Western Story

Every Week Magazine Jan. 12, 1929

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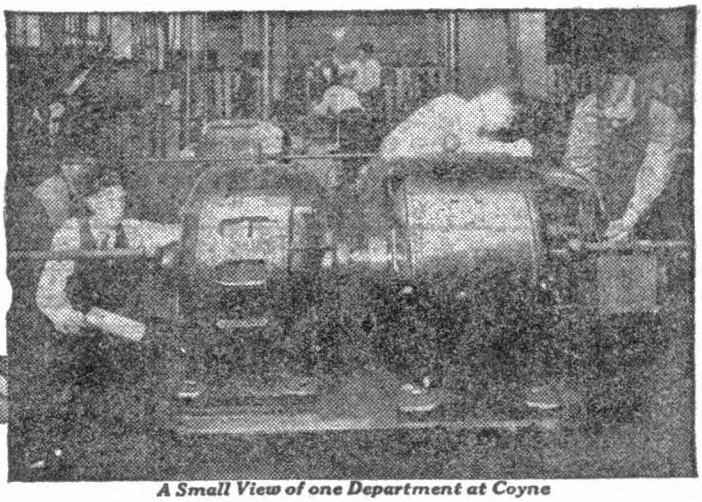
Features by~ Kenneth Gilbert ~ Max Brand ~
George Owen Baxter ~ Johnston McCulley

"The Old Way"



A Small View of one Department at Coyne

ELECTRICITY Becomes Amazingly Easy When Taught Without Books In 90 Days

WHY work at dull, uninteresting jobs that will never pay you more than $35, $40 or perhaps $50 a week? Make up your mind now to become a master of electricity! Train in 12 easy weeks to hold down the kind of a job that pays $50 and up to $200 a week, and which creates a constant demand for your services nearly any place in the world!

Not Books—No Classes

Electricity, as taught in the Great Shops of Coyne, is surprisingly easy to grasp. That's because we don't train you by books. You learn by doing actual, **practical** work on big, electrical machinery—finest outlay in the country. You learn **by doing**—and you learn from the ground up.

Not a Correspondence School

Experts work right along with you every step of the way. You get personal attention—it's not a bit like trying to figure out a lot of correspondence school pamphlets and diagrams all by yourself. The **Coyne Way** gives you real, **sound** knowledge that fits you to do practical electrical work in all its branches.

No Experience or Advanced Education Needed

You don't need one day's previous electrical experience or any advanced education to master electricity the Coyne way. Some of our most successful graduates never went farther than the 8th grade.

Earn While You Learn

By our special arrangement, our employment department will help you locate part-time work, if you want to earn while you learn. And after graduation we give you the benefit of our FREE EMPLOYMENT Service for life. Every week we secure as many as 40 positions for Coyne men.

Get FREE Book

Write today for my big book on electricity with over 150 photographs. Learn what great opportunity Coyne Training opens up for you. Also get full details of my Big-3 Special offer. No obligation. Mail the coupon now.

FREE If You Act Now

1. **R. R. Fare** will be refunded upon enrollment from any point in the U. S. to Chicago.
2. **Radio** course given absolutely without any extra charge. Covers new developments in this fascinating field.
3. **Auto** course, covering truck and tractor electricity. Especially valuable if you ever want to start electrical business of your own. See coupon!

FREE BOOK Coupon

H. C. Lewis, Pres.
Coyne Electrical School, Dept. 19-45
500 S. Paulina St., Chicago, Illinois

Please send me your free catalog on electricity and details of your 3 special offers. No obligation on my part.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL

H. C. Lewis, Pres.
500 S. Paulina St., Chicago, Ill. Department 19-45

WESTERN STORY
MAGAZINE

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EVERY WEEK

Vol. LXXXIII Contents for January 12, 1929 No. 6

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All manuscripts must be addressed to the Editors.

Yearly Subscription, $6.00 Six Months, $3.00 Single Copies, 15 Cents

What Will You Be Doing One Year From Today?

Three hundred and sixty-five days from now—what?

Will you still be struggling along in the same old job at the same old salary—worried about the future—never quite able to make both ends meet—standing still while other men go ahead?

One year from today will you still be putting off your start toward success—thrilled with ambition one moment and then cold the next—delaying, waiting, fiddling away the precious hours that will never come again?

Don't do it, man—don't do it. There is no greater tragedy in the world than that of a man who stays in the rut all his life, when with just a little effort he could bring large success within his grasp.

Make up your mind today that you're going to train yourself to do some one thing well. Choose the work you like best in the list below, mark an X beside it, mail the coupon to Scranton, and we will send you, without cost or obligation, the full story of what the I.C.S. can do for you.

Right now you can decide where you will be this time next year.

Common sense will tell you that it is far better to send in this Success Coupon today than to wait another precious year and then wish you had!

Mail the Coupon for Free Booklet

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS, Box 4905, Scranton, Penna.
"The Universal University"

Without cost or obligation, please send me a copy of your booklet, "Who Wins and Why," and full particulars about the course *before* which I have marked X in the list below:

BUSINESS TRAINING COURSES

☐ Business Management	☐ Cost Accounting	☐ Advertising	☐ Mail Carrier
☐ Industrial Management	☐ Bookkeeping	☐ Business Correspondence	☐ Common School Subjects
☐ Personnel Management	☐ Secretarial Work	☐ Show Card and Sign Lettering	☐ High School Subjects
☐ Traffic Management	☐ Spanish	☐ Stenography and Typing	☐ Cartooning
☐ Accounting and C.P.A. Coaching	☐ French	☐ Railway Mail Clerk	☐ Illustrating
	☐ Salesmanship		☐ Lumber Dealer

TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL COURSES

☐ Architect	☐ Electric Car Running	☐ Automobile Work	☐ Highway Engineer
☐ Architectural Draftsman	☐ Telegraph Engineer	☐ Airplane Engines	☐ Chemistry ☐ Pharmacy
☐ Building Foreman	☐ Telephone Work	☐ Plumber and Steam Fitter	☐ Mining Engineer
☐ Concrete Builder	☐ Mechanical Engineer	☐ Plumbing Inspector	☐ Navigation ☐ Assayer
☐ Contractor and Builder	☐ Mechanical Draftsman	☐ Foreman Plumber	☐ Iron and Steel Worker
☐ Structural Draftsman	☐ Machine Shop Practice	☐ Heating and Ventilation	☐ Textile Overseer or Supt.
☐ Structural Engineer	☐ Toolmaker ☐ Patternmaker	☐ Sheet-Metal Worker	☐ Cotton Manufacturing
☐ Electrical Engineer	☐ Civil Engineer	☐ Steam Engineer	☐ Woolen Manufacturing
☐ Electrical Contractor	☐ Surveying and Mapping	☐ Marine Engineer	☐ Agriculture ☐ Fruit Growing
☐ Electric Wiring	☐ Bridge Engineer	☐ Refrigeration Engineer	☐ Poultry Farming
☐ Electric Lighting	☐ Gas Engine Operating	☐ R. R. Positions	☐ Mathematics ☐ Radio

Name..... Address.....

City..... State.....

Speechless...When a Few Words Would Have Made Me!

But now I can face the largest audience without a trace of stage fright

THE annual banquet of our Association—the biggest men in the industry present—and without a word of warning the Chairman called on me to speak—and my mind went blank!

I half rose from my seat, bowed awkwardly and mumbled. "I'm afraid you'll have to excuse me today," and dropped back in my chair.

Speechless—when a few words would have made me! The opportunity I had been waiting for all my life—and I had thrown it away! If I could have made a simple little speech—giving my opinion of trade conditions in a concise, witty, interesting way, I know I would have been made for life!

Always I have been a victim of paralyzing stage fright. Because of my timidity, my diffidence, I was just a nobody, with no knack of impressing others—of putting myself across. No matter how hard I worked, it all went for nothing—I could never win the big positions, the important offices, simply because I was tongue-tied in public.

And then like magic I discovered how to overcome my stage fright—and I was amazed to learn that I actually had a natural gift for public speaking. With the aid of a splendid new method, I rapidly developed this gift, until, in a ridiculously short time, I was able to face giant audiences—without a trace of stage fright!

Today I am one of the biggest men in our industry. Scarcely a meeting or banquet is held without me being asked to speak. My real ability, which was hidden so long by stage fright, is now recognized by everyone. I am asked to conferences, luncheons and banquets as a popular after-dinner speaker. This amazing training has made me into a self-confident aggressive talker—an easy, versatile conversationalist—almost overnight.

* * * * *

What 20 Minutes a Day Will Show You

How to talk before your club or lodge
How to address board meetings
How to prepare and respond to toasts
How to make a political speech
How to tell entertaining stories
How to make after-dinner speeches
How to converse interestingly
How to write better letters
How to sell more goods
How to train your memory
How to enlarge your vocabulary
How to overcome stage fright
How to develop self-confidence
How to acquire a winning personality
How to strengthen your will-power and ambition
How to become a clear, accurate thinker
How to develop your power of concentration
How to be the master of any situation

No matter what work you are now doing nor what may be your station in life; no matter how timid and self-conscious you now are when called upon to speak, you can quickly bring out your natural ability and become a powerful speaker. Now, through an amazing new training you can quickly shape yourself into an outstanding influential speaker, able to dominate one man or five thousand.

In 20 Minutes a Day

This new method is so delightfully simple and easy that you cannot fail to progress rapidly. Right from the start you will find that it is becoming easier and easier to express yourself. Thousands have proved that by spending only 20 minutes a day in the privacy of their own homes they can acquire the ability to speak so easily and quickly that they are amazed at the great improvement in themselves.

Send for this Amazing Booklet

This new method of training is fully described in a very interesting and informative booklet which is now being sent to everyone mailing the coupon below. This booklet is called **How to Work Wonders with Words.** In it you are told how this new, easy method will enable you to conquer stage fright, self-consciousness, timidity, bashfulness and fear. Not only men who have made millions but thousands of others have sent for this booklet and are unstinting in their praise of it. You are told how you can bring out and develop your priceless "hidden knack"—the natural gift within you—which will win for you advancement in position and salary, popularity, social standing, power and real success. You can obtain your copy absolutely free by sending the coupon.

Now Sent Free

NORTH AMERICAN INSTITUTE
3601 Michigan Ave.
Dept. 1751 Chicago

North American Institute
3601 Michigan Avenue
Dept. 1751, Chicago

Please send me FREE and without obligation my copy of your inspiring booklet, **How to Work Wonders with Words**, and full information regarding your course in Effective Speaking.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

New Discovery "No-Frost" Offers $15 a Day PROFIT!

Here's an absolutely new money-making idea. Brings big profits—easy profits—QUICK PROFITS! You can make $1.00 to $2.00 an hour in spare time—$8 to $15 in a day—helping me handle orders in your territory for No-Frost. No-Frost is a new scientific preparation that is absolutely guaranteed to keep steam, frost, fog, rain, sleet, mist, and snow off auto windshields, street car windows, show windows, mirrors, etc. Think of it! Keeps glass clean, bright and clear in all kinds of weather.

Anyone, Anywhere, Can Make Big Money

All you do is demonstrate to housewives, auto owners, taxicab and bus companies, stores, garages, etc., and take the orders. We don't sell to dealers. All business from your locality must come through you. You alone get the profit on every order. Easy to demonstrate. Just put a little No-Frost on the glass. It doesn't show. It won't streak, smear, mar or scratch. Yet keeps glass clean and clear as crystal. A necessity for every auto owner, storekeeper, street car motorman, taxicab and bus driver, locomotive engineer, and housewife.

Floyd Makes $20 In One Day

Men and women everywhere are making amazing profits with No-Frost and my other fast-selling products. E. J. Floyd, Fla., works only 6 or 7 hours a day yet he often makes more than $20 in a single day. R. Lile, Okla., made $18.75 profit the very first day out and says it's the easiest, most profitable work he ever handled. It's so easy that J. C. McArthur, Mich., was able to clear $11 in just 3 hours' time; Mrs. K. R. Roof, S. C., besides doing her own housework, made $50 in spare time the first week she was with us. And right now I offer you the very same chance to make big money I gave these people.

SEND NO MONEY

Just put your name and address on the coupon. Give me a chance to prove that you can make $8 to $15 in a day. You don't need capital, training, or experience. I furnish everything and tell you just what to do and say in this easy, pleasant work. You don't risk a penny. Yet it's an opportunity to pocket hundreds of dollars in clear cash profits. You can make big money—right from the start.

JUST MAIL COUPON

Introduce No-Frost in your territory while it's new and before imitations are put on sale in the stores. Skim the cream of the profits. Clinch a big, permanent, repeat business. Make more money than you've ever made in your life before. Get the facts and read the proof. Mail coupon today—NOW!

Albert Mills, Pres., American Products Co.,
1055 Monmouth Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio.

Please send me, without cost or obligation, details of your new proposition that offers $8 to $15 in a day.

Name.....

Address.....

.....

(Print or Write Plainly)

The U.S. Government Job is a Good Job

$1260 to $3400 a year

STEADY WORK
PAID VACATION

MEN—WOMEN
18 to 55

Many February Mail Carrier Examinations

VALUABLE COUPON

Mail it today
SURE

Franklin Institute, Dept. L 196
Rochester, N. Y.

Rush to me FREE OF CHARGE, list of U. S. Government jobs now obtainable. Send FREE 32 page book telling salaries, duties, hours, etc., with sample coaching. Tell me how I can get a position.

Name.....

Address.....

QUIT TOBACCO

No man or woman can escape the harmful effects of tobacco. Don't try to banish unaided the hold tobacco has upon you. Join the thousands of inveterate tobacco users that have found it easy to quit with the aid of the Keeley Treatment.

KEELEY TREATMENT STOPS Tobacco Habit

Quickly banishes all craving for tobacco. Write today for Free Book telling how to quickly Free yourself from the tobacco habit and our Money Back Guarantee.

THE KEELEY INSTITUTE
Dept. D-800 Dwight, Illinois

Sell Mops

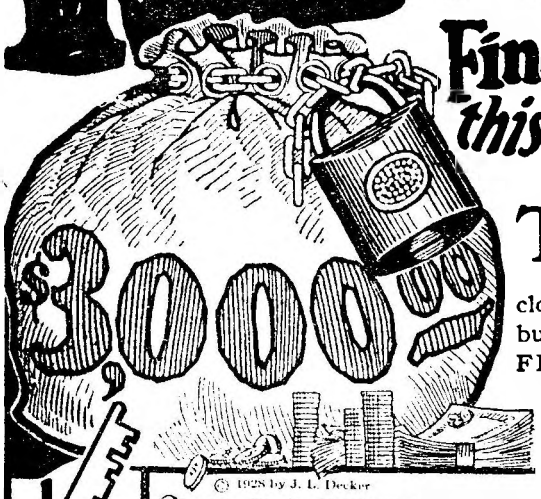
Clever mop amazes women. Wrings itself. Hands never touch dirty water. No stooping or bending. No more drudgery on hands and knees. Lucky 7 Mop also washes windows, waxes floors, cleans woodwork, etc.

SAMPLE FREE For 10 Days Trial

Agents make as high as $40 in one day. 30-second demonstration wins attention every time. Sales take only 5 minutes. You often make $5.00 an hour. Right now we are lending samples and all selling material for 10 days' trial. No deposit—No C. O. D. Make this amazing big-money test. Write today. Delphos Mop Co., Dept. A-310, Delphos, Ohio

REWARD

Find the key to unlock this FREE Bag of Gold



© 1928 by J. L. Decker

THERE are 19 keys pictured here. To be sure, they all look alike, but, examine them closely. 18 of them are exactly alike but **"ONE,"** and only one is DIFFERENT FROM ALL THE OTHERS. It is the key to OPEN THE PADLOCK on this $3,000.00 FREE "Bag of Gold." **SEE IF YOU CAN FIND IT.**

CLUES

The difference may be in the size, the shape, or even in the notches. So, STUDY EACH KEY CAREFULLY and if you can find the **"ONE"** KEY that is different from all the others SEND THE NUMBER OF IT TO ME AT ONCE. You may become the winner of a Chrysler "75" Royal Sedan or $3,000.00 cash money,—without one cent of cost to you. I will give away ABSOLUTELY FREE.—5 new six-cylinder 4-door Sedans and the winners can have CASH MONEY INSTEAD of the automobiles if they prefer it. 25 BIG PRIZES TO BE GIVEN FREE—totaling $7,300.00 cash.

➡ Or Win a CHRYSLER "75" Sedan ⬅

Choice of this beautiful Chrysler "75" Royal Sedan or $3,000.00 cash. We pay all the freight and tax in full on all the prizes and deliver them anywhere in the U. S. A. This is an AMAZING OPPORTUNITY. ACT QUICK, and here is why—

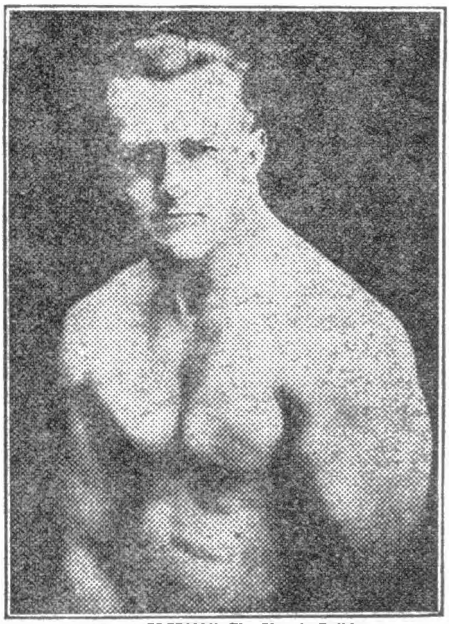
$1,000.00 CASH—EXTRA FOR PROMPTNESS

I will pay $1,000.00 cash money extra JUST FOR PROMPTNESS. Duplicate prizes will be paid in full in case of ties. YOU CAN WIN the Chrysler "75" Royal Sedan or—$3,000.00 cash. ANSWER QUICK.

You Cannot Lose

Absolutely everyone who takes full advantage of this opportunity will be rewarded. But, hurry. — *find the* **"ONE"** *key* that is different from all the others and RUSH THE NUMBER OF IT and your name and address to me TODAY on a postal card or in a letter. And, just say:—"Key number is different from all the others. Please tell me how I can get this magnificent Chrysler '75' Royal Sedan—or—$3,000.00 CASH MONEY without obligation or one penny of cost to me."

E. COLLINS, 537 South Dearborn St.
Dept. 561, CHICAGO, ILL.



EARLE LIEDERMAN—The Muscle Builder
Author of "Muscle Building," "Science of Wrestling," "Secrets of Strength," "Here's Health," "Endurance," Etc.

The Man I Pity Most

POOR OLD Jones. I see him now, standing there, dejected, cringing, afraid of the world. No one had any use for him. No one respected him. He just lived on. A poor worn out imitation of a man doing his sorry best to get on in the world. If he had realized just one thing, he could have made good. He might have been a brilliant success.

There are thousands and thousands of men like Jones. They, too, could be happy, successful, respected and loved. But they can't seem to realize the one big fact—that practically everything worth while living for depends upon STRENGTH—upon live, red-blooded, he-man muscle.

Everything you do depends upon strength. No matter what your occupation, you need the health, vitality and clear thinking only big, strong virile muscles can give you.

Here's a Short-cut to Strength and Success

But, you say, "It takes years to build my body up to the point where it will equal those of athletic champions." It does if you go about it without any system, **but there's a scientific short-cut.** And that's where I come in.

30 Days Is All I Need

In just 30 days I can do things with your body you never thought possible. With just a few minutes' work every morning, I will add one full inch of real, live muscle to each of your arms, and two whole inches across your chest. Many of my pupils have gained more than that, but I GUARANTEE to do at least that much for you in one short month. Your neck will grow shapely, your shoulders begin to broaden. Your friends will wonder what has come over you. You'll look ten years younger, and you'll feel like it, too. Work will be easy.

I Strenghten Those Inner Organs, Too

But I'm not through with you. I want ninety days in all to do the job right, and then all I ask is that you stand in front of your mirror and look yourself over.

What a marvelous change! Those great squared shoulders! That pair of huge, lithe arms! Those firm, shapely legs! Yes, sir. They are yours, and they are there to stay. You'll be just as fit inside as you are out, too, because I work on your heart, your liver—all of your inner organs—strengthening and exercising them. Yes, indeed, life can give you a greater thrill than you ever dreamed. But, remember, the only sure road to health, strength and happiness **always** demands action. Fill out the coupon below and mail it today. **Write now!**

Send for My New 64 Page Book

"Muscular Development"—It Is Free

It contains forty-eight full-page photographs of myself and some of the many prize-winning pupils I have trained. Some of these came to me as pitiful weaklings, imploring me to help them. Look them over now and you will marvel at their present physiques. This book will prove an impetus and a real inspiration. Send today—right now before you turn this page.

EARLE LIEDERMAN, Dept. 3001, 305 Broadway, New York City
Dear Sir: Without any obligation on my part whatever please send me a copy of your latest book, "Muscular Development."

Name .....

Street .....

City ..... State.....
(Please write or print plainly.)

30 Days Free Trial

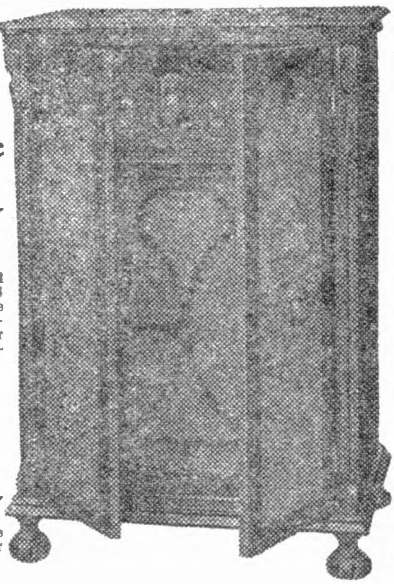
(Battery or Electric)

Super 8 Electric or Battery Set

New, wonderful 1929 models. 8 tubes — Single Dial—long distance Console or table models — shipped

Direct From Our Factory

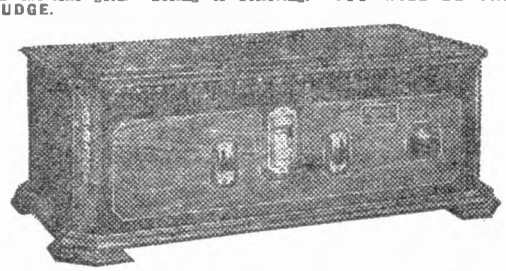
on 30 days' free trial. Electric or Battery Sets.



Metrodyne
SUPER-EIGHT ELECTRIC

Metro's latest achievement—the world's greatest radio value. Powerful long-distance 8-tube receiver—clearness of tone that is astounding—ultra-selective. Radio engineers pronounced it the ultimate for all-around perfection. To prove our claims, we will send this marvelous set to you direct from our factory on **30 days' free trial.** Compare its quality, beauty and price with any other radio on the market, and decide to keep it only after you are satisfied that the new 1929 Metrodyne Super-Eight is the peer of them all.

Eight powerful tubes. Highest quality low loss parts. Illuminated single dial. Positive switch control—simply turn a knob and it's on. Select your stations with accuracy at any desired volume. Beauty of tone unsurpassed. Console and table cabinets are handsomely grained genuine walnut, hand rubbed, in two-tone effect—artistically carved trimmings. All metal parts finished in two-tone gold. Seeing is believing. **YOU WILL BE THE JUDGE.**



Agents and Dealers

Great money-making opportunities demonstrating Metrodyne Super-8 Electric and Battery Sets. Liberal discounts. Exclusive territory. Demonstrating set on 30 days free trial. Write at once for details.

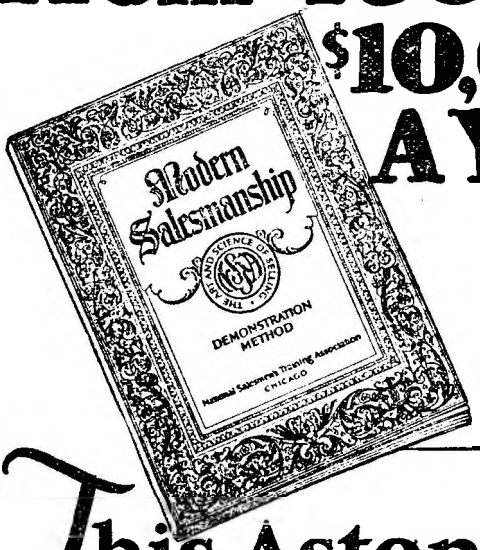
Amazingly Low Prices—Electric or Battery Sets

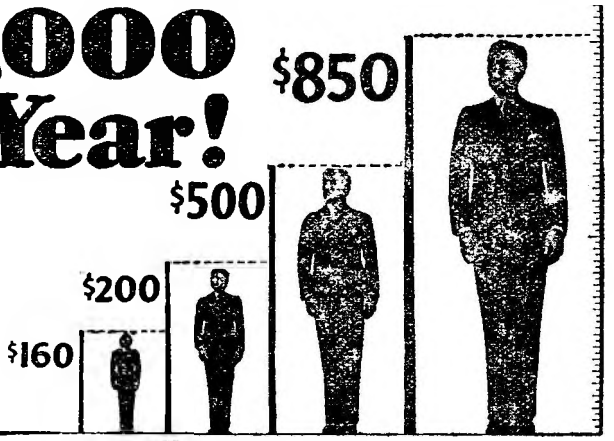
Write today for our 30 days' free trial offer

Metro Electric Company

2161-71 North California Avenue
Dept. 135 CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

From $160 a Month to $10,000 A Year!





This Astonishing Book Showed Him How

How One Man Uncovered Hidden Possibilities He Never Suspected Within Himself and Raised His Yearly Income $8,080! An Illuminating Message of Vital Interest to Every Man Who Ever Aspires to Earn $10,000—$20,000—or More a Year! SEE FOR YOURSELF This Remarkable Volume That Has Led So Many Men Into the Five-Figure Salary Class!

Where Shall We Send Your Copy....FREE?

TRUTH is stranger than fiction! And the true story that happened to R. B. Hansen proves it! His experience is not only intensely INTERESTING—but it will prove a revelation and positive inspiration to every ambitious man who reads this page.

Not long ago Hansen was working as a foreman in a rubber plant. His salary was $150 a month. That meant skimping and petty economies that are bound to irk ANY ambitious man. Naturally he was keenly dissatisfied—but like so many other men caught in blind-alley jobs, he didn't know how to get out!

And then one day something happened! A certain book fell into his hands. Between its covers he discovered a certain force that eventually led him to rewards beyond his fondest expectations. Inspired to action and with his feet firmly guided to the first rungs of the ladder to Success, Hansen went into business for himself. And within a short time he had boosted his earnings to $10,000 a year!

Salary Increases—200% to 900%!

A lucky accident? Not a bit of it! Hansen is not alone in his achievement of success after reading this remarkable book. OTHER men who have increased their salaries amazingly after reading these vital facts are numbered in the thousands! For example, C. W. Birmingham of Ohio read it and his salary raised from $15 a week to $7,500 a year. Wm. Shore of California made $3,000 his first 5 months. And O. D. Oliver of Oklahoma, who used to earn $200 a month, now makes as much as $1,000 in a single week!

How did they do it? What did the book show them? Just this:—Every one of these men realized that Salesmanship offers BIGGER rewards and delivers them QUICKER than any other line of work under the sun. This vital book, "Modern Salesmanship," introduced them to hundreds of surprising and little-known facts about the highest paid of all professions,—SALESMANSHIP. It blasted dozens of old theories, explained the science of selling in simple terms and told them exactly how the great sales records of nationally-known star salesmen have been achieved. And not only that, it outlined a simple plan that will enable almost any man to master scientific salesmanship without spending years on the road—without losing a day or dollar from his present position.

Free to Every Man

If we were asking two or three dollars a copy for "Modern Salesmanship" you might hesitate. But it is now FREE. We cannot urge you too strongly to take advantage of this opportunity to see for yourself what salesmanship has done for others—and what the National Salesmen's Training Association stands ready and willing to do for you. Find out exactly what the underlying principles of salesmanship are—and how you can put them to work for you. No matter what your opinion is now, "Modern Salesmanship" will give you a new insight into this fascinating and highly-paid profession.

Mail the coupon now!

National Salesmen's Training Association

Dept. A-581 N. S. T. A. Bldg. Chicago, Ill.

National Salesmen's Training Ass'n,
Dept. A-581, N. S. T. A. Bldg.,
Chicago, Illinois.

Without cost or obligation you may send me your book, "Modern Salesmanship," with details of your system of training and FREE employment service.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

Age.....Occupation.....

FREE! MEN! Here's the dope you've been looking for

HOW TO GET INTO THE RADIO BUSINESS~

J.E.S.

Many Earn $50 to $250 a Week in Work That is Almost Romance

If you're earning a penny less than $50 a week, clip coupon now for FREE BOOK! New 64-page book pictures and tells all about the Radio business, hundreds of opportunities—in work that is almost romance! YOU can learn quickly and easily at home, through my tested, proved methods to take advantage of these great opportunities! Why go along at $25, $35, or $45 a week when you can pleasantly and in a short time learn how to hold the big-pay jobs?

Clip Coupon for Free Book

Don't envy the other fellow who's pulling down the big cash! My proven home-study training methods make it possible for you, too, to get ready for better jobs, to earn enough money so you can enjoy the good things of life. One of the most valuable books ever written on Radio tells how—interesting facts about this great field, and how I can prepare you in your spare time at home, to step into a big-pay Radio job. GET THIS BOOK. SEND COUPON TODAY.

J. E. SMITH, Pres.,
National Radio Institute,
Dept. 9MX, Washington, D. C.

I Give You 6 Big Outfits of Radio Parts

With them you can build 100 different circuits—learn the "how" and "why" of practically every type of Radio set. This kind of training fits you to step into the good jobs—sends you out an experienced Radio expert. When you complete, my Employment Department will help you get a big Radio job like Graduate Edward Stanko, Chief Operator of Station WGR, or Frank M. Jones, 922 Guadalupe St., San Angelo, Tex., builder and operator of Station KGFI and Manager of the best equipped Radio shop in the Southwest, or help you start a Radio business of your own like Richard Butler, 1419 No. 17th St., Phila., Pa., who made around $500 a month compared with a job as motorman when he enrolled.

The Famous "Course That Pays for Itself"

Spare time earnings are easy in Radio almost from the time you enroll. G. W. Page, 1807 21st Ave. S., Nashville, Tenn., made $935 in his spare time while taking this course. Al. Johnson, 1409 Shelby St., Sandusky, O., $1,000 in four months, and he didn't know the difference between a condenser and a transformer when he enrolled. I'll give you a contract, backed by N. R. I. pioneer and largest home-study Radio school in the world, to refund every penny of your money if you are not satisfied, upon completing, with the lessons and instructions received. Find out what Radio offers you. Mail coupon.

I Have Trained Hundreds of Men at Home for Big Radio Jobs. My Book Proves I Can Do the Same for You.

RADIO NEEDS TRAINED MEN!

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Institute,
Dept. 9MX,
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Dear Mr. Smith: Without obligating me in any way, send me your big FREE BOOK, "Rich Rewards in Radio," and all information about your practical home-study, Radio Course.

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Worth Money to Ruptured!

Send New FREE BOOK and Amazing FREE SAMPLE of AIRTEX Without Obligation

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Mail this coupon to New Science Institute, 3656 Clay Street, Steubenville, Ohio

Here is an amazing offer to victims of rupture—an offer that has proved to be worth hundreds of dollars to many who have accepted it. Yet it costs you nothing.

A famous rupture specialist with a record of more than 20,000 cases will send you free of cost a newly-edited book that contains amazing new discoveries about rupture relief . . . case histories galore . . . illustrated in detail. A few of the facts contained in this free book are given below. But do this right now. Tear out the coupon at the right and send for this unusual book!

Can Rupture Be Exercised Away? Get Newest Book Now FREE to Ruptured

IT was twenty years ago when I first got ruptured. Today I consider myself entirely cured. Your system is nothing short of marvelous." John Miller, Jr. "Some months ago I ordered your outfit for the treatment of rupture of my son. Our doctor fitted it on him and he was skeptical it would help cure the condition, for it was one of the worst ruptures he had ever seen. Five months later I took the boy back to the doctor. He examined him and pronounced the rupture completely healed." D. E. Lytle, Orrville, Ohio.

These are but two of many astounding letters received from people, many of whom had despaired of obtaining relief from the torture and agony of rupture.

Never Before a FREE SAMPLE Like This

circulation is more free and more unhampered. Thus nature is allowed to knit new tissues together so that rupture often disappears completely without a trace remaining—in unbelievable time. Incredible? Yet the facts are ready now!

Now or Never

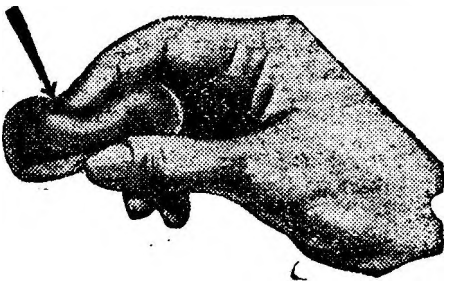
Be fair to yourself. Get the complete facts about Magic Dot and the offer that permits you to feel this marvelous relief, before you decide to buy. Don't go through life in constant pain. Relief from rupture is certainly worth the 2c stamp it costs you to send the coupon above. Send it—not tomorrow or next week — but NOW!

NEW SCIENCE INSTITUTE
3656 Clay Street
Steubenville, Ohio

Not a Truss

What is this wonderful device that has made thousands feel again the joy of living a full life? It is not a truss like men wore in the days of Lincoln. It has no steel springs, no leg straps, no bulky cushions. It can never slip off the rupture. Wearing it, you can still cough, run, jump, bend or sleep in any position. In fact, many are able to work every day—exercise as much as they desire—probably we should say truthfully actually EXERCISING RUPTURE AWAY!

Imagine a simple little device weighing less than a feather —little larger than a quarter—that rests firmly against the rupture without the need of strapping tightly. Think of a flesh-soft pad that yields with the slightest movement of your body—filled with millions of air-cells that breathe fresh, cool air into the spot around the rupture. And all the while blood



I GUARANTEE NEW HAIR *in These Three Places—*

OR DON'T PAY ME A CENT!

