Captain Saasher seated himself upon a rude stool, and kicked a bench towards Jack Beales for the latter to sit on.

"How for instance," said the leader, turning to the newly-made member. "Do you know how much money is in the box?"

"No."

"Can't you make a guess?"

"There must be many thousands. Perhaps a hundred thousand."

"It is guarded any more closely than anything else in the train?"

"Yes," said Beales. "Old Carter keeps special guard over it himself."

"Where is the wagon located in the train?"

"Always about the center."

"When there's no chance whatever of cutting it out from the rest, whipping the crew, and making off with it?"

"Nary a chance," said Beales. "Some men in the train are waiting that was they and night, and it would be bullet or rope to try such a game as that."

"Then the only way to get the box is by tackling the train?"

"That's the ticket."

Captain Saasher turned to the redskins, who were taking everything in without making a word.

"You see," he said, "we must get some help somewhere or other. They cleaned us out when we had a hundred eight more men than we've got now, and it's crossed likely that they can do it again. Now, I'm not going to let that box of moneyslip through my fingers by any means, not if I have to tackle that train with ten men. If I'm fighting well enough, but I'm not going to let my boys be cleaned out again if I can help it. We've got to have more men, so I put your wife to work and try to find out how we're to get them."

Muteer turned to Sholar Alarkum.

"Better get Motzer-Ponum," he said.

"He has many brave warriors," said the chief. "And his braves love fighting, 'unt in Tolah-froesser."

"He is the chief of the Omgas, isn't he?" asked Captain Saasher.

"How many warriors would he be willing to send me?"

"As many as we have."

"Then let's strike him by all means," said the captain. "But I thought your tribe was at war with the Omgas."

"The hatchet is buried," said Tolah-froesser. "We are friends."

"And therefore are willing to stop murdering each other in order to combine and murder other people," said the captain. "Well, we'll have something to talk and the full ride to the Omgas village. We can reach there before dark. And by the way, if that infernal steam contrivance gets in my way again I'll make a dash for it."

"It would be valuable to you," suggested Jack Beales.

"So I think," said Captain Saasher. "I want to see the man that the boy who runs the machine, and I'll make him wish he'd never left his mammy."

A hearty meal was prepared and eaten by the band, and then they walked down to a grassy enclosure where their horses were picketed.

They were soon mounted, and with their leaders at the front, the motley crew dashed away to the west, and by hard riding reached there before dark.

The shout which alarmed Frank and Dash Hallett had been raised by them, for the keen eyes of Captain Saasher had made out the form of the boy he had sured for his late defeat.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### SOME EXPLANATIONS.

DASH HALLETT was a decent sort of runner, and so was Frank, but the boy seemed to grow tired after running a few hundred yards, and pantingly subsided to a walk.

"Lively!" said Dash.

"Why?"

"I am loaded down," panted Frank, but with long strides he made pretty good time in the direction of the west.

He plunged through the trees with Dash at his side, and was immediately taken in tow by Charley Gorse, who took the young gentleman by the hand, and pulled him over the ground to where the Steam Man was standing.

Darney Shes was seated on the driver's seat, with his arms resting on the break, very coolly putting away on a clay pipe that was as black as coal.

The steam was well up in the monster, as was attested by the hissing sound coming from the valves.

"Tired out, old boy?" asked Charley, as Frank stumbled and almost fell.

"Dead beat," said Frank, regarding his feet and panting. "This engine has a strength enough to kill anyone if they are foolish enough to run."

And to Dash Hallett's great surprise, the boy removed the wires from his coat, took two curiously-shaped concerns out of his pockets, and then re-

moved a splendidly made shirt, formed entirely of polished links of steel.

These were laid in the trunk on the floor of the wagon, and then Frank jumped up to his seat. "I feel like a new man," he said. "How damned heavy that was. Where are those chaps that were following?"

"I can hear the patter of horses' hoofs on the ground," said Dash.

"Then hop in the wagon," said Frank, and laid his hand on the connecting steam rod.

Dash hopped in.

The steam man stood just on the edge of the grove, hidden from the Indians in the village by the intervening trees.

The sound of horses' feet could be distinctly heard.

Frank did not pull the rod, for he wished to see who was in pursuit.

The steam man was so constructed that he could be started or stopped a very short notice. A good head of steam could be let on at once, and the old fellow would start off at a high rate of speed, an unpleasant jerk being the only result.

Therefore, being desirous of seeing who was in pursuit, and not having the fear of capture before his eyes, the boy waited for the enemy to appear.

See the hoofs of the rapidly advancing steeds came crashing through the outer edge of the bushes which grew thickly among the trees.

Frank caught a glimpse of many mounted men, heard some oaths and excellent English curses, and then he made up his mind that the section of country he was then in was growing very sultry, rapidly, too.

He pulled the rod, and sent an almost full head of steam and then shut it off a little, following the plan adopted by the most experienced engineers.

Then he pulled the whistle cord.

The Steam Man made a jump.

Then he shrieked.

With the jump down went Dash Hallett in the bottom of the wagon.

Barney Shes tumbled squarely on top of him. Frank held the reins for support, and his cousin scoured himself by grasping the iron brake.

For a few yards the engine of the daring Captain Saasher. "There's the Steam Man. One hundred reward for him."

Away leaped the huge iron monster out on the plain.

The Indians had not been able to clearly comprehend who and what the Steam Man really was.

They believed him to be the devil on a tour, or else a sort of very extraordinary of his satanic majesty, sent to roam this earth in search of victims.

Anyhow they very respectfully declined to go in pursuit of the tall chap.

The white man held no such fears, and with Captain Saasher and Jack Beales leading the way, they dashed after the old long sleeper, but they were no match for the iron-limbed man.

They fired several shots at the inmates of the wagon, and Dash Hallett could not stand that.

He seized one of the loaded rifles which were always kept in readiness near the driver's seat.

The muzzle flew up, the stock touching his shoulder, and his quick eye flashed for one brief instant to see that the long sleeper was still there.

Then his finger pressed the trigger, the gas went off with a loud bang, and Dash crouched extremely.

The others looked around.

Captain Saasher and his horse were both tumbling to the ground.

This neat effect put a damper on the ardor of the pursuers, and they concluded to stop for the captain.

All dismounted and gathered around the fallen leader.

Dash could see them lift the captain from under the body of the horse, and he noted that the leader appeared to be uninjured.

"Guess I didn't hit his horse nor man," muttered the hunter. "That critter must have stumbled."

He saw the horse regain his feet, and then he held the captain remount him.

The pursuers did not continue the chase, for they began to see that their led horses were no match for the tireless limbs of the Steam Man.

Frank had kept up just a nice rate of speed, confident in the ability of his man to outstrip the pursuers in a few minutes with the full power of steam turned on.

He did not increase his rate now, but kept slashing through the rank grass at about twenty miles an hour, and then his lookout horses were handling the novel reins with skill.

"I'm not going fast, because I don't really want to get a great distance away from the village," he said to Charley.

"Why?"  
 "Don't you know?"  
 "I don't."  
 "Didn't I start out to bring back Dash Hallett and the Englishman?"

"That's so," said Charley.  
 "An't he the same token," put in Barney, "how was he to forget to take that man?"

"To tell the truth," smiled the driver, "I was so excited that I never thought of a thing about the Englishman. You see, I had to beat that medicine-man that they call in the village, and that drove the Cookney out of my head. But I bamboozled old—what's his name?"

"Mowaher Ahiner," returned Hallett, to whom the boy had applied.

"That's it, Mowaher Ahiner," said Frank. "The Indians consider him the greatest living medicine-man in the universe, but I made him crawl to his heels."

"You just did," said Hallett, looking with approval upon Frank's slight form and long head. "You actually beat the devil himself, at his own games, and on his own grounds, too, for the matter of that. But I'm a little currier in these things. Do you mind telling us how it was that knife didn't stick me when you let it drive full spite at my breast?"

"Why, of course not," said Frank. "I can show you how the thing was done in less than two minutes of an eyelash. Here, Charley, grab the ribbon."

Charley Gorse took the reins, and then Frank clambered down from the seat and went for that all-containing tree which he had used in the Indian village.

He took the dirk he had used in the Indian village.

"That's the article, isn't it?"  
 "Guess so," said Dash. "You're such a very tricky little cuss that I don't feel willing to swear to anything."

Frank laughed.  
 "Well, it took like that," he asked.

"Oh, yes," said Dash.

"And you have my assurance that it was used in the village," said Frank. "This is one of my old friends. In the first place, you will notice that the handle is quite as wide and almost as long as the blade."

"I see."  
 "And that it would be possible for the blade to retreat into the handle?"

"Yes—yes."  
 "Therefore it would be very plain, too, when I make a known the construction to you. Notice two knobs, one on each side, and made to match?"

"I see them."  
 "Now on the right hand side sets a remarkably stiff spring on the inside," said Frank. "When this spring is set you can hurl the blade deep into a tree."

"I understand," said Dash.

"Then," said the young inventor, "all we have to do is to touch this other spring and the stiff spring is unset. Then the blade sets on top of a flamber spiral spring, strong enough to keep it out from the hollow hill, but also limber enough to be driven back by the blade when the point comes in contact with any solid body. Of course, as soon as the knife bounces back from a body the spiral spring forces the blade out again. It's a very simple principle."

"Just so," said Dash Hallett. "But it took a little better thing than I had planned to hatch up the idea. But see here, you had that stiff spring set when you drew blood from the rookin's hand."

"Yes, and it was set when the point drew blood from mine."

"Then you couldn't have unset it," said the hunter, "for you didn't take it in your hand till after he'd hurled it full at your heart."

"Oh, that puzzle," cried Frank.

"Course it does," said Dash.

Frank pointed to the carefully made shirt of steel.

"You forgot that," he said. "I made that myself, and no knife will pierce it."

"Oh!" said Dash, "I savvy now."

"Anything else you don't understand?" asked the boy.

"Why, yes," said Dash. "What made the old chap jump and holler when he saluted the relative of the sun and moon?"

"Did you notice the little wires strung over my shoulder?"

"Yes."  
 "And did you see me take out two curiously made concerns from the pocket of my coat?"

"I did."

"Well," said Frank, "those odd-shaped things were indeed taken out of the wires were connected with them. When Mowaher Ahiner laid his paws on me he touched the wires, and in less than the tenth part of a second, he received a heavy charge of electricity from the batteries. They are little, but, oh, my!"

Here the Steam Man began to sloop up, and Frank saw that they were about entering a little grove.

"About time for supper, isn't it?" Charley asked.

"I suppose so," said Frank, and with slow tread the monster was driven under the shade of a large tree.

"From the ground," I'm good and hungry, I know, and I suppose you are, too."

"And what comes next?" asked Dash.

"Why, we must try to rescue that poor British subject from his dusky bride," laughed the young genius. "And we must get horses at the same time, for my trap won't accommodate so many things."

"But you'll not think of going back there with your machine at night?" said Dash.

"Why not?" cried Frank. "I can travel as well by night as by day, and, for the matter of that, can fight like the devil in the dark."

"Oh, you mean with your night pistols, as you call them."

"Yes, how did you know about them?" asked Frank.

Dash related his adventure with the bear when he had shot the monster by the aid of the light.

"But I can't see how it was done," said Dash Hallett. "I think you're a match for a haul tribe of reds, cuss, if I don't."

"I think so, too," smiled Frank Reade. "But just look here and I'll explain to you the principle of this most arrangement."

He drew the night pistol or revolver from his pocket, and allowed Dash Hallett to examine it closely.

"You see that it is just the same as any other self-cocking revolver."

"Yes; only it's got a much larger bore than common," said the hunter.

"That's true," said Frank. "But I made the weapon myself, and made them large for two purposes. First, to carry a large ball that should be almost as effective as the bullet from a rifle. Next I used a large bore to allow of the passage of the bullets."

"Go on," said Dash.

"Well, then," said Frank, taking out one of the cartridges which he had in the chamber, "see you have whole secret."

"I fill every one of these shells myself. I put in a certain quantity of powder in each shell. Then in the three shells I fill with the bullet, and the bullet is prepared in the other three shells I place a chemical preparation made in the shape of a bullet, and colored exactly to the hue of lead. This I do to prevent any one from discovering the difference in the bullets should it become necessary for me to play tricks with the pistol."

"Exactly," said Dash. "Go ahead with your old story."

"The last three shells contain what you might call a Roman candle ball," said Frank. "They are made of chemicals, however, instead of powder, as fireworks are made, and last longer than the ball which shoots from a Roman candle. The weapon is loaded with alternate bullets and fireworks. The advantage of the revolver being self-cocking is apparent. You hold your arm extended after pressing the trigger for the first time, and the fire don't reveal to you the object. You then cover it and press the trigger again, and down it goes just as you would cook the weapon. You might lose the time you needed for shooting."