ARE you sincerely anxious to be done with dandruff, itchy scalp, falling hair and baldness? Do you *really* want to grow new hair?

Perhaps you've *already* tried hard to overcome these afflictions. Perhaps you've put faith in barbershop "tips," and used all kinds of salves, massages, tonics, all with the same results . . . lots of trouble and expense but no relief!

Now, consider what *I* offer you. I GUARANTEE to grow new hair on your head—on the top, front or temples—IN 30 DAYS . . . or not one red penny of cost to you.

Isn't that a different story from those you've heard before? I don't say, "try my wonderful remedy—it grows hair!" I say, and I put it in *writing*, "I GUARANTEE to grow hair . . . or no cost!"

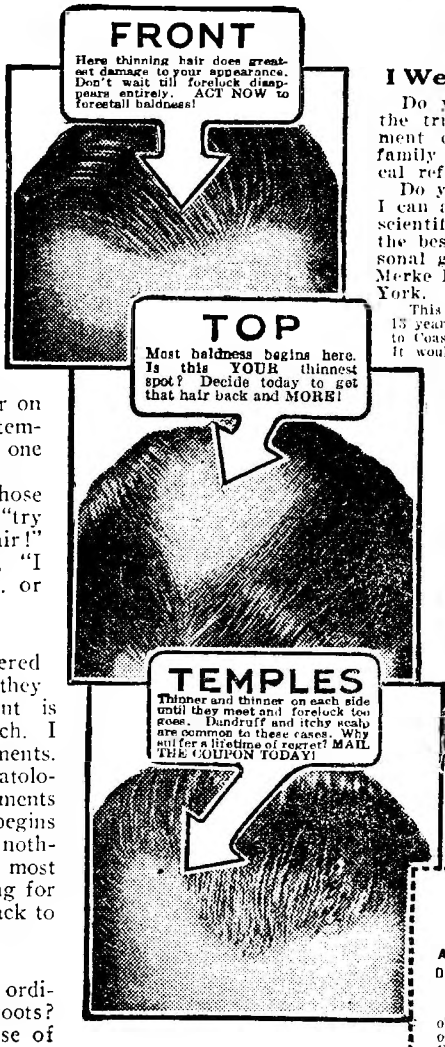
My Method is Unique!

Thousands who formerly suffered from scalp troubles bless the day they heard of me. For my treatment is based on science, on years of research. I *studied scalps*, not how to sell treatments. And I found, as did leading dermatologists, that ordinary surface treatments of the scalp are futile. Baldness begins at the ROOTS. If roots are dead, nothing can grow new hair. But in most cases, roots are only *sleeping*, waiting for the right treatment to bring them back to healthy, normal life.

I Reach the *Roots*

Now, I leave it to you. How can ordinary treatments penetrate to hair roots? How can they remove the *real* cause of baldness?

My treatment goes *below* the scalp, right down to the hair roots, awakening them to new action. And with just the mere investment of a *few* minutes a day, thousands get these results from my treatment . . . or they never pay a cent!



DANGER: One, two, three—BALD! And perhaps total baldness, say leading dermatologists, if you neglect any one of the three places shown above. Thousands fail to heed the warnings. But there is hope, no matter how thin the hair. Read my message. Study my guarantee. Then ACT!

I Welcome Investigation

Do you want absolute proof of the true causes and proper treatment of baldness? Consult your family physician. Or look up medical reference books.

Do you want positive proof that I can and do apply these accepted scientific principles? I offer you the best proof of all . . . my personal guarantee, backed up by the Merke Institute, Fifth Avenue, New York.

This scalp research bureau, established 15 years, is known to thousands from Coast to Coast. It has a reputation to keep up. It wouldn't dare to back me if I didn't tell the truth. So when I guarantee to grow hair or not a penny of cost, you're absolutely sure of a square deal.

Why Suffer Years of Regret?

Take a look in the mirror at those thin spots on your head! Think how you'll look when all your hair is gone. Consider how much prestige and attractiveness you'll lose. Then decide to act at once! Right now, mail the coupon below for the FREE booklet giving my complete story. In it you'll find, not mere theories, but scientific FACTS, and the details of my "hair grown or no pay" offer. My treatment can be used in any home where there is electricity. Send the coupon NOW! And by return mail the booklet is yours without the slightest obligation. Allied Merke Institutes, Inc., Dept. 421, 512 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

MAIL IT *TODAY!*

Allied Merke Institutes, Inc.,
Dept. 421, 512 Fifth Ave., New York City

Please send me—without cost or obligation—in plain wrapper, copy of your book, "The New Way to Grow Hair," describing the Merke System.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

(My age is.....)

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Tricky Hardware

By Johnston McCulley

Author of "Wolf Claws and Santa Claus," etc.

CHAPTER I.

AN ERRING BROTHER.

THROUGH the moonlit night, the half-breed known to men only as "Cocopah Charlie" went like a drifting shadow. Swiftly, silently, and almost ghostlike, he darted from tree to rock and from rock to stump. Now he would be out in the bright moonlight for an instant, and now he would reach a patch of blackness and merge with it and disappear.

For a short time he remained hidden in a jumble of rocks beside a crooked trail that came down from the high hills. Then he went on, darting swiftly to the shadow cast by a clump of brush. He crouched there for a moment with his ear to the ground, and then rose and went on to a huge tree, against the bole of which he leaned to watch and listen.

A moment of that, and Cocopah Charlie started his peculiar journey again. It was plainly evident that he was seeking to reach a certain objective, and that he did not wish to be seen travel-

ing toward it. He was bringing all his native cunning and cleverness into play.

Finally, he came to rest in a dark spot beside the well-worn trail that curved along the rim of the gulch and ended at the mining camp known as Mogul Creek. There he stood like a statue, his arms folded across his breast, waiting to hear the harsh crunching of heavy boots on gravel, which would indicate the approach of the man he wished to meet.

From the near-by resorts of the hectic gold camp there came the usual nocturnal din, a medley of ribald jests and raucous laughter. Some baritone was roaring an unseemly song. Another loud voice howled a challenge to mortal combat. Far down the street a miner was shouting that he had been robbed, and some others were laughing loudly at him. Robbery was a humorous thing in Mogul Creek; the robber generally was voted a clever man, and the robbed given a drink and a laugh.

Somebody was hammering at the keys of the old tin-pan piano in Al's Place, the largest recreation center of the camp. That piano had been freighted across the hills with much trouble and at much expense, and its possession gave Al's Place a tone that its competitors did not enjoy.

Huge kerosene flares fitfully illuminated the crooked thoroughfare that was lined with log structures, frame shacks, and tent houses. The street was thronged with roughly dressed men seeking diversion—miners who had claims on the gulch, hangers-on of the camp, parasites, gamblers, traders in claims, and a few legitimate business men. They jostled one another as they traveled from store to store and from resort to resort, drinking and gambling, retailing gulch gossip, making new friendships, and often creating new enmities.

Cocopah Charlie's face was as inscrutable as that of the famous Sphinx as he looked down the busy street from his place of concealment. If he had any special interest in the scene, he did not betray that fact in his countenance. But Cocopah Charlie seldom betrayed anything in that manner. For the greater part of the time, his face was just like a mask.

To the few who had taken the trouble to appraise him, Cocopah Charlie was known as a shrewd man. His Indian mother and his white father each had bequeathed him certain instincts that he had developed. The continual fight for survival had sharpened his wits and taught him to read men and their motives. He could be Indian one moment and white the next, but never could he be the one to the entire exclusion of the other.

Now he turned his head slowly and looked up the trail, which was pitch-dark in spots and drenched with bright moonlight in other places. Men came along it, hurrying men eager to get to the resorts of the camp and be relieved of the gold dust and nuggets that they had taken from the jealous earth. Because this wealth came so easily, it would go easily.

Down the street a shot rang out. A cry of fright and pain could be heard above the din. Cocopah Charlie snapped his head around and saw that a group of men was gathering in front of one of the resorts, and that others were rushing toward the spot. A flicker of relief crossed Cocopah Charlie's face when he made sure that the gathering was not in front of Al's Place, and then his countenance became inscrutable again.

He continued his silent watching and waiting, scarcely moving except to draw back a bit into the denser darkness whenever anybody came along the trail. Frequently he dropped a hand to finger the hilt of the knife that he wore in his belt, but the movement seemed to be purely mechanical and executed with-

out thought, and not the result of a spasm of anger.

Suddenly he tensed and became doubly alert. Another man was coming along the trail alone. He was walking with quick and nervous strides. The very sound of his boots crunching the gravel bespoke the man of stern purpose.

Cocopah Charlie peered into the night and watched this man as he crossed a patch of bright moonlight. It was the one for whom he had been waiting. He stepped from his place of concealment and stood out in the moon glare himself, where he could be seen easily and recognized.

The man on the trail caught sight of him and stopped abruptly a few feet away, an exclamation of surprise escaping him. He was a man of perhaps thirty, tall and straight and broad-shouldered, athletic, evidently not lacking in courage. His movements were those of a man always alert and on guard.

"Cocopah Charlie!" he exclaimed. "Well, well! You standin' sentinel over this here trail, Charlie? Guardin' a new claim, or somethin' like that?"

"Um! I wait here for you," Cocopah Charlie replied. "For a long time I wait for you to come along the trail. I circle the town so that nobody see. I think that you come."

"Yeah? Why have you been waitin' for me, Charlie? And what gave you the idea that I'd be comin' into town from my claim to-night? I didn't know it myself until about an hour ago."

The half-breed drew himself up preparatory to a long speech.

"Cocopah Charlie does not have many friends," he intoned, "because he is a breed. But those he has, he remembers well. Dan Dauney, and Bert Dauney, his young brother—they are Charlie's true friends. Once they saved Charlie's life when he had met with an accident and would have drowned in the river."

"Yeah? What of it? Shucks!" Dan Dauney said. "Sure we pulled you out o' the river. We couldn't stand there and watch you drown, could we?"

"You think that it was nothing? But Cocopah Charlie does not forget a thing like that. You have stopped men who would have beaten me while they were drunk, too, and so has Bert, the young Dauney. So I say that you are my true friends. And I help my friends when I can."

"Uh-huh! All right, Charlie!" Dan Dauney said. "So you've been waitin' here beside the trail for a long time, huh? Just to tell me again that I'm your friend? I'm in a hurry——"

"Wait!" Cocopah Charlie begged. "Dan Dauney, men have named you 'Tricky Hardware,' because of the way you can handle a gun. From nowhere it comes, spitting flame and smoke and lead. It may be in your right hand or your left. It is always ready before the other man can make a move against you."

"Shucks!" Dan Dauney interrupted. "You're only makin' loose talk, Charlie. You tell me what your game is, now. You want to borrow some money? Want a pinch o' dust, maybe? You sure can have it, Charlie. Talk right out. You're wanderin' all over the place with your words."

"It may be that you will have to handle that gun soon, Dan Dauney. It is best to make sure that the gun is ready," Cocopah Charlie said.

"Yeah? As a matter o' fact, Charlie, that little old gun is always ready," Dan Dauney replied. "But what's this here all about, anyhow? Is there some gent on my trail? Is some old enemy o' mine in Mogul Creek and gunnin' for me?"

Cocopah Charlie shook his head in the negative, sighed, and drew himself erect after the manner of a man about to make an important announcement.

"The young one is at it again," Char-

lie said. "He makes moves without thinking. He is like a man in a daze, and is at the mercy of other men."

"Are you meanin' Bert? What's he been doin' now?" Dan Dauney asked. "Come night, he went for a visit to another cabin. I happened over that way and found that he'd stayed only a few minutes and then had come on into the camp. I—I was afraid——" Dan Dauney's voice drifted away.

"It is known to me," Cocopah Charlie said, "how Dan Dauney loves his young brother, Bert, and would always watch over him and protect him."

"That's right, Charlie! I've sure and certain got my eyes on the youngster. I promised my mother that I'd look after him until he got a proper start."

"And I would protect him also, because he is my good friend. But I have waited here for you, since it is your right as his brother. If you had not come soon, perhaps Charlie would have done something about it himself."

"You make fast talk!" Dan Dauney snapped at him. "You tell me what you're tryin' to get at, Charlie!"

"The young one sits at the poker table again," Cocopah Charlie replied.

CHAPTER II.

THE PLOT OF THE WOLVES.

DAN DAUNEY sighed.

"And after him promisin' me faithful that he wouldn't ever do it again!" he said. "I was afraid o' it, and that's why I came into the camp."

"The fever is a terrible thing when it comes upon a man," Cocopah Charlie said. "I have seen it often. Young Bert has the fever, and so is a sick man. His hands are always hot for the feel of the cards and chips."

"The young fool!" Dan Dauney exploded. "And he's losin' heavy, I suppose. He don't know how to play poker any. Where is he playin', Charlie?"

"He is playing in Al's Place," Cocopah Charlie replied. "And at the table of Steve Porte. This Steve Porte is a fox. He has the eyes and nose of one, and the ears. He licks at his lips as he deals, as a fox does when he creeps upon a partridge. And his fingers are very nimble."

"Yeah? You watched?"

"I watched," Charlie said.

"And you know quite a lot about cards, too," Dan Dauney continued. "You make straight talk to me now, Charlie. Was Steve Porte dealin' funny?"

"Can a snake travel in a straight line?" Cocopah Charlie asked. "Does the loon show sense? Does the skunk not have an odor for the nostrils of all men? The dealing of Steve Porte was so crooked that men were smiling at it."

"Yeah? Well, I warned Steve Porte that if he ever let Bert play at his table again, I'd see him about it!" Dan Dauney said. "So I reckon that I'll have to see him."

"Cocopah Charlie knows some other things, too," the breed insinuated, stepping a bit closer to Dan Dauney and lowering his voice as he spoke.

"Let me hear 'em, then. And you be right quick about it, too, Charlie. I don't want to stand here all night listenin' to you. I've got to tend to Bert."

"There is some talk that Dan Dauney and his brother, the young one, both desire the same squaw!" Cocopah Charlie said.

There was a moment of silence, save for the distant noises of the camp and the gentle sighing of the wind that came down from the wooded hills. And then Dan Dauney lurched forward and clutched at the breed angrily.

"What's that?" he cried. "You dare to hint such a thing? Why, dang your hide——"

"Wait! Cocopah Charlie is your friend," the breed interrupted. "Do not ever forget that, Dan Dauney. Charlie

means no wrong. I speak because it is necessary for you to know what men are saying. And they are saying that Dan Dauney is in love with Stella Zaine, the daughter of old Reese Zaine, who has a claim and a cabin on the gulch."

"A lot o' their business!" Dauney said.

"And they are saying, also, that Bert Dauney is in love with this same girl, and that he would win her from his brother."

Dan Dauney suddenly grasped the breed by the shoulder, and Cocopah Charlie winced because of the pain of his grip.

"Who is saying that?" Dauney demanded.

"It is being whispered around the camp, Dan Dauney. I have heard it a dozen times or more. And some of the men are even making bets about it."

"The low-down curs! Some of 'em would make a bet about anything that came into their heads!"

"And they are saying, too, that Steve Porte, the gambler, would win this girl from both the Dauneys."

"That snake?" Dan Dauney exploded. "That cheap, no-account tinhorn gambler? Stella Zaine wouldn't even look at him. Why, if he as much as spoke to her——"

"He has many chances to speak to her while you and the young one are both hard at work on your claim, taking gold from the ground," Cocopah Charlie pointed out. "Steve Porte flatters old Reese Zaine and allows him to win at the poker table. You say that this Steve Porte is a snake. But he is more of the fox, to my way of thinking. And a fox is sly. This fox also runs with the wolves."

"Cuss and dang it, Charlie, I sure wish that you'd talk like a human bein' sometimes," Dan Dauney declared. "And you're keepin' me standin' here while Bert is gettin' fleeced in Al's Place. If there's anything that I should know, spit it out!"

"There are two men in Mogul Creek who do not like Dan Dauney—men he once made look small."

"Are you meanin' Sam Blurgon and Job Sanger? I had a little run-in with them once."

"Yes, they are the ones I mean. They would wreck the Dauney brothers if they could," the breed replied. "And they have made a plan. Charlie has big ears at times, and hears much when it concerns his friends."

"Well, what's their scheme?"

"They would have Steve Porte rob the young one, and through him rob you. It is the desire of Sam Blurgon and Job Sanger to get your rich claim. They will cause bad trouble between the Dauney brothers, if they can, and perhaps guns can be made to flame. Sam Blurgon and Job Sanger get the rich claim—and Steve Porte gets this Stella Zaine."

"So that's it!" Dan Dauney exclaimed. "It's a right nice little plot, but I reckon that I c'n shoot a few holes in it. Sam Blurgon and Job Sanger, huh? Them skunks!"

"Not skunks, Dan Dauney—wolves!" Cocopah Charlie corrected. "And they are running with a fox."

"Do you know anything else, Charlie?"

"I have warned my friend. The wise man does not walk into a trap that is prepared for him. Knowing that he has certain enemies, he guards against them. If there is trouble, Charlie will not be far away."

"Thanks, Charlie! I won't be forgettin' this," Dan Dauney assured him. "Bert! The young fool, givin' them a chance like this! I'll go to Al's Place and get him out o' there, and I'll sure tell Steve Porte a few things!"

"Do not forget that Al Canning, who owns the Place, runs with the wolves also."

"So? Well, I never did like Al Canning much!"

"You have said openly that he hires crooked dealers for his gambling tables, and Al Canning is the kind of man who remembers such things," Cocopah Charlie declared. "And Pete Reech, the deputy sheriff, owes Al Canning much money, and so is forced to be his friend."

"Uh-huh! I reckon that I understand, Charlie. They've got things all fixed up, ain't they? I've got a stiff game to buck, it seems to me."

"And that is not all, my friend. Cocopah Charlie has heard much more."

"You talk quick, then!" Dan Dauney commanded. "I'm right down eager to get to Al's Place."

"It is said that Dan Dauney and his brother are equal partners in their rich claim down the gulch, and that there is a certain paper which says that if one of these partners dies, then the other gets it all."

"Sure! That's the ordinary survivor clause in the contract," Dan Dauney explained. "What about it?"

"Suppose, Dan Dauney, that the young one loses his half of the claim across the poker table. The man who wins it then would be an equal partner with you. That would be bad enough. And then, if something happened to you, he would have it all."

A sudden realization of the entire plot came to Dan Dauney. He swore a single oath that was powerful and to the point. "Them scoundrels!" he gasped. "So they'd rob Bert and get his half o' the claim, and then shuffle me off and have it all, huh?"

"And then the way would be clear, also, for Steve Porte to get the Zaine girl," Cocopah Charlie pointed out. "Steve Porte makes friends with old Reese Zaine. With the Dauney brothers out of the way, the girl would have no protection. As you have said, Dan Dauney, it is a stiff game you face. But men call you Tricky Hardware, and Cocopah Charlie is your friend. And Cocopah Charlie has hunted wolves before."

"Thanks, Charlie. But this here is my own fight—mine and Bert's," Dan Dauney said.

"Yet it is always good to have a friend standing behind," Cocopah Charlie persisted. "Not all the wolves make their attack from the front, Dan Dauney."

Dan Dauney did not reply to that. He straightened his shoulders suddenly, and strode off down the trail toward the end of the street. Cocopah Charlie glided along a short distance behind, always present, yet not obtrusive.

Dauney's eyes were flashing, and his lips formed the straight line of determination. There was purpose in his stride now. He entered the end of the street and soon was shouldering men out of his path, and when they turned to resent it they took one look at his face and decided to do nothing.

Past resort and store Dan Dauney went, making straight for the flaming kerosene lights in front of Al's Place. Cocopah Charlie fell behind, for he dared not thrust men aside as Dan Dauney was doing.

Yet Dauney was not destined to reach his objective without an interruption. He suddenly found in his path an old man who would not be thrust aside. He was an ancient miner known as "Uncle Dick" Penk, an old-timer who worked for day wages and gave sage advice to those who would listen.

"A word with you, Dan, lad," Uncle Dick Penk begged. "I was hopin' that I'd run across you in the street some time soon."

Dan Dauney stepped aside with him. He had a lot of respect for old Uncle Dick. "I'm in a hurry," Dan said.

"Yeah, I know! It's Bert, I reckon. I tried my best to get him to stop, Dan, but he just wouldn't be stopped. And

I didn't have a chance, because they hustled me away from the table."

"Thanks, Uncle Dick! I reckon that you did everything you could."

"I'd be careful, Dan. You're maybe walkin' right into a trap. Things look funny to me."

"Yeah! Cocopah Charlie told me a lot about it. He's been keepin' his eyes and ears open."

"Charlie is the boy who can find things out, and he's to be trusted," Uncle Dick Penk said. "You take good care o' yourself, Dan. I'll help all I can, if there is trouble."

"Are they trimmin' Bert?"

"Yeah!" said Uncle Dick Penk. "And it's pretty raw, Dan. The boy has the fever on him, and can't see what they're doin'. Blurgon and Sanger are sittin' in the game with Bert and Steve Porte. The fifth man is an outsider, and he don't count."

"All right, Uncle Dick. Thanks ever so much!"

Dan Dauney shook the old-timer's hand, then braced his shoulders yet again and went on through the crowd. Cocopah Charlie slipped up beside Uncle Dick.

"There will be much trouble," the breed said. "I have the feeling."

"Yeah!" Uncle Dick Penk admitted. "And I'm goin' to be right there to see it. It's time that Al Canning, Steve Porte and that crowd were taught a lesson. They've been havin' things too much their own way around this camp. My gun's ready if it's needed."

"And my knife is always kept sharp, and is at the service of my friend," Cocopah Charlie said.

CHAPTER III.

A LAMB BEING SLAUGHTERED.

BENDING forward slightly, Bert Dauney covered his cards with the palm of his left hand. With his right, he tossed two poker chips into the pot. They fell with a click upon the generous heap of chips already there.

"I'm callin' you," Bert Dauney said.

His voice was thick, as though the speaker was laboring under the stress of some strong emotion. His black eyes bored into those of the man on the other side of the table. He licked nervously at his dry lips. The hand that covered the cards trembled. His breathing was a bit too rapid, too heavy.

"I'm callin' you, Porte," he continued. "You've frozen and bluffed everybody else out o' this hand, but I'm sure and certain stickin' right along with you, Porte. And I'm bettin' that this time I've caught you bluffin'!"

The other three players at the table were silent, as befitted men who had dropped their hands. Those who stood around the table and watched, suddenly were silent also. There was an unearthly din in other parts of the big resort, but here in the poker corner of Al's Place, there was an ominous quiet.

Didn't the young fool of a Bert Dauney know that he was being robbed? Didn't he guess that the dealing was crooked? Did he not have common sense enough to realize that Steve Porte was working for himself and for the house, and that Sam Blurgon and Job Sanger, also sitting in the game, were trying to trim him? Was the boy totally blind to everything that was going on?

It was not the business of an outsider to interfere. It was against the code for a man not sitting in the game to warn or accuse. A man was supposed to guard his own interests when he sat at a poker table in Al's Place, or in any other resort of Mogul Creek, for that matter.

"If you've got the feelin' that I'm bluffin', Dauney, why don't you raise me instead of only callin'?" Steve Porte asked. "That's your privilege."

As he spoke, the gambler glanced swiftly around the table. Sam Blurgon and Job Sanger were his allies. The

faces of those partners in evil were the inscrutable faces of good poker players now. Steve Porte knew that both of them were ready to draw guns and defend him if the boy showed fight.

Al Canning, the burly proprietor of the resort, was standing near the table, too, chewing a cigar and watching closely. Al Canning seemed to have an unusual interest in this certain game, for he seldom glanced at the other busy tables. His eyes met those of his dealer, and a message flashed between them.

"I'm callin' you, Porte!" Bert Dauney repeated. "Afraid to show your hand?"

"Not exactly that," Steve Porte replied, his teeth flashing in a mixture of smile and sneer. "I just don't like to give you a bad shock, Bert. Luck is runnin' against you just now, boy. Maybe it'll change later. The cards run funny sometimes."

Somebody standing not far from the table snickered at that, but Bert Dauney did not notice it. He was intent upon the game. His eyes bored into those of the gambler again, and he bent forward across the table once more.

"It just happens," the boy said, "that I've got a full house this time, and she's topped with queens! Flip over your cards, Porte, and let me rake in the chips."

The expression in the face of the gambler did not change. He turned his cards over slowly, and spread them out. Bert Dauney saw four tens and a trey.

"And there it is!" Steve Porte said. "I wasn't bluffin' this time, was I? Four little tens—forty miles! That makes your queen full look weak and silly."

Bert Dauney sank back in his chair and brushed his hand across his eyes weakly. He expelled his breath in a great sigh, and for a moment seemed to collapse in his chair. And then a whimsical smile came into his face.

"You win," he admitted. "I sure thought that you were bluffin' that time, Porte. My mistake."

There was instant relief in the faces of Steve Porte, Sam Blurgon and Job Sanger. They had been half afraid that the boy would leave the table in disgust and so ruin their plans.

"You're a good loser, Bert, and that's the first thing a poker player must be," Steve Porte said, as Sam Blurgon started to gather in the cards for the next deal. "I'll say that much for you. If anybody is goin' to win around here, I hope that you're the man. You've sure got it comin'."

Bert Dauney replied nothing. He was bending forward again now, watching Sam Blurgon riffle the cards. He had only a few chips on the table in front of him. And there was only a little gold dust remaining in his poke, and that poke had held a comfortable amount of it a short time before.

"Give me another stack o' chips," Bert ordered.

He spoke in a monotone, and scarcely above a whisper. He was thinking of what his brother Dan would say to this. Dan often had warned him against gambling, had talked to him like a father, and he had promised Dan that he would do it no more. He scarcely knew, he told himself now, what had got him started to-night.

The fever had come upon him during the afternoon, while he was hard at work on the claim, and he had been unable to fight it off. As he worked with pick and shovel and rocker, he was seeing stacks of chips and packs of cards. He had employed a subterfuge to get away from the cabin, away from Dan. And he had traveled to Al's Place and Steve Porte's poker table as speedily as possible, bringing with him the poke that contained his share of the takings for a month.

He had won a few small pots at first, and then he had started losing, and had continued losing regularly. When he did win, the pot was small, and when he lost the betting had been heavy. He

was such a novice that he did not realize what that meant, or that he had three enemies at the table and that they were whipsawing him steadily.

Steve Porte passed a stack of chips across the table to him. He took the poke from the boy, and on tiny and delicate scales adjusted to the advantage of the house, he weighed out the purchase price of the stack. When he returned the poke to Bert Dauney there was only a tiny pinch of the precious dust remaining in it.

The youngster fingered the chips and bent forward to watch Sam Blurgon as he dealt. Job Sanger was watching the boy in turn, trying to read him, to ascertain whether he was growing suspicious. A great team, Blurgon and Sanger, swindlers and cheats, mining-camp parasites. More than one camp had risen in indignation and had run them out.

"Are you gettin' suspicious o' me, Dauney?" Sam Blurgon asked suddenly.

"I've got a right to watch the deal, ain't I?" Bert Dauney asked in turn. "Any reason why I shouldn't?"

"No reason at all," Sam Blurgon said. "Watch me all you like. But you're sure actin' a whole lot like you thought I might not deal fair."

Somebody near the table snickered again. Bert Dauney glanced up quickly. But if he saw warnings in the faces of those around the table, he did not construe them to be such.

He was allowed to win a small pot, and his enthusiasm increased. Job Sanger dealt the cards again.

"You'll make a poker player, Bert," Steve Porte said, as he bent across the table a bit. "Trouble is, you're a long-winded player. I've seen a lot o' them in my time."

"What you mean?" Bert asked.

"Some men always start in a game slow, don't get warmed up quick. The cards are against 'em at first. They drift along, losin' pot after pot, close, just like you lost that big one a short time ago. Then their luck changes with a bang, and they clean up. I've seen it a hundred times. Long-winded players."

"Yeah?" Bert Dauney said.

"If a long-winded player can stick in the game, he'll come out a big winner. But he's got to have capital to string along until his luck changes. Understand? If he gets out o' money or dust before the cards commence talkin' for him, he's in hard luck."

"I reckon," the boy said.

"If you had enough dust to stick in this here game, there's no tellin' where you'd end. You know Al Canning. He never closes a game because a man's winnin'. Al would go broke first, stake this place and everything. Al's got that reputation. He went broke half a dozen years ago to a man who came into the game with five thousand dollars. When the game ended, he bought Al a drink—he owned Al's place."

"Uh-huh!" the boy said.

The betting was stiff, and Job Sanger won the pot. Almost all the boy's chips were gone now. Yet he won the next pot, though it was only a small one.

"See that? Old Dame Fortune is sure and certain flirtin' with you now, Bert," Steve Porte told him, laughing a bit. "You had to call that time. If you'd been able to plunge, you'd have raked in a nice heap o' chips. You had both Blurgon and Sanger goin' that time."

"I reckon," Bert said, wetting his dry lips with the tip of his tongue.

Steve Porte was dropping a seed of suggestion in fertile, prepared soil. He wanted the boy to make the offer himself, if it was possible to get him to do so. He did not want to suggest it if such a thing could be avoided. Porte wanted to be able to say, afterward, that Bert Dauney had suggested and made a deal.

"I wish that I had a wad o' money," Bert said suddenly. "I think you're

right, Porte. I need a lot o' money to sit in a game. I've got an idea that I'm one of them there long-winded players."

"That's my idea, and I've sure seen a lot of 'em," Steve Porte replied. "I'd like to see you win, Bert. You've been losin' regular, and you're a good loser. It's about time for the worm to turn, to my way o' thinkin'."

"I wonder if I couldn't raise some money."

"How?" the gambler asked. "Your brother Dan has got some foolish ideas about gamblin', seems to me, but o' course he's entitled to 'em. He wouldn't lend you any money to play cards with, I betcha. Would he?"

"No, he wouldn't. Dan don't like to have me play cards. I own half our claim, you know. I wonder if I couldn't borrow some money on that," Bert said. "If I could stake my half against so much money, and then buy it back after I'd won, couldn't I?"

"Now, that's an idea!" Steve Porte said. It was what they had been waiting for, these wolves. "But you'd have to see Al Canning about that. He's the one who's got the money. I'm only one o' his dealers. There's Al in the crowd now."

Steve Porte beckoned to Al, and the owner of the resort came over to the table, still chewing characteristically on his unlighted cigar. He listened to the excited Bert Dauney, and agreed to the proposition. But even Al Canning wanted to make it look good.

"What'll your brother say?" Canning asked. "I don't want him comin' in here and raisin' a fuss."

"I own half that claim," Bert told him. "Dan's all right, but he ain't my nurse."

"Well, Bert, I'll stake you ten thousand dollars against your half o' the claim," Al Canning said. "I reckon that it's worth that much. You can have a chance to pay it back any time inside two weeks. I'll go and write out the paper. Porte, you give him a couple o' stacks o' chips and let the game go on."

This was the situation for which the plotters had been waiting. They would win that ten thousand from the boy. He would be unable to redeem his share of the claim. Al Canning would be half owner with Dan Dauney, then. And if something happened to Dan, something that would look much like an accident, the plotters would have the entire claim.

Steve Porte gave the boy two stacks of chips. With those on the table before him, and plenty more to be had if he wished them, Bert Dauney started to plunge in his betting. He lost the first pot, then won quite a large one, and exulted, not guessing that this was all arranged.

Al Canning brought him a paper to sign, and he signed without giving it more than a passing glance. Then the game was continued. Steve Porte furtively allowed his eyes to meet those of Sam Blurgon and Job Sanger. The time for the big cleaning was at hand.

The betting on the next deal was heavy, and Bert Dauney lost a large amount. He lost again; and then he won a small pot. And so it continued, with the youngster always dropping farther behind, but winning just often enough to keep hope from dying within him. Stack after stack of chips were passed to him across the table, and Steve Porte kept an account of them on a little sheet of paper at his elbow.

Bert Dauney's face was livid now as he realized the aggregate of his losses. He began to feel the fear that he never would be able to recover. He was so nervous that he scarcely could hold the cards. He commenced making foolish bets. He bluffed when the others knew that he was bluffing. And whenever he got a good hand and bet to the limit, somebody else in the game always held a better hand.

Stack after stack! His credit dwin-

dled! The plotters were playing him as swiftly as they dared.

The fifth man, the outsider, having a certain amount of wisdom, and seeing how things were going, dropped out of the game, and nobody offered to take his chair.

"It's bad luck to play with only four at the table," Bert Dauney whined. "Let's get a fifth."

A voice from the fringe of the crowd broke in.

"I'll sit in this game!"

Dan Dauney suddenly was standing there beside the table, his eyes blazing, his arms hanging loosely at his sides.

CHAPTER IV.

DAN DAUNEY SITS IN.

DAN DAUNEY had thrust his way rapidly through the street crowd toward the front door of Al's Place after leaving Uncle Dick Penk, but he came to a stop before he got within sight of the door. It had occurred to him that the wolves might be expecting him to put in an appearance there.

So he darted into the dark space between two of the buildings, and got to the rear of the line of structures that fronted on the street. Going carefully through the black night, trying to avoid stumbling over rocks and heaps of débris, he came finally to the rear of Al's Place and managed to get unseen to a dust-streaked and fly-specked window, through which he could peer into the rear of the big room.

He could see the poker tables easily, and the one at which Bert was sitting was not far away. Dan Dauney watched the game through the dingy window. He could read the signs. He saw furtive glances pass between Porte and Blurgon and Sanger. He knew what was happening there as well as though Steve Porte himself had told him.

He went on to the rear door, where Al Canning did not have a guard stationed. Dan Dauney was not the sort to enter through rear doors generally. And so Dan was able to slip inside and get into the thick crowd without being seen by any of those in the poker corner.

He went direct to the bar and ordered a drink. He did not want the drink particularly; he wished to observe the demeanor of those about him. And the polite, studied manner in which they greeted him and then moved away convinced him that they were afraid of trouble, for some reason, and did not wish to be in his vicinity, that they knew what was being done to Bert.

So Dan Dauney moved slowly toward the poker table at which his brother was playing, got there just in time to hear Bert demand the fifth man, and made his offer to sit in the game.