"Very good," said Dash Hallett; "but it'll be so dark as to need your dart, how are you to know when to fire the chemicals?"

"Does the darkness affect the hearing?" cried Frank. "Can't you hear the patter of a man's feet he's running away, although you can't see him?"

"That's so," said Dash. "How is this supper coming up?"

"The Indian man and Charley Gorse has been built preparing a meal, while Frank was explaining his inventions to the interested Hallett."

They now sung out to the others that supper was ready, and a sup of coffee for each, a slice of cold meat, some pones of white bread, and some preserves, all resulting from the donations of the emigrants to Frank, afforded the prairie travelers a very hearty repast.

Here we must leave them and hurry back to the village of the Osagee, for the daring Captain Blesher is there, and plans are to be discussed which will have a strong bearing on this story.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

A POW-WOW.

The bullet from the rifle in the hands of Dash Hallett had aimed at the breast of Captain Blesher, as the hunter had crossed, the stumbling of the steed saved the rider.

He was slightly injured by having one leg caught under the body of the falling steed, but his follower had soon rescued him from his unpleasant position, and in ten minutes he was all right again.

"It's no use trying to catch that machine," he said, as his men helped the horse up. "They look about as fit as new, but the sage owl tried; and perhaps they'll outstrip the fleetest and freshest horse. Let us go back to the village."

In a moment they were all remounted, and galloped away to the westward and his horses.

The Indians were gathered near to the tree where Dash Hallett had been bound.

Motzer-Ponum and his chiefs were conversing with Blesher about the reds.

The white men galloped up and sprang from their well-trained horses, knowing that the animals would not stray away.

Captain Blesher saluted the chief, and the grave Motzer-Ponum returned his greeting in the most courteous style.

"Why did you let your prisoner go?" asked the captain.

From constant intercourse with the Indians on the plains, Captain Blesher could use their language as well as his own.

"The warrior medicine-man said that the Great Spirit had so ordered," replied the chief.

Motzer-Ponum meant Frank Reade.

"What medicine-man?" demanded the captain.

"The relation of the sun, moon, and stars," said the chief.

"What are you talking about?" demanded Captain Blesher.

"The wonderful medicine."  
 "But who is he?"

"The relation of the sun—"  
 "You said that once before," broke in the other. "But who is this medicine? Where is he now?"

"You should know best."  
 "And why?"

"Because you pursued him."  
 "What, that boy?" cried the captain.

"Yes," returned the medicine-man.

"Ha—ha!" roared the captain. "Frightened by a smart boy. But say, haven't you got a very great medicine yourself?"

"Mowaher Ahiner," said the chief.

"Yes, that's his name. What did he say to this young medicine?"

"He asked me his head in submission to the mighty power of this relation of the moon and sun."

"Bully for the boy!" laughed the captain. "But what can he do?"

"Many wonderful things," said the great and mighty Motzer-Ponum. "His heart cannot be pierced, and he can give a weapon the power of life and death."

"Pshaw!" whistled the captain. "I must try to get my hands on this very clever young medicine. Tell me what he did."

Motzer-Ponum had been greatly impressed by the wonder-workings of the tricky young genius, and he was hastened to give the captain a highly colored version of the boy's exploits, enlarging upon everything with a genuine Indian regard for veracity, and succeeded in making Frank Reade out to be a very wonderful person indeed.

"That's all very clever," said the other. "But we will do our best to get a suspicious descendant of a heavenly bodies, and with your permission go into council."

"You wish to have a big talk?"

"Yes," said the captain.

"Let the council-fire be kindled," said the chief. "Let my braves and warriors gather around me."

Boys, you have doubtless heard of the red-tape hustler rigmorale, in connection with the disreputable office at Washington. That highly respectable bureau don't begin to match a tribe of savages for rigmorale and show.

There's got to be the council-fire; there has got to be the council-ripe, or omelet of thought; there has got to be a speech in full terms from each and every brave and warrior entitled to speak, and the fun of it is that they all know before they ever began just exactly what decision they would arrive at.

Soon the council-fire was kindled beneath the tree which had so lately been doing duty for a death-stake.

The chief of both tribes gathered together, forming a good-sized inner circle.

Captain Blesher and the doctor also formed part of this inner circle.

In a large circle outside were ranged the warriors and braves of the Osage and Sioux tribes.

The pipe was filled, lit, and slowly went its rounds.

The fire was removed, and the council was declared open.

At a sign from Captain Blasher, the old Sioux chieftain arose to his feet and the circles became steadily still.

"Brothers," began Blasher. "We need your assistance. Our common enemy, the invading white man, who wrest our most prized hunting-grounds from us, rides over the plains. My brother here is pointing to Captain Blasher—who has a white man and an Indian breast, hates them fully as much as we do.

"A large wagon train is now passing over the great plains, laden with many valuable things we can use. There is also much fire water on the train, and we like that as much as do the white men.

"One sun ago, we, my white brother and I, swam down upon the train, thinking to kill them and take the wagons.

"We were met by a heavy fire, our followers were thrown into disorder, and an immense man with a voice like a buffalo and fire eyes of fire rushed upon us from the darkness, and we were driven away, leaving some of our best and bravest men, red and white, dead or dying on the plains.

"Now we come to you to ask you to help sweep these men from the plains before they can settle on our best lands, kill our deer and buffalo, and trap our otter and mink. We are not strong enough to attack them, but would protect the rights of my red brothers, and if they will aid me I will scourge these white people from the plains. I do not want one simple article of value from the hands of all the white people, for he has cunning goods that belong to wigwags. I will give to the brave Osage warriors who are willing to follow me. Shall I have your aid?"

"He sat down to the right of Motez-Ponn immediately sprang to his feet, and in emphatic terms said that he pledged himself and fifty of his best braves and warriors to the support of the white captain, and the Indians applauded this, and then the council broke up.

"It is settled, captain," inquired the deserter.

"Yes, they will come to my banner with a hail of arrows."

"And when will you start?"

"To-night, if you know where to go to," said the captain.

"I know where," said Beales, "but dare me if I know how to go there. Do you know the place called Three Islands?"

"Oh, yes," said Captain Blasher. "The name has been given to three groves that are almost connected. They are about ten miles south of here, a matter of about one hour's ride with fresh horses."

"Then you know where to go," said Jack Beales. "For by this time the train has come to a halt at Three Islands."

"Then their goose is just about as good as cooked," confidently remarked the mischievous and cunning Blasher. "Three Islands is just about as nice a place for us to pop down there as I could ask for. There's room there for both sides, and they can't stand against us, and all day long my boys who stand on the prairie. There's trees enough there for both parties, and we shall fight them on even ground."

"That is," said Jack, "if we cannot surprise them."

"Just so," said the captain. "There's Motez-Ponn calling to us. I suppose he wants our royal presence at his court."

"Of course this conversation had all taken place in good English, as Jack Beales understood nothing of the Indian tongue.

"The two villains walked away from the spot. The face was thus through the thick-leaved branches of the tree.

Then a head and shoulders came into view, and the beaming features of our most esteemed Cockey, George Augustus Fitzmoodle, could now be distinguished in a frame of green.

The Londoner carefully removed himself from the tree, and with an awful grunt dropped to the ground.

"Bliss my 'art h'and son," muttered this exorbitant individual, looking after the two rascals with an expression of indignation and contempt.

"It's h't h'and the bounds h'of possibility that

two white men could conspire with 'estashless savages to take the lives h'of their fellow-men? 'Orrible—most 'orrible. 'H'if h't 'ad the power, 'ow gladly would h' travel to Three Islands. 'But h'ow can y't be h'omanded to have these poor people from these 'orrid braves? And so he was!

## CHAPTER XIII.

## GEORGE AUGUSTUS WALKS OFF.

THERE was one beneficial result from all the excitement and hubbub which had taken place in the Indian village.

In consequence of the very many important matters of their attention, the relations had failed to keep a very strict watch over George Augustus Fitzmoodle, Esq.

The latter individual had been impressed with the idea that his every movement was watched by a pair of keen eyes, for the very lovely Widow Shoffaugus had told him that he could not leave the village without her knowledge.

"But h't seems to me that the very h'important events h'of the day 'ave distracted the close regard h'of these red 'oshan," soliloquized George Augustus, nestling himself upon the rude door-post, and watching the train as it passed on the safe side; but, then, for liberty h't must be willing to run h'all the risks, h'and h'encounter h'all the dangers. 'H't certainly shall 'endow me out my lucky all an hour from now, h'if my dark-skinned wife don't return."

His wife had gone off to a sort of Indian political caucus, a primary affair, where the affairs of the tribe were dealt with by the female members thereof.

George Augustus waited for some time—his wife returned not.

"The village was now very quiet, with the exception that boisterous sounds frequently came from the big lodge where the serene Motez-Ponn was entertaining Captain Blasher and his red and white friends in good style.

Liquor was flowing freely around the festive board where all the red and white thieves sat, and the jollity of the occasion was indeed great.

The night was not very light; nothing but the faint glimmering of the eternal stars lit up the gloom of the village.

"I may note whatever were taking part in the grand testimonial feast tendered to Captain Blasher, and the awful Sholom Alukum.

George Augustus crept inside of the wigwag, and waited until he could be conveniently arranged to place his hands upon a long knife which rested upon two pegs driven into the wall.

Armed with this weapon, the property of his wife, George Augustus crawled forth to do or die, or in other words, to make his escape or be taken.

He crept stealthily away from the door of his wigwag, and then, after going about ten steps, suddenly pulled up.

"Was a blessed fool h't 'am," muttered the Englishman. "Ow h'am h't 'id get h'away from 'ere when h't don't know the way h'ont? Never mind, h't'll go h'is h'any direction, and h't's a blessed sure thing that h't'll bring h'ont somewhere. Now for liberty h't'—no, not death, for death—'H't'd rather be h'anged than die—very much rather."

Having arrived at this conclusion, the very brave George Augustus Fitzmoodle, speculator in undisciplined and unscrupulous ways, very cautiously crawled along toward the door of Motez-Ponn's big wigwag.

He had chosen to go that way because he knew that he could bring his nose here near the path he had been traveling when first surprised by the Osages.

He got safely past the feasting place, and was about to bring himself on his feet and escape, when a tall form arose from the ground and confronted him.

The Cockey saw at a glance that this was one of his own kind, who stood before him, very effectively barring his path.

The Osage peered closely at him, and said something in his native tongue.

But the Englishman hadn't the least idea what he said.

The Indian reached out his hand, and pointed in the direction of the lovely Widow Shoffaugus's lodge.

"Oh, yes, thank you," said Fitzmoodle. "You would like me to travel back to the friends h'of my darker-colored 'all, but h'allow me to 'essure you that h't don't intend to do h'any such thing. 'H't in fact, sir, we were married h'ere, and we h'ave no partners for life. 'H't shall ever go back to that 'orrid 'ole thing again while h't 'ave h'is h'and in my mortal corporosity, h'and h't don't think you can make me."

This was added with a goodly amount of confidence and bluster, for the brave George Augustus, be it known to the reader, was gripping a knife very firmly all the while.

But the Indian did not understand George Augustus any more than George Augustus understood him; but he could guess from the Englishman's manner that the latter emphatically refused to go back to the States he'd deserted.

He again lifted his hand, and sternly pointed to the lovely lodge of the lovely Widow Shoffaugus.

"'H't's no use," said the Cockey, "I've got my stand h'ere all night, h'old stoutest bottle, but you couldn't budge me."

Then the Indian waxed angry, and probably made up his mind that the very odious Englishman could not be won, so he took him by the shoulders, turned the rather surprised Cockey around with a quick twist, and kicked him, the end of his number nine moonshine making him reel on the ground about two inches below the buttons on the back of his coat.

George Augustus didn't holier.

He was sent spinning by the force of the kick, and went rolling over and over on the ground, but he retained his hold on the knife.

He had made up his mind to escape; he had screwed up his wavering courage to the sticking point, and he had equipped himself for the battle, so to speak, and he was not going to be subdued by a mere kick—not but what a damn heavy one might have taken all the grit out of him and left him a good deal better off.

He picked himself up, and found that he was in a desperate state of mind. His English blood was insulted and he was now at boiling point, and he was ready to kick blow for blow.

To be sure he had the best of it, seeing that the Osage had no idea of being attacked; but then you know the Osage was a red Indian, and George Augustus was not a Cockey.

He gripped his knife firmly, threw back his hand, and rushed upon the Osage.

The latter was taken unawares.

He had expected resistance, he had taken no notice of the Englishman after kicking him, and thus the insulted Londoner had the advantage of catching his enemy off his guard.

His manly spirit was startled, Osage, the latter threw up his hands in a vain effort to ward off the blow, but the heavy blade crashed through bone and flesh, and sank to the hilt in the Osage's forehead.

The red-skin dropped, and George Augustus, after pulling the stained knife out from the wound and wiping it on the dress of the defunct Indian, walked off with his construction.

"'H't'm a very desperate man!" muttered the valiant Englishman as he tramped away from the village, keeping the knife in his hand all the time, although at the risk of being killed for his stable and fall. "'H't'm not to be trifled with, and woe be 'unto that man who bars my fight to the dome h'of liberty. 'H't shall strike—'H't shall strike—'H't shall murder! 'Es—ha!"

By which it may be seen that the exorbitant George Augustus had worked himself up to the heroic pitch over killing an Indian whom he had taken unawares.

He was soon clear of the village, and by taking the north star for his guide managed to keep on a straight course.

He had traveled some miles after mile with the sole companionship of the stars and his own thoughts, until he began to feel decidedly fatigued.

Then he saw the faint glimmer of a fire flashing and iridescent away on his route, and concluded to approach it, and to see whether he could see and whether the builders of the fire were white men or red-skins.

His mooded mind softened and cautiously advanced towards the fire, which could not be seen through the trunks of trees; so the Englishman knew that he was approaching a grove.

He drew near to the trees, and could hear the murmur of voices.

"'H't must get closer," said Fitzmoodle, and was advancing when the click of a trigger saluted his ears, and a voice rang out from the grove:

"'H'—'H'—'H'!"

"White—white!" yelled Fitzmoodle, dancing up and down in front of the tree from which the challenge came, expecting every moment to feel the death rattles tearing through his body; "for 'evens sake, my dear sir, don't shoot!"

A merry laugh was excited by the poor Cockey's terror, and a tall man came forth into the light, and stepped forward, looking at his body;

He looked at the trembling Englishman with amusement and contempt.

"What's your name?"

"George Augustus Fitzmoodle, sir, of London, h'England. 'H't'm a speculator h'in coal h'and h'in mines."

"Where are you going?"

"'H'anywhere," said Fitzmoodle. "'H't was a



prisoner h'among the 'orrid h'Osage h'Indiana, h'and h'I've just made h'off by h'extreme bravery. h'I 'ope you will grant me protection h'and shelter h'until the morning.

"That's jes as the capen and the boss says," returned the guard. "Folter me, and h'I take you to the boss."

"H'and who h'is h'e, h'if h'I might make so bold h'as to h'ask?" inquired Fitznooide.

"Harry Hale."

"H'and what h'is he?"

"The boss of an expedition sent out by the government to clear the ball crowd of robbers and thieves," was the reply. "He's one of the secret service detectives!"

Fitznooide was conducted by his tall guide through the maze of the trees to where the fire was burning.

Around the embers which had been kindled for the purpose of cooking, sat or lounged about thirty men, dressed for the most part in the regular prairie suits of woolen and hide.

Prominent among them stood two men who would have attracted considerable attention in any situation.

One was a grizzled old mountain and plain traveler by the name of Carter, a brother to the best game guide who had the emigrant train under his charge.

Bill Carter was perhaps fifty years of age, but his rugged form seemed to defy the hand of time. He was tall, broad-shouldered, and as tough and strong as some of the mountain trees he had felled in his day.

The other man who engaged the attention of George Augustus was perhaps thirty years of age.

He was of medium size, but his form was as perfectly sprung as that of the panther.

His eyes, gray, sharp, piercing, seemed to glance through a man, and he seemed one born to command.

Before these two men the trembling Cockney was conducted by the guide.

"Halloo!" cried Bill Carter. "What in thunder have you picked up now?"

"A chap what was sneakin' aroun' on the outside of the camp," said the guard. "He says his name is Fihluster Anakin, or something like that, and he wants you to give him protection and shelter over night."

"Excuse me," said the Englishman, with an oscular wave of his hand. "You 'ave mistaken my name. H'is h'is not Canooide; h'I h'am George h'Augustus, h'and h' of London, h'England, a speculator h'in coal h'and h'iron mines."

The sharp-eyed man looked him over a moment, and made up his mind that the Englishman was one of those solid men with whom it was very handy to be on good terms.

"You 'are very welcome, Mr. Fitznooide," was his greeting. "The shelter of my camp and the protection afforded by my men shall be yours as long as you see fit to tarry with us. My name is Hale, Harry Hale, and I am a detective in the secret service of the United States. This is the leader of my band of brave fellows, Mr. Carter, this is Mr. George Augustus Fitznooide. I hope you will do well by him."

"Happy tar meet yer, Englisher," growled out Bill Carter, who had a voice that was a cross between a base-drum and one of those terrific Dutch trombones.

"I'm 'only a rough-and-ready, stranger," said Bill Carter, "and a regular man when he sees the genuine article. Tip us yer lipper."

"Eh?" cried Fitznooide.

"Tip over yer gravelly iron," said Bill Carter, thrusting out a grimy hand that was like a bear's paw. "Plant your right bowzer thar, English."

"Really," cried the much-puzzled George Augustus, "h'I h'am 'at an 'ep' cost to comprehend the hexact meaning h'o' your strange remarks."

"English, I pass," sorrowfully observed the rough old carter, who had dropped his hand, and regarded the big-worded cockney with wonder.

"I don't smoke yer."

"Harry Hale, who had been much amused listening to all this odd talk, now came to the rescue.

"You do not understand Mr. Carter," he said to the Cockney. "He wants to shake hands with you."

"H'ah!" cried Fitznooide, very much relieved by the explanation. "With h'all my 'eart h'and soul."

"That's the ticket," cried Carter. "Now yer a-smoking me, h'I'm smoking you, Mr. Canooide, I'm happy to meet yer."

He grasped the cockney's soft hand in his own bony palm, and shut down upon him with so much warmth, that poor George Augustus hopped and shouted with pain.

"Snakes and buffers!" growled old Bill. "I've not hurt yer, have I stranger?"

"Oh, no," growled Fitznooide, trying to take the crumpe out of his hand, "h'only h'I wish you hadn't been quite so happy to me, that's h'all."

"Ho—ho—ho!" laughed Bill. "That's cussed out, my friend; well, I'll leave yer with the boss while I take a soot around the grove to see to things."

He walked away from them with his rifle resting in the hollow of his arm, and although he was an old and very heavy man, he could not catch the feet of his practiced foot as he moved skillfully through the trees.

These old western hard-nuts who live on the mountains and prairies, and wander for years through trackless forests, have a style of locomotion that is truly very wonderful, and in some strange manner they pass in silence over ground that strikes men out of ten would stumble over it.

The forests and prairies, the mountains and streams, and the glorious canopy with its moon and stars are all as books to them, to be read by that education they gain by a lifetime of experience.

"Be seated, Mr. Fitznooide," requested Hale, and placed a log for the Englishman to sit on.

"H'I really thinks h'I could do a bit h'in that way," said George Augustus, who was then served with a well-done slice from brain's haunch.

"I'd like to know what you h'instead doing in these parts, Mr. Ale?"

"Certainly," said the detective. "In such a section of the country as this there is not anything to be gained by keeping affairs secret. As I told you I am a detective of the secret service force."

"Hexactly."

"And I can now inform you that my present mission is to burn down and capture or exterminate the several bands of red and white robbers who have for many years past been the plague and bane of prairie travel."

"H'are you think you can do it?"

"I'll do it, or I'll die!" said Harry Hale, and a red gleam leaped to his gray eyes. "I have something more than the mere performance of duty to urge."

"Ah?" exclaimed Fitznooide, "you 'ave been a sufferer from their cruelty?"

"You may well say so," said Hale, seeming to recollect many trials of thought. "The devil, the fiend!"

"H'if h'I might make so bold h'as to h'ask 'ow much did they rob you h'off?" said Fitznooide.

The detective lifted his head and said, with flaming eyes:

"A life!"

"H'at h'at?" ejaculated Fitznooide.

"A life," said Hale. "I repeat it—a life! True not mine, but it was as dear to me as my own could be. I had a brother whom I loved as a son. He was younger than myself, but bold, keen, hardy, noble, and well-bracketed, and as true as steel."

"He was sent out upon just such a mission as this, sent by the same powers to capture those same gang of robbers, thieves, and murderers."

"He was too venturesome, and in a moment of foolhardy bravery, placed himself in the hands of the enemy, hoping to be able to get an easy victory by seeming to desert from his men. In some unknown manner the trick was discovered by that brutal Captain Slesher, and my brother's body was filled with bullets. But I shall avenge him, Captain Slesher is doomed if he ever crosses my path."

"I reckon," the guide said, who had come back while Hale was speaking. "he won't stand much more of that kind of talk either."

"Hexcuse me," said Fitznooide. "Didn't you say Captain Slesher?"

"Then h'I can tell you where to look for the brute within the hour," said Fitznooide. "H'I 'ave just left the village where 'e 'is."

They had concluded the careers of the two leaders rang sharply out; horses were brought in from a corral close at hand, the men were soon mounted behind Bill Carter, and at the word of command the brave fellows dashed away for the Three Islands.

## CHAPTER XX.

## THE CAPTURE OF THE STEAM MAN.

FRANK READE was undecided about going back to the Osage village.

He did not fear a tribe of savages, for they were so enigmatically afraid of the Terror of the West,

that he reckoned the Steam Man more than a match for all the ignorant redskins on the plains.

"What will you do about the poor young Englisher?" said Dan H. Balking, who was lying at the feet of the Steam Man, smoking a pipe and admiring the build of the man of metal.

"I hardly know," said Frank.

"Sure ye'll not put in for the poor body among those hayheaps?" said in our friend Barney Shea.

"Oh, I don't mind what you say," said Frank. "You're not of Kilkenny, are you, and all you want is to get into a mud sea things fly around like Old Nick. But I'm not going to run the neck of my steam friend into danger just because you're speaking for a row."

"Ain't you a good goon?" interrupted the Irishman. "I only want to be a friend in distress, do you mind?"

"That's all right," said Frank. "But if you had your way, you'd grab a big stick for a skull-bash and smash plump into the Indian village, knocking everything left and right."

"And quoth Barney Shea:

"Bsure wouldn't that be illigant intirely?"

"I don't see why we can't go back," observed Charley.

"I don't mind the rode," said Frank, "but those cussed murdering white men don't stand in fear of the steam Man."

"And probably admire him very much," said George.

"Exactly," said Frank.

"Be yer acart that Cap'n Slesher and his gang might get their paws on your prize," said Dan H. Balking.

"Thin h' Barney Shea that'll show yer the way out of the trouble," said the Peasantry.

"They all turned to him.

"We can't see yer the machine here? Wan o' yer d'ys sh'up wid the consarn, and me and the others go to the village."

"And who'll stop?" asked Frank.

"Not me or any of us," said Barney.

"Nor me," said Charley.

"You can't keep this chicken tendin' baby when there's danger around!" said Dan.

"Then can't you see the machine here? I like wild adventures well enough, but when it comes to leaving my steam friend behind, then I feel like staying with him. He's taken me out of many a scrape, and I'll not give him over to other people's care."

"Thin h' a bargain!" cried Barney.

"What's yer name?" asked Frank.

"Ye'll sh'op an' we'll go!"

"Yes."

"Hoopoo!" cried the Irishman; but Death Hallowed the broad hand over the mouth of the noble rascal.

"Shot up yer head!" growled the hunter. "Do you want a bull head o' reds prairie in on us?"

"The sooner we get the sooner we'll get through, do ye mind," said the Irishman.

"Jist let me strand foronast a dozes of thin red divils, and be the smoke of Kate Reilly's pipe, I'll be at the corner of the village in five minutes."

"You'll have plenty of show," said Dan.

"What distance are we away from the Osage village?" asked Charley Gorse, picking up his rifle.

"Oh, not so far as you might think," said Frank. "I did not travel away in a very straight course, but in about a quarter of a circle. We are now perhaps two or three miles from the village."

"An hour's tramp," said Dan.

"Just about; and I propose we start just as soon as possible."

"Then come on; I can take my course by the stars," said the hunter, and throwing his rifle over his shoulder he stepped away from the Steam Man, followed by Barney and Charley.

Frank listened until their footsteps died away, and then, boy-like, he began to feel terribly lonesome and almost wish that he had run the Steam Man close to the village.

He could not see very well with the faint starlight and the half-light from the eyes of the giant, but to occupy his mind, and drive off the lonesome feeling, he got up his gun, his rags and leathers, and proceeded to put the oil of warlike men in perfect order, oiling every joint, and cleaning every part.

This occupied him a considerable time, and

then he saw to the water in the tank, tried every catch, spring, and brace, examined all parts minutely, and decided that his steam friend was ready to travel a mile an hour as at good speed, without stopping to take breath.

After that he attended to all the parts of the wagon that needed oiling or bracing, for the concern was put together by means of slides and braces, and then Frank was out of work.