There was instant silence at the table and around it. Men moved back out of the way. Porte and Blurgon and Sanger sat as though suddenly turned to stone. Porte's face flushed. Al Canning, who was standing near, turned and surveyed the scene, and growled an oath under his breath.

Dan Dauney was standing with his legs widespread, his arms hanging loosely, his attitude and posture that of a man prepared to draw hardware swiftly if the occasion demanded it.

"The boy's right! A five-man game is best," Dan Dauney said. "Anybody got any objections if I take this chair?"

"Why, sure not, Dan!" Steve Porte replied, in a voice that sounded flat. "Take the seat. Want a couple o' stacks o' chips?"

"Just a minute, please! We are sure and certain goin' to rearrange this here game," Dan Dauney said. "First, Bert is goin' to quit!"

"Aw!" the boy drawled. "Why should I quit now, Dan?"

"In the first place, because you promised me that you wouldn't play again."

"Well, I'm sorry that I broke my

promise, Dan. But I just couldn't help it. And I've got to go on now, Dan. You see, I'm behind the game——"

"I reckon!" Dan Dauney interrupted. "How much behind?"

"Well, I lost quite a lot o' dust. But I'm one o' these here long-winded players, and the cards haven't turned in my favor yet. I want to make a killin', Dan. Let me keep right on."

"Did you stake your half o' the claim?" Dan demanded.

The expression that came into the boy's face told Dan Dauney that he had guessed correctly.

"How much you got left?" Dan demanded.

"He's got a credit o' five hundred yet," Steve Porte spoke up. "Here are the figures, Dan."

"Uh-huh! I don't doubt that the figures are correct, Porte. Trimmed him neat, didn't you?"

"Now, you see here!" Steve Porte snapped, trying to make a show of courage that he did not feel. "I don't know nothin' about this. This here table is for an open game, and you know it very well. We take all comers, win or lose. If a man wants to play at this table, we can't refuse—that's a rule o' the house."

"Yeah! I can understand all that," Dan Dauney told him. "But who made the deal with the boy for his share o' the claim?"

"I made it, Dauney," Al Canning said, stepping up beside him. "The lad suggested it himself. I staked him ten thousand against his half o' the claim, and gave him the privilege o' buyin' it back any time inside two weeks."

"Now that's a right nice little deal," Dan Dauney said. "Only it smells! Bert may be an infant, but I've cut all my teeth. No use in arguin' gents. I understand the whole thing."

"What do you mean by that?" Sam Blurgon snarled.

"And just where do you come in, Blurgon? You're only a player at the table, ain't you? You ain't got any interest in Bert's financial deals, have you? Huh! A blind man could see what's goin' on here. Bert, you young fool! Can't you understand——"

"If you want to play, sit in," Al Canning interrupted. "We don't want a lot o' loose talk in the poker corner. It bothers the other players."

"But you're goin' to have a little talk," Dan Dauney told him. "And none o' you gents better make a hostile move, either. If any o' your hired men try to fuss around me, Canning, I'll get you with the first shot. That's a little thought that you'd maybe better keep in the back o' your head!"

"I'm runnin' games here, Dauney," Canning said. "I don't compel anybody to play. And I don't want anybody playin' if he whines when he loses a few dollars. So you c'n go right ahead and take your kid brother out o' here!" he said.

"I don't want to quit!" Bert cried. "I'm behind——"

"And do you think that you'd ever get ahead, or come even, you idiot?" Dan Dauney snapped at him. "Don't you know a frame-up when you see one?"

"I don't like that talk!" Canning cried.

"Steady, gents!" Dauney warned. "I know your little game—the whole of it! And you'd better remember, Canning, that you'll get the first shot. Bert, you get out o' here! Get back to the cabin!"

"You're treatin' me like a baby," Bert complained.

"That's what you are! And you're a nice fat chicken in a den o' foxes, too!" Dan told him. "You get out o' here, now, and make trail for the cabin!"

"I'm sick o' bein' treated like a baby!" Bert cried at him. "You always want everything your own way. Ain't I got any rights at all? You're against me in everything!"

"Bert! I'm just tryin' to take care o' you, boy."

"There's some folks you'd like to make think that I'm just a baby."

"That's enough, Bert! Get out o' here, I said!"

"I won't go!"

Dan Dauney made a quick move, grasped Bert by the collar of his shirt, and yanked him out of his chair.

"Let me go!" Bert shouted. "Take your hands off me!"

He swung a fist, and it crashed against Dan's breast. Dan's face turned white as he gripped the boy's arms. Their eyes blazed.

"I reckon that was a shame, wasn't it?" Dan Dauney said, his voice low and charged with emotion. "You hit me!"

"You let me go! You ain't got any right——"

"Go! That's what I want you to do," Dan said. "I'll tend to you later!"

Bert stepped back, whimpering, a shamed look in his face. Dan Dauney looked at him straight, but the eyes of the youngster soon fell before his gaze.

"I'm goin' to sit in a game here and gamble my head off, but you're goin' home," Dan said. "Don't even hang around the camp. Five hundred left out o' ten thousand, huh? And a lot o' dust besides! A blind man could see what you've been up against."

Sudden realization of the truth seemed to come to the boy. He lurched forward.

"They've robbed me!" he shouted. "Curse them, they've robbed and robbed me. They're tryin' to get my half o' the claim."

"What's that?" Steve Porte snapped.

"Steady, gents!" Dan Dauney warned. "Of course they robbed you, Bert. And you was right willin' to sit here and be robbed. A chicken in a fox den! You get out o' here, now. I'll tend to you later!"

The boy hesitated for an instant, and then turned and made his way into the crowd and toward the front door. Dan Dauney looked at the others.

"Yeah, I'm goin' to sit in this here game," he told them. "Porte, you and Blurgon and Sanger will play, too. That makes only four o' us. But Al Canning will make the fifth."

"I'm not playin'," Al Canning replied. "You know that I never play durin' regular business hours."

"But you're goin' to play now," Dan Dauney declared, his thumbs hooked into his belt, his fingers twitching as though eager to get at his six-guns. "You sit down, Canning! This here is an open game. And you're a boss gambler. I've got a right to try for revenge for my brother. Sit down and play, Canning, or I'll brand you in these diggin's and others as a rank coward! And always remember this, Canning—you get the first shot!"

He sat down in the chair Bert had been using. Al Canning, his face purple with wrath, sat down in another. Canning dared not refuse to play, not when half a hundred men had overheard what Dan Dauney had said.

Dauney took out his poke and put it upon the table.

"Give me plenty o' chips," he ordered. "I want action in this here game. I don't gamble much, but when I do I go at it right. And be careful how you weigh out that dust, Porte!"

"What's that? Are you insinuatin' that I'd be crooked about weighin' it?" Porte asked.

"I know danged well that all o' you are crooked. I know that I'm sittin' in a crooked game. I'm goin' to be crooked myself," Dan Dauney replied. "But you gents are not! I'm puttin' one o' my guns in front o' me on the table, just by way of a warnin' that you'd better not be too raw. Under the circumstances, gents, knowin' what you've done and what you intended doin', I'm goin' to cheat—but you ain't!"

As he finished speaking, he placed the gun handy to his right hand. Blurgon and Sanger and Canning were watching him closely. Rage seethed within them, but they did not attempt to make a hostile move. This was not the time for that. Canning's eyes narrowed, and he chewed furiously at his cigar. Trouble was coming out of this, he judged. He wanted to be prepared for it, wanted to emerge victor if there was a possibility of a row.

Porte passed over chips, weighed dust and returned Dauney's poke, broke open a new pack of cards. They cut for deal, and Sam Blurgon got it.

"I might remark," Dan Dauney said, "that I know quite a lot o' card tricks. And I sure and certain c'n detect 'em, too, when they're used by another man. And the first one I detect at this here table, I start shootin'. Everybody understand that? All right, then! Deal 'em up, Blurgon!"

CHAPTER V.

A SHOT FROM AMBUSH.

SOMEWHERE in his past, Dan Dauney had learned considerable about the manipulation of cards. He dropped out the first hand, and dealt the second. And he won the pot, grinning as he raked in the chips.

That he had made a crooked deal, no man at the table, and no man who stood near it, doubted. In fact, Dan Dauney intimated as much in his talk.

And then began a card duel that furnished a topic for conversation for months to come. Against their wiles, Dan Dauney pitted tricks of his own. He lost at times, but he won for the greater part. The stacks of chips in front of him grew.

Nor did he relax vigilance. He was cautious, alert, ready for instant gun play if it came. They were remembering that he was called Tricky Hardware, and none cared to make a move that would bring Dan Dauney into action with his guns flaming.

Two hours passed. Word of the card duel had gone through the camp, and men poured into Al's Place to get the latest news regarding it. Dan Dauney had won six thousand dollars and was still going strong. Canning and Porte, Blurgon and Sanger were helpless in his hands. Half his tricks they could not detect. And when they did detect one they could do nothing about it.

And then they tried throwing down their hands whenever he dealt. But Dan Dauney would not have that, either.

"You gents just love to play poker," he informed them. "And so I'm expectin' you to do some tall bettin'. You've all got bettin' hands this time, gents. Look 'em over! What you doin' Canning? Raisin' me a hundred? That's fine!" He laughed and raked in the pot.

Another hour passed, and then Dan Dauney stopped Porte as he would have dealt.

"At a rough guess, I've got myself about ten thousand ahead o' the game," he said. "There ain't any use in prolongin' this here affair, I reckon. Sanger and Blurgon are playin' with house money, anyway, and o' course, Porte is. So we'll make an end o' it—Canning and me."

"What's that?" Al Canning demanded.

"A thousand each, Canning. One card to each o' us. High card wins. Mr. Steve Porte can deal the cards."

The boss gambler and Dan Dauney faced each other across the table. Dauney's eyes were narrowed to tiny slits, and seemed to send forth flaming sparks. Steve Porte shivered as he caught sight of them.

"You c'n deal 'em, Porte!" Dauney said. "I'm leavin' it to your judgment how you deal."

There was a menace in the remark,

an unveiled menace, and every man who heard the words understood. Porte looked at Al Canning helplessly as he riffled the cards and prepared them for cutting.

Uncle Dick Penk was near the table, and had been watching for more than two hours. Cocopah Charlie hovered in the background. Dan Dauney had other friends in that crowd, too, some of them men who had been fleeced in Al's Place, and were ready to back up the man who was beating Al Canning at his own game.

Steve Porte dealt a card to each. Dan Dauney flipped his over immediately, and allowed his right hand to rest on the gun on the table before him.

"There it is, Canning!" he said. "An eight. That's not very high. But I reckon that it beats yours, don't it?"

Canning glanced at his card, gulped, and tossed it into the discard.

"You win!" he said.

And those who stood behind his chair knew that he threw down a king in the face of Dan Dauney's unvoiced threat.

"Steady, gents!" Dauney said. "The show is over for this evenin'. Cash in these chips, Porte. Canning, take out ten thousand and hand me that paper the boy signed. I've got a thousand or so profit, too, I reckon. Weigh out the dust carefullike, Porte!"

They were helpless. They could start a gun battle, but they did not care to risk that. Al Canning, especially, who had seen Tricky Hardware shoot, did not want to be made a victim. Often, during the last two hours or so, his eyes had begged his fellows in crime not to make a move.

Dan Dauney got the paper Bert had signed and calmly destroyed it. He took the dust Porte weighed and poured it into his poke, and stuffed the poke away.

"I got sense enough to understand," he said, "that I c'n expect some trouble out o' this. Because you jaspers never know when you've got enough. But I'm tellin' you here and now that I'll be watchin'."

He stood up, stretched, and picked up his gun. The others got up also. Dan Dauney motioned them toward the bar, and they started in that direction. But, instead of following them, Dan Dauney turned aside quickly and allowed the friendly crowd to swallow him.

He reached the door and went out into the crowded street, where the cool breeze was sweeping down from the hills. He drank in deep gulps of it, clearing his head and lungs after the long session in the smoke-laden air of Al's Place. Uncle Dick Penk appeared beside him.

"Good boy, Dan!" he whispered. "But you want to keep your eyes and ears open now, boy. They'll be on your trail."

"I reckon!" Dan said. "I couldn't expect anything else. But I aim to take care o' myself."

"They'll scheme up somethin', Dan."

"I'll be watchin'. I've got to get to the cabin, now. I want to talk to Bert. He—he struck me."

"I saw it, Dan, but the boy——"

"He struck me!" Dan Dauney repeated. "And he insinuated somethin', too, about me wantin' certain folks to think he was a baby. Cocopah Charlie had it right, I reckon. I'm the only blind one in Mogul Creek."

"Are you meanin' about the girl, Dan?" Uncle Dick asked.

"Yeah! I hadn't even thought that Bert——"

"He's only a foolish boy, Dan. Don't let it bother you. Maybe this here affair will teach him some sense. Every youngster has to have his fling and learn his lesson."

"I'll get back home and talk to him."

"I don't think he went to the cabin, Dan."

"What's that? I told him to get home!"

"Cocopah Charlie told me a little

while ago that Bert had gone to one o' the places across the street. He had a pinch o' dust left, I reckon, and probably tried to run it into a million."

"But I told him to go home!" Dan Dauney's voice was stern. "If he's disobeyed me——"

"He thinks that he's a man, Dan, and master o' his own actions," Uncle Dick explained.

"He's got to mind me, just the same, until he's older and knows more. I'm goin' to find Bert and have it out with him."

His voice was raised as he finished speaking. A dozen men heard his words. A dozen men saw Dan Dauney leave old Uncle Dick and slip away across the street, making for the nearest resort, on a hunt for his erring brother.

And inside Al's Place, a group of angry, half-frenzied men had gathered in the little room which Al Canning used as an office. Porte and Blurgon and Sanger were there, and also Deputy Sheriff Pete Reech.

Pete Reech held his position by virtue of his relation to the sheriff by marriage, and not because he was fitted for the office. He was a weak sort of man in some things. Al Canning's thumb was upon him.

"We've got to get 'em!" Canning said, speaking in low tones. "No man can handle me like that and get away with it. And my plan is the best. It'd be easy to shoot Dan Dauney down from ambush, but there'd be talk. And this other way will hurt him more."

"And who's goin' to do it?" Porte asked.

"Reech can't, 'cause he'll be needed in an official capacity. You understand, Reech?"

"Yeah! But I don't like it," the deputy said. "It's goin' pretty far."

"But it's an easy way to get a share in a rich claim, Reech," the gambler told him. "You just wander out o' here, now, and wait for the time to get busy. There'll be plenty o' witnesses. That'll leave me and Porte, Sanger and Blurgon. I've got four little cards here in my hand. One of 'em is the ace o' spades. The man who draws that does the work. Get goin', Reech!"

The deputy left the office and went to the bar, where he fortified himself with strong waters for the ordeal that he knew was coming. Al Canning spread the four cards on a table.

"Each gent draws a card and keeps the result to himself," he instructed. "That way, nobody will know exactly."

They each drew a card, glanced at it, stuffed it into a pocket. Then they went into the big room, where the din was heavy again, where men were drinking and gambling, howling and guarreling. They went through the crowd, separating, each going his own way. And in the pocket of one of them was the ace of spades.

Far down the street, some minutes later, a half-intoxicated boy lurched from one of the resorts. His last pinch of dust was gone. Men had been laughing at him, too. He felt that his own brother had turned against him, and it did not help any because he knew that he deserved it.

And he had the realization, too, that Stella Zaine was not for him. How could she love a foolish boy, when there was a man like Dan Dauney reaching out for her?

Bert Dauney sobbed, fought to control himself, tried to brace his shoulders. He would circle the camp and go back to the claim, he told himself. He would have a settlement with Dan, for that could not be avoided.

He walked in front of a space between two of the buildings. That dark space was riven by a flash of flame, by a second. Two reports rang out.

Bert Dauney gave a cry of pain, started forward, staggered, half turned, and collapsed on the ground as men

came running. But the life had gone out of him before the first reached his side.

CHAPTER VI.

IN JAIL—AND OUT.

MOGUL CREEK was inured to violence and tragedy, for they were everyday affairs, but the assassination of Bert Dauney startled the camp, for there were peculiar circumstances attending it. Everybody knew how Bert Dauney had been fleeced in Al's Place, and how his brother, Dan, had avenged him at the card table.

Rumors flew throughout the camp, wild rumors without the slightest foundation in fact, and many of them ridiculous. Dan Dauney, receiving news of the tragedy, rushed grief-stricken down the street, refusing at first to believe it. He was sobbing as he knelt beside his brother's body.

"Who did it? Why?" he cried. "Who would kill Bert? He never harmed any man except himself."

No man gave him a reply. Some of those nearest turned away, choking at the sight, and others because they were suspicious. Only "The Doctor" touched Dan Dauney on the shoulder and tried to get him on his feet again.

The Doctor was known to the camp by no other name. He was one of the mysterious ones of Mogul Creek. He was physician and pastor in one. He was an accredited justice of the peace, and he also acted as coroner. The Doctor was prepared to marry couples, though the couples who wished to be married were few, and he delivered the funeral orations in Boothill when the deceased was of enough importance.

"Come away now, Dan," The Doctor begged. "You can't do any good here. I'll have the body taken to my cabin, and we'll have the funeral at noon, when a lot o' the boys can be there. I'll give him a good oration, Dan."

"Who did it?" Dan Dauney demanded. "I'll find him—kill him! I'll run him down if it takes me years! It's my brother they've killed!"

"Somebody shot from the dark, Dan, shot from ambush like a cowardly skunk! Maybe they mistook Bert for some other man. That's all that anybody knows about it, Dan. Come away, now."

But Dan Dauney would not leave. He helped them carry his brother's body into The Doctor's cabin at the end of the street. And there he stood looking down at him, his eyes bright and tearless now.

"The last words that I had with him were harsh words," Dan Dauney said. "I ordered him to go back to the cabin. I—I was tryin' to take proper care o' the boy."

"That there is right good actin'," a voice behind him said.

Dan Dauney turned slowly, scarcely understanding, to find Deputy Sheriff Pete Reech standing there with half a dozen determined men behind him. Dan Dauney was like a dazed man. He brushed a hand across his eyes and stared at them without speaking.

"You're under arrest, Dan Dauney," the deputy announced. "Hand me your guns!"

The deputy's own gun was in his right hand and ready for instant use as he spoke. He feared that Dan Dauney might show fight. But two of the men stepped forward swiftly and took a gun from Dan's holster, and another from the front of his belt.

"I—I don't understand," Dan Dauney was saying. "What do you mean, Reech?"

"You're under arrest, Dauney. I guess that is plain enough. Under arrest for shootin' your brother."

"What's that?" Dan Dauney shouted the words, and would have hurled himself upon the deputy and attempted to throttle him, but men grasped him and held him back, finally quieting him.

"You told him in Al's Place that you'd tend to him later," Deputy Reech pointed out. "And you was heard to say, just after you left Al's Place, that you was goin' to find Bert and have it out with him. You did just that, I reckon."

"You fools! He was my brother! I was tryin' to see that he got along all right."

"Yeah! You were both in love with the same girl, too, and there was hard feelin's between you because o' that. You had motive enough for it, I reckon."

Once more Dan Dauney lurched forward, and it took three men to hold him back, to keep him from clutching the deputy's throat.

"Don't you dare say that!" Dauney cried. "And don't stand there doin' nothin', Reech. You're an officer. Find the man who killed my brother. Find him for me, give me his name—and then turn your back!"

"Yep, it's right good actin'," Pete Reech commented. "But it don't go down with me, Dauney. You threatened to square accounts with Bert. He was fussin' around the girl you wanted for yourself. And that claim o' yours —with him dead, you own it all. It's a right rich claim, too, I understand."

"Why, you——" Dauney started.

"So I'm arrestin' you, Dauney, and we'll have a little investigation into this here case."

"So that's the game, is it?" Dan Dauney cried. "Runnin' with the wolves, are you? Playin' Al Canning's dirty game because you owe him money!"

"That's enough, Dauney!"

"Hits you, does it? I'm talkin' now. I blocked one o' Al's schemes, so he's tryin' this. Let me tell you somethin', Reech. I'm goin' to find the man who killed my brother, and I'm goin' to kill him! Porte and Canning, Blurgon and Sanger—and now you! You're all in on it! Kill Bert, get me out o' the way, steal the claim! If I must, I'll get you one at a time!"

"You ain't goin' to get anybody just now," the deputy informed him. "You're goin' to the jail!"

"Try to take me!"

"That wont' be extra hard to do now, I reckon," Deputy Reech replied. "You ain't got your guns on now, Dan Dauney. You ain't got any hardware to be tricky with. We're gettin' sick o' murders in this here camp, and it's time to put an end to 'em."

"I didn't kill him, I tell you! And you know it! It's your dirty scheme to——"

"Fetch him along, men!" Reech ordered.

The command was issued to the men Deputy Sheriff Pete Reech had brought to the cabin. He knew that they would do his bidding, since they were picked men who served Al Canning. And now they fought against the frantic, struggling Dan Dauney, finally subdued him, and carried him down the street between two lines of wondering citizens of Mogul Creek.

They took him to the little log jail on the side of the hill. They tossed him inside, and the heavy door was closed and the bolts shot into place. Dan Dauney grasped the bars of the nearest window, shook them, yelled at the men outside. But they went away when Reech ordered them to do so, and the deputy stepped closer to the window.

"We've got all kinds o' evidence against you, Dauney," Reech said. "Plenty to convict. A miners' jury will do for you to-morrow, more'n likely."

"I'll get you for this, Reech—I'll get all of you!" Dan Dauney promised. "Your crooked scheme won't work. I've got a few friends in this camp. And I'll settle personal with the man who killed my brother."

"Still actin' and pretendin', are you? Well, I can't blame you, o' course."

"You know that this thing has all been arranged."

"Yeah? Just where were you when your brother was killed?"

"I was lookin' around town tryin' to find him. A friend o' mine had told me that he hadn't gone back to the cabin."

"Uh-huh! And I reckon you found him, too. You can't say just where you were when he was shot, or who saw you, or who you was talkin' to, can you? You ain't got a leg to stand on, Dauney. That big cottonwood tree down by the creek will have a weight on one o' its limbs to-morrow, maybe."

"You can't get away with this, Reech! And when the time comes for me to pay you off——"

Pete Reech stepped closer to the window, up in the darkness, keeping just far enough away so that Dan Dauney could not thrust out a mighty hand and grasp him by the throat.

"I've always hated you, Dauney!" he said. "Think that this is all arranged, do you? What if it is, huh? It's goin' through, just the same! I reckon that Al Canning and the boys will relocate your claim after you swing. And, far as that girl o' yours is concerned, Steve Porte will make her a fine husband."

"You're speakin' your death warrant, Reech!"

"And I ain't a bit afraid o' that, either. We've got you, Dan Dauney! Nine tenths o' the men in camp are thinkin' right now that you shot your brother 'cause you was jealous o' him, and they're ready to string you up. I'm leavin' you alone in the jail, Dauney, and goin' back to the street. If certain gents take a notion to save the trouble of a trial, it'll be too bad!"

"You skunk!" Dauney hissed at him. "And what do you get out o' it? What does Blurgon get, and Sanger? Are you fools to do Al Canning's dirty work for nothin'?"

"Oh, we'll all have a share in your rich claim," the deputy said, laughing a bit. "Don't worry about us, Dauney. You'd better be worryin' about yourself."

"One o' you five men shot my brother!" Dauney accused. "I c'n see the whole thing now."

"Ain't you imaginin'?" said the deputy.

"Which one did it? I dare you to tell!"

Pete Reech laughed again. "I may look like a fool, but I ain't one, exactly," he said. "Well, I'll be sayin' good-by now, Dauney. This may be the last time I'll see you alive. I can't do a thing, can I, if half a hundred men take a notion to string you up? Certainly not! What c'n one man do against a mob?"

As he spoke, a shadow slipped around the corner of the little log jail, a shadow that hugged the wall. And suddenly that shadow swept forward, there came the thud of a blow, a groan, and Deputy Sheriff Pete Reech measured his length on the ground.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FUGITIVE.

THE imprisoned Dan Dauney scarcely realized what had happened. And then it flashed into his mind that the official had been attacked and rendered unconscious. Dauney had a moment of fear then, for perhaps this act meant the descent of lynchers.

But the fear was only fleeting. That shadow outside bent over the prostrate deputy sheriff for a moment. Dauney heard something that sounded like the click of handcuffs. Then the shadow sprang up and hurried to the window.

"Dan Dauney!" it said.

"That you, Charlie?"

"It is Cocopah Charlie, yes! Never does Charlie forsake a friend. Go to the door, which Charlie will open."

The breed dashed around to the door and drew the heavy bolts. With the key he had taken from Reech's pocket,

he turned the lock. He opened the door, and Dan Dauney stepped out into the open

"Keep to the shadows," Cocopah Charlie whispered. "The deputy will groan for a few minutes before he awakes. I have put his own handcuffs on his wrists. Men will laugh at him."

"Thanks for this, Charlie."

"I serve my friend!" Charlie said. "I mourn for the one who is gone. I help Dan Dauney find the man who killed his brother. Do not scorn my help now, Dan Dauney. Charlie is part Indian. He can read sign, and sometimes he can read men. Let us go."

"Go where?" Dauney asked. "I've got work to do."

"Foolish work?" Cocopah Charlie demanded. "You would rush down into the town, perhaps, and have hot words and some shooting. And then perhaps the second Dauney brother would be among the slain. There is no sense in that."

"I want to find the man who killed Bert."

"So! But some think that you did it. They will seize you and put you into the jail again, or do worse. Charlie has not been idle. Charlie has found out many things. You must escape for the present. Then we will make our search. In the morning, Charlie can read the sign. Come with me now, Dan Dauney, to where another friend is waiting for you."

Dauney was still in a half-dazed condition. He turned and followed the breed, keeping in the shadows as much as possible and trying to make little noise. He did not doubt that the unconscious deputy and the empty jail would be discovered soon, and he wanted to be well away from the scene.

Charlie led him over the hill and down the other side, where they could not even see the lights of Mogul Creek. They dropped down into a tiny canyon, along the bottom of which ran a trail, and hurried along through the sandy earth. And after a time they came to a clearing, where a man stood holding a horse.

"Uncle Dick!" Dauney gasped.

"Steady, boy!" Uncle Dick Penk warned. "We don't want to make any mistakes, now. Here is a horse, Dan. Belongs to a friend o' mine, and was borrowed for you to use."

"And here are your own guns," Cocopah Charlie added. "The sheriff was carrying them, and I took them from him after I knocked him on the head."

Dan Dauney grasped the weapons thankfully, examined them, and stowed them away.

"You've got to keep your liberty, Dan," Uncle Dick was explaining. "Charlie will find out things, and I'll do my small part. Let everybody think that you made a run for it."

"I can't have them thinkin' that. I can't have them believin' that I killed my own brother."

"But you've got to stay in the clear until men get cooled down," Uncle Dick protested. "Al Canning and his men have got 'em all stirred up now. Can't you see the sense in it, boy?"

"Just what is the game, then?" Dan asked.

"Hide out somewhere in the hills. Come to this spot at night at this time, and be careful when you do it. Either Charlie or I will meet you here. Charlie will do a little scoutin'."

"I want to know who killed my brother," Dan Dauney said.

"The Canning gang, but we don't know which man," Uncle Dick replied. "Canning or Porte, or Blurgon or Sanger. They're all guilty, Dan. But we don't know which one fired the shot. I know that Pete Reech didn't, for he was standin' in the doorway of Al's Place when the shootin' occurred. I saw him there."

"That leaves four," Dan Dauney said, as though to himself. "But Reech is

guilty, too, if he was in the plot. He told me as much up at the jail."

"You stay under cover then, Dan, until we find out a few things," Uncle Dick urged. "Be careful, boy. We don't want that gang to get the best o' you."

"Bert's got to have a funeral."

"I'll tend to that, Dan. I'll fix everything with The Doctor. The Doctor don't believe that you're guilty. They'll be buryin' Bert about noon to-morrow."

"Listen, Uncle Dick! Have them dig the grave right in front o' that big jumble o' rocks at the edge o' Boothill. You know it? Good! You tend to that for me."

"But why just there, Dan?"

"Don't be askin' questions. You reckon that there'll be a lot o' men at the funeral?"

"You know what a funeral is in this here town, Dan. It's a social affair. But there won't be very much of a crowd at Bert's funeral. Men who are afraid o' Al Canning will be afraid to go, afraid o' makin' a show of takin' sides."

"I'm goin', Uncle Dick."

"What's that, lad?"

"I'm goin' to my brother's funeral, and nobody can stop me," Dan Dauney said. "You make 'em dig the grave where I said, and leave the rest to me."

"They'll catch you, Dan, and we don't want that."

"They won't catch me, Uncle Dick. None o' the Canning gang will be there, unless it's just one sent to watch things. Bert was my brother, and I'm goin' to his funeral. But don't you tell The Doctor or anybody else. And don't be afraid for me."

"I wouldn't try it, Dan!"

"But I'm goin' to, Uncle Dick. Don't you worry about me. You and Charlie do all that you can to learn the truth. But I'll be around Mogul Creek somewhere, takin' a hand in the game."

"Charlie heard some things as he listened at the window of Al Canning's office," the breed put in.

"Tell it quick, then. Dan must be goin'," Uncle Dick said.

"Reech was sent from the room. And four other men drew cards, and the one who drew the ace of spades was to kill Bert Dauney. None knew which one got it, for the man was not to tell."

"The fiends!" Dan cried.

"I tried to find my friend and warn him, but I could not," Charlie said.

"Canning and Porte, Sanger and Blurgon!" Dan Dauney said. "One of 'em did it! But all are guilty! And so is Pete Reech. I can see the trail that I've got to travel, I reckon."

"Now you be careful, Dan!" Uncle Dick said.

"Maybe I won't even be very careful. But I won't die until I've got the man who shot my brother, and the others, too. You c'n be sure o' that."

"I—I took the news to the Zaine cabin," Uncle Dick said.

"Well?" Dauney asked.

"Stella Zaine says that she knows you didn't do it, Dan. She said to give you her love if I saw you. So that's all right."

"If she believed it for a minute, I wouldn't want to see her again."

"Get in the saddle, Dan, and get goin'," Uncle Dick suggested. "Take care of yourself, lad. Charlie and me are goin' back to town now."

Dauney shook hands with both of them and vaulted into the saddle. He was an excellent rider, and he had a good horse. He went down the canyon, away from the town, and his two friends turned back toward Mogul Creek.

A little later, he emerged upon a mesa and looked far back at the twinkling lights of the town. He remained there for as much as ten minutes, scarcely moving, mourning. Then, his period of mourning at an end, he became the stern, relentless avenger.

None knew this country better than Dan Dauney, unless it was Cocopah Charlie and others of his ilk. Dauney had prospected all this range of hills before the big strike was made at Mogul Creek. He knew hiding places that other men did not know. He had little to fear if pursuit came.

But Dauney did not intend to run from the scene. He planned to play a game far more dangerous. He rode slowly back into another canyon until he came to a clearing of which he knew, and there he picketed his mount.

Dan Dauney drank at a cold spring, stretched himself on the ground, and looked up at the stars. He fought to get his brain into a normal condition. He knew that he would have to be cautious and alert, that a wrong movement might cost him his life before he had accomplished his purpose.

He fought, also, against mourning further for Bert. He drove his brain into a corner, so to speak, tried to compel it to exclude all thoughts save those which dealt with squaring accounts with the Al Canning gang.

Then he slept, to wake as the dawn cracked the eastern sky. He bathed his face and hands in the cold water of the spring, watered his horse, searched and found wild berries for his breakfast. Then he put bridle and saddle on the horse, mounted, and rode away from his camp.

He did not return through the canyon, but cut across a ridge and got into an ancient dry watercourse, which he followed for some distance as it twisted and curved through the land, a gash made decades before by some turbulent stream following a torrential storm up in the hills.

Once he left the mount and ascended to a high place, from which he could look over the surrounding country. For almost half an hour he remained there, but saw nothing to cause him alarm. If there was a pursuit, he judged that it would have been toward the northern hills. That would have been the logical direction for a guilty man to ride if he were making a get-away.

Dauney glanced at the sun now and then to read the time. His approach upon the camp of Mogul Creek was circling, for he was keeping in the earth's depressions, riding through boulder fields and along canyon floors.

It was within an hour of noon when he came to a tiny gulch not far from Mogul Creek's cemetery. Dan Dauney dismounted there, trailed the reins, and stretched himself upon the ground. He fought to calm his seething brain again. He sat up and took out his guns, examined them carefully, and returned them. He made sure that he had extra ammunition handy.

Once again he got into the saddle, and now he rode carefully up a slope that was studded with gigantic boulders. At the crest of it was a huge pile of rocks. Dan Dauney dismounted in the midst of them, and tethered his horse carefully, for he did not wish the animal to stray for even a short distance.

Then he crept cautiously and silently up among the rocks until he came to the crest. Peering over the lip of the ledge, he could see Mogul Creek's Boothill directly below him.

Uncle Dick Penk had carried out his instructions. A fresh, shallow grave was waiting just at the base of that jumble of rocks. And toward it across the uneven, dusty land came the short funeral procession.

CHAPTER VIII.

A PECULIAR FUNERAL.

PETE REECH had been found just as he had regained consciousness. Word had flashed through the camp that the deputy sheriff had been attacked at the jail, the jail had been thrown open, and that the prisoner was gone.

Reech had been obliged to get the

camp blacksmith to get the irons off him, for Cocopah Charlie had taken the key of the handcuffs and tossed it away. The deputy was raging because he knew men were laughing at him.

There was considerable speculation as to the identity of the man who had assaulted the deputy and released the prisoner. Reech had not seen the man. A blow had come out of the air and sent the deputy down into the depths of darkness, and that was all that he could tell.

It was impossible to make a check of the men in camp, for the town teemed with men, and they were coming and going continually between the resorts and their cabins up and down the gulch. Reech did not know who to suspect.

Consternation claimed Canning and Porte, Blurgon and Sanger. Tricky Hardware Dauney was abroad, thirsting for vengeance. He even had his own guns. And they knew how he could handle those guns even in play. How deadly they would be with a purpose behind every shot, they shivered to contemplate.

Reech assembled three posses and sent them into the northern hills. About one third of the men were mounted, but the most of these were indifferent riders. The others, being afoot, could do nothing but comb the brush when daylight came, and try to pick up the fugitive's trail.

The Canning gang went about heavily armed. Armed watchers were put at the front and rear doors of Al's Place, and others were stationed about the camp, to give alarm in case Dan Dauney put in a sudden appearance. They feared the sudden descent of Tricky Hardware with flaming guns of vengeance.

But they continued to drive home the thought that Dan Dauney had murdered his brother because of a girl, and free liquor did much to inflame the minds of many men. Those who knew Dauney best, however, listened to the quiet words of The Doctor and other friends of the hunted man.

The Doctor, after a consultation with Uncle Dick Penk, made preparations for the proper burial of Bert Dauney. The grave was dug, and a rough coffin fashioned. And a little before noon the funeral party left The Doctor's cabin.

Six men carried the box on their shoulders, The Doctor walking ahead and leading the way. Behind the coffin marched about a score of men of Mogul Creek. Some went out of curiosity, others because they were friends of the Dauneys, and two because Al Canning had sent them as spies.

One woman followed the body to the grave. Stella Zaine had compelled her father to accompany her, and she clung to his arm and wept as they left the town and started along the winding trail that led to the burial place a quarter of a mile away.

Stella Zaine had looked upon Bert Dauney as an irresponsible, impulsive boy. She was his age in years, but a great deal older in thought. And his taking-off had shocked her. She had rejected immediately the idea that Dan had anything to do with it, had silenced her father when he suggested the possibility of it.

And so they marched through the heat and the dust, turned up the side of the hill, went between the rows of ill-kept graves, some with weather-beaten wooden crosses at their heads, and came to the fresh grave that had been prepared.

The coffin was placed upon the ground, and men bared their heads. The Doctor faced them. They all respected The Doctor for his ability to talk, to set broken bones, heal wounds, aid in time of sickness, and for his wholesome advice regarding all matters. He was the camp's sage.

And they were wondering, the major-

ity of them, whether The Doctor would say anything pertinent to the boy's taking-off. Would he hint at the identity of the murderer? Or would he deliver an ordinary short funeral oration and ignore the cause of death entirely?

The Doctor's first words solved the question.

"My friends," The Doctor said, "we have come here for the last rites over the body of a man cut down in the flower of his youth. The life of this boy we all knew has been taken from him violently, my friends. Years of useful work should have stretched before him. What man is responsible for his death, we do not know at this time. But that man, whoever he may be, will be punished as surely as there is a God in heaven!"

The Doctor cleared his throat, glanced at those before him, and resumed:

"We live in the midst of violence and sin. We see evil on every side. Such a thing is always to be found where men scratch the earth for gold. Gold, one of the most beautiful and most valuable things in the world, has always gone hand in hand with violence, intrigue and crime. It has caused wars between nations. It has broken friendships. It has caused men to sin and women to err.

"Metal must be purified and refined before it is of proper worth. So with men, my friends. The process is a difficult one at times. It is events like this that cause us at times to stop and think, to ask ourselves if it would not be better to divorce beauty and value from violence and brutality.

"Only a few of us are here to honor the man whose body we are about to consign to Mother Earth. Some have remained away because of fear. Many are up in the hills, trying to find a trail, thinking they are searching for a guilty man. I do not believe that man is guilty. Knowing his enemies, I am not afraid to stand here and say this. And at this poor ceremony, he is the one above all others who should attend."

"He is here, Doctor!"

Dan Dauney's voice rang out. A shadow fell suddenly at the base of the jumble of rocks. They looked up, to find him standing there in silhouette against the flaming sky, a gun in either hand, his hat on the rock at his feet.

"Hands up, gents!" Dan Dauney said. "The Doctor is right. I did not kill my brother. I'll tend to the man who did. I've come here to my brother's funeral. When it is over, I'll go away again—and no man will stop me!"

They put up their hands, staring at him voicelessly, stunned by the unexpected.

"Uncle Dick, just take their guns and make 'em in a little pile off to one side, please!" Dan Dauney commanded. "Cocopah Charlie, you go help Uncle Dick. Don't put your hands down, gents, and don't try to prevent Uncle Dick and Charlie doin' what I've said, or I'll forget what place we're in, and why."

Uncle Dick and Cocopah Charlie worked swiftly, disarming those who were gathered around the grave, taking the weapons aside for a hundred feet or so and putting them in a pile there. Stella Zaine clung to her father's arm, her eyes wet with tears, and watched the man standing above.

"Now you can go ahead, Doctor," Dan Dauney said.

The Doctor was an old man, and each gray hair in his head meant a certain amount of wisdom acquired through turbulent years. He had been startled often in his life. He had not anticipated this, but after the first start of surprise, he was his usual calm self. He cleared his throat again, and lifted his voice.

The Doctor outdid himself that day. Never had he been so eloquent. He spoke at length, and while he spoke the men of Mogul Gulch stood there in the

blazing sun, uncovered, and with their hands held high above their heads. And Dan Dauney listened reverently, but held his guns ready for instant action, and his eyes roamed over those below him.

Then came the prayer. Dan Dauney gave a last glance at those below and bowed his head and closed his eyes. Down in that group there may have been two or three men eager to effect his capture, but they made no move. The sonorous tones of The Doctor rolled over them, and something in the situation appealed to their sense of decency and held their hands.

The prayer was over. The ceremony was continued. Dan Dauney stood like a statue while two men tumbled earth into the grave.

"I want to thank you, gents!" Dan called to them, then. "And I want to say that it won't be healthy, now, for you to go for your guns and come after me. As soon as I dodge back behind these rocks, gents, I'm on the warpath again. I never killed my brother. One of four men did. And those four are Canning, Porte, Blurgon, Sanger. And as soon as I learn which, I am going to deal with him. If any of Al Canning's men are in this crowd, they can carry that word to him—he might just as well know it."

For an instant Dan's eyes met those of Stella Zaine, and in hers he read her belief in him. He nodded to her, stooped and picked up his hat, returned one gun to his belt, held the other at his side, bowed to The Doctor, and then darted from view.

Out of sight of them, he returned the second gun to its holster and made a dash for his horse. Getting into the saddle, he galloped down the gravel slope and turned into the dry watercourse. He did not have any fear of pursuit, since none of those in the funeral party had horses with them. And he was beyond gunshot distance before any of them could get over the ledge of rocks.

CHAPTER IX.

ANOTHER NIGHT.

ANOTHER night came to Mogul Creek, with the bright, early moon bathing the hills and gulch and tumbling water of the creek with beauty; another night with its unearthly din in the resorts of the camp, its jostling crowds, its gambling and drinking.

Some of the posse men had returned, disgusted, reporting that they had found no trail, only to receive the intelligence that the man they had been pursuing had been within a quarter of a mile of the camp that day, attending his brother's funeral.

The sudden mob rage against Dan Dauney was dying out. Calm men began reasoning. The belief that he had killed his brother perished in many a mind. His statement that one of four men was guilty was remembered. The Canning gang's evident fear, their act of posting armed men at points of vantage, convinced many that Dan Dauney had spoken the truth.

A murder and a man hunt was not enough to change the complexion of events in the hectic camp. There might be another murder before the light of day came again. Men forgot the affair, save to refer to it now and then in a casual way.

But Al Canning and his men did not forget. Guilt was heavy upon them. They moved about their business, but were ill at ease. Steve Porte sat at the poker table, but he played an indifferent game, and he glanced around furtively from time to time. Sam Blurgon and Job Sanger remained around Al's Place instead of frequenting other resorts, after the manner of men fearing to be caught out in the open.

Down in the Zaine cabin, half a mile from the camp on the rim of the gulch,

Stella Zaine and her father, Reese Zaine, sat and talked after the evening meal. Stella had made a defense of Dan Dauney, and Reese Zaine had admitted, finally, that he doubted Dan's guilt.

But Reese Zaine was the sort of man to fail to see the true worth of another man. He considered Steve Porte, the well-dressed gambler always supplied with funds, a better husband for his daughter than the owner of a rich claim. Porte had flattered Reese Zaine, had played the game carefully, had got the father on his side.

But when Zaine broached the subject of marriage between Stella and Porte, Stella raised a tempest.

"I'd die before I'd marry such a rat!" the girl cried. "I know something of his past life. No decent girl would marry him. Dan Dauney is a man, a real man, a clean man."

"Oh, Dan's all right!" her father said. "I ain't sayin' a word against Dan. But Steve Porte is stylish——"

"I don't want a smirking, stylish man," his daughter interrupted. "Steve Porte is a tinhorn gambler, and he'll never be anything else. He's a camp parasite. He'll swing, some day. Let's say no more of this, father. I am going to marry Dan Dauney if he asks me."

"I owe Al Canning a little money, and Steve Porte is Al's friend," Reese Zaine admitted.

"And you'd give me to Porte to pay the debt?" she asked, withering scorn in her voice and manner. "You've been slipping lately, father. Better take a grip on yourself. Stay away from Al's Place. Do a little card playing once in a while, but do it somewhere else. Did you lose over the table?"

"A month ago, one night," he confessed. "But I've been winnin' a little lately."

"At Steve Porte's table?" she asked.

"Yes."

"I thought so. He is letting you win, to get on the good side of you on account of me. So do not take credit for good poker playing. If you owe Al Canning money, take gold out of the claim and pay him. It's nothing to worry about."

Along the rim of the gulch, through the shadows, Dan Dauney was slipping while this conversation was taking place. When he came near the Zaine cabin, he crouched behind a clump of brush and watched until he was sure that none of Canning's spies were in the neighborhood. He went on, then, and peered through a window, to be certain that nobody was in the cabin except Reese Zaine and his daughter.

Then Dauney went boldly to the door and knocked. Receiving a call to enter, he lifted the latch, opened the door, strode inside, and closed the door behind him again.

"You, Dauney?" Reese Zaine cried, springing to his feet. "You shouldn't come here, man! Canning and his crowd will take it out on me."

"You needn't worry, Zaine. I'll take care o' you," Dauney said.

"You'll take care o' me? You're on the run right now."

"I don't aim to run far," Dan Dauney said. "I just dropped in for a word with Stella. I want her to know that I never shot Bert."

"I never, under any circumstances, thought you did, Dan."

"Thanks! Only a few do."

"But you're in danger here, Dan," she said. "If they learn that you are here——"

"I've got a few friends," Dan interrupted. "There's one below the cabin now, and another above, watchin' the trail. I'll know if any o' my enemies come near."

"Who's watchin' for you?" Zaine asked.

"I ain't betrayin' my friends, Zaine. I'm sorry, but I don't just trust you. You've been runnin' with the Canning crowd a little lately."

"Why, you——" Zaine started to bluster.

"I don't want any trouble with you—you're Stella's father," Dan Dauney said. "But I'm tellin' you this, Zaine—you want to stay away from that gang. The gang won't last much longer. I aim to clean it out. One of 'em killed Bert."

"How do you know that?" Zaine asked.

"A friend o' mine heard 'em plan the thing, and watched while they drew lots to see who'd do the actual shootin'. I know the four men—Canning, Porte, Blurgon, and Sanger. They want my claim—and Porte wants Stella."

"He'll never get me, Dan," the girl said.

"Zaine, I reckon that you're a fool!" Dauney said. "That gang is only usin' you. They'll kick you out in a minute when they can't use you any more. If you've got the nerve, Zaine, I want you to do somethin' for me."

"What?" Reese Zaine asked.

"Go up to Al's Place, after I'm gone, and tell 'em that I've been here. Stand right up like a man, Zaine, and say that you know I didn't kill my brother. Tell Porte right to his face that Stella is goin' to marry me."

"You've never asked me, Dan," the girl said.

"I'm askin' you now."

"I'll do it, Dan, whenever you say."

"Just as soon as we can, then, Stella. We'll fix up my cabin and——"

"You seem to forget that you're on the run," Reese Zaine put in.

"But I won't be on the run after to-night, Zaine. I'll either be dead or things will be so I won't have to run," he said.

"Dan!" the girl cried.

"I've got certain plans made," Dauney said. "What are you goin' to do, Zaine? I want to know my friends now. I'll have plenty later, if things come out right."

"You're puttin' me in a hole, Dan," Zaine complained.

"No, I ain't. I want you to declare yourself. I want you to be a man, Zaine. You've just slipped a little, and that's not surprisin' since it's Al Canning and his gang that have been after you."

"If I declare for you, and Canning wins this row——"

"Then you'll be in a hole, maybe," Dauney said. "Do as you please, Zaine."

"What good will it do for me to go there and say that I don't believe you shot Bert?"

"If you do it right, it'll give that gang the idea that there's one man, at least, who ain't afraid of 'em. Maybe it'll make 'em do some thinkin'. And maybe I won't be very far away, Zaine."

"They might start shootin'. If the Canning gang killed Bert, they wouldn't hesitate much about killin' me, if they felt like it. And Porte might get the idea that he could get Stella if I was killed and she didn't have a protector."

"I'm her protector from now on," Dauney said.

Zaine hesitated a moment, and then: "I'll do it!" he said.

Stella grasped him by the arm. "You're a man again now, dad," she told him.

"I'll take the chance," Zaine said. "I'll say you were here, Dan, and that I think you didn't shoot Bert. That it?"

"That's it," Dauney replied. "If any o' the Canning crowd starts to treat you nasty or make threats, just laugh in their faces. Give 'em the idea that they ain't controllin' the situation—understand? I just want 'em to feel uneasy. You ain't the only one workin' along this line, Zaine."

He put out his hand, and Reese Zaine clasped it.

"I'm ashamed," Zaine said. "Porte was workin' me, I reckon. But he said that he wanted to marry Stella."

"If Stella was in love with him, I'd

step back," Dan declared. "Porte ain't the man for her, and he wouldn't be even if she didn't like me. Porte may have a wife or two scattered around the country, from what I've heard. I'm goin' outside with Stella now, Zaine, for a few minutes. You go to Al's Place in about half an hour."

The girl followed him outside, and there in the shadows he put an arm around her and drew her close, and had his betrothal kiss. They talked for five minutes or so, and then he kissed her again, and she went back into the cabin.

Dan Dauney made his way swiftly along the rim of the gulch, keeping in the shadows as much as possible. Uncle Dick Penk stepped out from behind some rocks.

"Whistle for Charlie," Dan said.

Uncle Dick Penk sent a peculiar whistle quavering through the night air, and in a few moments Cocopah Charlie came to them. He had been watching at the other end of the trail.

The three left the trail and went aside for some distance, where they could talk in low tones without running the risk of being overheard.

"I looked over the ground at daybreak, Dan Dauney," the breed said. "I would have met you to-night where we gave you the horse had you not got word to Uncle Dick to meet you elsewhere with him."

"You find anything, Charlie?"

"Tracks in the soft earth," Charlie said. "They circled behind the shop of the blacksmith and returned to the street between two of the tent-houses, and there were lost with other tracks."

"Can you tell anything from the tracks?"

"Nothing," the breed admitted. "They could have been made by any of the four men. The earth is soft there, and the sides of the boot marks blurred and caved in, so that sizes could not be told."

"You find anything else, Charlie?"

"I found nothing more, but I have been watching all day. I have watched the four, and also the deputy sheriff," the breed replied. "Guilt is heavy upon them, and they are afraid of the man they call Tricky Hardware."

"Sized 'em up, did you, Charlie? And could you guess which one shot Bert?"

"I could not read them," Cocopah Charlie admitted. "At one time I thought it was Steve Porte, and at another Job Sanger. And then Sam Blurgon seemed to have the light of a murderer in his eyes. And Al Canning also. So I could not tell. But if Charlie watches for a few days——"

"There ain't goin' to be any delay of a few days," Dan Dauney said. "I'm goin' to do as I planned. Charlie, you do your part, and Uncle Dick will do his."

"You betcha!" Uncle Dick declared.

"Reese Zaine will do as I asked, too," Dauney continued.

"It's goin' to be a risky thing, Dan," Uncle Dick put in.

"But my plan goes through!" Dan Dauney snapped.

"Then you c'n depend on me, Dan, and I reckon that you c'n depend on Charlie, too."

"Charlie serves his friend!" the breed intoned.

Dan Dauney shook hands with both of them and went swiftly and silently away through the shadows. Uncle Dick Penk and Cocopah Charlie followed the trail back toward Mogul Creek. They encountered Reese Zaine where two trails met, and went on into the camp with him.

The street was thronged, as usual at night. Loud voices howled. Men laughed and cursed and fought, and the tin-pan piano was going in Al's Place. The three men who entered the street had reached an agreement about certain things. They separated as they joined the jostling throng.

CHAPTER X.

TWO CAPTIVES.

INTO Al's Place went Reese Zaine, as he had done hundreds of times before since coming to Mogul Creek. Reese Zaine was a man. Now that he had decided upon a certain course, had determined to rectify his errors of judgment, he would go the whole way. He went up to the bar and got a drink, just by way of being natural, and then wandered through the crowd and gradually made his way to the rear and the vicinity of the poker tables.

Men nodded to him, and some spoke. Reese Zaine was not a cordial man, and though he was respected in a measure, he had few real friends. And it was not known whether he had allied himself with the Canning crowd. So just now, with things the way they were, it behooved men to be careful.

Zaine stopped finally near the poker table where Steve Porte was dealing, and watched the game after the manner of a man for whom it had small interest. Canning was standing not far away, and nodded. One of the players left the game.

"Want to sit in, Zaine? Feelin' lucky to-night?" Steve Porte asked.

"I don't aim to sit in." Reese Zaine replied. "I'm cuttin' down on my poker playin', and I aim to distribute my patronage. It ain't right for a citizen o' Mogul Creek to spend all his time and money in one place."

Steve Porte glanced up at him in surprise. He did not understand the tone that Reese Zaine was taking with him now. He had been indulging in the belief that Reese Zaine thought he was one of the greatest men in the world, and would make an excellent son-in-law.

"Don't you like this table?" Porte asked.

"I ain't worryin' any about a table," Zaine said. "I'm wonderin' about Dan Dauney."

"What about him?"

"That's what I want to know. What's bein' done about him? Just where does he stand?"

"He's bein' hunted, o' course, for killin' his brother," Steve Porte said.

"Uh-huh! I don't know where they're huntin', but I'm right sure that it's the wrong place. Dan Dauney came to my cabin about an hour ago, maybe less time than that."

"What's that?" Half a dozen men chorused the cry. Al Canning moved swiftly to Zaine's side.

"Did you say he was at your cabin, Zaine?" Canning asked.

"He sure was. Dropped in like nothin' had happened, and passed the time o' day."

"Why didn't you get us word?"

"How in blazes was I to get you word?"

"Did he throw a gun down on you and keep you there?"

"Nope!" Reese Zaine said. "He just come visitin', naturallike. Talked a time and then went away. He said he didn't shoot his brother, and I'm believin' him."

"You're what?" Porte exclaimed.

"What's that?" Canning demanded. "You don't think that Dauney killed his brother?"

"I sure don't, Al," Zaine replied. "He said that he didn't, and he didn't lie. He told my girl that he didn't, too, and he wouldn't lie to her. He's goin' to marry her."

"So he's goin' to marry your girl?" Steve Porte asked, rising from his chair.

"Never mind about the girl just now," Al Canning put in. "What else did Dan Dauney say, if anything?"

"Well, he said that one o' four men was responsible for his brother's death, and that he didn't know exactly which one, but that he'd find out or punish the whole four."

"And you're believin' him?"

Reese Zaine gulped, but stood his

ground. "It seems right likely, from what he told me," he answered. "It seems like somebody overheard four men plottin' to kill Bert, and watched them while they drew lots to see which would do the work. But this man couldn't tell who drew the card and did the shootin'."

Canning and Porte exchanged glances. Fifty men were listening, for Reese Zaine had been talking in a loud voice. And Zaine did not care how far he went now.

"Dauney says," he continued, "that the four men are Canning, Porte, Blurgon, and Sanger!"

"Why, you——" Porte began.

Al Canning stopped him with a gesture; bent forward.

"Careful, you fool!" he hissed at Zaine.

"What do you mean by tellin' me to be careful? And I don't like to be called a fool!" Zaine snapped back at him. "You asked what Dan Dauney said at my cabin, and I've told you."

"And you think one o' us four men did it?" Canning demanded.

"It ain't any o' my business," Zaine replied. "So I'm not doin' any thinkin' at all—not out loud."

"I want to talk to you. Come into the office," Canning said, in tones of command.

"No, thanks! I ain't playin' this place any more, Al. And you needn't draw a gun on me, either, or wink for one o' your men to do it. And don't have anybody try to pick a quarrel and plug me. It'd be a bad move for you, Canning. There's quite a crowd around."

Reese Zaine turned his back and started through the crowd, leaving certain dumfounded persons behind him. Blurgon and Sanger had been near the table, too, and had overheard, and now they got to Al Canning's side as speedily as possible.

Zaine half expected to be shot down. Canning and Porte wanted to shoot him. But his manner had conquered them for the time being. They sensed the hostility of men near them.

And about this time old Uncle Dick Penk took a drink at the end of the bar and started talking. His voice could be heard plainly in the poker corner:

"Shucks!" Uncle Dick said. "Dan Dauney never shot his brother. Any man who'll stop to think a minute will decide that. I'd hate to be the man who did shoot him. Dauney won't stop till he gets that man. Tricky Hardware is on the warpath."

Canning thrust his way through the crowd to Uncle Dick's side.

"Maybe you've been talkin' to Dauney, too," Canning said.

"Why, sure!" Uncle Dick replied. "I was talkin' to him on the trail 'bout half an hour ago."

"What's that?" Canning shouted. "Why didn't you bring him in?"

"Yeah? Me bring in Tricky Hardware when he ain't asleep and is wearin' his guns?" Uncle Dick said. "I'm too old to be a fool like that. We had a right nice talk. He's gunnin' for the man as killed his brother."

Deputy Sheriff Pete Reech thrust his way to them through the crowd that fought to get near and overhear.

"Uncle Dick, I've got a notion to jail you for aidin' and abettin' fugitives," the deputy said.

"I didn't aid him. I just talked to him."

"Why didn't you hurry into camp and give the alarm?" the deputy demanded.

"It ain't any o' my business. I don't think he shot Bert, and you're wastin' time tryin' to catch him."

"Take the old coot to jail!" Cannnig commanded. "Take Reese Zaine there, too. Can't you understand, Reech? They're helpin' that murderer."

"You'd better not take me to jail!" Uncle Dick said. "Tricky Hardware is my friend."

"He is my friend, too!" That was Cocopah Charlie's voice. The breed was within a few feet of them. "He did not kill the young one. But he will punish the man who did!"

"Reech, are you goin' to let men like this shield and protect a murderer?" Canning asked. "Take 'em to jail!"

"They're goin'," Reech said. "I want some help. Charlie, you're under arrest. You, too, Dick Penk. I'll pick up Zaine. We ain't goin' to have murderers aided in this here camp."

Canning was whispering in the deputy's ear: "Get 'em in jail and keep their mouths shut. There's somethin' wrong somewhere. We got to watch out for ourselves."

Reech grasped Uncle Dick by an arm, and Cocopah Charlie also. Dick stood quiet, but Charlie twisted free and flashed the deputy a glance of hate.

"Tryin' to resist an officer o' the law, are you?" Reech cried. "Some o' you men help me, here!"

But he was surprised to find that those nearest had turned their backs and were getting away from the scene, acting very much as though they did not care to be made deputies. Reech shouted at them again, but none turned to aid him. He got out his handcuffs—an extra pair since the key was lost to the ones he used generally—and snapped one cuff on Uncle Dick's left wrist. Then he grasped Cocopah Charlie's arm and jerked him backward, and hurriedly snapped the other cuff on Charlie's right wrist.

"Don't need any help," Pete Reech said. "I'll pick up Reese Zaine later."

"Might be a trick o' some sort," Canning said. "Porte, you'd better go along with Reech as far as the jail, and then hurry back here. You, too, Pete. I want to talk to you. You've got to catch Dan Dauney, and we've got to stop this nonsense talk. Men'll be thinkin' next that one o' us did shoot Bert Dauney."

"Many men believe it even now," Charlie put in.

"Shut up!" Reech commanded, shoving his prisoners before him. "Come along with me, Porte. Got a gun?"

Steve Porte drew one out of a pocket. Reech marched his prisoners toward the door, and the crowd fell back out of their path. The deputy received many looks that he did not like. Uncle Dick was a favorite in the camp, and he had done nothing more than stand up for his friend. But none in the crowd made a move toward a rescue.

Perhaps the attitude of Uncle Dick held them back. It seemed that he took the arrest in good nature, that it was a joke with him. It looked very much as though his eyes were twinkling. Through the door they went, and down the street, Reech grasping Charlie by the arm and Steve Porte holding Uncle Dick.

Men stared at them as they passed, and many howled questions that the deputy refused to answer. Some started to follow them, and when they came to the end of the street a score of men were at their heels.

"Get back!" Reech shouted at them. "Don't try to interfere with the law. These men have been aidin' and abettin' a murderer."

It was a ticklish moment, for Reech knew well that Uncle Dick Penk had a multitude of friends. But those he addressed decided to hurry down the street and learn the cause of all this before they acted. So the deputy turned and went on with Steve Porte and his prisoners.

They came finally to the little log jail, and Steve Porte, gun in hand, guarded the prisoners while Pete Reech unlocked and unbolted the door and threw it open. He went inside and lit the lantern that hung against one wall.

"Bring 'em in, Steve," he called back.

Steve Porte thrust the prisoners forward into the little jail.

"Keep a gun on 'em until I get these here cuffs off," Reech ordered.

The door of the jail suddenly was slammed shut behind them. They heard the heavy bolt shot into place.

Steve Porte, forgetting the prisoners, turned and hurled himself against that closed door. Deputy Sheriff Pete Reech, a terrible fear upon him, did the same thing.

"We're locked in!" Porte cried. "I heard the bolt. Reech, we——"

"Steady!" called a voice at the open window. "This is Tricky Hardware talkin' to you! I've got you two skunks! You did just what I thought you'd do."

Pete Reech had a moment of thought. He hurled his gun and smashed the lantern. It fell from the wall and was extinguished.

"Steady!" came the voice from outside. "I've got you gents right where I want you now! Boys!"

The last word evidently was a command to Uncle Dick Penk and Cocopah Charlie. For they sprang upon their captors in the darkness, unexpectedly, raining blows, making their assault as brutal as possible. They got the two guns, and jerked each other to the window and slipped the guns through.

"Good enough!" Dan Dauney said. "It pays to have friends. I'll just draw the teeth out o' these here guns, and then we'll go right ahead with the show."

He extracted the cartridges from the guns and hurled them far into the night.

"Gents, I'm goin' to open the door," Tricky Hardware said. "I want you to be standin' on the other side o' the jail, and I want Dick and Charlie right at the door. I'm eager and willin' to shoot if my orders ain't carried out."

Uncle Dick Penk kept him informed, in low tones, of events inside. So Dan Dauney opened the door, and Uncle Dick and Charlie came out into the moonlit night.

"Now you c'n come out, Reech!" Dauney said. "Step right out here with your hands above your head. And you know what'll happen if you make any funny move. Lord knows what keeps me from shootin' you down the way it is! March out here!"

Deputy Sheriff Pete Reech, fear within him, came forth. Under Dan Dauney's orders, Uncle Dick fumbled in the deputy's pocket and got the key to the handcuffs. The prisoners liberated themselves. One of the cuffs was snapped on the deputy's wrist.

"Out you come, Porte!" Dauney snapped. "Hands up, remember."

Steve Porte was not made of courageous stuff. When things were against him, he was a craven. Only when he ran with the pack was he brave.

He emerged from the jail, hands held high above his head. One of those hands was jerked down immediately, and he was fastened to the deputy by means of the other handcuff.

"What—what you goin' to do, Dauney?" Reech asked.

"Just now, I'm goin' to gag you two jaspers," Dan Dauney replied. "You c'n get busy and help me, Uncle Dick. Charlie, you keep your eyes and ears open while we're workin'."

It appeared that Dan Dauney had prepared for this. He brought forth cloth-wrapped pieces of wood that made effectual gags not the least painful in the world. Reech and Steve Porte could make no resistance.

Then the two men were guided around the jail and from shadow to shadow, kept away from the trail, hurried over rough ground, half jerked off their feet every now and then by their silent captors.

Finally they turned down the hill and toward the trail that ran along the rim of the gulch. Here was an abandoned cabin, a well-constructed log abode of generous proportions, deserted by some man who had failed here and had gone on to new diggings. Dan Dauney opened the door, and they went inside.

"I'm goin' to leave you two skunks here—leave you gagged and with your hands tied behind your backs," Dan Dauney said. "I may need them handcuffs again."

Uncle Dick Penk and Cocopah Charlie stood guard with guns held ready for instant use while Dauney removed the handcuffs. Then he took lengths of stout cord from his pocket and lashed the wrists of the two men behind their backs. If the cords cut into the flesh, Dauney did not seem to care.

He thrust the prisoners from him, back into the dark cabin, went out and closed the door.

"Uncle Dick, you and Charlie can mount guard," Dauney said. "Let 'em know that you're doin' it, and I reckon they won't make much of a try at escapin'."

"You'd better let at least one o' us go with you, lad," Uncle Dick said.

"Nope! Your escape from jail has got to be a mystery just now. You wait here, like I say. I won't be long."

"If these jaspers try to escape, it's all right to plug 'em, ain't it?" Uncle Dick asked.

"Yeah! That'll be the correct thing to do, though it'd rob me of a pleasure," said Dan Dauney.

"You be careful, Dan."

Dan Dauney laughed peculiarly and swung off through the night.

CHAPTER XI.

CAPTIVES.

AT Al's Place, business continued much as usual, though many of Canning's customers had drifted to other resorts, sensing the coming of trouble and eager to be absent when it really did occur.

Another dealer sat in Steve Porte's chair. Al Canning walked around his establishment nervously, speaking to the men who guarded the doors and urging them to keep their eyes open, warning his employees. He stepped aside, finally, with Sam Blurgon.

"It's time that Pete Reech and Steve were back," Canning said. "I wonder what's keepin' them. I've got to have a talk with all you boys. We got to do somethin', Blurgon, and do it quick. If there's any whispers goin' around town, we ought to know it. Tell you what, Sam—you go across the street to Pedro George's and listen around."

"Sure!" Sam Blurgon said.

Pedro George's was another resort only a short distance away, a smaller one than Al's Place, but popular. Sam Blurgon went across the street through the crowd and entered. Pedro George himself was standing at the head of the bar, and he greeted Blurgon warmly and offered him a drink.

Blurgon drank and then wandered around the resort, listening to the talk. He made his way to the rear, where there were gambling tables. He sat in a game, thinking that he would learn more that way.

The Dauney affair was being mentioned, but men were careful what they said around Sam Blurgon, knowing well that he was one of Canning's men. Blurgon decided that he could learn nothing here, and he was eager to get back across the street to attend the conference to be held in Canning's office when Porte and the deputy returned.

So he played a couple of hands more and then thrust his chips across the table for the dealer to cash. He took the few dollars he had coming and got to his feet.

"Sorry you ain't stayin'," the dealer said.

"Don't feel like playin' to-night," Sam Blurgon replied. "I'll give you a run some other time. Some gent can have my chair now."

A few feet behind him, the rear door of the resort was opened. It remained open its full width as a man stepped inside.

"I want you, Blurgon!"

Dan Dauney sprang forward as he spoke, jammed the muzzle of a weapon into Sam Blurgon's ribs before the man could make a move. A hand shot out, tore Blurgon's revolver out of its holster, and tossed it aside.

"Steady, gents!" Dauney commanded. "It's Blurgon I want, and no trouble for anybody else unless they make it themselves."

"It's Tricky Hardware!" somebody in the near distance cried.

Sam Blurgon tried to lurch to one side. Dan Dauney's gun cracked against the side of his head, and he reeled back half conscious. Then Dauney fired twice rapidly, and the two nearest lamps crashed to the floor.

An instant later, Dauney was outside, and Sam Blurgon was with him. The door had been slammed shut. Guns cracked and bullets tore through it, but Dauney was to one side, his gun jammed into Sam Blurgon's ribs again, making rapidly for the dark places.

Nobody in Pedro George's resort was eager to open that door and charge through a shaft of light when Tricky Hardware was outside. Dauney reached the deep shadows made by a jumble of rocks, and there stopped with his prisoner.

Sam Blurgon was wabbly from the blow he had received, but he was reviving fast. Dauney wrenched at his jaws and affixed one of the gags he had prepared.

"You're goin' right along with me, to where Reech and Porte are waitin'," Dauney told his man. "If you're right down eager to die before you know what it's all about, Blurgon, just try to make a wrong move. One bullet would do for you, you skunk!"

Sam Blurgon offered no resistance. He had a certain amount of brutal bravery, and he had some common sense. He knew that Dan Dauney held the upper hand now. It was the part of wisdom to do as he was told at this time, and wait for an opportunity to gain the advantage.

Men were milling around the resort they had just quitted, shouting to one another, and watching the patches of moonlight. Dan Dauney had taken one of his enemies from their midst and had disappeared into the night. This was Canning's affair. Why should they court a bullet by going to the rescue of Sam Blurgon?

So, dodging from shadow to shadow and prodding his prisoner on the way, Dan Dauney got from the street and back where men would not be likely to stumble upon him. Once more he made a half circle to keep away from the main-traveled trails. He came to the abandoned cabin, where Cocopah Charlie and Uncle Dick were standing guard.

"Got another," Dauney said. "Hold a gun on him, Uncle Dick, while I tie his wrists behind his back. I didn't have to use the handcuffs. He stepped along like a little man, the scoundrel!"

Sam Blurgon shook his head and gurgled behind the gag while his wrists were being lashed.

"He's right down eager to talk to me, but I ain't got time to listen to him now," Dauney said. "We'll put him in with Porte and Reech for the time bein'. All gagged, and all crazy to talk to one another, I'll bet."

The door was opened and Sam Blurgon was thrust inside. The door was closed again. Dan Dauney stepped back a short distance, where his prisoners could not overhear.

"Sanger and Canning to get yet," he said. "They'll maybe be watchin' now. I'll be back as soon as possible."

Once more he hurried away through the night.