He put a little more coal into the stomach of the giant, regulated the dampers, and had everything in readiness to start off at the shortest notice.

What to do with himself the boy really did not know.

He had books, but not enough light to read them by, unless he could get within exact range of the half-closed stream of light which came from beneath the lids of the monster, and a big tree prevented him from taking the position.

"I can't stand this," scolded Frank. "I feel just like reading, so I guess I'll turn the old fellow around a little."

He mounted the box, and leaned forward to grasp the driving reins.

By some mischance, probably owing to the imperfect light, he got hold of the cord attached to the whistle.

Whoop, shriek, whoop!

The little grove resounded with the loud cry of the monster.

Frank was used to the whistle, but then he had not expected to hear it just then, and it startled him so much that he fell over backwards, still retaining his hold on the cord as he tumbled into the bottom of the wagon.

Of course, while he held on to the cord the old fellow yelled.

Frank mighty soon let go his hold, and the head did coast as suddenly as it commenced.

The hills seemed to echo back the sounds from their far away cliffs, and the boy felt very uneasy.

The thought of danger to himself did not occur to him, but he concluded that his friends would consider the whistle as a signal for them to return.

"I really don't know what to do," muttered Frank. "I suppose they are half-way on the road by this time, and yet if they heard those whistles, they would be sure and come back, and that poor Englishman would be left to misery and death among these rocks and wide deserts. I should have looked out for just such an accident as this. A good set of signals, understood by Charley, would enable me to communicate with him, even if he were five miles away. Such a thing is as good as a telegraph. Took would tell him to come in; took-too, would make him understand that I had changed my mind and did not want him, and just by spacing the whistles I could fairly talk with him."

He looked up at the steam man in a very disconsolate manner.

"It's no use," he said to himself; "I must either go after them and meet them or have the brave fellows tramping back here for nothing. I'll throw on a full headlight and push away."

He turned back the eyelids of the giant traveler, and the powerful light streamed out fully, causing strange, weird shades and lights among the branches and leaves of the trees.

It got upon the seat, and reached forward for the reins.

He was very careful this time not to touch the broad whistle string.

He handled the steam very carefully, for the grove was rather dense, and he knew that he ran some risk of injuring his man if he failed to use the utmost caution.

It is with locomotives and balances in the human form, so it was with the body and limbs of the Steam Man.

In the human form there is always one leg weaker than the other, and the stronger limb will always swing around to the weaker; our genius knew this, and made one leg of his man stronger, by throwing more steam power into the joints. It would then swing around to the weaker limb, and thus a curve could be described.

Just as he mounted the seat, three dark forms fitted through the trees east at hand, and slowly crept near.

Frank pulled his left rein in order to move around to the right, and the man slowly lifted his legs.

The shadowy forms looped through the flickering bars of light and approached the machine.

The long, iron limbs slowly rose and fell, and the man of metal moved around in the direction that Frank desired to go.

The forms rapidly drew near, and now darted swiftly forward.

Frank was about to throw on a good head of steam, when Jack Beales and two of his compan-

ions leaped into the wagon, and the boy was firmly grasped by three pairs of strong hands.

"I claim this concern, in the name of the brethren of the plains," cried Beales. "Obey my orders, young man, or I'll put a bullet through you!"

#### CHAPTER XL.

##### AT THREE ISLANDS.

CRACK!

"Help!"

First a loud peal of the rifle, then the strill agonized appeal of a voice—the voice of a man.

Those successive sounds rolled through the groves of Three Islands, startling the feathered denizens of the trees, and bringing every man of the emigrant party to his feet with a bound. Snap Carter's command rang out like the note of a bugle.

"Barrowed the wagons!" The brave guardians of the helpless women and children quickly thronged around the vehicles.

Never was there a braver crowd of true hearts.

"Silence," commanded the guide.

A perfect hush succeeded the order, and the old plainsman saw best ears to catch the slightest sound.

"Be gone again."

"Help!"

The voice was weaker now, and to the old guide it seemed that the person in need of help was fast expiring.

His noble heart responded quickly to such a call.

He touched two of the emigrants on the arm, and led them follow him.

"That's a human critter in distress," said the old mountaineer. "I'm going to rescue him, so follow!"

He moved in the direction from which the sound came.

The eager emigrants followed after him with quick strides.

The guide moved cautiously, and yet with some speed.

The emigrants followed in single file, stepping lightly in the track of their leader.

The sound had seemed to emanate from that portion of the grove fronting on the east, and thither Snap Carter bent his steps.

He stepped forward, for it was dangerous to go walking blindly forward in the night when there might be a score of enemies in his path.

He called aloud:

"Straggle!"

For a moment there was no reply.

"Guess he's giv up the ghost," said Snap.

But his fears were removed by a very weak voice saying:

"Here. Come quickly; I have killed a savage, but he has wounded me."

The voice appeared to be about twenty feet distant.

"Come on," cried Snap Carter. "The cusses are all gone, and we'll soon take this poor cat to the camp."

He plunged heedlessly forward, his friends at his heels.

"Here," directed the voice.

"We're Kimmin'," cheerily said Carter. "Lord love yer, stranger, we hain't the kind."

He had just got that far in his comforting assurances when several forms leaped upon him from the darkness.

The emigrants were struck down like logs, and a sweeping blow with a rifle-bit was made at the head of the guide.

Snap Carter realized instantly the nature of the attack.

He had been decoyed away from the train by the enemies who were trying to strike him down, making swift, heavy blows at the hardy old man.

The old guide defended himself with desperate energy, for he felt that the salvation of the train depended upon his getting back to the wagon.

His long rifle, wielded by the muscles of his powerful arms, swept a circle around him.

Four went down under the whistling stock like great logs to the earth.

The old tiger was thoroughly aroused, and he felt that he could not afford to die or allow himself to be taken prisoner just then.

He dashed away like a giant, and his feet leaped away from him.

It wasn't healthy to come within the wide sweep of the heavy butt.

Somehow and rifles went down like chaff before the strong sweep of Snap Carter's rifle.

The voice rang out. It was the same as that which he called for help, and it said:

"Take that man alive. Don't fire on him."

But Snap had made up his mind that he would not be taken alive.

He put forth all his great strength. Like a meteor the rifle flew around his head, his foot

retreated, and, suddenly turning, the old guide

His limbs had not forgotten their speed.

Bushes, logs and rocks were cleared with immense leaps.

His foot touched after him with a shout.

The old man sent back an answering cry, and continued on to his flying course.

A few moments later he reached the surprised guard at the train the outcrop at him, and at the same time ordered him to retreat to the wagon after firing the signal of danger.

The sentinel obeyed.

Those who rushed within the lines of the brave defenders.

The sounds of pursuit had ceased.

The guide sank down upon the ground exhausted.

His limbs were trembling from the mighty exertions they had made, and he was unable to stand.

The men crowded around him with eager faces.

"Are you hurt?" asked one.

"No," gasped Carter. "only winded. D—n it, man, don't strike a light unless you want to lose your soap."

For out of the men had tried to light a match in order to see whether the guide was hurt.

"Where's Smith and Burns?" asked several of the emigrants.

They referred to the two brave fellows who had been laid low by the cruel trickery of the enemy.

"Gone under," said Carter. "Who's got any whiskey?"

"Here," said several, and a dozen flasks were held out to him.

"Has there been a fight?" asked one.

"The liveliest bit of a scrimmage that this chicken has had for nigh on fifteen years," said Carter, slowly getting upon his feet and stopping to pay attention to the flask of whiskey he held in his hand. "I had the nicest kind of work for just about two minutes—couldn't be much longer. I s'pose I must have knocked over a dozen chaps with the butt-end of my old gun. Smith and Burns are gone under, but for all that they were both knocked over. Probably they didn't see what hit 'em, even."

"And how did you escape?"

"Guess I had the guide." "I guess I must have knocked things flyin' at a tarnal velocity to get clear o' that?"

"But what are we to do?"

The questioner bit the words several.

"Keep quiet and watch," said Snap. "None o' yer are plainsmen, or else I could send yer out to say in my ear, but ten to one you guesses would lose yer hat, or your brains must be trained that bad useless. Be careful not to show the least spark of light."

The men disposed themselves around the wagon, watching and waiting with their weapons in their hands, ready to defend their loved ones to the last breath from the cruel marauders.

Snap Carter would have liked to wander out beyond the wagons to fill the post of an advance guard, and warn of the approach of the enemy, but with his late experience told him that he had to deal with men as skilled as himself.

"And what has the guide, what can you do with that poor fellow?"

"They're got poor fellows do alone? Under've got good grit, they fight like catsamounts under any good leader, but if I should happen to get my wings pinched, I'm a good deal of a loss."

"They can't be expected to know anything about such fighting as this, and they'd get scooped in no time."

The experienced old plainsman rested his form against a wheel and had a good rifle lightly held in his grasp peered out as far as the darkness would permit him.

"I wish I could throw a light out there," he muttered, "but the moon's full, and the trees of the furthest grove. 'Ab, that was a peaky good idea of that youngster what's got the Steam Man. He can see foes and they can't see him."

He referred to the some of the best light of the Steam Man, which, while it was sure to dazzle the eyes of those it lashed upon, revealed them to Frank while he remained unseen.

Only the sounds of the darkness, and their pale gleams could not dispel the gloom caused by the heavy fogged trees of the groves.

A faint chirping sort of sound, somewhat like the noise made by a cricket, reached the trained ears of the guide.

To him, accustomed his life long to all sorts of signals made in imitation of birds, beasts, and insects, such a sound was a plain-sounding.

The chirping came from a point directly in advance of him, and perhaps twenty yards distant.

The old guide listened intently.

Again came that sound, but now from a point equally distant, on the extreme right hand, almost on a line with the range of the wagons.

"They're closer in, I think," muttered Snap Carter. "I think I'll wait until I hear them upon the—"

Just at that moment the chirp came from the extreme left, and then Carter spoke to the men: "Boys," he said, speaking low, and betraying no agitation.

"Yes," said the men.

"Don't get flustered," said Snap, "but the truth of the matter is, that our enemies are on the right and left hand, and directly in front of us. How many of 'em there is, no one knows, and we can't tell how peaky soon they may work around to the back and have us surrounded—above all things, I caution you to speak low."

"What is to be done?"

"Watch and wait," said Snap. "There is no better words to live and die by. I'd crawl out and try to scout around a bit, but then I might get scooped, and then it would be all day with you fellows. I must stand here and give my orders, or we'll never leave this grove alive. Pass the question around the crowd: 'Is every man fully armed and got enough ammunition?'"

The question was around, and the reply ascertained that the emigrants were in good fighting order.

Again that signal-like chirping broke the stillness.

As before, it came from the front, and was instantly answered from right and left, and a moment later came a faint chirp from the rear.

The train was surrounded!

What number of enemies were opposed to them they did not know, but could a light have been thrown athwart the faces of the emigrants, many of them would have been found deadly pale.

There is something terrible in being hemmed in on all sides by foes. If your enemy is before you, then you can brace against some firm support, perhaps, and strike with the confident feeling that your rear is safe, but when your foes are on all sides, then you feel shaky. You know not where to look for blows, and feel that you are destined to be struck down from one quarter while defending yourself from another.

A deep silence succeeded the chirping, and the emigrants listened so intently for the next sound that they scarcely seemed to breathe.

They were soon started from the attitude of attention.

"Charge!"

Low and clear rang out the command on the still air.

Scarce had it sounded, before Carter's voice hurried back a defiant shout.

"It's Captain Blasher," he cried; "we've whipped 'em before and we can't do again."

Then there was a mighty rushing sound, as the red and white robbers poured down upon the train.

From all sides they came, yelling like a horde of unchained fiends.

"Steady men!" rang out the old guide. "Face front on a right 'n' left. Fire!"

The order was obeyed.

Crank!

The rifles peered out in a prolonged din; the bullets whistled and shrieked among the trees, as the hoarse cries of the foe, the ceaseless yells of the slain, and the loud commands of the leaders to continue the advance, told very plainly that Snap Carter had given a wise order.

Still the horde of ruffians poured down upon them.

"Fire!"

This time the command was shouted out by Captain Blasher.

Scarce had it left his lips, ere Carter had yelled out sharply:

Drop!

The men for the most part comprehended the danger, and understanding the order, fell quickly to the ground.

Many lives were saved by the quick order, but many a life was lost nevertheless.

The fire had only come from one quarter, and had been directed low, so that the allies on the other quarters should not suffer from the bullets of their friends.

On came the robbers.

His heavy rifle was twisted around his head as lightly as a dandy might twirl a cane.

He leaped boldly away from his men, and went crashing into the thicket of the enemy's ranks. Six or seven were crushed like eggs beneath the mighty sweep of that skillfully-wielded rifle, and his foes went down before him like mere puppets. Shouts and yells, cries and shrieks, loud complaints, and the sharp shots seemed fairly to clash together in the air.