Back in Al's Place, Canning and Sanger and some of the others were like maniacs. Men had yelled the story at them—that Dan Dauney had appeared in Pedro George's and had car-

ried Sam Blurgon away after smashing him on the head.

And into Al's Place came two men with something more to report—that the jail door was standing open, and that they could find no trace of the deputy, nor of Uncle Dick Penk, Cocopah Charlie, or Steve Porte.

"What could have happened?" Canning said to Sanger. "Dick and Charlie might have turned the tables, got the best o' Reech and Porte, and got their handcuffs off. But what's happened to Reech and Porte?"

Job Sanger had no reply for him. Sanger's face was white, and in it were lines that expressed fear. He fumbled with the gun that swung against his hip.

"I—I don't like it," Sanger said. "Don't like the look o' it at all, Al."

"Are you gettin' yellow?" Al Canning demanded. "It's Tricky Hardware doin' this, with the help o' Cocopah Charlie and Uncle Dick Penk. They've been lucky so far, that's all. And the chances are that Reech is after 'em, and that he's makin' Steve Porte help him. Maybe there's nothin' to worry about. If either o' us can get a shot at Dauney, we can end things. Dauney will never make Sam Blurgon talk."

There remained in Al's Place not more than half the number of men usually to be found there at this hour. Once more Canning talked to his employees, and especially the two men who stood on guard at the doors. Half a dozen men he could trust were scattered through the crowd, too.

And meanwhile Dan Dauney had circled the town again. For a time he remained back in the darkness, watching and listening. Then he crept through the shadows in the rear of the line of buildings. Careful not to be observed or heard, he went to the end of the line, where there was a big log structure at present vacant. It had been a resort, but had failed of popularity.

Dan Dauney got into the place through a broken window. He had a big, heavy can with him, which he had carried from a clump of brush a short distance away. He had stowed the can in the brush earlier that night, before capturing Sam Blurgon.

And now he opened the can and dashed its contents against the wall and over the seasoned dry floor of the empty building. The odor of kerosene permeated the air.

Dauney went to the front of the building and listened for a moment. Then he went to the rear, to the broken window, and listened carefully there. And then he returned to the middle of the building, pulled open his coat, struck a match and shielded it from the possibility of its glare showing. He tossed the flaming match into a pile of kerosene-soaked débris.

As the tiny flames started, Dan Dauney got through the broken window and hurried away from the scene. Once more he went through the shadows to hide in a jumble of rocks a couple of hundred yards from the line of buildings.

The roisterers in the busy street continued their amusement-seeking. The empty building was at the end of the row, and near it were some establishments closed for the night. Not until the flames broke through the front of the building and the roof was the fire noticed.

Then the alarm was shouted from one end of the thronged street to the other. A wind was coming down from the hills. The fire, unless checked, would sweep the camp. The resorts, the business establishments, would go up in flame and smoke.

The men of Mogul Creek knew what such a thing would mean. They would find themselves short of provisions. They would be on short rations until mule teams could freight more stuff across the hills. The resorts would be gone. Fire in an unprotected gold camp

is a thing to strike terror to the hearts of its citizens.

Men charged down the street shouting the terrible news. They howled for buckets, for water. They formed a bucket brigade to get water from the turbulent creek. Men left their cabins when they heard the commotion and saw the red glare, to run into the town and help. The camp had to be saved. All else was forgotten.

The flames swept through the old, dry building and attacked the next in line, which was a blacksmith's shop. The whole town was fighting the fire now. Merchants were preparing to move what goods they could back upon the hillside, were hiring men to do the work.

Al's Place was deserted save for a few men who worked for Canning. The fire horror was paramount in all minds now. They were trying to check the flames at the blacksmith's shop by using dynamite on two small log structures adjoining, by hurling water on the buildings across the street, and they were hopeful of succeeding.

Al Canning was at the front door of his resort, looking up the street, trying to decide whether to prepare to abandon the Place. Job Sanger was in the office room, guarding Canning's desk and little safe, as Canning had ordered.

Dan Dauney crept down the side of the hill, avoiding the hurrying men. He peered through the rear windows of Al's Place, and saw Canning at the front door. He saw Job Sanger, too, standing in the open door of the office room.

Dan Dauney slipped in through the rear door and went slowly and cautiously along the wall, behind the tables and chairs. The end of the bar would keep Canning from seeing him if he happened to turn. But Canning had gone out into the street to see the fire better.

"Don't move, Sanger!"

Those words chilled Job Sanger. There seemed to be a deadly menace in them. He knew the speaker without turning his head to identify him. He felt a hand tug at his gun and remove it from the holster.

"Back, and over to the window!" Dan Dauney ordered.

With the muzzle of a gun jammed into the small of his back, Job Sanger thought it best to obey. He was not noted for courage, anyway, and the night's events had half terrorized him. He could understand an open gun fight, but he could not understand this mysterious abduction of strong men.

"Turn around, Sanger!" Dauney ordered.

Job Sanger started to turn—and the barrel of a gun crashed against his head, crashed a second time, and Job Sanger reeled backward and collapsed against the wall.

Dauney bent over him, worked swiftly, gagged his man. He lashed his hands behind his back. He opened the window and put his prisoner through it. Then he got through the window himself, picked up the half-conscious man, and hurried away through the darkness.

Behind him, the red glare of flames lit up the street. Behind him was almost the entire population of Mogul Creek. Dauney kept to the shadows and traveled for a distance of three hundred yards, and then put Sanger down.

Job Sanger groaned.

"I reckon that you're able to hear and understand," Dauney said. "You're goin' to walk, Sanger, and walk where I say. If you don't, you won't ever do any more walkin', I reckon. Get on your feet, you hound!"

He jerked Sanger to his feet, prodded him with the gun, and guided him across the rough ground and toward the edge of the gulch. Sanger's head was clearing. He trembled with fear. The gag kept him even from asking questions.

They came to the trail, after a time, and finally to the old cabin. Cocopah Charlie and Uncle Dick Penk met them.

"Here's Sanger, boys," Dan Dauney said. "Tumble him in with the others."

"The big job is to come, lad," Uncle Dick warned.

"But somethin' tells me that I'm goin' to pull it off," Dan Dauney replied. "Uncle Dick, Charlie can tend to this bunch. I want you to come with me."

Uncle Dick Penk went with him along the trail.

"I set fire to the old saloon buildin', and got the gang there while I kidnaped Sanger," Dan explained. "I've got my horse tied on the hill back o' Al's Place. Maybe I'll have to use him, and maybe not."

"And what do you want me to do, Dan?"

"I want you to stay in hidin', Uncle Dick, until you know that I've got Al Canning. Then you find Reese Zaine, and have him go into the camp and collect about a dozen decent citizens, includin' the Doctor. I want them fetched to the cabin where we've got our prisoners. I don't care if you get two dozen—the more the better. Only, don't let any o' Canning's men come unless they're watched."

"I'll do it, lad. Zaine will be around the camp, since they're fightin' the fire."

"The fire's about out—the camp ain't in any danger now," said Dan Dauney. "Not much damage, and I'm glad o' that. You keep under cover just now, Uncle Dick. You're an escaped prisoner, remember."

Dan Dauney chuckled and slipped away.

CHAPTER XII.

PUNISHMENT.

AL CANNING turned away from the front door and spoke to the one man who remained on duty behind the bar. The others had gone to fight the fire.

"Danger's over," Canning announced. "We won't have to move anything."

Then Canning went on through the room to the door of the office.

"All right, Sanger!" he called. "They've got the fire almost out. Now we'll——"

The sentence ended in a gulp. Sanger was gone. The window of the office was open.

Canning shouted and his bartender came running.

"Sanger's gone!" Canning cried. "Taken through the window. They've got Porte and Reech, Blurgon and Sanger!"

Fear was revealed in his face, and Al Canning was a man who did not often feel fear. He had more courage than all the others put together, and Dan Dauney knew it.

But Canning knew real fear now. He could only guess at the forces working against him. What had become of Reech and Porte? He knew that Dauney had captured Blurgon and carried him away. But what had become of Job Sanger? Where had the men been taken?

Canning examined his gun and made sure that it was ready for use. He warned his bartender to be ready. Men came trooping into the resort from fighting the fire, clamoring for drinks, and two more of Canning's employees were with them. He told them what had happened, warned them to be on guard continually.

Other men returned. His barkeepers, his gamblers were warned. Al Canning made it strong. He must be protected. If he crashed, they all crashed. When daylight came, there would be an investigation, a hunt. Until then, they could only guard.

An hour passed without unusual event. The tired fire-fighters drifted away to their cabins. The games were dead. Only a few men remained at the bar. Those who wished to talk

about the events of the night preferred to do so in other resorts, where Al Canning and his men could not hear.

In Al's Place a dozen men loitered, talking in desultory fashion, playing solitaire, men of the type who did not wish to go to bed. Canning began to think that the dawn would come without any more trouble. And then, perhaps, in the light of day they could discover what had happened.

Dan Dauney had held his hand purposely to lull Canning into a sense of false security. He had met Uncle Dick again, and had explained what he wished to do. And Uncle Dick had gone to the Zaine cabin and got Reese Zaine and given him his instructions. They had aroused The Doctor and bade him hold himself in readiness. But Uncle Dick Penk did not betray the whereabouts of the place where Dan Dauney had his prisoners. And he could not tell what Dan intended to do, for he did not know.

Then came the moment when Dauney descended the hillside again by dodging from shadow to shadow. He crept up to the rear of Al's Place and peered through the window cautiously. He saw that one of Canning's men was at the front door and one sitting beside the rear door. Two men were behind the bar. He had to deal with Canning and four of his men.

He did not fear the other men in the resort, for a glance at them told Dan Dauney that they would not take sides, some because of a sense of fairness and others because of timidity. So he crept on to the rear door, which had been opened for about a foot to let in fresh air.

Now he took out both his guns and examined them. This was to be the critical moment, he knew. He thought of Bert again, and the thought nerved him.

And suddenly he kicked open that rear door, and crashed the barrel of one gun against the temple of the guard there. The man toppled over, dropping the revolver he was holding. Dauney kicked the weapon to one side.

"I've come for you, Canning!"

Dan Dauney shouted the words, dashing into the middle of the room as he spoke. His guns spoke, too, for he had four men besides Al Canning with whom to deal. One bullet caught Canning's wrist as he would have drawn, shattered it, and sent the resort owner reeling back against a wall.

The guard at the front door turned and opened fire, and Tricky Hardware dropped him. He dashed to the end of the bar and began firing at the two men behind it. A bullet fanned his cheek. Another scratched his left arm. But the men behind the bar dropped.

Dan Dauney dashed across the room again, straight at Al Canning. Canning crouched against the wall, powerless to defend himself. Dauney grasped him by the arm and rushed him toward the rear door. He fired another shot in the air, to hold back others in the resort.

But none of the others offered resistance. It was none of their battle. Dan Dauney got Canning to the door and whisked him through it and into the darkness at the rear of the building.

Once more a heavy gun barrel cracked against a head. Canning gave a groan, clutched at Dauney, missed, and collapsed. Dauney holstered his weapons, picked up the groaning man, and carried him away.

He kept to the shadows, and he made no noise. The resort vomited men. Others came running from the street, for they had heard the firing. Dauney stopped for a moment where Uncle Dick Penk was hiding.

"Got him!" Dan whispered. "I'll take him on the horse. You hurry and do your work, Uncle Dick."

Farther up the side of the hill, Dan

Dauney bound and gagged his man. He found his horse, put Al Canning across the saddle, and roped him there. Then he led the animal toward the edge of the gulch by a circuitous route.

Cocopah Charlie was waiting at the cabin. He helped Dauney get Al Canning to the ground. Canning was fully conscious and aware that he had a terrific headache. His wounded wrist was causing him agony, too.

Dan Dauney tumbled him into the cabin with the others, closed the door, and sat down beside Cocopah Charlie. And now he rolled and lighted a cigarette and puffed in evident enjoyment.

"The work has been well done," Charlie said.

"It ain't over yet," Dan Dauney informed him. "I've got the five men. I know that Reech didn't kill Bert. But I don't know which one o' the other four did, and I aim to find out."

"And when you find out?" Cocopah Charlie questioned.

"That's a right foolish question for you to ask, Charlie," Dauney told him. "There can't be but one answer, and you ought to know it."

He got up and paced back and forth in front of the cabin. He was thinking of Bert again. Bert was gone, and he would have to readjust his life. When this was over, he would marry Stella Zaine, and make a home. Bert would be but a memory.

Half an hour passed, and then men came along the trail. Uncle Dick was leading them with Reese Zaine. The Doctor was with them, and others were prominent men of Mogul Creek—men who knew the code and would be fair.

Dan Dauney met them some distance from the cabin.

"I want that you gents should just listen near the windows and door at first," he explained. "If there's a confession, I want you should hear it."

They crept through the darkness and took up their positions. Then Dan Dauney lit a lantern that he had ready, and Uncle Dick Penk opened the cabin door.

The five prisoners were scattered around the room, still gagged, their wrists still bound. Without command, Uncle Dick and Cocopah Charlie went to them and removed the gags.

Dan Dauney stood in the doorway. The Doctor and two men of the camp were just to one side, out of sight of the men in the cabin. The others were at the windows, listening.

"I've got you five villains!" Dan Dauney said. "You killed my brother and then tried to make men think I did it. And now you're goin' to pay! Porte and Canning, Blurgon and Sanger and Pete Reech; this here camp will be a lot better when you're gone from it, I reckon."

"We'll go!" Steve Porte cried. "We'll get out, Dauney!"

"It won't be as easy as that for you," Dan Dauney said. "You're goin' to talk to me straight and fast now. I know a lot o' what happened. We won't talk about why you wanted Bert killed, 'cause that's understood."

"Who says we had anything to do with it?" Blurgon asked.

"Four o' you drew cards to see which one would do it," Dauney accused. "So you're all guilty, and so is Reech, for he was in on the deal. You killed a boy tryin' to get a claim. You tried to make it look like I'd killed my own brother. I loved that boy. I promised my dyin' mother that I'd do my best to take care o' him. So you c'n guess how much mercy I'm goin' to show you now."

Dan Dauney whipped out his two guns and held them at his sides.

"Who shot my brother?" he demanded.

None of them gave reply. None made a move toward him. They could do nothing, with their hands tied behind their backs, with Dan Dauney—Tricky

Hardware—the best shot in the district. standing there in the doorway with two guns held ready to flame.

"Anybody goin' to talk?" Dauney demanded.

"I never shot him, Dan," Pete Reech whined. "I had to do what I did. Canning made me, 'cause I owe him money."

Canning cursed him.

"I know you didn't shoot him, Reech," Dauney said. "I know where you were when he was shot. But one o' the other four did. I aim to find out which one."

"You won't find out!" Canning yelled at him. "We're standin' together, Dauney! You can't get away with a deal like this. Some o' my friends will be here mighty quick."

"The only friends you've got in camp, Canning, are right here in this cabin—skunks like yourself!" Dan Dauney told him. "You needn't hope that somebody will come along and put a stop to this. You're a sneaking skunk, Canning! You ain't got any nerve. You get others to do your dirty work."

"I took my chance with the others ——" Al Canning stopped speaking abruptly, realizing that he was making a confession.

"So you admit that the four o' you drew lots to see which would kill Bert?" Dauney asked.

"Yeah! And a lot o' good it'll do you. Nobody knows which o' us did it, except the one who did."

"That sounds right down foolish, don't it?"

"But it ain't!" Al Canning said. "We drew, and then separated. The man who got the ace o' spades didn't tell the others. Every one o' us who didn't do the shootin' will say we didn't, and the man who did will say so, too. So how are you goin' to find out, Dauney?"

"I don't have to find out. I know!" Dan Dauney said.

While they watched him, he examined his guns again, slowly and thoroughly, breaking them carefully, whirling the cylinders, holding the watchers under a terrible tension.

Standing back against the wall in the fitful light cast by the lantern, they stared at him. Fear was in their faces. Perspiration stood out on their foreheads. They trembled.

"I know!" Dan Dauney said again, and none of them knew that he lied. "And I'm goin' to shoot that man down like a dog, right here and now. I'm goin' to send him to——"

He raised one of the guns as he finished speaking.

"No—no!"

The cry came from one of the five as he cowered back against the wall.

"So! It was you, Porte! I didn't know, but I sure found out!" Dan Dauney said. "You're the skunk who shot down my brother from ambush. So, darn you——!"

He raised the gun and started to drop it, prepared to empty its bullets into the cringing form beside him. But an arm shot out of the darkness and jerked Dan Dauney's gun hand aside. And The Doctor gripped him and held him helpless for the moment.

"No, Dan!" The Doctor said. "It ain't fittin' that you should have that man's blood on your soul. He ain't worth shootin', Dan. All o' us have heard what was said. We don't need to waste any time, I reckon. Just leave it to us, Dan, and go home with Reese Zaine. You've done all the work, so you've avenged your brother. We'll do the cleanin' up around here."

Other men crowded around him, and Dan Dauney was led back and out of the cabin. Reese Zaine had him by the arm.

"What The Doctor says is best, Dan," Zaine said. "Come away with me. Stella will be waitin' up for us. She'll have coffee ready. Come with me, boy!"

And so Dan Dauney stumbled along the gulch trail at the side of Reese Zaine. And now that it was over, the tears streamed from his eyes again and sobs shook his body. But he had grown quiet long before they reached the Zaine cabin. There he held Stella in his arms for a moment, and then sat down to rest and eat the food that she had prepared.

"You just forget everything, Dan," Zaine told him. "You and Stella get married and live on your claim. I'll hire me a day-wages man to help around here. And I'll march up the gulch and visit as often as you'll let me."

It was an hour past daybreak when Dan Dauney left the Zaine cabin. Cocopah Charlie was waiting for him—had been waiting for hours, sitting hunched up on a stump. He got up and fell in step beside Dan Dauney, who was looking at the rising sun and drinking in deep breaths of the invigorating morning air.

At a certain place on the trail, Charlie touched him on the arm and stopped him.

"Look, Dan Dauney!" he said.

Dan Dauney looked, and saw—five forms swinging from the limbs of a cottonwood tree down by the creek—five forms swinging slowly in the morning breeze.

EXCLUSIVE GLACIER PARK

ABANDON motors all ye who enter here," is the stern dictum of the authorities of the Dominion of Canada in regard to Glacier Park, in the Canadian Rockies in British Columbia. A whole beautiful park of four hundred and sixty miles that, nevertheless, bears the sign "No Parking" will seem rather like a full stop in the face of the ubiquitous motorist as well as something of an anomaly. But the matter is settled, and there is no appeal.

This dark cloud which hangs over the motorist, however, has its silver lining for the pedestrian and the beauty lover. Captain E. N. Russell, the superintendent of the park, is determined that it shall be preserved in all its natural beauty, and that commercialism in the shape of the hot-dog stand, the gasoline filling station, and all the attendant industries are to be rigidly excluded together with their reason-for-being. The most direct transcontinental route from the prairie provinces to Vancouver would have been through the park, but the Dominion authorities are going to enormous expense and extending their building program considerably in order to have a route for overland motor tourists to go round the park instead of through it.

Glacier Park, which is one of three national parks in the Canadian Northwest, is across the British Columbia-Alberta border from Lake Louise, which is much patronized by travelers from New York. The motorist will doubtless regret being deprived of the privilege of entering this paradise on wheels, but, like the philosophers that all experienced travelers eventually become, he will reverse on being thus confronted with a "Stop" and turn joyfully in a direction where the signal is "Go."

Hardrock Hunts in Pairs

By Seth Ranger

Author "Santa Sails In," etc.

THE deputy United States marshal who covered the Big Nugget district pulled up his dog team and pounded on "Hardrock" Shipley's door. "You boys get your clothes on," he shouted, "and harness that mushing mule of yours."

Hardrock Shipley nudged "Poke" Tupper, his partner. "Roll out of that bunk, Poke, and dress, it's the marshal talking. Something's up."

Hardrock pulled on his clothes hurriedly and opened the door. "Come in, McClure," he invited. "What's the excitement?"

McClure proved to be a young man who stood six feet three, and weighed around two hundred and twenty pounds. He was one of the best-looking and most powerful men in the North. His face was flushed with excitement. "I've got something on Bud Baker at last," he cried with evident satisfaction.

"Humm!" mused Hardrock. At moments of rage or deep thought his fringe of red whiskers was inclined to bristle. "Sure you're not moved by personal dislike rather than evidence?" he inquired. "You know, McClure, you're going to make a good marshal in time. You've got the strength to travel long distances over hard trails without rest. You've got courage. But such qualities, valuable as they are, won't do you much good if you make two or three bad boners. A peace officer who goes off half cocked isn't much respected."

"There's no doubt about this," McClure cried.

"Humm!" said Hardrock. "I know you've hated Bud Baker for two years now; in fact, ever since he kidnaped Molly Allen, married her, and made her as happy as you hoped to make her."

"Bud's a born outlaw—reckless with his own life, with her's, and with no respect for the law or lives of others."

"Kind of harsh judgment," Hardrock said thoughtfully, "and rendered by a man who isn't exactly unprejudiced. What'd he do?"

"Killed Mark Sather, robbed him of several bales of fur, and made a bad job of it!"

"How?"

"Because Sather came to long enough to tell who killed him. An Indian came in about three hours ago with the news. I'm expecting trouble. Bud Baker's not the sort to be taken alive, and I'm forming a posse to hunt him down. I need you two boys. Stick up your hands and be sworn in."

There was no arguing this point. An officer has the authority to swear in needed help in an emergency. Hardrock and Poke were sworn in.

As they prepared for the trail, Poke Tupper asked in a low tone, "What do you think, Hardrock?"

"I don't think Bud Baker killed Sather. The old rascal probably goaded Bud to the point of murder several times, but Bud wouldn't do anything to injure him. I'm admitting Bud was a reckless dare-devil and got into trouble on several occasions, but it was never serious trouble. And, as in so many other cases, the right girl came along and tamed him. Bud never killed Sather, but if we don't handle this case right, either Bud Baker or McClure will be dead before night. They hate each other. McClure hates Bud because he won Molly; Bud hates McClure because 'Mack' once made the crack that Molly would tire of Bud within a year and spend the rest of her life wishing she had married him."

Poke nodded his head gravely. "The situation is sure full of dynamite. And the heck of it is, I like 'em both. What a mess! Well, I'm ready. It's a queer situation where a couple of the posse secretly tries to take the play away from the marshal, but that's what we've got to do."

Tabasco, the North's mushing mule, broke trail for the shorter-legged dogs. A steady stream of snow clods was flying from the mule's hoofs into Hardrock's face. Hardrock usually drove because he could get more speed out of Tabasco than could Poke.

Dawn was breaking as they neared Mark Sather's cabin. An air of tragedy hovered over the place. A half-starved malemute was giving voice to occasional howls—the death howl that Poke had heard more than once. Dogs are queer that way.

A heavy-log building housed two grunting pigs. A storeroom just beyond contained several tons of dried salmon. A creek, now frozen, indicated the source. Around the cabin there was an extensive clearing which in the summer was devoted to gardening.

The Indian who had brought in the news of the murder explained that he had not touched anything in the cabin, and that things were just as he had found them, except that he had lifted the dying man to his bunk. McClure led the way indoors. There was a curious lack of disorder. Except that the storeroom built into it had been thoroughly searched, the cabin was in a normal state.

Sather had been killed by a blow from behind. The butt of a gun had been used.

"Don't take it for granted that Bud killed Sather," Hardrock suggested kindly; "take it for granted that most anybody might have done the job. If you're too sure, you're liable to overlook an important clew. That's just an old man's advice."

"But a man who was sheriff and marshal when it was a dangerous business to hold those offices," Poke put in.

"Do you see anything unusual?"

"No, except that the man who did the job knew what he wanted and evidently got it. There wasn't a struggle. Sather never had a chance."

They went into the kitchen. Everything there seemed to be in order. "I'll

get breakfast," Poke offered, "while you boys finish checking up on the evidence."

Snow had fallen, covering up all tracks except a footprint at the entrance to the woodshed. It was large, the moccasin print of a big man.

"Bud Baker and I have the biggest feet in this district," McClure said grimly, "and that's not my footprint. The sooner I can get to Bud's fox ranch the better I'll be pleased. Hello! What's this?" He reached down and picked up the pelt of a silver fox that had been dropped in the snow. It was perforated with tiny holes forming the brand "S." "Sather branded all his pelts," McClure observed. "That may help some!"

"Breakfast's ready," Poke called.

After their hard all-night mush, breakfast was welcome. Crisp bacon, spuds, prunes, and flapjacks awaited them in generous portions. The coffeepot was steaming enthusiastically, and a can of cream had just been punched.

Hardrock speared a slice of bacon and thrust it into his mouth. "Can't wait for manners," he mumbled, "as hungry as I—— Say! Poke! What did you do to this bacon, fry it in a pan filled with fish grease?"

"No! Why?"

"Taste it!"

"Holy cats!" grunted the disgusted Poke a few seconds later. "Sather puts up his own bacon and ham every fall. He's been feeding salmon to his hogs and it's tainted the meat!"

Hardrock called the malemute and dumped the bacon in front of him. "Next to a Siwash," he commented, "you like fish about as well as anything I know."

They made a meal out of what remained, then continued on to the Baker cabin two miles away.

"Look!" whispered the marshal, pointing to track in the fresh snow. "Somebody's carrying a warning to Bud. Word must have leaked out at Big Nugget that we were coming after him. He's got friends there. Every crook has friends." Neither Hardrock nor Poke made any comment. "I'll say this much for him," McClure continued; "he covered up his tracks and didn't leave any evidence except that one moccasin print."

"The perfect crime has never been committed," Hardrock said, breaking the silence. "No matter how crafty a man may be—and it sure was a crafty man who killed Sather—he overlooks some little detail."

"What detail in this case?" the marshal sharply demanded, as if suggesting that Hardrock was concealing something.

"It's there, but we overlooked it," Hardrock replied.

"'Sandy' McClure, if you come a step nearer, I'll drop you in your tracks!"

The voice rang out sharply when they were a quarter of a mile from the Baker cabin. A curious expression passed over McClure's face as he recognized his former sweetheart's voice. He stopped dead. Hardrock Shipley dived into the brush, but Poke Tupper found himself covered when he started to make a similar move. "Stand right where you are," the girl ordered. Then she lifted her voice. "You little redheaded monkey, if you try anything, I'll shoot first and ask questions afterward! Come out of that brush!"

As Hardrock did not obey, she blazed away at the thicket. After that, Hardrock was afraid to come out.

"Now, listen, Molly," McClure pleaded, "you wouldn't be foolish enough to shoot an officer doing his duty."

"Yes, I'd be just that foolish. This is a frame-up. I'm fighting for Bud because he's a man worth fighting for. I'm not so sure that you're doing your

duty, either! Bud's not guilty. He fought with Sather on several occasions—— Stop right where you are, don't think because I'm talking that I'm not watching! As I was saying, he fought with Sather, but Bud hasn't been away from the ranch in three days."

"Then why all this defense?"

"Because Bud's afraid he'll be framed. There are several people who would like to get hold of this fox ranch. He's not going to be locked up where he can't protect his own interests."

"Why is Bud letting his wife fight for him?" The marshal spoke pointedly.

The girl flushed at that. "That was a small statement, Sandy McClure, and you know it! I'm supposed to be in Big Nugget. I told Bud I'd go. Then I changed my mind; I'm going to fight it out him."

Obviously, the marshal admired the girl's courage. Also, he doubted that she would actually shoot him. He must go ahead. He advanced slowly, his eyes on hers, attempting to read her thoughts. He saw her grow hard; then, apparently realizing what it meant, she weakened momentarily. Again the thought of her husband controlled her. "Don't make me shoot you, Sandy," she pleaded, "but Bud's going to have his chance. Don't make me shoot, Sandy!" Her face was tortured.

"Careful!" warned Poke. "She means business. To her, love is greater than the law. She figures she's fighting for her home and husband. She is——"

"Sandy—there!" The rifle roared. At the same instant, Poke and Sandy McClure saw the muzzle go into the air as Hardrock Shipley launched himself upon the girl. The two went down as the rifle cracked.

Hardrock was yelling at the top of his lungs. "Give me a help, you Siwashes! She's got twenty-five hands, and each one is scratching my face. Hey, Molly! Stop it! Danged if I ever struck a girl, and I ain't going to begin now! Stop it! Poke! Sandy!"

At that moment Hardrock got a hold, and the fight was over. They closed in about the defiant girl.

"Sorry, Molly," the marshal said, "but it had to be! You were lucky that Hardrock interfered; you might have shot me."

"I tried to! You are against Bud!"

"It's a shame that such a girl has to love a man of that type," McClure whispered to Hardrock. "Now for Bud Baker," he said aloud. "The sooner I get this over, the better."

The girl became frantic. "Do something," she pleaded, turning to the two old sour doughs. "He'll kill Bud sure, or Bud will kill him. It's terrible! Terrible! Oh, if I could only get my hands on the people responsible!"

Molly Baker struggled as McClure stalked away. Hardrock looked at Poke when she pleaded for them to do something. Poke looked at Hardrock and nodded. The pair let the girl slip between their fingers, and she was off on the run to hurl herself on the marshal, while the partners legged it into the woods.

"He'll have his hands full," Hardrock predicted, gingerly feeling the scratches on his face. "She's disarmed now, so she can't kill him. He won't kill her."

"You know something?" Poke suggested.

"What?"

"Bud Baker will probably be watching from the ridge above his cabin. He's a regular mountain sheep when it comes to seeing things."

"And the way to get a mountain sheep," Hardrock interrupted, "is to get above him. He never thinks to look up."

Despite the seriousness of the situation, Hardrock and Poke chuckled frequently as they thought of Sandy McClure with a pretty wild cat on his hands. The partners separated above the cabin and approached the ridge from opposite directions, Hardrock waiting a half hour, while Poke worked his way through the heavy brush.

Hardrock was slowly making his advance an hour later when he heard Poke's voice cry out: "Don't shoot!" It was the signal they had agreed on in case Bud got the drop on either of them. It warned the other of the situation and position, and it was then up to him to act accordingly.

Hardrock began to descend at an angle. As they had figured, Bud was above his cabin, watching. Presently, voices reached Hardrock.

"I should have shot you, Poke, for even thinking I'd kill Sather. Somebody should have killed him, and I'm admitting that freely, but I wouldn't take a chance. But I know that, if Sandy McClure ever gets me in jail, I'll be a long time getting out."

"What are you going to do with me?" Poke inquired, stalling for time.

"I don't know yet. My wife is safe in Big Nugget by this time; that leaves me free to operate."

"Your wife is down below, arrested," Poke informed him. "She decided to stay and cover your retreat!"

Bud Baker's face flamed. "She'd do that!" he said with pride. "Who's got her—McClure? I'll kill him for that. I'll——"

"If you are innocent, you'd better give yourself up and prove it," Poke suggested. "I'm telling you this because you're the same hot-headed sort of a young cuss that I was. I like you and——"

"I'll fight it out. And I'll get her back! I'll——"

Hardrock Shipley's voice cut in at that moment:

"Up with 'em, Bud! It's Hardrock speaking. I've got you covered!"

Bud whirled and fired at the sound. Poke, though unarmed, hurled himself at the younger man. They went down into the snow and, ten seconds later, Hardrock had piled into the fight. It was the sort of fight that left nothing out. Even Hardrock was satisfied.

Presently, two badly battered men were handcuffing a third. "No hard feelings," Hardrock observed as he got to his feet. "We won't mention that you resisted officers of the law. You made one mistake when you got the drop on Poke—you forgot me. Always remember, Poke Tupper travels in pairs."

Bud eyed Hardrock curiously. "You must have stuck your face into a clump of devil's-club," he said. "You're all scratched up."

"Just the same as a clump of devil's-club," Hardrock admitted. "I couldn't seem to hold both your wife's hands at the same time. Ever try it?"

"I never had any trouble holding her hands," Bud answered, his sense of humor coming to the surface for a moment. Almost instantly it was gone. "What's next?" he asked.

"We're taking you down to McClure. He's probably near your cabin." Hardrock fired three shots. From the valley came three answering shots: the signal that the fight was over.

As Hardrock, Poke, and Bud emerged from the woods, Molly rushed forward, crying: "Did he hurt you?"

Bud snarled, glaring at McClure, "No! I hurt him more than he did me!" Poke's bleeding face confirmed this.

"I'm crying because they got you, Bud," Molly explained. "They've wanted our place because it is ideal for a fur farm. And—and—now they'll get it!"

"Who do you mean by 'they'?" Hardrock demanded.

"Everybody who is in the business. Sather wanted it!"

"Go easy," Bud warned her in a low tone. "They'll use Sather's wanting it as a reason for me killing him."

"Others wanted it," she hurried on, "but they were afraid to fight in the open. They were afraid of Bud." Her voice filled with sudden pride. Then she turned to Hardrock. "Oh, how could you? I thought you were a friend of mine!"

"I'm a better friend, maybe, than you think," Hardrock answered.

Sandy McClure began searching the place. The girl followed, watching his every move. He looked into the storeroom, and a shout of delight escaped his lips. "I found the moccasin that made that track at Sather's," he called. "Here it is, drying out! See, it's got a worn spot. The track was made by a worn moccasin of unusual size. Is this your moccasin, Baker?"

"I'm not answering questions. No matter what I say, it'll be used against me."

Hardrock, watching the girl, saw her suddenly scoop up a silver-fox pelt and thrust it beneath the mattress of a bunk. Perhaps McClure also saw the movement, perhaps he was merely thorough in his search. He lifted the mattress and jerked out the skin. "Look here," he cried triumphantly. "It's a poor pelt, but it's branded 'S.' It came from Sather's! I guess that just about settles the case, Hardrock!"

"It's good evidence," Hardrock admitted, "enough to convict; but it might be taken several ways. Remember what I told you about jumping at conclusions."

"Huh!" McClure grunted. His first big case was yielding all kinds of evidence—the murdered man's dying statement; the moccasin, and now the pelt.

Frequently, Molly gripped her husband's hand on the trip back to town. He returned the pressure, but his face remained sullen. He was beginning to hate his fellow men.

"You'd better take him in the back way," Hardrock suggested; "the crowd may get rough. Old Sather wasn't popular, but he was struck down from behind. Also, a lot of people don't like Bud."