Blows were desperately struck and were desperately parried even in the darkness that hung about the grove.

The marauding bands fought for plunder; the emigrants for their wives, children and lives.

A rumbling sound pierced the air, and made it unduly above the rous and din of the desperate battle.

The thundering sound of many iron-shod hoofs battering the ground came to the ears of the fighting group, and a moment later the flashing glare of a score of torches revealed the approach of a mighty band of armed men.

Like a resistless torrent they swept down upon the outer ranks of the enemy, their wild western cheer pealing out on the breeze.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## DARK HALLOTT'S LAST SHOT.

When Frank Reede was clutched by Beales and his three comrades, he struggled desperately to free himself from their grasp.

However, the boy was powerless in their strong hands, and he soon found that he was exerting himself in vain.

"Hold still, you whelp!" cried Beales. "Stop your squirming, or I will draw my toothpick across your throat! Have you got any idea that you can get away?"

"What right have you to hold me?" cried Frank.

"The only right that is recognized on the plains," said Beales, "is the right of might; and that's the fact that wins."

"I never injured you," said the boy.

"That don't make any odds," said the brutal Beales. "I need this counter of yours, and if it takes a reasonable time that I need you to run it, I'd cut your throat!"

This made Frank understand that he was in the power of a man who would not hesitate to shed blood if occasion demanded the taking of life.

The Steam Man had come to a perfect stand-still, for the driver had only let, on sufficient steam to stop on the point of the old saw-log.

The prairie racer stood motionless, his fiery eyes gleaming out brightly into the dark night.

The valves were hissing, showing the steam to be well up.

Everything was in readiness for a swift and long run, but for all that Frank Reede would have preferred stopping just where he was, to travelling in such evil company.

"Are you going to knuckle under?" asked Jack Beales.

He half drew a murderous-looking knife from his belt, as he asked the question, and he glared at the boy in such a cruel, merciless manner that Frank's blood ran cold.

"That do you want me to do?" he asked.

"Run to machine."

"Where to?"

"Three islands."

"Don't know where that is," said Frank.

"I'll show you the way," said Beales. "Will you do it?"

"I suppose I must," said the boy.

"Now you're talking," said the deserter. "Can you stand now?"

"As soon as I see that my man is in right order," said Frank.

He wanted to get out of the clutches of his foes, hoping that some chance might come up which would enable him to get the best of them.

How he longed to have on his steel shirt, and the two pocket batteries.

With these death-dealing wires crossing his breast, they could not retain their hold upon him a second.

He could only get to his all-containing trunk for two minutes he could secure the three ruffians out of their way.

enough so long as you travel straight and obey orders, but just as soon as you try to fool with me you'll die. I'm a cussed rough customer to fool with now, I tell you, so mind your eyes."

Frank saw that it was useless trying to work any dodge just then, so, after fumbling about the valves and draughts for a few moments, he said that was all correct.

Jack Beales clutched him up into the wagon again, which was pretty well crowded with four persons and the many traps Frank carried with him.

"How fast can you go?" asked Beales.

"What rate of speed?"

"Yes."

"I could go fifty miles an hour."

"That's too serious fast for such a night as this," said Beales. "In fact, I don't want to go half as fast. Just clap on enough steam to take us about fifteen or twenty, and that will suit me."

"All right," said Frank, who hoped to throw them somewhat off their guard by seeming cheerfulness in complying with their commands. "In what direction?"

"Do you see that star?" asked Beales.

He pointed to a large and very bright body in the sky.

"I do," said Frank.

"Then travel towards it," said Beales.

Frank turned on the steam carefully, and the man moved off at about the pace Jack Beales had requested.

The driver was perched upon his seat with his reins in his hands.

Behind him stood the three brutes, weapons drawn.

Frank understood that any attempt to prove false would be the signal for a bullet in his brain.

Many and many a time did he curse that little mishap which had brought the three brutal robbers down upon him.

A mile sped by, and half of another was finished, when a shot rang out, and a piercing shriek went up to the sky.

Daah Halloet and his two comrades had gone about three miles on their journey towards the Indian village, when the shrill whistle of the Steam Man came plainly to their ears, borne on the still night air.

They halted instantly.

"That was the Steam Man," said Charley.

"Bright as day," said Barney.

"What did he holler for?" demanded Daah.

"I really don't know, unless Frank wanted us to come back or something," said Charley Grouse.

"I think Frank must be in some kind of trouble, and sounded the whistle to recall us."

"Faith an' must we go back?" groaned the Irishman.

"Och, tare an' cunn! here was me self laughing to think of the liggant shindy that we might be after findin' in the village boyant, an' now we've got to turn tail."

"Perhaps you'll find all the fighting you can't ask for," said Charley. "Frank would never have sounded that alarm unless he was in trouble."

"Then here goes for the boy," said Daah.

"He's a trump, from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head, and he shan't send out a signal of distress in vain. He saved my life at the risk of his own, and while I live he shall never want a friend!"

The two men and the boy then retraced their steps at a lively rate.

They had to wait for about ten minutes at a rapid, slinging walk, when a very bright light became visible far ahead.

It was the double head-light streaming from the eyes of the Steam Man.

They pressed forward more quickly, and in a few moments could hear the tramping of the iron feet, as the man of metal rushed over the plains.

They stood still in their track when the Steam Man was on a line which would bring him past them at the distance of about a hundred feet, and not knowing what was the condition of their own very good stead, —

Onward came the monster.

Daah Halloet cocked his rifle and waited patiently.

Soon the prairie traveler drew near, and then, by the light shed from the large steam-gauge, they could see the three men standing up behind Frank.

One of them was holding on to Frank's coat collar, while a knife was gripped in his hand.

That was enough for Daah.

He lifted his rifle, took a quick aim, and fired.

The brute he fired out, and then fell dead in the arms of Jack Beales, who pulled a heavy revolver from his belt, and glared out towards the living group.

Frank became excited and pulled on one rein, the Steam Man swung around at the torch, and

the brilliant headlight was directed full upon the hunter, who still held his rifle to his shoulder.

Jack Bealer's arm flew out in a line from his shoulder, the pistol was discharged, and Dash fell that instant, wounded and dying, to the grass plain.

#### CHAPTER XXIII.

##### DASH HALLETT'S LEGACY.

As Dash Hallett sank back dying to the ground, our young friend Charley Gorse threw his rifle to his broad shoulder and covered the form of Jack Bealer.

A whip-like crack, sharp and clear, rang out, and then the deserter tumbled over backward to the plain, his life going out before his falling body reached the ground.

The remaining robber leaped from the wagon, and tried to run away.

"Oh, no, no, no, no," cried Barney, starting after him on a full jump, and brandishing his well-used blackthorn stick. "This would be a sight to see, do you see. We couldn't think of partin' wid ye, not just now, anyhow."

And then he leaped upon the flying man and made a clip at his head with the stick.

The man turned and drew his knife, which pleased Barney very much.

"An' it's a foine boy ye are," he said, making another clip at the enemy's head, which the latter blocked with his drawn blade. "Ye have the raise stuff in ye, and I'll fight fairer wid ye for that same. How'd on one breast, and I'll throw me stick a way."

The fearless fellow really would have thrown his shillelagh away, and fought the outlaw with his knife, to show his approval, if the robber had given him time.

"Go to thander, you blundering Irish fool," he cried, and leaped upon Rooney with upraised knife, his aim being to get inside the guard formed by the Irishman's shield.

He made a desperate plunge at the Flatlander, but Rooney, although unable to bring his shillelagh into guard quickly enough to stop the blow, managed to fend itself equally as well by kicking out with a will.

His heavy boot struck the descending blade from the hand of his foe.

The man dropped to the ground as if shot, and the knife went whizzing into the air.

Barney was about to step forward to examine his prostrate opponent, when the hand of the robber flew up and Barney Shea caught the blue guard of a pistol.

It is doubtful whether the man had effected his drop in any quicker time than our Irish friend extended his.

Barney realized that the pistol would go off, and that in all probability the muzzle would be pointed at his body, therefore he wisely concluded to fall as flat as a pancake, and to do so as quickly as possible.

So down went Barney Shea, and at the same moment the pistol went off.

The ball flew harmlessly above the form of the shrewd Irishman, and in less than a moment Barney was upon his feet.

He dashed down upon the enemy like some infuriated race-horse, and before the fellow could strike the son of the Emerald Isle was showering blows upon him.

"Take that—and that—and that!" cried he, bestowing his cracks with a liberal hand, "and thought ye was a man in such fine style, but I foud that ye're a murtherin' spalpeen at best. Do ye call that any sort of a dacent way to do? Flop yourself down upon the grass like ye're wounded or dead, and thim whin a man is coming up to waka ye, what do ye do but wnook wid a big pistol and bang away at him. I thought ye was a man worthy to be a descendant from Killebride, and thim whin ye see such fine style, but now I foud that ye're only a big throtter after all. Take o' that, and tell me, darlin', do ye loike the flavor?"

While talking he had been constantly showering his heavy blows over the body, head, and shoulders of the robber, until the latter rolled from under the shillelagh and nimbly leaped away from the Irishman.

Barney inspected the man, but the fellow had put on an extra harness of speed, and the Irishman was unable to catch him, so he gave up the chase and came back, merrily.

"Oyther, be dard, his head'll be ather aching for six weeks to come, an' there's a devilish little varmint in a blackthorn stick. Shure it was only a bog throtter he was, ather all, so he was hardly a dacent man for the son of the Emerald Isle."

As soon as the last of his enemies had vacated the wagon Frank Beale shut off every particle of steam and leaped to the ground.

He ran to the spot where Charley Gorse was now supporting the form of Dash Hallett.

The head of the dying hunter was pillowed on Charley's shoulder, while the boy's tears fell upon the drooping's upturned face.

They had not known each other long, but their acquaintances had begun amid widest danger, and when brave hearts meet under such circumstances the ties of comradeship are usually as true and strong as could be the tried friendship of calm and uneventful years.

"Poor Dash," murmured Charley. "Can't I do anything for you?"

"No, boy," returned the hunter, "my call has been trumpeted and I've got to obey the great captain of rangers. I haven't anything to regret, except that I should like to have died in a square stand up fight. But I'm glad I wasn't put under by a redskin. I'd rather die by the hand of a white man, for the reds would be crowin' for a year if they'd put Dash Hallett out of the way. Where is he?"

"Who?" asked Frank, who was now bending over the dying plainsman.

"The man who shot me."

"Lying by the wagon, with Charley's bullet through his skull," said Frank.

"Then I'm satisfied," said Dash. "I can call it a rest for me."

Frank thrust his hand under the blood-stained shirt of the hunter and felt for the wound.

He had but little difficulty in finding the hole, for it was a large, ragged cut, that was big enough to let out a dozen lives.

"It's no use, my boy," said Dash. "I've got my last sickness, and nothing on earth can keep me from the happy hunting grounds. Ain't it so?"

"I'm afraid you've got your death wound," said Frank.

"Of course I have—who's that?"

For just at that moment came the cowardly pistol shot fired by the outlaw.

Frank could not tell, but the next moment he saw the robber's face uttering exclamations: as he rained blows upon the robber.

In a few moments the Irishman came up to them panting and puffing, his shillelagh besmeared with blood from the nose of his foe.

"Tare an' oums! and is he kil't?" he asked, gazing upon Dash, who lay upon Charley's broad shoulder with closed eyes.

"Yes," said Frank.

Hallett opened his eyes.

"Yes, I'm going, Barney," he said. "The trumpet has sounded and I must go home. Before I go I want to say something. I've got something to leave you, my boy."

"A legacy," said Frank.

"That's it," said Hallett. "I'm dying, and I don't want to die unless I can leave things settled in some sort of shape. In the first place I want you all to promise me that ye'll not desert poor Fitznoodle. I want you to see that poor greasy beggar to the border towns. Will you all promise?"

They all gave him their solemn promise not to desert Fitznoodle.

"Now that you've agreed to do that I'll talk about my legacy," said Dash. "Frank, put your hand inside my coat."

Frank did so.

"Do you find a little pocket?"

"Yes."

"Well, inside and you'll come across a flat tin tobacco box."

"I have it," said Frank.

He drew forth the tobacco-box, and handed it to Barney.

"No, I can't open it now," said the dying hunter, handing the box back to him. "The strength has gone from my fingers. Open it."

A small amount of paper, carefully folded, lay in the bottom of the box.

"Have you got the paper?" asked Dash.

"Yes."

"Then you've got the map that'll guide you to the spot where ten thousand dollars in gold has been buried for two years," said Hallett. "It was in the charge of a fellow that tried to go with the pistol with him. I never knew who he was, or what he was, or to whom the money belonged, for he never told me. We had a light wagon and two good horses, and I've often thought you boys might stote the money from some express company. Well, we was attacked, and this fellow was killed; so was the horses. I fought like a covey man; there was only three left of them all, and then I got shot and was fully wounded. I was too badly wounded to carry any money away with me, so I lived on the provisions in the wagon for a few days, then I made a rough map and made it like you see, then I made a rough sketch of the place where the gold was stunk. I was lucky enough to fall in with a friendly tribe of reds after a few days, and

just as I thought I was going under, I was saved. Boy, jest open that paper."

Frank carefully removed the paper from the box and unfolded it.

"I have opened it."

"Can you make out the sketch?"

"Yes."

"But the locality ain't marked, is it?" asked the dying hunter.

Frank looked closely.

"No," he said, "you have marked everything in plain style, but where is the place?"

"I have opened it," said Barney. "Go direct to the grove called Three Islands."

"Go on."

"Then take up a course west by son-west."

"West by son-west," repeated Frank, marking the directions down.

"And follow it for just about two hundred miles."

"Yes."

"Then you come to a grove like Three Islands."

"Yes."

"And in that grove runs a stream," feebly continued the dying man. "There's a tall cotton-wood grows by the bank of the stream, right hand facing the sun. When the sun is about an hour high, you can see the shadow of the trunk extending over the water. Under the shadow of the further rock that the shadow touches lays the gold."

He paused a moment.

"Have you got it all?"

"Yes," said Frank.

"Then good-bye," said the hunter. "Take care of that grove, and you're welcome to enjoy that gold when you like."

And then the eyes closed, the hands relaxed, and Dash Hallett, brave, true son of the western prairies, passed quietly away to the land of shadows.

They made him a grave beneath the green sods of the prairie he had roamed for many long years, and the virgin soil was moistened by his sad, heart-born tears.

#### CHAPTER XXIV.

##### THE NIGHT BATTLE.

LIKE A devastating hurricane the rangers, under the leader, Bill Carter and Harry Hale, poured down upon a Brethren of the night.

Their hoarse cheers, sounding like the trumpet note of doom, rang and vibrated through the arches of the grove.

Their lurid torches lit up the scene with a wild, unearthly radiance.

The robbers, red and white, well knew the meaning of that terrible cheer.

They recognized the words could say, that their deadliest enemies were pouring down upon them, eager for their blood, determined to sweep them from the face of the earth.

They recognized the cry, and knew the men from whose throats it pealed.

These were no green emigrants, who, however brave they might be, were unused to the tactics of prairie warfare, but a band of well-armed and trained plainsmen, terrible fighters, dead-shot, perfect riders, and as fearless as the grizzlies of the mountains.

Therefore they grew appalled when the shout saluted their ears, and when Harry Hale and his brave followers poured down upon them with pistol, rifle and knife, they were too much terrified to fight.

Their ranks were broken, they were thoroughly demoralized, and their leaders were unable to collect them quickly enough to make a stand.

Captain Slesher struck down an Indian who had turned to fly.

"Halt!" he shouted, trying to stem the tide with his authoritative tones. "We are two to the one yet, and we can whip them."

"There's no more to be had here," said Carter.

He touched Harry Hale on the arm.

"Who?"

"Captain Slesher."

"Who?" demanded the detective.

"That chap yonder flourishing a knife."

That trapper had no time to say more, for the enemy, partially reassured by Captain Slesher and Harry Hale, began to stir and to blow for blow, and Bill Carter was in receipt of delicate and personal attention from three tall sons of the western wilds.

Harry Hale shot one glance of fierce hatred at Captain Slesher, and then threw up his carbine and fired.

At the same moment the captain raised his rifle and fired down an emigrant.

The bullet struck the knife, turned the blade aside, and glancing from the flashing steel sank into the body of the Osage brave.

With a cry of anger, the detective spurred his horse forward.

He vainly endeavored to reach the fighting captives.

At every point he was barred by a flying and struggling mass of men.

Try as he would he could not reach the man who had slain his brother.

The surging mass rolled between, and he was forced to strike down those nearest to him without being able to reach his hated enemy.

"Here!" came shrilly to the ears of the guide as he gathered his horse around the wagons and ordered them to stand by the train.

"Here!" shouted the old man.

"It's me, Bill," came back to him. "Come and join us scoundrels."

"I'm thar!" yelled the old guide. "Boys, thar's my brother calling, and the old man has got to go. Don't any of you stir from the train without my orders."

And then the old screamer bounded away. The men stood firmly by the wagons, while the bullets whistled and sang a death melody over their heads.

Not more than thirty feet away from them waved a fierce conflict.

The many towers had been thrust in cervicels and boughs, and now showed over the field of battle a lurid glare.

The detective was vainly striving to reach his enemy.

Captain Slasher caught sight of the brave little fellow, and seemed to return his warm salute.

He shook his knife in the air, and Hale sawed the salute of enmity with his broad blade.

They pressed towards each other.

Still the surging crowd of men and horses kept them apart.

"Do you want me?" shouted the captain.

"I want your life!" shrieked Hale.

"Come and take it!" said Slasher, and then he leaped forward to get clear from his man.

The detective worked towards him just as rapidly, and in a few moments more two brave men met.

They glared at each other a moment in deep silence.

"I never saw you," said the captain, seeming to respect his foe's appearance. "Who are you?"

"The brother of the detective you filled with bullets," said Hale, and then he flashed his broad blade.

"I will," said the other; and his weapon flashed in his hand. "You're a game sort of a rooster, and I'm glad to meet you. Pitch in, Banty."

They rushed upon each other.

Their opposing blades met with a clash, and the sparks seemed to fairly stream from the steel.

Around them the battle raged with unabated fury.

The hoarse cries of the wild western boys answered the shouts of the Indians.

The orders of the savage chieftains were met by the commands of the two Carters, who were fighting side by side, bowing and cutting like woodmen.

Savage yells and English blasphemies, shots and blows, stabs and kicks; the neighing and plunging of the maddened horses; the mad shouts of their excited riders; all went to make up a scene that, once beheld, must live for years in memory.

They cannot do justice to a picture that the artist's pencil cannot truthfully portray, so the full horrors of the scene can be better guessed by the reader than conveyed by the writer.

Hale fell back to gain breath.

Captain Slasher immediately assumed the offensive, and the detective was forced to defend himself from skillful blows.

He was well versed in handling the long knife, and met the captain with such coolness and steadiness that he excited the admiration of his larger opponent.

"You're a good boy of my steel and no mistake," he said, looking admiringly upon the active little detective. "Now, mind your eyes. I warn you that I am going to try a trick upon you."

He was a generous enemy. Hale kept his eyes open to some purpose, for he was not one of those people who affect to disregard a word of caution.

The man Slasher stepped back for a moment, and the combatants rested.

"Ready," said the outlaw.

"Ready," said Hale.

"Then look to yourself," cried Slasher, and he leaped forward.

His hand rose and fell with rapid motion, and his flashing blade, ever falling and then rising in the torchlight's glare, seemed like a wall of steel.

He retained a perfect storm of blows upon his brave enemy.

Active and light as he was, Hale had enough to do to escape the attack.

For fully a minute the hurried, vicious thrusts of the captain were kept back.

None of the blows reached further than the left side of the detective's knee.

Suddenly Captain Slasher dropped on one knee, and made a quick upward thrust for the heart of his foe.

His blow was made before Harry Hale could put himself in a position to guard.

The knife was driven upward with all the force of Captain Slasher's powerful arm, and it went through the stout fabric of the sharp needle.

Harry Hale threw up his arms and fell prone to the stained field.

Captain Slasher leaped to his feet and found himself confronted by Snap Carter.

The battle had surged up to the wagons, and the emigrants were now battling fiercely with their foes.

"Hello!" yelled Snap.

"Oh!" yelled the captain.

"At last," said Carter, cursing his bowie.

"We'll have to die," said the captain, his blade held aloft.

"I don't care," said your eye, old man, for one of us is got to die!"

They had been waiting for this chance for some time.

They had many grudges against each other, and they were both anxious to wipe out their old scores.

They closed with a terrific crash, and their blades seemed to twist and twine like two glowing snakes.

They fought close up, wrist to wrist, their hot breathing seeming to contend.

At length the captain Slasher fell back, and clapped his hands to his side.

A flying bullet, perhaps from friend as well as from foe, had struck him, and he fell weak and faint.

He knew that he need not look for mercy in the least from Snap Carter, so he resolved to guard himself.

He shouted out a peculiar call as he staggered back.

Immediately his white followers rushed in one compact mass towards him, and in less than a minute he was protected by a conical shield.

Slasher called out to the red chieftains, and a retreat was ordered.

It was obeyed instantly, and in a huddled, pell-mell manner they all rushed off, making as good time through the dark groves as could be made.

The emigrants stood by the wagons, but the fire-eaters, the wild westerners under Bill Carter, were anxious to rush off in pursuit of the flying foe.

"Call 'em back, Bill," said Snap. "This may be a trick."

So Bill Carter ordered them to remain by the train, and thus the red and white bands were enabled to get safely away.

Then the two Carters went over the field, trying to ascertain the extent of their loss.

They found many bloody corpses strewn about the grove, and wounded horses struggled with dying men.

Snap Carter gave the orders promptly.

Eight or ten torches lit the wounded men out from under the bodies. Shoot the wounded and dying horses. Bring water to the thirsty ones, and carry the disabled to the wagons. Tell the women to make the bandages of lint and apply

healing salve. Let every driver harness his team to the wagons, and move the train one hundred yards west. Live!"

Under his clear and sharp orders things were done without confusion, and soon the wounded were made as comfortable as was possible under the circumstances.

The screaming wounded horses received a merciful death, and soon the train was removed as Snap had directed.

The guide and his brother were slowly marching over the field, giving orders and rendering assistance to the sick and the dead.

"I don't see the little 'un," said Bill.

"Who?" asked Snap.

"My boy."

"The little 'un screams that jumped off his horse and clipped in at Slasher!"

"Yes."

"The last I see of the gritty case he was hakin' away at Slasher."

"I hope he didn't go 'n' make a mistake. I tho' 't was a little screamer and no mistake. I tho' 't was a heap of that chap, Snap."

"Much obliged to you, I'm sure," said a voice from the ground. "I hope I shall always merit your good opinion. By the way, have you any whiskey?"

The two old plainmen were surprised to see Harry Hale lying near at hand, very pale looking, but evidently not seriously hurt.

The detective was resting on his elbow, and looking towards the train.

"Whiskey!" cried Bill Carter, springing forward and grasping the hand of the detective.

"Take the whole flask, you little game-cook."

He then indignantly took the flask and helped himself liberally.

"Now talk," said Snap Carter. "How did you happen to get topped over?"

"I had a knock 'er," said Hale. "I tackled that Captain Slasher, and we had it hot and heavy for awhile. I was just about a good square match for him, and he can't be all bad, for he gave me plenty of chance. He even warned me, and when I was winded he let me rest, when he might have won the battle by pressing me hard. However, he told me he was going to try a trick upon me, and then he struck me and was furious. I'm good at guarding, and he couldn't touch me when we stood face to face, but he dropped down before me suddenly, and made a very rapid upward thrust for the heart of my foe."

"The blow was made before Harry Hale could put himself in a position to guard."

"The knife was driven upward with all the force of Captain Slasher's powerful arm, and it went through the stout fabric of the sharp needle."

## CHAPTER XXV.

"THEY SHALL BE DRIVEN INTO A TRAP."

About two miles away from Three Islands, in a wooded grove, were gathered the red and white brethren of the Plains.

Under a tall tree, made plain to the view by flaming pine-knots, lay Captain Slasher.

Over him bent the strangely roven and moose-skin-clad medicine-man, who had been frightened by the inventor of the Steam Man of the Plains, the wonderful Mowaher-Abner.

The captain's wound was not serious, but it had taken a little of his blood, and he felt a little weak.

Mowaher-Abner, who really was skillful in the use of bandages and ointments, carefully attended to the wound, and made him as comfortable as was possible under the existing state of affairs.

The Indians were sitting or lying around in various attitudes.

Some were smoking, some were taking sympathy consolation from whiskey-flasks, and others were gazing in the primitive Indian style known as "five-bones," a game they lose over their squaws at sometimes.

Many of the white robbers were sleeping on the soft turf, while others were whittling the hours away with their knives.

There was not a white member of Captain Slasher's band who did not possess one pack of cards at least.

A pack of cards was part and parcel of the

stock in trade carried by these rough-and-ready gentlemen of the plains.

Every man had at least one pack, as we have said, and some of them took real pride in carrying separate "decks," sorted for some one of the various games they played.

Near the tree, under which the wounded captives were reclining, were Moteur-Ponnu, Toiah-froser; the gray-headed Sholom Alarkum, and at least half a dozen of the principal braves of the Oagee and Sioux tribes.