"I can handle the matter," McClure answered. "Besides, they won't be expecting us so soon."

News travels fast. A crowd had gathered. For the most part, the men were curious. Somewhere in the back of the crowd a voice yelled, "There's the killer! String him up and save the cost of the trial. There's been too many murders on these out-of-the-way fox farms. For goodness sake string him up!"

The murmur grew louder. Hardrock and Poke drew close to the prisoner. Each had drawn his gun. Molly placed herself between the men and her husband. "You may get hurt," Bud whispered. "Beat it!"

"I won't!" she answered. He knew better than to argue.

Hardrock was leading Tabasco, and it never occurred to the mob that there was a purpose in this. The break came as the prisoner neared the jail. The voice in the background, demanding a lynching, set the others in motion. "Fire over their heads," McClure ordered.

"I will not until they get too close," Hardrock answered.

Poke held his fire. The marshal and Hardrock fired twice. A husky sour dough dropped a block of ice down on Hardrock's extended arm, then followed by leaping onto Poke. As the tall sour dough went down, some one struck the gun from the marshal's hand.

"At 'em, boys!" yelled the high-pitched voice from the rear.

Molly leaped like a tigress on the marshal. "Take off his handcuffs so he can fight. He won't run away."

McClure struggled to his feet and handed the girl the keys. Then, with his fists, he began to beat the mob back. A second later, Bud Baker had pushed his wife behind him and was lashing out. The pressure drove them toward the jail. The street was choked on either side by struggling humanity.

Hardrock Shipley reached over and tickled Tabasco in the flanks. The mule's heels struck out, hurling a man clear over the heads of those in the foreground. Each time the mule kicked, it sounded as if some one was beating a wet drum. Hardrock turned Tabasco's head to the right, then to the left, and in this manner sprayed his fire like a machine gunner.

The mob was checked briefly, but during the interval McClure dragged his prisoner into the jail and closed the door. Hardrock and Poke followed, but Tabasco, running wild, galloped down the street, kicking in every direction. Windows were smashed and doors broken down as people struggled to get out of the mule's way.

'Who was the cuss doing all the yelling?" Hardrock panted. "He started that mob!"

"Pete Monk, I think," McClure answered, "but I couldn't tell. He was probably loaded with moonshine and looking for excitement. Monk is harmless."

"Yeah, about as harmless as a .44 in the hands of a good man," Hardrock retorted. "Well——"

"You boys are through now," McClure said. 'Thanks. I'll send your money around in a few days."

"We're not through," Hardrock said; "we're just starting."

"Starting?"

"Now that we've got Bud Baker in jail where you and he can't kill each other, we're going to find who killed Sather!"

McClure flushed darkly. "That's an insult to my intelligence. I've worked up a perfect case."

"You've made the mistake a lot of young peace officers make—you jumped at conclusions. Bud may be guilty, but I don't think he is."

"A jury of twelve men will think so when I get through talking," the marshal answered. "Well, you'd better leave your badges—you're no longer deputy marshals."

In the weeks that followed there were times when Hardrock Shipley was almost desperate. The deeper he went into the case, the more evidence he found against Bud Baker. "Looks like you'd have to admit you're wrong," Poke suggested.

"Admit, nothing," roared Hardrock. "No crime is perfect. Finding evidence is a matter of keeping your eyes open. It pops up when you least expect it, but it pops just the same. I'm going to look into the private life of every cuss that's wanted either Bud's fox farm or Sather's life."

For the most part, the fox farmers were too busy cutting down overhead to have designs on Bud's farm, but there were some who might. These Hardrock visited—dropping in for a word of gossip, he explained, as he was passing through. As he gossiped, he looked around.

"Everybody but Pete Monk," Hardrock grumbled. The trial would take place the following day. Special guards were being sworn in to prevent violence. "Of course, Pete didn't do it," Hardrock mused, "but for my own satisfaction I've got to be able to say I looked over everybody."

Hardrock arrived at Monk's that evening. "Come in," Pete invited. "What's the news? I haven't been to

town since the night they brought Bud Baker in."

"He goes on trial to-morrow! Say, Pete, why did you want him strung up?"

"Mostly because I was drunk, and partly because Sather and I were once pardners. A man hates to hear of a pardner being struck down from behind. But if I'd have been sober, I'd never have yelled for Judge Lynch. I'm a law-abiding citizen!"

"It's all past now. Guess I'll be moving on."

"Better stay for the night."

"Well, if you insist!"

They played cards until midnight, then Hardrock turned in. "This night, little Molly is probably crying her eyes out," Hardrock muttered sleepily. "Well, I've done my best."

Hardrock was awakened the following morning by the rattle of stove lids. He dressed, while Pete fried the bacon. Pete was none to clean, but Hardrock resolved to make an attempt at eating. The coffee was good and the sourdough flapjacks were as good as Hardrock could make. He speared three slices of bacon and commenced to cut the strips up. "Danged good bacon," he said. "Where did you get it?"

"I buy the best when it comes to grub. This comes from a small packing plant in Seattle, but they sure know how to put up ham and bacon."

Hardrock swallowed the last of the coffee. "Well, guess I'll be going. Put on your parka, Pete, and come along. You'll want to see the trial."

"It might be interesting at that!" Pete agreed. "Can that mule of yours haul the two of us?"

"Tabasco can make a stab at it," Hardrock answered.

A girl as pale as death watched a sullen young man in a witness chair. Bud Baker was just concluding his testimony when Hardrock and Pete arrived in court. "And I'm putting the cards on the table," said Bud. "Once I was shot at, and I returned the fire. The next day I found Sather's tracks where the shot came from. I admit that he's wanted our farm for years. It is a better location than his, and he figured because he was the first into this country, he was entitled to everything. As to the branded pelt that was found in my cabin, I don't know how it got there. Look at the thing. Do you think any fur man in his right mind would steal it?"

Bud looked around the courtroom, half expecting some one to answer. His eyes paused briefly on the pale girl and his expression softened, then it grew hard again as he saw the Indian who had heard Sather's dying statement. "Chief Big Moose, there, probably told the truth," Bud went on. "He has never lied before, but Sather himself was mistaken. He thought I committed the crime because he hated me."

What a defense! Even the girl could see that the circumstantial evidence was overwhelming.

Hardrock Shipley cleared his throat. "It may not be the right procedure, but I'd like to put a witness on the stand for the defense. Pete Monk! Take the stand!"

Pete Monk went deathly white. The courtroom gasped. Slowly, Pete took the stand. "I don't know anything about Bud Baker killing Sather," he faltered.

"I know you don't, Monk," Hardrock said easily, "but we do know that even if Baker did kill Sather, he would never have stolen a poor fur and left it around his place. It looked to me then and it looks to me now that the job was done by a greedy man—a man so greedy that he kept all the best furs he stole and planted a poor pelt to throw suspicion on Baker. That's why, instead of figuring Baker guilty, I figured he was innocent. But the guilty

man was clever. He wore Baker's moccasins over his own and left them with the poor pelt for the marshal to find. He was very careful not to take any of Sather's belongings, such as guns, knives, traps, and so on. But he did take some grub, because grub is mostly alike. He even took a side of Sather's sickening, salmon-fed bacon. And this morning I nearly choked when I ate it."

Pete Monk leaped from the witness chair, but the marshal caught him before he was halfway to the door. "Just a minute," McClure growled. "You're playing heck with the evidence I've produced in this case, but I want to hear your answers just the same. How about that bacon?"

"It's a lie! I bought that bacon from a Seattle packing house and——"

"Salmon's cheap in Alaska when you live by a stream, but in Seattle they don't feed hogs salmon—corn's cheaper and leaves a better taste in the consumer's mouth," Hardrock said.

He looked impatiently toward the door. If he had any luck, and he believed he was entitled to some luck after the weeks of hard work he had spent on this case, Poke Tupper should be showing up about now.

He stalled by asking a number of questions, then the door opened. Poke Tupper staggered in, bending low under the burden of a bale of fur. He dropped the bale onto a table and cut the lashings with his hunting knife. The courtroom was silent as Poke held up the different pelts. Each was a prime silver-fox pelt. Each bore the brand "S."

When all the pelts had been shown, Poke said:

"After Hardrock and Pete left, I searched Pete's cabin. Didn't find a thing. Just happened to pick up a wolverene's track. Thought I might get a shot at the cuss, but he got away. I dug where he had been digging—you know a wolverene loves to get into a fur cache. Well, here's what I found!"

The jury walked into the jury room, turned around, and walked right out again. "Not guilty," said the foreman, before the clerk could ask the usual formal questions.

The courtroom was quickly cleared. Hardrock Shipley smiled and started down the street. The marshal strode past with Pete Monk. Pete cursed the little Irishman with feeling. "When you showed up, I might have known it wasn't to pay a call. I might have known Poke Tupper was around somewhere."

"Yeah," Hardrock admitted, "mostly when I hunt—I hunt in pairs, that's what I do."

Two arms went around Hardrock's shoulders. He whirled and faced Molly Baker. Instinctively, his hands went up to protect his face. She smiled. "I'm not going to scratch you this time," she cried. "I'm going to kiss you."

Hardrock's face became even redder than his fringe of red whiskers. And Molly kissed him, not once, but for each scratch his face bore, and then she hugged him, while Bud Baker looked on and grinned with approval.

From the distance came Poke Tupper, his long legs leaping over the snowdrifts. "Hey!" he called. "I helped out on that, too, Molly!"

"Yeah," Hardrock jeered, "you and Tabasco. Run along, Poke; if she kisses you, she'll have to kiss the mule, too."

The Stranger

By Max Brand

Author of "Silver Trail," etc.

CHAPTER I.

DRINK DEEP.

THEY were holding beef out of Clayrock, for the UX outfit. Eighteen hundred steers, strong with good feeding and apt to want their own way, were quite enough for two punchers to handle, even two like Pete Lang and Lew Sherry, whose range name was "Tiny Lew." But the beef had had their fill of good grass on this day, and had been drifted enough miles to make them at once contented and sleepy. They began to lie down, slumping heavily to their knees, and so gradually down—unlike the grace of a mustang dropping for the night.

"Trouble and beef—that's all you get out of a bunch like this," said Tiny Lew, as he circled his horse quietly around the herd. "And *we* don't get the beef," he concluded.

"Shut up and start singing," said Pete Lang. "Which if you was an orator, these shorthorns wouldn't vote for you, anyway. Sing, darn you!" said Pete Lang.

"You start it, then. I got no singing in my throat to-night."

Lang began, to the tune of "My Bonnie Lies over the Ocean":

"Last night as I lay on the prairie,
And looked at the stars in the sky,
I wondered if ever a cowboy
Would drift to that sweet by and by.

"Roll on, roll on;
Roll on, little dogies, roll on, roll on;
Roll on, roll on,
Roll on, little dogies, roll on!"

"Will you quit it?" asked Tiny Lew plaintively. "It makes me ache to hear such mournful lingo."

"You've got too much education," said Lang. "I always told you so. If there was any nacheral sense born into you, it was read out in books. But there's that speckled steer got up again. Will you sing him down, sucker, or are you gunna start wrangling until the whole herd begins to mill?"

Tiny Lew tipped back his head and his bass voice flowed in a thick, rich current, carefully subdued:

"There's old 'Aunt' Jess, that hard old cuss,
Who never would repent;
He never missed a single meal
Nor never paid a cent.
But old Aunt Jess like all the rest
To death he did resign
And in his bloom went up the flume
In the days of Forty-nine."

The speckled steer lay down again with a grunt and a puff.

"A fine, soothin' song is that," sneered Pete Lang. "Let 'em have some more! You oughta be singing in a hall, Tiny."

Tiny Lew, unabashed, continued his song with another stanza:

"There is 'Ragshag' Jim, the roaring man,
Who could outroar a buffalo, you bet;
He roared all day and he roared all night,
And I guess he is roaring yet.
One night Jim fell in a prospect hole—
It was a roaring bad design—
And in that hole Jim roared out his soul,
In the days of Forty-nine."

"I've had enough," said Pete Lang. "Whistle to 'em, son."

Slowly, the two punchers walked or jogged their horses around the night herd, sometimes with low, soft whistles; sometimes they sang a word or two of a song and hummed the rest of it, and the great, fat steers, plump for shipping on the next day, quieted under the soothing of the familiar sounds, and with that human reassurance about them—like a wall to shut away danger of wolf or mountain lion, danger of the very stars and winds—they went to sleep.

Then the two punchers drew their horses together and let the mustangs touch noses.

"It's quite a town, Clayrock, by the look of the lights," said Tiny Lew.

"I've had my share of talking juice in yonder, under them lights," remarked Pete Lang. "It's got one trouble. The kind of redeye they peddle there over the bar ain't made for boys, but for growed-up men. You'd better keep away from that joint, Tiny."

Tiny Lew stretched forth a hand and took his companion firmly by the back of his coat collar. Then he heaved Pete Lang a yard out of the saddle and held him dangling against the stars.

"Do I let you drop, you little, sawed-off son of a gun?" asked Tiny pleasantly.

"I'll have your gizzard out for this!" declared Pete Lang, keeping his voice equally low, for fear of disturbing the steers.

Tiny deposited him back in the saddle.

"It's so long since I've had a drink," said Tiny, "that I'm all rusty inside. I'm lined with red rust, two inches deep. I'm more full of sand than a desert. A couple of buckets full of redeye would hardly be heard to splash inside of me, Pete."

At this, Pete Lang chuckled.

"Look here," said he. "You go in and tip over a couple. These here dogies are plumb sleepy, and I can hold 'em till morning. Go in and tip over a couple, and then come back and I'll make a visit for myself, before morning."

The big man glanced over the herd. Every steer was down. Now and again, the sound of a horn clicked faintly against a horn, or a tail swished could be heard distinctly, so still was the night!

"I'd better stay," said Tiny Lew, with indecision.

"You drift, son," replied his companion. "Besides, you're only a nuisance, to-night. The thoughts that you got in your head, they'd disturb the peace of a whole town, let alone a night herd like this. Get out of here, Tiny, You've near strangled me already. He touched his throat, where the strain of his collar had chafed the skin when Sherry had lifted him from the sad-

dle. The big fellow slapped Lang on the shoulder.

"So long, Pete. Wish me luck, and no fights, and a safe return."

"All right," said Lang, "but I warn you that a mule makes a safer ride than a hoss into Clayrock—there's so many quicksands and holes in the ground. Don't find no friends, and don't stay to make none, but just tip down a couple and come on back."

"Right as can be," said Tiny Lew, and turned his pony's nose toward the lights of the town.

He rode a pinto, only fifteen hands high, but made to carry weight, even weight such as that of Tiny, and tough as a mountain goat. They split straight across country, jumping two fences that barred the way, and so entered at last the first street of Clayrock. It was a big, rambling town, with comfortable yards around the houses, and as Tiny Lew rode in, he could hear the soft rushing sound made by sprinklers on the lawns; he could smell the fragrance of the gardens, too, and the umbrella trees stood in shapely files on either side of the way.

"Civilized," said Tiny to himself. "Pete was stringing me along a little."

He came to a bridge over a little river and, in spite of his hurry, he reined in his horse to watch the flash and swing of the current as it dipped around a bend of the stream. There was sufficient distance from the arched center of the bridge to the nearest houses to enable him to look about him, over the head of Clayrock, as it were; and he saw that the town was snuggled down among the hills—easy hills for riding, he judged, by the round outlines of the heads of the hills. Only to the south there was a streak of darkness against the higher sky, and the glimmer of a number of lights which he thought, at first, must be great stars.

But then he realized that stars cannot shine through such a dark cloud, and finally he was aware that it was a flat-faced cliff that rose over Clayrock—the very feature which gave the town its name, of course! The select center of the town, no doubt.

Tiny Lew went on. He had no desire to see select centers, but presently, on the farther side of the river, he found the houses closer together. The gardens ended. People were in the streets. He passed a moving-picture house where the sign was illuminated with crimson lights. And so he reached the Parker Place.

There were two larger hotels in Clayrock, but they were not like the Parker Place. It stood off a bit by itself, on a hummock, so that it was able to surround itself with a narrow wedge of lawn or garden, and it had a beaming look of hospitality. Tiny Lew Sherry did not wait for a second thought, but turned in the head of his mount toward the stable. There he saw his horse placed at a well-filled rack, and went into the hostelry.

No sooner did he push open the door than he heard a chorus sung in loud, cheerful voices—the chorus of a range song, which made him feel at home at once. He went into the bar. A dozen punchers reached out hands for him, but Sherry broke their grips and went on into the gaming room. He knew that he was too sober to drink with fellows such as these.

In the rear room there was not a great deal of light except for three bright pools of it over the three tables which were occupied; but there was comparative quiet. That is to say, the roar from the bar was like the noise of a sea breaking on a hollow beach. It was so loud that the bartender had to ask twice what he would have.

Sherry had no chance to answer for himself. From the next table rose a slender form—a tall and graceful man who tapped the bartender's shoulder.

"Not the regular poison, but some of

mine," said he. "I can see that you've made a voyage and have just come to port, partner. And a good thirst like that shouldn't be thrown away on the filth they have behind the bar, out yonder."

Sherry was willing to agree. He thanked the stranger and asked him to sit down; as a matter of fact, he already was seating himself, uninvited.

The drinks were brought. The stranger raised his glass, and Sherry saw that the lean, brown hand of the other shook a little.

"Drink deep!" said he.

And Sherry drank, but his mind was troubled.

CHAPTER II.

TWO SAILORS.

HE was troubled for several reasons, any of which would have been good enough, but the main one was a sort of savage keenness in the eye of the other. He was a lank man, with a yellowish skin, and a proud, restless way of turning his head from side to side; and in this head there was the most active and blazing pair of eyes that Sherry ever had seen.

"You hail from where, stranger?" asked this fellow.

"I've been punching cows for the UX outfit," said Sherry. "What's your line?"

"You punch cows?" said the other, dwelling on this answer before he made his own reply. "I've seen my storms, but I've never had to duck into such a rotten port as that to weather them. Cow-punching!"

He laughed shortly, and the gorge of Sherry rose. But, like most big men, it took a long time to warm him thoroughly with anger. He was willing to waive the peculiarities of a stranger, particularly, since he was drinking this man's liquor.

"You've never been a sailor?" the host asked.

"No," said Sherry.

"You've never lived, then," said the other.

"What's your name?" said Sherry.

"My name is Harry Capper. What's yours?"

"Sherry is my name. I'll let you into the know. Some of the boys around here would take it pretty hard if they heard you at work slamming punching as a trade."

"Would they? Would they?" snapped Capper, his buried eyes blazing more brightly than ever.

"You have to do the thing you find to do," said Sherry with good humor. "Besides, you couldn't sail a ship through this sort of dry land."

He laughed a little at his own remark, but Capper refused to be softened.

"I thought that you looked like a man who would be doing a man's work. There's no work off the sea. There's no life off the sea—except on an island!"

He laughed in turn, with a sort of drawling sneer. Sherry made up his mind that the wits of Harry Capper were more than a little unsettled.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said Capper, "I'll spot any landsman ten years, and show him more life in half the time at sea. Rough and smooth. Into the wind and with it! What does a landsman ever get a chance to do? But suppose you have four thousand tons of steel under you, and the steel loaded with a cargo, and the engines crashing and smashing, and a rotten crew to work the craft, and leagues between you and your port, and a fortune if you get to it—well, that's living!"

"You've commanded a ship?"

"I never sailed in command, but I've been first officer to bring more than one ship home. You don't always finish where you start. That's one thing about the sea, too!"

Again he laughed, and more than ever Sherry was convinced that this man's brain was addled. He would have

liked, too, to hear something about the steps by which the other had risen to the command of vessels when he sailed in subordinate rôles. He had no opportunity, for suddenly Capper started to his feet.

He sat down again, almost at once. His nostrils quivered, and his eyes flared more villainously than ever; he was staring at Sherry with an almost murderous intensity as he said: "I'll show you some of the things that you learn at sea. Look at the fellow just coming into the room. He looks like a swell, don't he?"

Sherry saw a man of middle age come into the room and stand for a moment near the door, drawing off his gloves slowly. He had a fine, thoughtful face, a most magnificent forehead, and the whole bearing of a quiet gentleman who lives more inside himself than in the world.

"You'd say that a fine gentleman like that wouldn't talk to a bird like Harry Capper, beach comber and what not?"

"And will he?" asked Sherry, beginning to feel a good deal of disgust.

"*I* think he will—if I ask him," said Capper. "You'll see, now."

He turned suddenly in his chair.

"Hello," said he. "Come over and have a drink with me."

The newcomer started a little at the sound of this voice, but now he replied courteously: "I'm not drinking, Capper. Thank you."

The sailor laughed in his unusually disagreeable manner.

"You'd better think again!" he said with a great deal of ugly point.

The other hesitated for a moment; then he came to the table and sat down.

"This here is by name of Sherry," said Capper. "And this is Oliver Wilton, an old messmate of mine. Ain't you, Oliver?"

The other made a little gesture which might have expressed assent, or simple irritation.

"Sure, he's a messmate of mine," said Capper. "We've sailed around the world together. We got a lot of the same charts in our heads. We've seen places. We've seen Bougainville Island, and Choiseul. And Treasury Island, and Ronongo, and Buena Vista, and San Cristoval. Have we seen them, mate?"

He reached across and slapped the shoulder of Oliver Wilton, and the latter winced from the touch of the sailor. He had refused whisky and was merely making a pretense of sipping his beer, while he watched Capper with an extraordinary expression which, Sherry thought, contained elements of disgust, fear, and keen anger.

And the surprise of Sherry grew. It was beyond words amazing that a gentleman should submit to such familiarity from such a fellow as Capper.

"But Oliver left the sea," said Capper. "You don't mind if I call you Oilver, do you, Oliver?"

"I suppose not," said the other.

Capper grinned with delight at the torment he was inflicting.

"Of course, you don't mind," said he. "Not a good fellow and a rare sport like you—why, the things that we got to remember together would fill a book, and a good fat book, at that! Am I right, old man?"

Oliver Wilton bit his lip.

"Close-mouthed old boy he is," said Capper, "but always willing to stand his round of drinks. Slow in the talk, but fast in the drinking was always his way."

At this broad hint, Wilton presently ordered a round of drinks, and Sherry could not help noticing the curious glance which the waiter cast at the sailor and at Wilton who would sit at such a table.

"You're not taking more than you can hold?" said Wilton to the sailor.

"Me?" chuckled Capper. "I always got room in my hold for the right kind

of goods to be stowed away in an extra corner. Always! So bring on the new shipment!"

The drinks were duly ordered, and then Wilton said suddenly: "I'll see that they fill out of the right bottle. They have a way of substituting in this place!"

He got up and hurried from the table.

Capper leaned back in his chair, his face filled with malicious satisfaction.

"He's a rum old boy, eh?" said he. "But he's on the hook. Oh, he can wriggle if he wants to, but he can't get off the hook! It's stuck into his gills! I suppose," he went on, his face flushing with a sort of angry triumph, "that there's nothing that he wouldn't give me, if I asked for it. I start with asking for a drink, but I might ask more. Oh, I might ask a whole cargo from him. But he's got that good a heart, that he never could turn down an old shipmate!"

He laughed again in that peculiarly disagreeable manner of his, and Sherry stirred in his chair. He had had enough of this company and he determined to leave after the present round. Moreover, Pete Lang would be expecting his return before long.

Wilton came back, himself carrying the tray.

"There you are," said Capper. "I told you he was a rare old sport. Pay for the drinks and play waiter to bring 'em, too. That's his way. Big-hearted and an open hand for all. That's him, always."

Wilton set down the drinks.

He seemed much more cheerful, now; though Sherry could not help suspecting that there was something assumed in the present good nature.

But he sat down and offered the glasses with a smile.

"Good luck and good health to you, Capper," said he, "and to you!"

"Why," said Capper, leaning a little over the table, "that's a kind thing, sir. A mighty kind way of putting things. And here's to you, with all my heart!"

It seemed that Capper was genuinely moved by the cheerful manner of the man he had been tormenting, and he showed his emotion in his voice.

Sherry, in the meantime, with a nod to the others, picked up a glass, in haste to be done and away.

Half the contents were down his throat before he heard the exclamation of Wilton: "Hello! That's not your glass!"

At that, he lowered the glass. It had had rather a bitter taste, he thought. Capper, in the meantime, had finished the glass he had taken up, and hearing the alarmed exclamation of Wilton, he now snatched the one from the hand of Sherry and swallowed off the contents, saying, with his brutal laugh, "I've got to have my own, of course!"

Sherry, half disgusted, stared at Capper. His temper had been frayed thin by the repeated insolence of the other, and now the striking muscles up and down his arm began to tighten.

"I ain't had enough drinks," said Capper suddenly, "to make me feel so dizzy. I——"

He half rose from his chair and slumped heavily back into it, his head canting over upon one shoulder.

"Gents," said Sherry, "I've gotta leave you. I'll pay for a round, but then I have to start back——"

He rose in turn, and then a stunning darkness struck him back into his chair and he heard a voice, apparently from a great distance, saying: "Here is a pair of helpless drunks. What will you do with them?"

CHAPTER III.

JACK BLEW.

FLASHES of sense returned to Sherry, thereafter. He knew that he was being dragged, half carried, to another place. He knew that he was al-

lowed to slump heavily to the floor. And after that, he had a sense of cold and darkness. When he was able to get to his knees, his eyes were still half open, half shut, and it was at this time that he heard the crash of a revolver, inhaled the pungent fumes of burned powder, and was dimly aware of the red spitting of fire.

That roused him fully and quickly to his senses, and starting to his feet, he stumbled upon a revolver which lay upon the floor before him. He picked up the gun and found the barrel warm to his touch, and a wisp of smoke floated in the deep, narrow gullet of the weapon. It was his own revolver! He knew it by four significant notches which he had filed into the handles of it for certain reasons best known to himself.

Startled by this, he stared about him, and then he saw the stranger, Capper, lying on his side against the wall, with a crimson trickle of blood down his face, and an ugly, purple-rimmed blotch on his forehead.

He was dead, and Sherry knew it at a glance. He did not go near the dead body; but he looked wildly about him. There was only one means of escape, but that appeared a simple one—a large window at the farther side of the room. To this he ran. It was locked!

But what was that to Sherry? Outside, he saw the ground; by fortune he had been placed upon the lowest floor of the hotel, and he was a mere stride from freedom.

A hand struck at the door.

"What the dickens is up in there?" asked a rough voice.

For answer, Sherry took his Colt by the barrel and with the heavy butt of the gun he smashed out a panel of the window. A second stroke brought out three more, and a third opened a gap through which he could easily make his exit; but at this moment the door was sent open with a crash.

Sherry whirled against the wall, his Colt ready. It was not the first time that he had had to fight his way out from a tight corner, but apparently the hotel keepers at Clayrock were more thoroughly prepared for trouble than the hotel keepers of other communities. No fewer than five men charged through the doorway, and Sherry, in his first glance, saw a sawed-off shotgun—most convincing of all persuaders—a rifle, and three leveled revolvers.

Courage is admirable, and fighting skill is delightful in its full employment, but even a disposition such as that of Sherry could see that this was not the time to strike back. It was better to be armed with a conscious innocence than to use his gun.

"Stick up your hands!" came the grim order.

And he obeyed quietly.

They found the dead body at once. There was an outbreak of exclamations. They herded Sherry into a corner of the room and took his gun away from him; an armed guard stood upon either side, while the other three lifted the dead man and placed him on the bed.

"He'll never be deader in a thousand years than he is now," pronounced one, whom Sherry recognized as the waiter who just had served him.

"And what'll we do with this bird?" asked another.

"Stick him in the jail."

"Why in the jail? Here's his gun warm in his hand! Judge Rope is about good enough for this bum!"

"Bill is right," said another. Then: "What you gotta say about this, stranger?"

Before Sherry could speak, a quiet voice said through the shattered window: "If you boys will listen to me, I think I can explain this."

"It's Mr. Wilton," said the bartender, attempting to convey an air of much respect.

They wrenched open the rest of the

broken window, and Wilton climbed easily into the room.

"I was half afraid that something like this would happen," said he. "That man is entirely innocent; unless you want to hang a man for self-defense. I knew that dead man. His name was Capper. He sailed before the mast on a ship which I commanded. And when he sent up word to me to-day that he was in town, I came down to see him. He was always a wild, reckless fellow. A little wrong in the head, as a matter of fact. I was afraid that he might get into mischief, and so I came down to take what care of him I could. I even had a drink with him; and it was the drink that polished off the pair of them. When they were carried in here, I wanted to follow, but the door was locked. So I walked around into the garden to look through the window. A very lucky thing that I did! I saw Capper, like a mad creature, as he was, throw himself at this fellow while he was still half conscious. He barely had sense enough to defend himself. You can see the bruise on his forehead, where Capper struck him. Capper was a madman. Mad with drink, no doubt. He managed to tear the gun out of the holster of Sherry, here. But that brought Sherry out of his whisky sleep. He grabbed the gun back and knocked Capper away, and when Capper started to rush in again—he shot him dead."

He made a pause here. Silence and then a murmur of surprise followed this statement.

"Funny, I didn't hear no racket in here," said some one.

"They weren't shouting," said Winton. "Their brains were too filled with whisky fumes for that. And, after all, the finish came in about two seconds—before I could get in through the window, in fact! Sherry seemed to come to his senses. He saw the dead body and made for the window, and started smashing it open. He saw, of course, that the case looked black for him, and he didn't know that he'd had a witness who could clear him."

There was a general murmur again; it was of pure assent except for one bearded man, wearing a heavy plaid raincoat. He was a rough customer, with a growth of beard of several days' ripeness upon his chin, and overhanging brows, from beneath which he peered earnestly out at the others. Now he advanced upon big Lew Sherry and stood before him with his legs well braced, and his hands upon his hips.

"Boys," he said, 'before you let this gent loose, I want to tell you a few things about him."

"Go on," said the bartender, who seemed to be in charge of the crowd.

But others were gathering, and the room was full of pushing people.

"If a dog bites once," said the man in the raincoat, "you call it bad luck and let him go. If he bites twice, you shoot him, I take it?"

"Go on," said the bartender. "What are you driving at?"

"I'll show you in a minute."

He turned back upon Sherry.

"You know me, Tiny?" said he.

Sherry had worn a dark scowl from the moment he first eyed the other. He hesitated now, but at length he said: "I know you, Jack."

"And how did you come to know me?" asked the other.

"By breaking your jaw for you," said Sherry. "I see you wear a lump on the side of your ugly face still."

The man of the raincoat grinned in a lopsided fashion.

"And how did you come to bust my jaw?" asked he, while all grew hushed with interest, listening to this strange conversation.

"Because you jumped me," said Sherry, "and you well know that you did, Jack!"

"I jumped you," admitted the other. "And why did I jump you?"

"Ah—that's what you're driving at, is it?" asked Sherry.

"It is! Why did I jump you?"

"Because——" began Sherry.

"Listen to this," exclaimed the other.

"Because," said Sherry in repetition, "I killed one of your cousins, and shot up another pair of them!"

An exclamation greeted this statement.

"You hear him?" asked Jack.

"It was fair fight," protested Sherry.

"Mind you, gents," said Jack. "The four of them was in one shack. They'd been felling some timber above the rest of the gang. In that there shack they had the fight. He claims that he killed one of the three and laid out the other two. They wasn't babies, any of those three. I ask you, does it seem nacherel and to reason that he could do it by fighting fair—this gent, mind you, that's just plugged a drunk through the head?"

Sherry looked swiftly around the encircling faces, and all that he saw appeared grim reading indeed to him.

"I got no grouch against this here bird," said the bartender, "but it looks like sense in what Jack says. When a dog bites twice—it shows a habit!"

Sherry searched his mind for an answer, but he found none.

Then the quiet voice of Wilton broke in: "It seems to me, men, that you might ask what happened *after* this shooting scrape at the lumber camp, Did this man bolt?"

"There's a question," said Sherry. "You can answer that, Jack. Did I run for it?"

"You come into camp and bragged about what you'd done," said Jack. "You come in with a cock-and-bull yarn."

"Did I take care of the two boys that were laid out but not dead?" asked Sherry. "Or did I leave 'em to bleed to death, as I might've done?"

"You come in an' bragged!" repeated Jack, furious at the memory. "I ask you boys to use your common sense. And here you got this gent red-handed. It ain't the first killing. And the one I tell you wasn't the first, either. Here's his gun!"

He snatched Sherry's gun and held it high.

"There's four notches filed in this here. Tell me, was they filed for fun, Sherry?"

He waited, then he answered himself with: "And there'll be five notches in there to-morrow!"

At this, a decidedly stern rumble of anger ran through the listeners. It was after the palmy days of outlawry when gunmen were rather more admired than condemned. Law had entered the West; and the gunman was an unpopular character.

At last Sherry said loudly: "Gents, you're on the wrong trail. This Jack, here, is trying to run me up a tree. I'll tell you the honest truth. There's not a notch there that isn't for the finish of a white man in a fair fight. And that's straight, so help me!"

This speech made an obvious impression, and Sherry could see the effect, as he looked about over the faces of the listeners. He noted that Wilton stood a little apart from the others—or rather, out of an apparent respect for him, the rest would not rub elbows too closely with their superior. As for Wilton himself, he seemed to be watching this scene as he would have watched something on a stage, in which he had very little concern. There was even a faint smile on his lips, from time to time, as he followed the different arguments.

Jack was not to be downed. "White men?" he exclaimed. "And what else have you accounted for?"

Sherry saw that he had led himself into a corner, but he added quietly, in reply: "I've been in Mexico, boys. And I've had to live in Louisiana among

some unpeaceable gents. That's all that I got to say about that."

"It looks sort of black for you, Sherry," said the bartender. "Though I've got nothing against you."

"It's gunna look blacker for him," insisted Jack. "It's gunna look black as choking for him, before we get through with him. This ain't a jay town that's to be buffaloed and talked down by a slicker like this Sherry! He's an educated gent, too. Reads a lot. Knows a lot. How did he ever have to leave home, I'd like to ask? I tell you, if you knew the inside of this one, you'd find it hotter'n cayenne pepper!"

Jack had piled up his points with some adroitness and there was no mistaking the hostile air of the crowd when Wilton interrupted the proceedings again, to ask: "If he came into camp, how did he happen to get off, up there, without trouble?"