Moteur-Ponnu's pack-marked face was further beautified by a "deerskin" which promised to leave a livid scar when it should heal.

Sholom Alarkum was spattered with blood, but was unhurt.

Toiah-froser carried his right arm in a sling, and held a consoling pipe with his left hand, from which he puffed huge volumes of blue smoke.

"Well," said Captain Slesher, breaking in upon a moody silence which had hung over the group for some time, "we didn't succeed quite so well as we expected."

"We got whipped," candidly put in the plucky Muteur, who bore several marks of the battle in which he had taken a very active part, "and if we'd stayed there longer I think we'd been killed."

"We were deceived," said Sholom Alarkum.

"How?" demanded Slesher.

"We expected to meet only emigrants, and we were forced to fight against those wild rangers—ugh!"

And the shafts shuddered, as though he was much disgusted with the terrific fighting qualities of the fire-scaled fiend.

"We would have scooped them, but for Carter and his band," said Slesher.

"And what will you do now?"

The question came from Muteur.

"I don't really know what to do," moodily answered the captain. "I don't want to give up what I'm after, and yet there's too many old plainmen there for me to tackle."

"That is, to meet them in a fair, square, open fight?"

"Exactly."

"Suppose you could trap them?"

"That?" cried Slesher.

"I say, suppose you could trap them—what then?"

"The Indian, one of the most cruel and crafty of his kind, learned from me secretly."

"What then?" repeated the captain. "Why, I'd gobble 'em up, I guess."

"Yes, I know," said Muteur; "but what will you give me?"

"For catching the rats?"

"Yes."

"What do you want?"

"One hundred dollars."

"What'll you do with it?"

"I want to buy something I saw at the big settlement."

"If you can do anything that will place the box that contains the money into my hands, you shall have that amount of money, even if I have to pay you out of my share."

"You promise?"

"I do, and my word is just about as good as three of your oaths."

The treacherous Muteur grinned.

"Never mind," he said, "I can stick to my word whether I do or not; and if you promise me faithfully that you'll give me one hundred dollars, whether you get the box or not, I'll undertake to carry out my idea. They shall be driven into a trap."

"You want me to promise to give you the money, whether I get the box or not?"

"Just so," said Muteur.

"That's cheery," said Slesher.

"Not at all," said the Indian robber.

"And why ain't it?"

"I didn't engage to give the box in your hands, did I?"

"No."

"Didn't say that I could show you how to get the box?"

"Then there's no cheek about it," said the wily red-skin. "I don't claim to be able to obtain the box for you, for I can't do it. I'm talking about what you can do, and will do, if you come to my terms. You say that you can't meet the wild rangers in a fair open fight, so I say that I will drive them into a trap for you. I shall not make one step towards the thing unless I have your promise of the money, no matter what comes up."

"And why should you demand a price for the service?"

"Because I shall risk my life," replied the Indian.

"In entrapping them?"

"Yes," said Muteur. "In fact, to tell the probable truth, I don't think I shall be able to claim your money. But I want the hundred dollars, and I will risk my life for it."

For a moment Muteur spoke extremely bad English, and very little at that, could not understand what was being said; neither could nearly all of his braves. The Sioux, from associating with the white robbers for so long a time, had all become fluent in the use of English, and those who were yet awake clustered around the two speakers, regarding Muteur with an inquisitive stare.

"I think I know what you would do," said Toiah-froser, speaking to Muteur.

"What?"

"I shall them into the Wolf's Mouth," returned his red brother.

"Right," said Muteur. "But how do you think it can be done?"

"I don't think it can," said Toiah-froser.

"They are not fools. They can see as plain as you, and they do not travel at night. If you forced them it would have to be done in daylight, and I don't think it can."

"I am confident," asserted Muteur. "And if I can do it they cannot escape."

"That is sure," said Toiah-froser. "Once in the Wolf's Mouth they are gone. Ten men would be enough to keep them in there until they would give up."

"Is that so?" cried Captain Slesher.

"It is true," said Muteur.

"Then I'll give you my word that you shall have the money if you'll drive the train into that trap," said Slesher.

"Done," said Muteur, and the compact was made. Muteur turned to Toiah-froser.

"I shall wait you and three braves to go with me," he said. "I will leave to you the task of picking out three young warriors who are fleet as the deer and tireless as the buffalo. Now I must sleep. Keep awake, captain, and when his thirteen o'clock I want you to wake me up and call the Medicine man of the Oagee."

And then, having given his orders like a leader, the Muteur rolled himself in his blanket, tumbled over and went to sleep.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### MUTEUR'S DEVICE.

The gray dawn of morning stole over the vast plains, and sent a revealing light upon the scene described below.

Muteur, accompanied by four of his brethren, was slowly riding over the plains toward a section where an immense herd of buffaloes rested.

Over the hanches of Muteur's horse there was slung a bison skin, having the head, ears and horns complete.

When about a mile from the spot where the leader of the vast herd lay sleeping, the master spirit drew rein.

"I will leave my horse here," he said to his companions, dismounting from the steed and removing the buffalo skin. "You can now divide and gain the rear of the herd, and begin firing just soon as you get in range. I shall be ready. Don't forget your orders. Keep them on the right course at any risk."

His men dashed away.

Two went to the right and two to the left, and by describing a half circle they could reunite on the other side of the herd.

Muteur spoke to his horse, and the trained beast immediately crouched down and was well hidden in the grass.

Then the treacherous Sioux, one of the most cunning of his race, threw his bison-skin over his shoulder and tramped away in the direction of the herd.

He approached within a half mile of the foremost ones, and then proceeded to envelop himself in the skin.

The head, ears and horns set completely over him.

The disguise was quite natural-looking, and at a little distance could deceive the bison into the belief that they looked upon one of their number.

The Indian went down upon all-fours and took an attitude which made it appear that he was grazing.

His followers were now approaching the vast array of beasts from the opposite side.

They had the advantage of the wind, and in a few moments were enabled to draw very close to the beasts without these latter scenting their approach.

Then they began firing rapidly from their rifles. The startled brutes leaped to their feet, and for a moment they all stood irresolute.

The leaders threw up their heads and sniffed the air.

Bang—bang! came the rapid shots.

Two of the beasts tumbled over lifeless to the plain.

Two leaders gazed behind them, and then they caught sight of their mounted foes.

The alarmed animals see no way of escape better than in the direction of the disguised Indian, who is apparently feeding on the grass.

They rush towards him, and he, taking to flight, dashes with the speed of a forest deer to where his fleet horse lay crouching amid the tall weeds.

This was the full purpose of Muteur's use of device, for which he had secured the aid of comrades.

The great object to be attained, to successfully carry out his plan, was to get the great herd of buffaloes started in the direction he desired.

It was very fleet of foot, and managed to keep ahead of the frightened animals without great exertion.

He soon reached his horse, flung the bison skin across his hanches, mounted the animal, and dashed off at a good speed toward the southwest.

Onward came the mighty army of buffaloes in their endeavor to maintain the start they had taken. For, if they paused but for a moment, the thousands of maddened brutes behind them would trample them to death beneath their flying feet.

After they had kept the four leaders, flung and yelling, keeping the herd on the course desired by Muteur.

The morning deepened, and the sunlight flashed over the plains.

Suddenly Muteur gave utterance to a sound that indicated satisfaction.

Far ahead, perhaps three miles away, the treacherous Sioux could descried the long wagon train with its sails, pursued by the frontier.

"Good!" he exclaimed; "they are directly on the track. They will be forced fairly into the trap."

He glanced behind him.

The buffaloes were coming on with their steady, long gallop.

He put spurs to his horse, and the fleet steed seemed to touch the ground as it bounded lightly along, stretching over the rolling prairie like a race-horse gliding over a smooth course.

He gained rapidly upon the slow-moving train. In a very few moments he had gained a position abreast with the train, and about half a mile on their right hand.

He could see that he was noticed by the emigrants, and rising in his saddle, Muteur pointed to the herd, which was now booming along about a mile in his rear.

At the same moment the thunder of their hoofs upon the hard plain was borne to the ears of the two Carters, who rode at the head of the train.

Then Muteur heard their orders ring out on the air, and immediately the animals that were attached to the wagon were put under their top speed, and the long train went dashing over the plains.

Then the Indian dashed away at full speed, leaving his firing steed at a terrible rate, and aiming for a point several degrees off the course followed by the train.

In less than three minutes he had reached the spot which he had fixed upon, and he continued on, after crossing the course, until about a quarter of a mile had been spanned.

Here he drew up, and placed his fingers to his mouth.

He blew a shrill signal-whistle, and was answered from the west.

Here we must pause to describe the place near which Muteur sat motionless upon his painting steed.

The vast plain was ribbed with two long and high walls of rock, rising up from the ground like two high mountains.

These two long ribs extended about half a mile away to the west, and then they rose up and united, growing together, and forming an impassable wall hundreds of feet high, and fully an eighth of a mile in thickness.

It will be easily understood that this was a perfect trap.

Once in the long entrance to the long, blind alley of rock there was no mode of leaving the inclosure except by the same opening that allowed entrance.

This entrance was perhaps a hundred or more yards in length, and could be guarded by a few expert riflemen with such effect that those who had entered the blind path could not come forth without being shot down.

Even the most separate combined charge that could be made could be checked and thrown into disorder by a volley from sharpshooters.

who could easily be concealed in the huge stacks of rock.

This was the horrible trap into which the cruel Indians desired to drive the emigrant train.

To accomplish this it was necessary to break them from going either to the right or to the left of the blind canyon, and this difficulty was got over by the head of men who now crossed from the trap, led on by Captain Slesher and Shotgun Alarkum.

They filed away to the right and left, and took up their positions some distance from the defile, just out of gunshot. The best of men were holding themselves ready in equally divided numbers to prevent the emigrants from passing the trap.

Onward came the swiftly-moving train, and onward came the surging mass of scared animals at its rear.

Strait for the trap dashed the foremost wagon of the train.

Snap Carter's eyes blazed as he noticed the hand filing out of the blind pass, and an anxious expression crossed his face when they took up their positions.

"Good God!" he exclaimed. Harry Hale, who was leaning along at the side of the guide, looked at him in surprise.

"What's the matter?"

Carter pointed to the pass, and then to the men stationed on either hand of the rocky entrance.

"That's a blind pass," he said. "I know it as well as I know myself, for I come very near carrying it about a year ago, when I was out of my rock line and rise up, and it's a regular trap. If we're forced in that hole we shall never get out again without help from the outside."

"Let me charge them with my band of screamers," cried Hale.

"It would be a waste of life," sternly said the guide.

"While you was tackling them and fighting for nothing, the buffaloes would form us in just the same, and you'd lose men for nothing."

"Then we're trapped," said Hale.

"So it seems."

"I don't like to be snared without striking a blow."

"Neither do I," said Snap. "I ain't that kind of a man, but the lives of the men and women are in my hands, and I mustn't throw 'em away. We must go in that trap, and trust to luck to get out again. This is a neat plan, nicely laid, and every well carried out; and we're to be shot."

They dashed along in moody silence, every man holding one hand upon his knife or pistol, ready to repel attack if the divided herd in front of them should pour down upon them.

"This is horrible," said Hale, looking back over his shoulders at the buffaloes. "How are we to escape them even now?"

"By the pass," said Snap.

"But won't they follow?"

"If they do it will be by climbing over the dead bodies of their brother beasts," replied the guide.

As soon as the train is fairly in the pass, you and your men must guard the mouth and shoot down anything, man or beast, that comes within range."

The four Indians in the rear of the maddly plunging buffaloes kept firing and yelling at the frightened beasts, and caused them to continue on in an undeviating line for the spur of rock.

On their horses sat the red and white men under command of Slesher and the rascally Shotgun Alarkum, motionless as statues, and as grim in appearance.

The pass was reached.

Snap Carter reversed saddle and allowed the foremost wagons to drive rapidly into the defile.

The wagons all dashed in at a rapid rate, and immediately after the last one of the long train had passed in, the rest of the men took up their position with loaded rifles, ready to defend the rocky entrance at any cost.

The buffaloes rushed up at a terrific pace, and a volley crashed out at their heads.

The leaders dropped dead before the steady aim of the western sharpshooters, and then the vast herd divided and coursed away to the right and left, causing the Brethren of the Plains to take to their heels.

Just as this took place, there came a familiar sound to the ears of the strong, brave men who guarded the pass.

The shrill whistle of the Terror of the West rang out, and the Steam Man dashed up to them over the plains.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### FIFTY MILES AN HOUR.

FRANK sat on the seat, guiding the huge man with practiced hands, while behind stood Charley George and Barney, gazing intently upon the unusual scene.