"There *was* trouble," said Jack. "But he was the pet of the boss of the show. And that got him off. There was a lot of trouble, but this Sherry is one of those sneaks that always aims to play in with the straw boss, darn him and all his kind!"

This stroke produced another thunder, more thunderous than the rest.

"But suppose," said Wilton, "we find out just what story was told by both sides when they came into the camp that day?"

"The kids told a straight yarn," said Jack. "They told how they'd been sitting around having a little poker game in the evenin'. Sherry lost. Like the yaller quitter that he is, he grouched. They shut him up. He scooped for the money with one hand and begun shooting with the other before any of them could reach for their guns."

"Well," said Wilton, "but isn't it odd that a straight story like that could be disbelieved?"

"Because the boss ran the show and ran it crooked, to help Sherry!" declared Jack. "There ain't much difference between the speed of anybody's draw—hardly a fraction of a second! How could one man do that work against three, and come off hardly scratched?"

The patience of Sherry, which had been fairly well maintained up to this point, now was ended, and he flared forth: "Jack, if you think there's very little difference in the speed of a draw, I invite you—and any friend of yours—to stand up to me inside of ten paces, and we'll start the draw with an even break!"

Jack was so staggered by this proposal that he actually took a backward step.

"One of the three did no shooting at all," said Sherry grimly. "He died while he was lugging out his gun. The second feller got in one shot as he dropped, and the third got in two. And here's the proof of it. Here's the first one!"

He touched a white scar that clipped the side of his cheek.

"Here's the second one!"

He pulled up his left sleeve and exposed a forearm white as the skin of a baby. He doubled his hand, and beneath the skin appeared enormous, ropy muscles, bulging so that they threatened to leap through the skin. Against that setting, turned still whiter by the contraction of the great muscles which stopped the flow of the blood, appeared a large purple patch.

"That was the second shot that plugged me," said Sherry. "And as for the third, it's along the ribs of my left side, and it left a mark you all can see!"

Silence followed. Eyes turned slowly to Jack, who protested eagerly: "He could have picked up those marks in any fight. He admits that he had plenty of them, all over the world!"

The voice of Sherry was low and bitter:

"You yellow dog!" said he. "You know that I was dripping blood when I

got to camp. And that was why you jumped me. You never would have dared, otherwise. You forgot that my right hand was still ready for you."

Jack bit his lip, and his keen eyes flashed from side to side, seeking for a new idea, but before he could find it, the big man continued quietly:

"I told the true story, when I came into camp. We were playing poker. I'd had my share of the luck. It's a lie that says I hadn't. Matter of fact, I was the winner, and a big winner, as things went in that camp. So big a winner that straight poker wasn't good enough for the rest of them. I'd discarded an ace of clubs before the draw. And after the draw I called a hand of four aces! I wanted to argue the point. But the winner went for a gun. I had to beat him to it. And I did. You've heard this mangy coyote yelping at my heels. But I've told you the absolute truth."

Again silence weighed upon the room, and again Jack took a backward step. He had changed color, now.

"He'd be glad enough to see me hanged," said Sherry. "That sort never drops malice. That sort of man hunts in packs, getting others to take the risks that he hasn't the nerve to take for himself. As for this job here, it's a bad one. I'm sorry for it. I'll tell you straight that I had nothing against Capper. I never saw him before to-day. I don't know exactly what happened. My brain was slugged. I waked up, as you might say, when the gun went off. Then I saw my own gat at my feet, still smoking. And yonder by the wall where you found him lay Capper. Well—it looked black for me, and that was why I tried to run. I've put my cards on the table, boys. There's truth and nothing else in every word that I've spoken. Now, make up your minds."

It was not certain how the crowd would decide, until the bartender stepped forward and confronted Jack. He was not a big man, that bartender, but he was a fighter by nature.

"You!" he said. "This town is kind of cramped and small for your style, I reckon. You'd better blow!"

And Jack blew!

CHAPTER IV.

WASN'T IT QUEER?

THE strain of that impromptu trial had been so great that every one sighed with relief as the tension relaxed. And now, after having accused Sherry so bitterly, the crowd milled around him in unfeigned good will.

One big fellow slapped him heartily on the back.

"Sherry," said he, "if that's your name, I've got to say that I weigh within a few pounds of you, and yet I've got a chestnut mare at the hitching rack outside that can carry me. If you need that hoss to help you on your way, don't let me stop you from trying to catch up with Jack—the poison skunk! The hydrophobia rat!"

But Sherry waved his big hand.

"That's finished," said he. "I never hunted trouble in my life, and I never will. I never went half a mile after another man with a gun in my hand. And I never will."

A cheerful current of humanity curled closer about him to sweep him down toward the barroom, but he pushed them away with a good-natured might. Then he strode through them, and at the outer door of the hotel, he caught up with Wilton.

Him he touched upon the shoulder.

"I want ten seconds," said he, "to tell you something. I want to tell you that if it hadn't been for you singing out, I might have hung to-day!"

Wilton smiled and nodded.

"I actually believe that you might," said he. "Our fellows in Clayrock are a rough set. They act first and think afterward."

"That's why I thank you," went on Sherry in his quiet bass voice which, however, no matter how softly it was controlled, had a rumble in it like the echo of a far-off peal of thunder. "A few words are just as good as a thousand, I suppose. But you saved my hide. And there's a lot of that hide to be grateful for!"

"By the way," said Wilton, "what was your college?"

Ever so slightly, Sherry started.

"What?" he said. And then he paused, and deliberately looked Wilton in the eye. "I don't know what you mean," said he.

Wilton chuckled.

"Of course you don't," said he. "I should have known beforehand that you wouldn't understand what I meant."

"And now that I've thanked you," went on Sherry, "will you let me ask you what you put in that glass?"

Wilton started in turn.

"What I put in the glass?" he echoed.

"Mr. Wilton," said Sherry, "the point is this. I'm no hero at whisky. But I can hold my share of it. And to-night I seem to have passed out cold in two drinks. That's why I ask you what you put in that whisky!"

Wilton sighed. His eyes half closed.

"Suppose," he said suddenly, "that you walk up to my house with me?"

"I'd like it fine," said Sherry. "But I can't. For the reason that my bunkie is riding herd for two, just now, and he expects me back."

Wilton answered, with much quiet point: "Nevertheless, I think you should come along with me and I think that you will. Between you and me, Sherry, I confess that you appear to me a fairly reasonable and honest fellow; and if you are, you'll agree that you owe me something."

"I owe you," said Sherry carefully, "for some very opportune remarks during that impromptu trial of me a few moments ago."

"Impromptu?" said the other. "Is that your word for what I said?"

Sherry turned full upon his companion. It was a very bright night of stars; and the lights of the town were now few and dim, for most people had gone to bed; and altogether, there was not nearly enough illumination to enable him to see the face of his companion.

"I don't know what you're driving at," Sherry said with a good deal of bluntness.

"You don't?"

Wilton hesitated for an instant, as though many answers were rushing to the tip of his tongue, though he said finally, in a controlled voice: "That surprises me. But I go back to the doped drink. Of course, it was drugged. But what on earth, my dear young friend, could make you think that *I* would drug the liquor?"

"Because," said Sherry, with his usual openness, "you seemed upset because I had taken the glass which you intended for Capper—poor wretch!"

"The glass which I intended for Capper, and which he intended for me."

"What?"

"That's it, exactly. As I put down the drinks, I saw Capper's hand flash over the top of one of them and I thought—I couldn't be sure—that that hand dropped a film of something white into the liquor. What I did definitely see was that Capper deftly exchanged glasses with me. Naturally, I couldn't stand for that. The fellow was half mad, and capable of anything. Between you and me, I should not have been very sorry if he had poisoned himself with his own hand—while intending it for another!"

The voice of Wilton turned hard and grim.

"It sounds a mixed-up business," commented Sherry. "I got the wrong glass as you were slipping it back to him?"

"Exactly."

"It seems odd," said Sherry. "I don't

see what point there was in his poisoning you! He acted to me more like a fellow who would be apt to blackmail you—who was holding his knowledge, say, over your head."

"Knowledge?" cried Wilton with a sudden burst of extreme fury. "That gutter rat—that sneaking, paltry, vicious little cur—knowledge of me!"

Sherry was amazed. It was actually the first time that Wilton had so much as raised his voice, during all these singular scenes in which Sherry had watched him; but once the flood broke through, it raged in a torrent.

It was over at once.

"I don't know whether he had anything on you or not," said Sherry. His tone implied that he did not care, either. "I saw him rubbing your nose in the dirt; I watched you taking water from him. Maybe he had nothing on you; anyway, it was darned queer, to my way of thinking."

"Yes, yes," answered Wilton rather hurriedly. "I suppose it was. It was almost as queer an action, say, as that of a man who draws a gun on a drugged and helpless companion and shoots out his brains!"

CHAPTER V.

A SHIP OF STONE.

TO this startling retort, Sherry listened with wonder and horror.

"We'd better walk up the hill to my house," repeated Wilton.

And Sherry went with him, his brain suddenly benumbed, almost as it had been when he was most completely under the authority of the drug which had been dropped into his whisky. What hand had dropped it there? The hand of Wilton or Capper? And for what purpose? And now he himself was accused by the very man who had saved his neck from a mob execution.

"You say that I deliberately pulled my gun and shot down a helpless fellow?"

"I tell you what I saw with my own eyes," said the other. "Capper was shot exactly where he lay. He hardly stirred a muscle."

"Great Scott!" gasped Sherry. "Could I have done that, I ask you? What had I against Capper? What had I to gain by his death?"

"A man under the influence of a drug doesn't think along very straight lines," replied the other. "You were in a haze. You still suffer from some of the effects."

"Shot him where he lay—helpless?" groaned Sherry.

"Exactly. There was blood on the wall behind his head, when they picked him up."

"The blood was splashed against the wall in this fall," urged Sherry.

"In the midst of that blood there is a bullet hole," said Wilton. "I think that's fairly conclusive."

He had led the way up a steep incline from the heart of Clayrock, and now as they came before an open iron gate which gave upon a winding driveway, Sherry halted and laid his great hand upon one of the iron pillars that supported the weight of the gate panels.

"I murdered that man while he was lying there?" muttered Sherry.

Wilton did not answer this. Apparently he thought that he had made the case conclusive enough beforehand.

"I don't understand it!" said Sherry. "Great Scott, I don't understand it. Man, man, all my life what I've avoided, as other people avoid death, is any accusation of bullying another person. I've never taken an advantage. I've never fired when a man's head was turned. Heaven knows that I've been low—I've been in the muck—but one thing at least I've always done—I've fought fair!"

At this, Wilton laid a hand upon the shoulder of the other and patted it kindly.

"I believe every word you say," said he. "But a drugged man is an insane

man. Particularly, people put under by some of those tricky Oriental poisons. And those are exactly what Capper would have used, as a matter of course. And, driven out of his head for a moment, what a man does then is exactly what he would never dream of doing when he is normal!"

"That's clear enough," said Sherry huskily. "That's clear enough and that's bad enough!"

"It is, isn't it?" murmured the other. "I'm sorry for you, Sherry. I hated to tell you the truth about this, as a matter of fact. But I had to, and for very selfish reasons!"

"Will you tell me what those reasons are?" asked Sherry.

"I've never told a soul in this world," said Wilton. "But the fact is that I'm going to tell you the whole story."

He began to walk up the long driveway.

"Why not tell me here?" asked Sherry.

"Tell you the story here?" cried the other. He laughed with the sudden harshness which, now and again, came into his voice. "Why in the name of caution should I tell you a story where the whole world might listen to me? No, no! Wait till we get to my house. I have one room there that really is private!"

He laughed again, the same jarring laugh, as he repeated this.

And Sherry, amazed, unnerved, sick at heart, went unwillingly up the path beside his companion. The drive doubled twice, cutting along the face of that bluff which he had noticed before rising above the town, and finally it came to the front of the house on the hill which had showed the lights that had seemed as much stars as lamps.

It was not an imposing house. It was built all in one story, and it followed the natural conformation of the ground slavishly. There had apparently been no attempt to level a sufficient space, but the foundations were laid according to the natural contour of the land. The result was an indescribable living line to the upper contour of the building, which pitched up and down heedlessly, like a boat upon the waters, bringing up with a high head upon the northeastern end of the ridge.

"She lies here like a snake, doesn't she?" murmured Wilton.

"Yes," said Sherry in full agreement. "like a snake ready to strike."

He saw the other twist sharply about and glance at him; but now they passed under the face of the dwelling and went directly to that highest spot where the house came to an end. They passed around to the very extreme point, and Sherry exclaimed with real wonder: "Why, it's like the bow of a ship!"

It did, in fact, contract toward that point, so that it gave the whole edifice a strange likeness to a misshapen vessel struggling through the sea. Yes, and in another instant the clay rock seemed a vast wave, which was upholding the ship toward the sky, ready the next instant to dash it to destruction.

These strange images jumped full-grown into the brain of Sherry, and he dismissed them again with a shrug of his powerful shoulders.

"D'you like the place?" asked Wilton in a strangely eager voice.

"You have a view from up here," replied Sherry, noncommittally.

All the plain about them was dotted with the lights of single houses, or streaked with the lights of whole streets. For Clayrock was not a town standing by itself, there were many other smaller villages scattered around it, so that, to carry out the first metaphor that occurred to Sherry, if this house of Wilton were a ship at sea, it was steering by the lights of a most dangerous and twisting channel.

"And now," said Wilton, "we'll go into my room."

He stepped up to the door and turned

a switch, which caused a flood of light to spring up within. Into the interior, Wilton peered through a small hole which he uncovered and then covered again. After this, he unlocked the door and waved Sherry ahead of him.

"Go first," said he, "and let me tell you that I never go across this threshold without expecting to be met with a bullet through the head or a knife in the throat!"

With this odd introduction, he closed the door behind him, and waved Sherry up a second short flight of stairs that rose from the little entrance hall.

"This is my own private way of coming in and going out," explained Wilton, and unlocked the door at the head of the stairs.

CHAPTER VI.

STEEL-LINED.

HE again waved Sherry in before him. "And here is my room," said he.

The illusion of a ship's cabin was almost perfect. The very windows were rounded at the tops, small, and where the chamber narrowed at the front end of the house there was actually a round light! The ceiling, too, was manifestly curved, as though following the lines of an upper deck. To make the resemblance perfect, a narrow flight of steps, hardly more than a ladder with wooden rungs, lifted to a trapdoor out of one corner. Up this went Wilton while Sherry followed him, wondering.

The manner of his host was as matter of fact as that of any man he ever had met in his life, but his words and his ways were odd, indeed! They passed from the ladderlike stairway to the roof of the house. Or, more properly speaking, it was the roof of the room beneath, with little relation to the rest of the building.

The sense that he was in a ship still persisted with Sherry, though now, to be sure, it was more like voyaging through the stars than over any terrestrial ocean.

"I want you to take note of a few of the features here," said Wilton.

And he called attention to the fact that on three sides the room gave down upon the sheer face of the clay rock, a dizzy fall.

Upon the fourth side, it looked down at least twenty feet upon the nearest portion of the roof of the remainder of the odd building.

"A little fort, you see?" remarked Wilton. "Now, step closer to the edge. Anywhere, closer to the edge."

Sherry obeyed, but with caution. He had a giddy feeling that this singular fellow might thrust him over the side into oblivion! The roof on which he stepped yielded, as he thought, the slightest particle beneath the pressure of his weight, and he heard the faint ringing of a bell from the room beneath. He stepped back in haste.

"What's that?" asked Sherry.

"An alarm, of course. Come down with me again!"

They returned to the room below, and Wilton carried on his methodical demonstration of his house. Sherry listened carefully, knowing that something lay behind all this, but unable to guess what.

"Have you tried the weight of the door?" asked Wilton.

He set it ajar, and Sherry moved it back and forth. It seemed the weight of lead.

And Wilton explained with his usual calm: "There is a half-inch sheet of bullet-proof steel of the finest quality sunk in that door, and in fact, every wall of this room is secured in the same fashion—the ceiling and the floor, too. Those solid shutters which close over the windows are lined with half-inch steel, as well, and the trapdoor leading to the roof. This room, you will see, is such a strong box that if a bomb were exploded under it, it might be knocked

off its base, but it would hardly be more than dented by the explosion."

Sherry nodded. He could not help wondering if Wilton were a little mad.

"Now, then," said Wilton, "you will see that it would be very hard for any one to get into this room, but still, there are drills which would eat through half an inch of steel as though it were soft pine. I can't depend upon steel alone. I need something more, and here it is!"

He set wide a door and revealed a shallow closet where Sherry, with experienced eye, noted at once a formidable little armory.

He saw half a dozen repeating rifles, revolvers, and automatic pistols, pump guns, double-barreled shotguns, and two with sawed-off barrels, terrible at such close range as fighting within the limits of a room.

Sherry examined them with care, and he saw, also, ranged boxes of ammunition for all the different types of weapons.

"You might stand a siege!" said he.

"I might," nodded Wilton.

He opened a second door, and pointed at several tiers of boxes.

"Canned food and distilled water," said Wilton. "Yes, I could stand a siege."

He turned and faced Sherry.

"You want to know why I expect such a thing to happen?"

"Of course," agreed Sherry.

"I'll tell you why. No—it would take a great deal of time. I can't tell you this moment all the details. But after the——"

A bell rang. The ring was twice repeated with a pressing haste.

"That's my niece, Beatrice," said Wilton.

He went to the door and laid his hand upon the knob of it. Then he turned and looked earnestly at Sherry: "She's an unusual sort of girl, you'll see."

He opened the door, stepping straight back behind the panel, as it swung slowly inward, delayed by its own weight, and Sherry found himself staring into a white, sad face, the eyes surrounded by deep shadows.

A girl came into the room with a graceful step which yet had little lightness in it.

"I've brought you a note, Uncle Oliver," she said.

"Beatrice," said he, "this is Lewis Sherry. Sherry, this is my niece, Beatrice Wilton."

She came up to Sherry and shook hands, with one of those casual and forced smiles which Sherry had always hated.

Then she turned back to her uncle.

"This is the thing, Uncle Oliver."

She handed him an envelope. He frowned down at it—then suddenly crumpled it in his nervous grasp.

"Where did you get this?" he asked.

"I'll tell you another time," said she.

"And why not now? I don't mind talking before Sherry."

"Ah?" said she, and half turning, she looked with a keenly searching glance at the big man. It was as much as to say: "Have you been enlisted?"

It was to be inferred from her voice and her manner that she was not altogether on the side of her uncle. There was a definite gap between them.

"If you don't mind, then, I'll tell you exactly. I was taking the short cut up the hill——"

"When?"

"Half an hour ago."

"What were you doing out as late as that?"

Instead of answering, she paused, and deliberately looked straight into the face of her uncle.

Then she went on: "I was as far up the path as the place where the old root sticks its elbow out of the ground, and there a hand touched my arm."

"By Jove!" breathed Wilton.

"It wasn't very pleasant. I turned around, and the other arm was caught.

There were two men, one held me on each side."

"What sort of men?" asked Wilton, who had turned gray and now sat down.

"I couldn't see. It was pitch black there among the trees. I strained my eyes at them, because of course I wanted to try to recognize them. I think, in addition, that they hadn't trusted the darkness. They had either blacked or masked their faces. So I could make out nothing, except that one of them was about middle height, and the other was a great deal taller. About as tall, I should say, as Mr. Sherry."

She regarded Sherry again, but only for the sake of more accurately estimating his height.

"You tell a story well," said Oliver Wilton ironically. "You never are in a hurry to get to the point, my dear."

"Thank you," she replied, her eyes as dull and dark as ever while they watched her uncle. "I have to take it by degrees. That forestalls questions afterward, you know—if you'll pay attention the first time! I say that I couldn't make them out. I was frightened and——"

"Bah!" broke in Oliver Wilton.

She repeated sternly: "I was frightened."

It was as though she insisted upon the possibility of fear, and her uncle would not allow it in her.

"They gave me this letter," she went on, "and they said to me: 'Tell him that we're straight as a string. With him, too. Only—we want turkey talked!' After that, they let me go. Those were the only words they spoke to me."

"Then how did you know that they were referring to me?"

He asked this sharply, suspiciously.

"I guessed. I don't know how."

She was sneering openly. It was more than dislike that existed between these two. It was actual hatred, as Sherry was beginning to understand. And he considered the girl more keenly than before. She might have been beautiful if her air had been more happy, her eyes not quite so dull, with only flashes of emotion passing through them, from time to time. But a settled melancholy seemed to possess her, and she was faintly frowning all the time.

She had brown eyes; her hair was a very dark auburn. And sometimes, as she turned her head, the red high lights upon her hair seemed to be repeated in the color of her eyes, making a weird effect. Her skin was very white, her eyes unusually large, and the upper lids, when she looked downward, were distinctly marked with purple. Some women make up in this manner to give a touch of thoughtful distinction to their faces; but Sherry did not need to be told that all was natural with her.

He never had seen man or woman at all like her. He put her into a new category and reserved judgment. He was only ready to say one thing: That she possessed as much force—as much danger, say—as any man. And he had known dangerous men!

Another of those unpleasant little pauses had come between her and her uncle. Then she said good night to them and left. Wilton closed and locked the door behind her, and turned back to Sherry.

"That's one reason I live in a steel box!" said he.

CHAPTER VII.

"CLEAN YOUR GUNS."

IT was an odd thing, indeed, to learn that a man's reason for fortifying his room as though it were a blockhouse is the existence of a young girl. But there was something so extraordinary in the manner of Beatrice Wilton that it appeared to Sherry that there was some justification of the attitude of his host.

At this point, Wilton asked the cowpuncher to sit down.

He said in his quiet way: "You've

seen and heard a good many strange things since you came to this house with me, Sherry."

"I have," admitted Sherry.

"I wanted to show you the face of the situation first. Now, I must tell you why I've been so frank. But first of all, I will give you another bit of testimony."

They went to a clothes closet which was, in fact, large enough to serve as a dressing room, with a small window, like a porthole, opening to the south. From this he came back carrying a gray felt hat, which he held up, and Sherry saw a half-inch hole punched neatly through the crown.

"Air hole, for hot weather," said Wilton. "Put there by some kind friend—I don't know who. I was walking up the hill one evening and this hat was shot off my head by some man in the brush. I went after him; found nothing. The trees and the bushes make a thick tangle, you know."

"I know," said Sherry.

Wilton, with a sigh as though of relief, tossed the hat back through the door, where it rolled unregarded upon the floor of the dressing room.

"What do you think of this affair, Sherry?" asked the other.

"What you mean," answered Sherry, "is that you're in danger of your life. And I gather that you think Beatrice Wilton may have something to do with your danger. Is that it?"

"That's it," nodded Wilton. "It doesn't seem possible to you?"

"Miss Wilton, you mean?" inquired Sherry.

"Yes."

"I don't know," said Sherry. "I've been living on the range a long time. You don't suspect women of murder—not on the range. Besides, what has she to gain by finishing you?"

"I am her guardian," said Wilton. "She has a half million or so of property."

"And what of that?" asked Sherry sharply.

"You think I'm a fairly callous fellow?" smiled Wilton. "Well, Sherry, that property goes to her the moment that she marries, or, on my death."

Sherry thought this over with a frown.

"You think she's hiring killers to go after you?" he said.

"I don't know," answered Wilton. "My life is endangered. I know that. I know that Beatrice has plenty of reason for wanting to get rid of me. I know that she's not fond of me."

"You're letting me into this pretty deep," said Sherry.

"You want to know how you're interested," said Wilton, "and I'll tell you. I have an idea that during the next ten days there will be special efforts to get at me. During that time I'm going to live under a guard."

He narrowed his eyes at Sherry again.

"You're a fighting man, Sherry," said he, "and I gamble that you're an honest man. Will you take the job of trying to keep me alive for ten days?"

"I had an idea that something like that was coming," said Sherry. "But before I give you an answer I want to know what there is in the job?"

"I don't think," said Wilton, "that one man would be enough. I'd leave it to you to pick out some other good fighting man, some reliable fellow. You can pay him whatever you like. And I'll pay you—a thousand dollars a day!"

Sherry frowned.

"You don't like that?" asked Wilton, curiously.

"A fee like that," said Sherry, "is almost too big to be paid for honest work. However, I'll think it over. Tell me, Wilton, if you suspect any other person beside your niece?"

"I suspect every living soul around me," said Wilton in his calm way,

which he retained even when saying the most startling things. "I suspect even you. You may have been planted somewhere at the hotel so that I could fall in your way. Yes, I suspect every one."

"Why should other people want to get at you?"

Wilton considered, his glance fixed upon the ceiling. "I don't think I'll answer that," said he.

He looked straight at Sherry, and suddenly the big fellow realized that his host was a man capable of anything—certainly capable of banishing all shame.

"You want me to watch over you," answered Sherry, "but at the same time you want to blind one of my eyes. Is that very logical?"

"I can tell you this," said Wilton. "If ever sailors come near this house, be on your guard against them. Outside of Beatrice, the next danger that I know of has to do with the sea. Some one from the sea, Sherry, is going to take a try at me."

"Some one like Capper?" suggested Sherry.

"Like Capper," nodded the other. "But a great deal more formidable, Capper was a good deal of a fool. Bloodthirsty. Exactly that! I mean to say: He was so interested in making trouble that he hardly cared if he ruined himself in making the other fellow suffer. However, I expect that we may have a visit from a more dangerous sailor than Capper!"

"And that's all that you can tell me?"

"I can tell you a little more than that. There are several sets of people that want me to die."

"Within ten days?"

"Yes, within ten days."

"Your niece is one of them?"

"When her father died," said Wilton, "he left her money in trust for a year. At the end of that time, the control of her money was to pass into my hands, if I cared to undertake the work of guardian. That work meant giving up my own affairs entirely. But I decided to make that sacrifice."

He looked straight at Sherry, and the latter looked straight back at his host. There had been a little ironical intonation on the last word.

"And the sailors? You can't tell me why they're after you?"

"No, not a word about that."

"You don't know how these people might try to come at you? Guns, you say?"

"I don't know," replied Wilton. "I'll tell you some of the things that I'm half suspecting: Poison administered in food, with a blow arrow, or perhaps through the bite of a snake. Or again, there's something to be feared from the thrust of a Malay knife. And, of course, I've already had a bullet through my hat."

Sherry shrugged his shoulders.

"Why shouldn't you close yourself up in your steel box, here, and pretend that you're being besieged for ten days. You have everything you need."

"I have this place," said Wilton, "because I can sleep here with a slightly greater sense of security. But no place is completely safe. Suppose a bomb loaded with poison gas were thrown through a port into this cabin, one night?"

"They'll do anything to get at you?"

"They'll do absolutely anything!" Wilton assured the cow-puncher.

Suddenly he rose to his feet. For the first time he betrayed a real emotion.

"There are people that I know of," said he, "who would sell their souls for the sake of shooting me through the head. Do you understand?"

Sherry nodded. Under those last words there had been an electric thrill of hysteria; and Sherry understood, in a startling burst of insight, that the calm of Wilton was totally affected and un-

real. It was a calm surface with a storm beneath.

"Well," said Wilton, "you've heard as much as I can tell you. What do you say to this proposal, Sherry?"

"A thousand dollars a day," repeated Sherry. "And for the sake of that, I'll have to get a partner, and then the pair of us will have to go on guard—and the moment we start work, we'll both be targets for the same hands that are aiming principally at you?"

"You will, of course."

"Well," said Sherry, "the money—and the fun—interest me."

"You'll take the place?"

"Yes."

Wilton sat down at a table and scratched a letter. Then he rose and passed it to Sherry, who read:

RIVERSIDE NATIONAL BANK,

Mr. H. A. Copley.

DEAR MR. COPLEY: If I am alive ten days from this date, please pay ten thousand dollars to Lewis Sherry. If I am dead, destroy this letter.

Yours very truly,
OLIVER WILTON.

"Will that do?" asked Wilton.

"Of course," replied Sherry. "When do I come up here?"

"At once!"

"We're driving in a bunch of beef to-morrow morning at dawn. By nine o'clock I'll be here, and I'll have a man with me."

'That leaves me another night," muttered Wilton, "with only my own pair of eyes to keep watch. But I suppose that I'll have to!"

"I'm going back to camp, then."

"At nine to-morrow?"

"I'll be back."

"Good night," said Wilton. "And if this talk keeps you awake to-night, don't waste your time—spend it cleaning your guns, because you'll need them before you finish working for me!"

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

WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE!

IT is a well-known fact that you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink. However, there is an easy way out of that difficulty: let your horse go thirsty and turn his back on the water if he wants to. But what's to be done when a country is in part submerged with water, and there's nowhere for the water to go? That is, one might say, a horse of another color! For of all the "excess baggage" that is hard to dispose of, too much water is the hardest.

Such a situation is found this year in far western Kansas, a country without creeks. It is caused by the excessive rainfall which has created such a surplus of water that the local engineers are wondering what on earth to do about it. Nearly a year's rainfall has descended within three months, and many acres of ground so level that they are generally used as pasturages are now under water.

There are no creeks to take care of the excess, and the water has filled every low and deep place, causing in many instances lakes to form. One of these has overflowed the main highway near one of the cities. Until the water subsides—which it apparently is not going to do in a hurry—the highway cannot be repaired or bridges made over it, and the loss and annoyance that result are most serious. The rain is so frequent and heavy that hardly has one shower fallen when along comes another, and there is no time for evaporation. And what's to be done about it? That's what the good citizens are asking themselves and each other. They must feel like those persons who at a public meeting cry, "Throw him out!" to a disturber, knowing they are constitutionally powerless to act. They must wait until the offender subsides.

Bear and Forbear

by Kenneth Gilbert

Author of "Moose or Men," etc.

UNTIL this moment Jim Nason had never found any use for the telescopic sight which he had purchased for his rifle the previous fall before coming into this country of the Upper Nesigak. The long tube with the powerful lens fitting easily on top of his rifle barrel had rather appealed to him as a possible means of shooting mountain goat and sheep, who are prone to keep warily at a distance from human pursuers. But Nason had been busy running his trap line, and he discovered that the telescopic sight was rather unwieldy to carry, so he had left it in his cabin; besides, it had not proved absolutely necessary in shooting sheep and goats, for this was a primeval wilderness and its big game was unacquainted with man, and, therefore, inclined to be trusting.

So throughout the winter and fall the telescopic sight had reposed in its case in Nason's cabin. With his winter's catch of fur practically completed, Nason was at the point of gathering his outfit and striking for the outside. Had he not determined that before leaving he would gratify an old feud, he would not this day have fitted the telescopic sight to his gun and set out in the hills in search of Itswoot, the giant she-grizzly who by her strength and size had become a sort of Amazonian ruler of the high slopes.

Nason wanted to add one more pelt to his very fine catch of furs, and that pelt, he decided, would be Itswoot's. Once he had killed her, he would not only be richer by possessing a very fine bear skin which would command a good price at the trading post, but he would also have the satisfaction that he had glutted his vengeance for the harm she had done him.

And as though fate had cruelly betrayed the old she-grizzly into the hands of her greatest enemy, Nason now lay hidden behind a log, with a steady rest for his rifle, and the cross hairs for the telescopic sight held steadily on the grizzled body of the bear as she stood on a cliff perhaps eight hundred yards distant.

That was exceedingly long range, and Nason realized it fully; with the naked eye, his front gun sight seemed to cover her body completely, big though she was. But with the magic of the telescopic sight, she seemed to be six times closer than she was in reality. Nason had a good gun, and its long, sharp bullets, under the impetus of a heavy charge of smokeless powder, would span the eight hundred yards and strike her down with deadly, sledge-hammer force. He was a good shot, too, and with the aid of the telescopic sight and the gun rest, he felt confident that he would not miss. So while Itswoot stood there statuesquely, unaware that death was near, Nason held his breath and his right forefinger began tightening on the trigger.

But just before the instant when the canyons and hills would echo to the sharp report of the gun, Nason paused, and released the pressure of the trigger finger. For there had just appeared within the circle of vision covered by the telescopic sight, something which changed the aspect of the situation to the man.

It was a downy-furred little grizzly cub, but a few weeks old; so young, indeed, that it had but recently gained its eyesight, and the hair which covered its remarkably small body was fine and silky. The son of Itswoot herself!

Nason smiled grimly as a new thought came to him. Knowing bears as he did, he realized that old Itswoot undoubtedly valued the life of this cub far more than she did her own. The way to hurt her most, therefore, would be to kill her cub first, and then, after her agony in seeing the cub die, Nason would dispatch her also.

For the man's heart was bitter indeed against the old grizzly. Nason, after the fashion of many trappers accustomed to living alone in the wilds, had developed peculiar characteristics. To him the wild creatures appeared more as human beings, and he was accustomed to regarding them with certain animosities such as he might have held against humans who jostled him in the struggle of life. He was convinced that old Itswoot was jealous of his presence here, and that she had deliberately tried to drive him out. He remembered well the day when, unarmed save for a light gun, and carrying a heavy pack of traps, he had met her face to face on a narrow sheep trail which ran along the edge of a precipice. That had been their first meeting, the previous fall, and as Itswoot had stood there glowering at him, her head rolling from side to side as she gave the grizzly signal of mounting wrath, Nason had turned and retraced his steps along the trail as rapidly as he could. He gave her no credit for the fact that she had not pursued and killed him, as she could have done very easily. But at that time old Itswoot, rolling fat from having stuffed herself with huckleberries and many whistlers which she had dug out from their rocky retreats on the high slopes, was in rather a good humor. Moreover, she was not accustomed to giving way on the trail to any living thing. Therefore, she stood her ground, and because this human being gave evidence of fear and a desire to get away instead of standing there and doing battle with her, she had permitted him to escape. But the kindliness of her act was utterly lost upon Nason. He cursed the fact that she had caught him at a disadvantage, and vowed that some day he would even the score.

Again, just before she began her winter hibernation, she added fuel to the flames of Nason's hatred of her. Coming on the remains of a caribou about which he had strewn a number of fox traps, she calmly moved in, sprung practically all of the traps, from which she withdrew her feet easily, and then proceeded to gorge herself on the bait.