The Steam Man dashed straight up to the spot where the wild marksmen were grouped before

coming to a halt, and then the power was shut off, and the long iron limbs came to a standstill.

Frank leaped to the ground, and as he did so his hand was grasped by the stout old guide, who grasped him in the most hearty manner.

"Glad to see you," cried Snap Carter, shaking our hero's hand with vigor, and turning to his brother, he added:

"Glad to see you, thunder!" "Little screamer!"

"Glad to know you," said Bill Carter, and was about to grip Frank's hand in his usual bear-hug style, when Augustus Fizzleoodle, who was standing by, cried:

"Please, Mr. Carter, don't be quite so glad to see 'im 'h' you were to see me, h' or the boy won't be 'h' able to get the links h' of 's' and for a week."

"Ho—ho! ha—ha!" laughed the big westerner, who remembered his first handshake with the country. "I shan't hurt the youngster. Here, my lad, here!"

He held out his huge paw.

"I'm afraid I can't do it," said Frank, looking smilingly at the bear's paw extended to him, and then at his own slender, white hand: "but I'll put my hand in yours, and say that I am pleased to meet you."

"That's the ticket!" cried Bill. Lord, you've got just such a handle as my pal."

Just as they were shaking hands the robbers, who had made a swift detour on either side of the pass, whirling around in large circles.

"I don't see 'em all," said Snap Carter, his gaze fixed upon the horsemen who were circling around the plain, ever keeping up outside of rifle shot. "I kin only see about as many as we are, and there's just twice as many afore."

He was lacking just then in his customary looseness, or he might have suspected the route that was being played upon him and his followers by the daring and cunning Captain Slesher.

He was correct in his estimate that not more than half of the robbers were riding in view.

While the trained horsemen were wheeling and prospecting at a safe distance from the pass, their brethren were crawling very rapidly along the sides of the rocky entrance, seeking to gain positions which would secure them from danger, while it afforded them opportunity to fire upon the emigrants and drive them further up the terraced slope.

Of course the prancing company of horsemen in front were sent to their positions merely to engage the attention of the emigrants, while the rest of the robbers guarded the positions desired.

The ruse was a neat one, and succeeded.

In a few moments a dozen shots rang out from the ends of the double spur, and two of the emigrants fell dead.

Others were wounded, and fell back in the arms of their surprised friends, gasping for breath.

Snap Carter recognized too late the danger he might have avoided by a little prudent forethought, and he fairly ground his teeth with rage when he found how completely he had been duped by the enemy's shallow trick.

However, he met the crisis with his usual cool authority, and showed that he was the man to command.

"Dash up the grass, every man except the wild rangers!" he shouted. "Rush lively, and carry the wounded men with you. Now, you scoundrels try to gain a cover and shoot anything you see quiver."

The robbers dashed up the pass as fast as possible, bearing their wounded with them.

The Steam Man afforded the best bulwark for the rangers, and they crouched behind it in numbers, and the others sought refuge in the rocky wall.

But they were fired upon from above, and then from both sides, and many of the brave fellows were wounded without being able to fire back upon the hidden foe.

Mutber had indeed driven them into a most terrible trap.

It was useless to remain. They must retreat sooner, or they would be slain.

It was throwing life away to stay, and reluctantly Snap Carter gave the order to run up the pass.

But know that he would run a great risk in mounting his box, but the boy had grown accustomed to danger, and did not shrink from it.

Moreover, he was determined not to leave the Steam Man at the mercy of his foe, so he made a reckless leap, landed on the seat, and with a quick movement pulled on the reins.

The man gave a bound.

A loud crash followed.

The bullets whistled and sang around the brave boy, and his feathered cap was torn from his head by a flying ball.

The Steam Man tore up the blind pass, and in a moment Frank Beede was safe from his enemies.

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monster proceeded up the hard road at a leisurely walk.

The spot was soon reached where all of the emigrants and plainmen were clustered around a dying man.

"Here's a nice pickle," said Harry Hale, his pitying eyes fixed upon the features of the man.

"This poor chap is a power. There are more 'ying cold, low-down ways, and several wounded, and for all this we are powerless to retaliate."

"What can we do?" said Snap Carter. "We are in the trap, and we can't leave it without help from the outside."

"Then you must have help from the outside in order to escape," said Frank.

"Just so."

"And where'll you get it from?" "A man could never get out on horseback, he might get away by crawling, and then he would have to be smart."

"And he'd get away?" cried Frank, his eyes beginning to blaze. "What then?"

"What then?" said Snap Carter. "Why, he could go to Fort Tremont and bring a troop of cavalry here as fast as horses could run. That's what we want."

"What's the distance?"

"One hundred and fifty miles."

"Then, in four hours I shall be at Fort Tremont," cried Frank Beede. "I shall set out to get ready for the long and fast run; half an hour rest on the road to cool my hot box, and the distance to be covered in the three remaining hours."

"What fifty miles in an hour?" cried Mr. George Augustus Fizzleoodle.

"Yes, sirree," said the inventor of the Steam Man, walking up to his machine and very rapidly emptying the reservoir from the knee-pan of the monster. "Fifty miles an hour, and I can do it or bust."

"But you can bet your loose change that he looked well to everything before he made the venture."

His fire was raked out and a clear one of solid coal built. Water was supplied to the reservoir by emptying the trough from the knee-pan of the monster. Fifty miles an hour, and I can do it or bust."

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

## CONCLUSION.

That night of the morrow had come. All day long the men scoured in that terrible trap had looked longingly towards the east, anxiously awaiting the sound of the bugle, or the whistle of the Steam Man.

How night had come, and just as the shades were deepening, there rang out the thrilling note of the cavalry charge, followed by the more piercing voice of the Terror of the West.

The rescuers were at hand. Crash! A lurid flame leaped up to the sky as the rifles pealed forth their death notes, and a bright red globe flashed back a thousand lights from the burnished metal as the troopers charged down upon the Brethren of the Plains.

Snap Carter's voice rang out like a bugle, his horse leaped distinctly above the clash and din, higher than the roar of the battle.

"Dash down the pass!" shrieked the fighting old guide. "The cavalry's here!" Scarcely had his clarion voice sounded forth the command ere the men rushed like maddened brutes down the rocky roadway, straining every nerve to reach the battle-ground before the fight was over.

The Steam Man was standing close to the entrance, his huge, brilliant eyes glowing out with fearful gaze upon the scene.

A huge pan filled with chemical powder was burning upon the side of the wagon, and cast a wild, terrible glare over the stained field.

The outlaws were fighting like infuriated devils, and as they were many in numbers, and desperate in courage, they made a most bloody resistance.

The wild rangers dashed out of the pass like an avalanche, and on foot rushed up upon the outlaws, seeking out the leaders, whether red or white, and engaging them in mortal strife.

Snap Carter made a dash for Hntover, the head and front of all this trouble, and with one seized him in his arms, and dashed him against the wall of rock, killing him instantly.

This was he rewarded for bringing them into the horrible trap.

Frank covered Sholom Alarkum, and sent him to the grass with a bullet in his brain.

Harry Hise looked eagerly around for Captain Shear.

The brave outlaw leader was fighting like a sand, and urging on his followers by example and command.

The detective threw his rifle to his shoulder and fired.

Captain Shear threw back his hands, his eyes closed, and he fell from his horse to the plains, dead.

Tolahreener was killed at the same moment by a cavalryman.

Moses-Ponum was shot through the heart by Charley Gorse, and almost at the same moment the lieutenant of the robbers was laid low by the bullet of our friend Barney Shay.

These few deaths decided the battle.

Without leaders the outlaws were unable to cope with the combined forces, and in a few moments they turned tail with one accord, and dashed away.

A wilder went up to the sky, and the western men caught Frank Reade in their arms, and hugged him like a child.

"Hanky boy!" they cried. "You're a regular scowaman. Three cheers for the youngster and the Steam Man of the Plains!"

And the rocky pass rang loudly with the thunder of their voices.

At this moment the rather stoutly-built Mr. Fitzmoodle came up to the spot, saying that he had tried to reach the battle-field in time to see his party, but that, "I'm afraid, h'i'n has not built for running, y'know."

"Your friend is dead," said Frank, who had not had time to think of poor Hallett when meeting the Englishman in the pass the day previously. "Dash is gone."

"Poor 'Allett!" cried Fitzmoodle, throwing up his hands in surprise. "Fostively!"

"I'll help bury him," said Frank. "He left you to our care, Charley, Barney and myself, and we promised to take you back to the civilized country before we left you. Then he died easy."

"Poor fellow—poor fellow!" muttered George Augustus. "Well, h'i must say h'i'ave become so 'entirely disgusted with this 'orrid 'atheistical land where the natives have h'advocates of h'inducible connection, h'and where the female natives believe h'in a perpetual leap year, that h'i shall be pleased to go back to the more civilized ports of your h'again. H'i's h' 'orrid section 'o' country just 'around 'ere, h'and h'i shall not regret leaving h'i' h'in the least."

There was a good deal of laughter over the Englishman's odd observations, and then the leader of our party stepped forward and offered to escort the cockney to the nearest settlement, if he so desired.

George Augustus said yes.

"This takes it off of your hands."

"Just so," said Frank. "Now we are free to go where we please. In the morning we'll go to Three Islands, and start for the stream which flows over our gold."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Go to Three Islands. Travel west by south-west for two hundred miles, until you come to a grove like Three Islands, through which runs a stream. On the right hand, facing the sun, a tall oottonwood grows on the bank of the stream. What the tree is one hour high, the shadow of the trunk falls over some rocks in the stream. Under the furthest rock touched by the shadow the gold lies buried."

This had been the sum and substance of Dash Hallett's parting bequest to Frank and his comrades, and now the three stood beside the tall oottonwood, while the rising sun began to cast its shadows over the slowly-moving stream.

Soon the long shadows of the oottonwood stole out over the stream towards a cluster of rocks, and the three gold-seekers watched carefully for the long bar to run out to the fullest length.

At length it fell on the largest rock in the group, and then Frank looked at his watch, and declared the sun to be exactly one hour high.

Instantly they waded into the stream, and ran out through its shallow course towards the rock where the slanting bar of shade now rested.

The rock was long and broad, but very flat and thin, and the Irishman put his strong hands under it, the slab came up with ease.

Before them lay three half-submerged boxes,

made of some hard wood that stood the setting of the water without rotting.

"Give us a lift," cried Barney.

In a moment the two boys had caught hold of one of the boxes with him, and carried it to the bank where the Steam Man stood.

The other boxes were soon hauled up on shore, and then the fastenings of one was carefully removed by Frank.

"Hurrah!" cried Charley Gorse.

"Will I ever go home?" yelled Barney. "Yes, you'll go home, but keep you like a gentleman when you get there, at all events," said Frank Reade; and in front of them lay an open canvas bag of shining gold money. Not dust, but coined dollars ready for use.

They were as wild as most mortals would be under the same circumstances, and could hardly think of doing anything all the morning but look at their treasure.

"And the fun of it is that it is worth more than ten thousand," said Frank.

"How so?" said Charley.

"The premium on yellow boys will bring the amount up to fifteen thousand," said the driver of the Steam Man. "When I see New York gold stood at one hundred and fifty, if we can bring our pile pocket to some broker's office, we shall each pocket five thousand apiece."

"Poor fellow!" said Barney. "Fah, I'll take me self back to the swale town of Clonakilly, and I'll be after marryin' one o' the best and puttest collets in the whole county of Cork, for I'll be land-owner; and this'll be good morning, Squire Shea. Hooroo!"

"And getting out his fiddle, he played the 'Devil's Dream,' and jiggered to the music to let of his extra feelings."

"And what will you do?" asked Charley Gorse of his cousin.

"Oh, I'll go home and spend half of the pile in making a steam boat," said Frank.

"What?" said Charley.

"I mean it," said Frank. "I'm going to try and invent a horse just by steam, and I'll be hurrah for the west again!"

"Bully boy!" said Charley. "Make a team of 'em, while you are about it—but what will you do with the Steam Man?"

"I don't know."

"Sell it to me," said Charley. "I will give you my share of the gold for him, for I want the old fellow. With that money you can carry out your ideas fully, and come out to me next year with a steam train."

That done, the young genius, and from that moment the Terror of the West belonged to Charley Gorse.

They succeeded in running in safety to the village where they were to live, and when the Irishman saw Frank took leave of their cousin and friend, and with the three boxes of gold they took passage on board a boat that conveyed them to a city where they connected with a railroad, and as they were soon whistling towards New York, where they arrived in safety.

George Augustus Fitzmoodle and Barney Shea happened to meet, and they took passage for the old country together, and at last accounts, they were both doing well.

Charley Gorse succeeded in carrying all the redskins and Indians of the West; and as for Frank Reade—well, he don't die with the conclusion OF THE STEAM MAN OF THE PLAINS.

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