From that time on nothing would have convinced Nason that Itswoot was

not at open warfare with him. But he saw no more signs of her until the following spring. During that period his anger toward her cooled somewhat, and he might have forgotten his intention to kill her had he not discovered that she had found a particularly fine silver-black fox in one of his traps.

This was in early spring, when Itswoot had come forth from her winter's sleep and an enormous appetite had returned to her. She left but a few handfuls of thick, glossy fox fur to tell the tale, but her tracks were all about the place, and Nason's old hatred of her seized him anew. He was convinced that she was deliberately carrying a feud against him, and he swore now that before he left the Upper Nesigak with his winter's catch of furs, he would be revenged upon the old she-grizzly. When he returned to this country the following fall she would not be here to plague him. Therefore, he set out this day, determined to keep on until old Itswoot was dead.

The fiendish cunning of his new plan to be revenged upon her pleased him mightily. He could guess rather accurately the terrible agony which she would undergo when she discovered her cub was dead. He would let her suffer for a while, and then he would kill her, too.

Therefore, the muzzle of his gun moved slightly to the right until the cross hairs covered the body of the cub. So great was the distance that the little cub seemed scarcely larger than a humming bird, but Nason knew that his rifle was perfectly sighted. The only question in his mind was whether he should take a very coarse sight or a medium one. The rear leaf was set at the scale which read eight hundred yards, but even so there was a large element of uncertainty as to the result of this first shot.

Still, everything seemed as it should be; the little cub was standing there on the brink of the cliff, looking down curiously into the chasm as though fearful of the depth. The cross hairs of the telescopic sight quartered him; Nason was confident that he could make a perfect line shot, but there was grave danger that he might shoot too high or too low. Anyway, he would try. He held his breath, and slowly pressed the trigger.

The echoes of the shot went stuttering up the canyon and through the hills.

For many years old Itswoot had lived in that region where she had been born. For many years the peaceful course of her existence had been untroubled. It was quite true that she was the sovereign of these slopes, respected even by other bears from the opposite side of the range who seldom encroached upon her territory, yet she killed only when she was hungry, and subsisted largely upon gophers and whistlers, and during the berry season in autumn she was for weeks almost entirely a vegetarian. Seldom was she aroused to anger, for she was of the "moon-faced" or more genial type of plantigrade which seems naturally good-humored. It was only when she discovered the presence of the man in her domain that she became uneasy.

That day when she had first met him on the sheep trail, and Nason had fled so ignominiously, there was in reality as much fear in the heart of Itswoot as there was in Nason's. She was loath to give way, of course, and when it was apparent that he was afraid of her, her courage grew, until she gave the warning sign by rolling her head. That was enough for Nason; he had promptly fled. So, feeling somewhat relieved that she had thus easily put the human being to rout, Itswoot had gone on.

Again, that day when she had robbed his fox set of the caribou carcass, she had been very hungry. The fresh meat she deemed one of those rare miracles

which occur in the wilds. The snapping of the traps, which were too small to hold her, had been annoying, but did not distract her long from the feast of caribou flesh. Shortly after that she had found a cave to her liking high up on one of the slopes, and, full-fed and with her digestive organs lined with pine needles so that they would not utterly collapse during the famine period, Itswoot had succumbed to the drowsiness which had been slowly stealing over her. Throughout the winter she slept, while the blizzards came and the north wind with ghoulish cries piled the snow deeply around the entrance to her cavern. But, snugly warm, although the steam from her breath very quickly coated the interior of the cave with a thin film of ice and frost, old Itswoot slept on.

And there in that same cavern late in February her cub had been born. For two years old Itswoot had been barren, and the loneliness which was the manifestation of mother yearning had brooded heavily upon her. Now she was overjoyed. True, the little stranger was a blind, hairless, skinny thing, incredibly small to be the offspring of such a gigantic mother, yet she showered adoration upon it as the most beautiful creature she had ever seen.

As the cub grew larger and his body became covered with fuzzy down, a peculiar patch of silver hair appeared on the front of his lower throat. This would distinguish him from among other grizzlies, even as he was already distinguished by being the son of the giant Itswoot. But just now he had no realization of his royal birth and that he bore an unusual mark. He was merely a playful little bear who was filled with a vast curiosity concerning the mystery of life. Within the gloomy interior of the cave he remained with his big mother, and did little else those first few weeks save consume quantities of warm milk and spend most of his time sleeping, his little body cuddled closely to her great, warm bulk. But as eyesight came to him at last, the cub underwent a change. It was evident that he was growing up.

For that matter, too, the mother likewise experienced a change. For one thing she became more restless, and spent much time pacing up and down the cramped confines of the cave as though bringing herself to a state of mind where she would act. Instinct, more than any of her senses, told her that outside the snow was vanishing from the southern slopes, and that down in the valleys the rivers were throwing off their icy shackles. From the southland had come the first hardy birds, and at dusk the thickets were melodious with bird songs. In certain places where, during the winter, the ground had been swept more or less free of snow, the earth was becoming veined and cracked, as the earliest vegetation was boldly seeking to push its head up through the moist loam and drink deeply of the life-giving sunlight.

In these wild hills, too, other winter sleepers were awakening. That black-and-white adventurer, the skunk, was abroad; and likewise the whistlers, those who had survived the previous fall when, other meat being hard to get, they had become the special prey of the great grizzlies. Now their shrill, piercing notes of warning could be heard everywhere. The deer mice, immaculte in their white waistcoats, were about, too, nibbling hopefully at clusters of dried seeds which had escaped the birds the previous winter. Still farther south, others of the seven sleepers, including the bat and the raccoon, had bestirred themselves. Those smaller cousins of the grizzlies, the black bears, were early risers, but as befitted one of royal dignity, old Itswoot had tarried within the cave until she could be quite sure that spring was here.

At last, however, she knew that there

could be no mistake about it. One morning when the dawn was soft and misty, and the air balmy, she broke the icy covering which had gradually formed across the doorway of her cave, and led the little cub forth to the glories of a world awakened and refreshed from long sleep.

It was an amazing thing to the little cub, and he was awed at the vastness of the world as he glimpsed it for the first time, accustomed as he had been to the snug coziness of the cave where he had been born. He sniffed here and there curiously, yet always keeping to his mother's side. Like all grizzlies, his eyesight was poor, so that for him the world seemed to dissolve into a blur beyond a radius of one hundred yards; yet even that was an incredibly large area for the little cub. At the heels of his mother he moved away, pausing now and then to whimper as he bruised his tender pads on sharp-pointed rocks.

For the first few days after coming forth, old Itswoot felt no desire to eat. She did, however, possess an amazing thirst, which she quenched in the nearest pool of snow water. Seeing his mother drink so copiously, the little cub was minded to drink also, but he found the water thin and tasteless, and decided that he didn't like it at all. Soon after she had filled herself with water, old Itswoot led him off in search of soap berries, still clinging to their shrubby stems, and the leaves of certain deciduous shrubs which Itswoot knew instinctively had a medicinal quality, an alterative power. She ate them, not because she was hungry, but because she knew they were good for her.

It was a few days later that she made her first kill, a fat old grandfather woodchuck, who, with a shrill whistle of warning, took refuge beneath a flat rock. Calmly, Itswoot set about digging him out, and although the job took more than two hours, she kept at it patiently. Vast excitement seized the cub when at last the woodchuck, cornered in the farthest reach of its tunnel, made a bolt for freedom, but died instantly under the smashing impact of Itswoot's great left forepaw.

The cub sniffed interestedly at the meat, and stepped back hastily when Itswoot growled. She was telling him plainly that not alone was the woodchuck for her, but that such meat was not good for a cub.

That first taste of warm flesh prodded into wakefulness Itswooot's sleeping hunger, without satisfying it in the least. By this time, the sleekness which had characterized her while she was within the cave had miraculously vanished. Once she had resumed the normal function of eating, she became lank and bony within a few days as the effect of her long fast and the steady draining of her vitality by the cub made itself felt. She was at this moment ravenous for food, so she hunted long and arduously for more whistlers, while the cub was hard pressed to keep up with her.

At the same time, however, he was making gigantic strides in putting on flesh and bulk. Daily he grew stronger, although subsisting on a diet of milk; and by degrees his mother became less lank and bony. But it seemed now that she was always hungry, as though she could not satisfy her appetite. Therefore, the day when she had come on Nason's fox bait and her nose told her that the meat was temptingly fresh, hunger overcame her natural caution.

She did, however, cuff the cub back out of the danger zone before she ventured near the bait, and as obedience was implanted in him he kept clear while she tore off great strips of flesh with her strong jaws, as she sought to gratify her appetite. As the small fox traps snapped upon her feet, she merely snarled at them, drew out her feet, and then flattened the traps with smashing blows.

During this time, too, the cub was learning many things concerning the wonderful world which lay before him. At the heels of his mother he explored deep canyons, trod his perilous way along the lips of appalling cliffs, took great delight in rolling with her in the cool snow banks which could be found in the deeper depressions above timber line. Likewise he was with her when she started quartering the snow slides to dig out the frozen bodies of hapless mountain goats and sheep who had been swept to their doom by an avalanche and left buried there. This meat was temptingly fresh, and old Itswoot ate mightily of it.

All this time she was teaching the cub confidence rather than fear. But one day when Itswoot was crossing a ridge, the cub following her as usual, she paused suddenly, sniffing the ground, while her hackles and the long hair on her back rose warningly. Deep from within her chest came a muttered growl, and the little cub understood instantly that she was signaling to him of gravest danger.

He, too, sniffed the ground, and in a comical display of anger he growled ferociously and bristled. Thereafter, mother and cub turned and moved silently but rapidly away from the place. It was the first time that the cub had come upon the scent of man, for Nason had passed that way scarcely twenty minutes before. But the lesson of fear which his mother taught him was indelibly impressed upon the youngster's mind. Thereafter, even though he attained great size and strength, he would regard man as the personification of death, and would studiously avoid him so long as it was possible.

Nor had he forgotten the lesson a week later, when he and his mother were moving along the edge of another cliff in search of whistlers. They had come out in plain sight on a point of rock, and his mother had stopped there while her nose sampled the wind, which was touched, somehow, with the scent of man. A light air drawing up out of the canyon had brought to Itswoot the taint of Nason's presence, but as he was too far away for her to see him, she was compelled to rely wholly upon her nose to locate him. That problem baffled her and she stood there trying to solve it. By and by, the cub, who had lagged behind a rock to investigate a dark hole which might prove the hiding place of one of the curious little animals his mother killed for food, came up closer and stopped. He, too, stood there looking down into the canyon, sniffing, as his delicate nostrils recorded the dreaded man scent.

And as the cub stood there it seemed that heaven and earth came together in a blinding flash, and he dropped as though stricken by lightning. Balanced as he had been on the very edge of the rock, he collapsed as the bullet touched him; then his rotund little body slipped off, and went hurtling downward.

As the cub fell, there came to the horrified Itswoot, the thin, staccato echoes of the shot. The man! The great killer had waylaid her and had slain her cub!

She saw the body of the cub strike a tangled bed of vine balsam twenty feet below the lip of the cliff, balance there precariously for a fraction of a second and then, limp and grotesque, drop out of sight behind the shelf. And then her moment of dazed horror and disbelief passed, and she roared a terrifying challenge to the unseen foeman who had done this dread thing. Taking a half step forward, she peered down anxiously, looking for some way by which she could descend this cliff to find the battered body of her beloved son, so that she might mother it even in death.

But there was no safe way down here, so common sense told Itswoot. Twenty feet it was to that narrow ledge covered with vine balsam, and from

then on she could not tell how steeply or how far the cliff dropped away in space. The quickest way to get down would be to go to the head of the gully where the cliff began. This was fully a mile away, but Itswoot would not be denied her grief. With a heave of her powerful shoulders, she lifted herself and swung about, her intention plainly being to find the cub hidden down at the foot of the cliff.

Nason saw then that there would be no opportunity to enjoy for long the spectacle of her sorrow. Working the bolt action of his repeater, he slipped in another cartridge. Then, just as Itswoot swung away, Nason's shoulder jerked again to the recoil of the gun, and the canyon echoed to the report.

He saw old Itswoot fall flat, and his heart leaped with triumph; but the next instant, pausing only to turn her head toward him and snarl challenge, for he was too far away to be seen, she was up again.

Again Nason fired, coolly and painstakingly, as though he were shooting at a target set up in front of his cabin. Again Itswoot staggered as the heavy bullet smashed its way through her flesh. Another shot, and once more she flinched and almost fell. But Itswoot came of a breed which is renowned for its ability to "carry lead," and never was a grizzly more gloriously living up to that reputation than was old Itswoot at this moment. She heaved her bulk along with gathering speed.

Another bullet came, but this ricocheted off a rock just in front of her, the metal fragments of the shattered missile stinging her face maddeningly until she roared in new rage and pain.

Then she was gone, while down on the flats Jim Nason slipped fresh cartridges into his gun, and smiled grimly.

"She won't go far," he decided. "Tough old cuss, at that, but she's hurt bad. Only a grizzly or an elephant could stand up under that punishment.

"Well, she's done for, and so is the cub. To-morrow, when I've got more time, I'll work around up there to where she is, find her, and draw her pelt. Reckon I might as well gather up that cub, though. He's young enough to be tender as chicken, and if he ain't smashed up too much, he'll make me a fine mulligan stew to-night."

Nason got up, and moved through the brush in the direction of the foot of the cliff, where he had seen the cub go crashing downward. He reached the place without difficulty, but had some trouble in finding the little bear. At last, however, he located it behind a log, a crumpled little heap of brown fur.

Catching hold of one hind leg to lift out the body, Nason suddenly leaped backward with a startled oath. For the cub was alive! As he touched it, the youngster had squealed shrilly, and buried its needlelike teeth in the fleshy part of his hand.

Angry, but at the same time astonished, Nason looked up at the cliff down which the cub had fallen. To his trained eyes it was clear how the miracle had happened. A succession of ledges, covered with vine balsam and alders—the latter fed by veins of water seeping down through the rocks—had broken the meteorlike fall of the cub, so that he had landed at the bottom bruised and breathless, yet apparently unhurt. His bones were soft and pliable, and his body cushioned by fat. Indeed, save for a crimson smear across the forehead, where the heavy bullet from Nason's gun had merely creased it, the little bear was practically unharmed. He squatted there now, regarding the man with terror, not unmixed with curiosity. The cub's little beady eyes, which had a bluish opacity, were fixed in wonder on this human being who stood so near by; the cub's large batlike ears were pricked forward as though to catch every sound this human being might make.

Nason might have felt a rush of compassion for the little bear then, but he did not. He was still filled with hatred for old Itswoot, and his hand smarted where the cub had nipped him. With the butt of his gun, he could have killed the cub; still, after all, this would be a poor revenge, now that the mother was practically dead. The more Nason thought of it, the more he was inclined to let the cub live.

But he would not allow it to go free. That would be equivalent to killing it, anyway, for he surmised that the youngster was not weaned as yet and could not survive by its own efforts. After all, Nason was returning to civilization, and he would have a story to tell of how he had won his feud with old Itswoot. To-morrow he would go up on the cliff, find her there, and bring back her pelt. Then, when he reached the trading post, he would not only have her pelt to show, but he would also have her cub to display. The thought appealed to him mightily.

It was but the work of an instant to strip off his coat, and throw it over the cub, until the youngster was bundled helplessly, despite its squealing protests. Thereafter, very well satisfied with his day's work, Nason headed for his cabin.

He went inside, closed the door, and turned the cub loose. For a minute or so, the cub seemed terrified by the presence of the man, and the strange scents everywhere about the cabin. But directly the cub appeared to gain confidence, and he went sniffing about the place, whining now and then as though at a loss to understand why his mother was not here. Nosing along the rough floor, he came to a halt at last at Nason's feet.

Instantly he underwent a change. He bristled warningly, and from his throat came an infantile growl intended to be most alarming. But Nason merely laughed. And the cub looked up at him vastly puzzled by the strange sounds which the man was making.

Thereafter, ignoring the cub, Nason set about preparing supper, for he had been out hunting all day, and he was tremendously hungry. After whining disconsolately for its mother, the cub at last crawled under the man's bunk, and lay there, watching with bright, beady eyes the movements of the human being.

Supper finished, Nason poured a little canned milk, well watered, into a dish and put it before the cub. But the latter was either too timid to eat, or the manner of serving food bewildered him. He growled, and drew farther back under the bunk.

Nason nodded.

"You'll eat when you're hungry enough, I reckon," he remarked unfeelingly. "If you think I'm going to rig up a bottle and feed you pap by hand, you're going to be mistaken." Thereafter, he made ready for bed, quenched the single candle, and crawled into his bunk, almost instantly falling asleep.

It was perhaps an hour later that he was awakened by soft footfalls about the cabin floor. Straightening up, he made out a small, shadowy form wandering about. The cub, restless and hungry, and tremendously lonely for its mother, had no desire to sleep. Nason shouted at it, seeking to terrify it so that it would take refuge under the bunk and remain there, but the little grizzly merely stood in the center of the floor and eyed the man in bewildered fashion.

At last, unable to woo sleep again because of the cub's stealthy prowling, Nason got up.

"I'll fix you!" he vowed. "Scat!" he yelled, and the cub, terrified again, scuttled back to its refuge under the bunk. Thereupon, Nason dragged forth a couple of grub boxes, one of which he thrust under the bunk, and the other just at the edge, so that the cub was now completely penned in. The boxes

were wedged in place so that only a strong man could have moved them. Once more Nason went to sleep, and the cub no longer troubled him.

Nevertheless, the man awakened again, perhaps two hours later. Some unusual sound which impinged on his eardrums brought him sitting up; for Nason had lived long enough in the wilds to have learned to sleep as does a wild animal, literally with both ears open.

His first thought was that the cub was trying to get out of its pen, but although he listened closely, the youngster seemed to be quiet. Nason sat there motionless for a full minute; then, having heard nothing more, he was on the point of lying down again, when there was a peculiar noise at the door—a stealthy scratching.

In the darkness, the man smiled understandingly. A wolverene, hungry and overbold, was hopefully trying to get in; or it might be a stupid porcupine who craved a taste of the smoky, salty bacon which it smelled. There was no chance that it could get in, of course, for the door was closed with a heavy bar which had been dropped into place from the inside. Nason tried to go to sleep again, but the scratching persisted. Finally, he lost patience.

"I'll fix you!" he vowed. Getting out of the bunk as silently as possible, he found his gun in the darkness, slipped a cartridge into the barrel, for he always kept the weapon unloaded in the house, and tiptoed to the door. But before he could lay hands on the bar, he realized that the scratching sound had stopped.

He waited a moment, then noiselessly lifted the bar and opened the door, gun ready for a shot if the wolverene or coyote should be waiting just outside.

It was a very fine spring night, with a soft-hued moon of the color of fireweed honey riding high in the heavens, so that he could see any object between the door and the forest at the edge of the clearing. There was, however, nothing in sight. Sticking his head out of the door, he looked this way and that, but still he saw nothing. He would have stepped outside, but the ground was wet with heavy dew and he was barefooted. So he stood there for a moment, slightly puzzled.

Then he heard the noise again! This time, however, it came from the window at the opposite side of the cabin. A rather bold, persistent scratching.

Jim Nason stepped back inside, not troubling to latch the door again, and tiptoed across the room until he stood just opposite the small square of scraped caribou hide which served for a windowpane. To strengthen it, bars of wood had been placed across it on the outside. But just as he was lifting his gun, determined to chance a shot through the window, the scratching stopped.

He stood there listening, waiting, but the scratching was not resumed. He was on the point of giving up and returning to bed, when he heard a heavy step on the doorsill, and the dried-leather hinges of the panel creaked. Startled, he whirled—and gasped involuntarily!

For in the doorway loomed a terrifying, menacing bulk, which seemed to fill the opening. A great, shaggy beast with glowing-hot eyes. Old Itswoot herself!

She whom he had believed to be dead was still here, but sorely wounded, for she weaved slightly on her feet in that infinitesimal pause before the thing happened. But she was alive, and murderously determined. In some manner she had survived the terrible punishment of his bullets, had reached the bottom of the canyon at last, and found where the man had captured the cub. Then, driven by an all-powerful mother love which scorned death, she had trailed him to the cabin, determined to

wreak vengeance on the man who had stolen and perhaps killed her cub.

Even as her challenging roar rang deafeningly in the room, Nason half-flung up his gun and fired. There was no time to aim; indeed, he was so startled that he fired almost without thought. The bullet buried itself in the door jamb, just at the instant she lunged at him; but the blast of powder smoke in her eyes halted her for an instant. Before he could shoot again, however, she lurched forward.

Nason, his brain working with lightning speed, realized that there was no time for a second shot. Dropping his gun, he sprang on top of his bunk. The next instant he was scaling the wall of the cabin, blessing the fact that he had built it in rather unusual fashion. Up in these hills, there was an exceedingly heavy snowfall and, unlike the cabins of most trappers, this one had a high, steep-pitched roof. Indeed, the ridgepole was so high that the she-grizzly, tall though she was and with an astonishing length in her forearms, would not be able to reach him. But first he had to gain the ridgepole, and then he would be compelled to cling there precariously until his arms gave way, and he fell. For a few moments, however, it would be a sanctuary for him.

Therefore, he swarmed up the inside of the gable, his bare feet gripping the rounded sides of the unbarked logs. His hand touched the ridgepole and, like an acrobat, he swung out into space. He felt the wind of the grizzly's paw as she aimed a tremendous blow at him. Terrified beyond words, Nason now clung up there in the roof peak by means of hands and feet, grateful that he had escaped thus far, even though it could not be for long at best. Beneath him, raging in disappointment that the man was out of her reach, old Itswoot thundered a challenge at him to come down and fight. In the gloom of the darkened cabin, he could see her shadowy outlines, but the darkness seemed to give her added proportions until she appeared as some Gargantuan monster. In the half light, her eyes shone with a malevolent glare, and her roars made the walls of the cabin fairly vibrate. Desperately, Nason clung there after the fashion of a sleeping sloth clutching a limb.

But very quickly old Itswoot saw that the man was beyond her reach, and, although she still rumbled dangerously, she gave up trying to get at him. Cunningly, she surmised that before long he would drop into her waiting paws. A single squeeze, her strong jaws meeting in his throat, and he would meet death as quickly as he had intended she should meet it. Almost calmly and confidently, then, she sat down to wait, her eyes never leaving her intended prey up there in the gable.

The strain of hanging there in this fashion very quickly made Nason's arms ache. A cold sweat beaded his forehead as he realized the horrid fate which awaited him when he dropped. He understood enough of the bear's nature to know that for some time at least she would not leave the spot. Before that time came, however, he would have fallen to his death. Almost the man whimpered as full realization of his dread predicament came to him.

Suddenly, he felt a glimmer of hope. In the center of the roof, suspended by a *babiche* thong from the ridge rafter, was Nason's pack of furs. It was hung up thus so that rodents or even a wolverene who might raid the cabin while he was absent would not get at the valuable collection. Nason believed that if he could work out to where the pack was hanging, he could at least rest his feet on it, and thereby remain aloft indefinitely.

Yet, cramped as he was, he found it difficult to work his way along the ridge rafter. He did accomplish it, however, but not without constant fear,

for the she-grizzly followed every movement he made, hoping that he would slip and fall into her deadly embrace. At last he put his feet on the pack, and sighed gratefully as the strain was relieved. The next second he gave a gasp of horror.

For the *babiche* thong, tight as a bowstring under the weight of the heavy furs, snapped! The pack crashed floorward, and Nason almost went with it. Just in time, he saved himself, but he could have cried out in disappointment and hopelessness.

The pack landed squarely upon the waiting grizzly. Then and there Nason visualized the dread fate which awaited him. No doubt, Itswoot thought at first it was the man who had fallen, for she not only crushed the bale but tore savagely at it with her strong teeth. Nason saw his precious furs ripped out and destroyed, but it gave him no pang of regret. He was concerned now solely with preserving his life, and surely that was more precious to him than all the furs in the Northland.

But that seemed a futile hope. He knew now that his life was merely a matter of seconds. Already, his arms and legs were numb and weary with the strain of hanging on up there in the roof. Not much longer now! And old Itswoot gave no sign of leaving.

With what he believed to be his last breath, he shouted curses at her, and she replied with deep-throated promises of what she would do to him. Directly, however, he stopped this senseless mouthing, and summoned his waning strength for a final effort.

His thoughts took a curious twist. Almost it seemed to him that he could hear the slow ticking of an unusually loud clock—a monotonous *tock-tock-tock,* as the thing measured the seconds, and each second brought him nearer to imminent death. He tried to pray, but found that his hot and dry tongue stuck fast in his throat. Always he battled with his inner consciousness, which seemed cowardly, for it urged him to let go and meet death swiftly. He even fancied that he could feel the warm breath of the great bear as she sat on her haunches, looking up at her intended prey.

And then, a peculiar sound cut through his jumble of impressions—a plaintive whimper. At first it meant nothing to him; it seemed that he was already dead, and that his persistence in clinging fast up there was merely a manifestation of *rigor mortis.* But he heard that whining cry again—and this time he understood what it meant!

Or, rather, it was the change that had come over the she-grizzly which gave him an inkling of what was taking place. For he was aware that she had dropped to forefeet, and had padded swiftly to his bunk, beneath which her cub was hidden. He heard her growl impatiently; then came a ripping, tearing sound as the strongly built bunk was torn apart. So near to fainting was Nason that he could not unclose his eyes to see what was taking place. But he did hear a joyful whining, and then a peculiar muttering note, which came from the she-grizzly as her nose explored the cub to make sure that he was actually safe. The cub cried again, impatient in its hunger, but old Itswoot paid no attention.

Now that her cub had been miraculously restored to her, the she-grizzly's natural impulse was to get it away from such dangerous surroundings as quickly as possible. Gone was her hatred of the man, and her desire to kill him. The freedom of the hills beckoned her, and strong was her eagerness to be away from this tainted habitation of man. With the cub trailing at her heels, she forced her bulk through the narrow doorway, and was gone.

Nason heard her go. It seemed ages before she got through the door. Still the man waited on, nearly unconscious

though he was. There was a strong probability that she might turn back, after getting her cub outside. Tenaciously, however, Nason clung to the rafter. When he did fall, heavily, it was when merciful oblivion came, and his strained muscles relaxed.

When he awoke at last, it was to find the grayness of dawn filtering through the open cabin door. He moved his body slightly, and he cried out in pain. Then, half-fearfully, he began to examine himself for broken bones.

But he was unhurt, although terribly bruised by the fall. The fact that he had dropped limply, when unconscious, probably had saved his life.

By and by, he got up courage enough to rise and slowly push the door in place, once more dropping the protecting bar in its notch. It was an involuntary act, as though he acknowledged his inability to live through another such experience as the one which he had just undergone. He was weak, almost helpless, and he surmised that a glimpse in a mirror would show that he had aged ten years.

But Itswoot was gone; that was the one blessed fact to which his dazed faculties clung. She was gone, and, miraculously, Nason was still alive.

By afternoon, if he was able to travel, he promised himself that he would be well out of the place. He observed that only the outer furs of the pack had been destroyed. If all of them had been torn to pieces, he would not have complained.

The man was cowed, humbled. He saw himself as one who had overreached, in striving for vengeance. Then and there he promised himself that if he returned to these hills the following fall, he would acknowledge his feud with the old she-grizzly to be a thing of the past. So far as he was concerned, she could roam these hills untroubled to the end of her days.

For Nason realized that he had run afoul of a natural law higher than that which man may evolve of his own accord. He had sought to combat the powerful force of mother love, which has swept triumphantly down the centuries in maintaining life on this planet. And, in the end, if it had not been for that same mother love which drove old Itswoot to scorn victory when it was within her grasp, he knew that he would have been dead at this moment. Great though the price had been, Nason felt that it was not too great for the lesson he had learned.

JOURNALISM AMONG THE ESKIMOS.

ASIDE from being the westernmost point of North America, Wales, Alaska, now has the added distinction of maintaining the "First and only paper published by Eskimo school children," to quote the newspaper itself, *The Seal Poke*, as it is called.

Mimeographed by Eskimo children who attend the United States public school located in Wales, *The Seal Poke* undertakes to record the daily happenings as well as events of special interest that occur in the lives of the one hundred and fifty-four inhabitants of the village. The articles are all well written by young Eskimos, who are learning the English language at the school.

Among other interesting items in an issue of the paper was a reference to the name itself:

"The seal poke, after which this paper is named, is the native's handy bag. In it he carries food and whatever necessary while hunting. A common name for it is 'pook sac.'"

Singing Guns

By George Owen Baxter

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters

SHERIFF CARADAC installs the outlaw, Annan Rhiannon, under the name of John Gwynn, on his farm. The nearest neighbors are the Dees, of whom Charlie is most admired by the sheriff. Rhiannon meets Nancy, last of the famous Morgans, who ruled before the Dees came. She tells him they are her mortal enemies, and he offers his services. Rhiannon is welcomed by the Dees and finds particular favor with young Isabella. Rhiannon's helper, a sullen fellow named Richards, is dismissed for eavesdropping and replaced by an Italian.

While Rhiannon visits the Dees a fearful scream is heard in the old house. The hosts explain it as a practical joke. Rhiannon learns later that Nancy Morgan is concealed there. Two Dees are wounded by an intruder, who escapes. Sheriff Caradac writes Rhiannon to shelter Richards if he returns. He arrives, wounded, and in delirium says his name is Morgan. That night Rhiannon, planning to visit the Dees, finds Morgan has escaped on his best horse.

CHAPTER XXIX.

TOWARD THE GREAT ADVENTURE.

RHIANNON dropped the match, by the light of which he had made this discovery, and cursed Morgan softly to himself. But as he stood there in the darkness, he thought he heard the mumbling of voices behind the barn. He passed to the end of the stalls, and made sure—two men were in close conversation.

After that, Rhiannon stalked them like a cat.

Through a rear window of the barn he crawled, working his bulky body with the utmost care, and so came to the open air. At the corner of the barn he crouched; for close to the brush he saw the outline of a horseman and another man on foot standing near by, and the first word that he heard, though muffled, came in the unmistakable voice of Caracci.

"I saddled the gray horse for him. That's the best one we had."

"Where's Rhiannon?"

It was the voice of Sheriff Caradac—the voice of the sheriff, using Rhiannon's real name to a hired Italian laborer! Caradac, here by stealth, talking by stealth of Rhiannon, the outlaw, with a price upon his head!

Of all the strange things that had happened to Rhiannon, nothing had been so strange as this. He kneeled

where he was. He could not have found the volition to move.

"Where's Rhiannon?"

"Resting on the front porch. He don't even know that Morgan's gone."

"No," said the sheriff, "he's a little slow in the head. There ain't any doubt of that!"

"He is," said Caracci. "He ain't too fast in the brain. I've noticed that!"

Rhiannon set his teeth.

But the sheriff—Caradac! How could it be that such talk should come from him?

So, stung with grief and bewilderment, Rhiannon sharpened his ears.

"What will Rhiannon do to-night?"

"I dunno. Sleep—if he don't find that Morgan's gone."

"He'll find that out."

"Then he'll probably sleep, anyway. He takes time to make up his mind about anything."

"You can't tell," said Caradac. "And, mind you, Caracci, watch yourself plumb careful."

"That's what I do," said Caracci. "I'll be best pleased when I'm clear of this job, Caradac."

"Does he still think you're an Italian?"

"He never thought nothin' else. I sing some tunes that might be Italian. He never doubts me."

"No," said the sheriff, "he's like a kid. No suspicion in him."

"And still, he's Rhiannon!"

"He is," said Caradac, "and if you doubt it——"

"I don't doubt nothin'. I seen him outface the Dees, to-day. Oh, he's got poison in him, all right!"

"If he knew I was working behind his back," said the sheriff, "it would be a bad day in my life! But you'll keep your mouth shut, son?"

"I got cause to!" said the false Caracci softly.

"Could Morgan handle himself when he left, do you think?"

"Sure he could. He needed a sleep, and that was all. He got that, some chuck, and his wound fixed up. He'll be all right! I asked him!"

"Did you give him a gun?"

"I did, and fifty rounds."

"That's right. I gotta go. You watch everything."

"As close as I can."

"So long. There'll be something to tell you in the morning, my boy."

"They've got her, have they?"

"I dunno what they've got. Good night, kid."

The sheriff pulled the head of his horse around and started across the field, while Rhiannon drew softly back along the side of the barn and reached the front of it. There he paused, almost blind with rage—and sick at heart, as well. For this double-dealing of Caradac's seemed to him a most unhappy thing indeed, and a thing he hardly could believe even after hearing the words of the sheriff with his own ears.

He saw the form of Caracci darkly appearing, like a faint shadow among shadows, as he went back toward the house.

Then Rhiannon went into the barn and took the second horse. It was an old brown gelding, rather stiff in its joints, but once warmed to its work it could run fast enough.

After saddling it, he put a second saddle on his best mule, a gray veteran of many a day's labor, but able to raise a gallop, as well. The stirrups of the saddle on the gelding he shortened to what he considered a proper length. Then he went back to the house.

As he came closer, he heard Caracci in his room, singing softly a song of Italy—or were they of Italy, these songs? Rhiannon gritted his teeth and went on.

He entered as softly as he was able, and took his best rifle. He rigged another holster under his right armpit

And now with two revolvers and the Winchester, and a heavy belt of ammunition strapped around his hips, he told himself that he was ready for action at any time.

He stole out from the place as softly as he had entered it. Back to the barn —where he took horse and mule and led them to the corral gate, opened it with the utmost caution, lest a single creak could be heard, and so mounted the old mule, and, leading the gelding, proceeded down the road.

He was in no hurry. The complete darkness had hardly more than set in, and all the night was before him—a wild night it was sure to be, he made small doubt of that.

On his way from the corral, he had stopped at the blacksmith's shop and added to his equipment a short bar of the finest steel. There was no more useful tool than this for the opening of doors, locked windows, and the like.

He slipped his hand into the saddlebag now and fumbled the cold metal with much satisfaction.

So he came winding down the road into the valley and through a cloud of trees to the vicinity of the house of Dee.

That was his signal to dismount, for a horseman makes a lofty mark, almost sure to strike the eye of any observer even in the dim light. On foot he continued, wading the creek because he did not wish to make a noise by crossing the bridge, which was sure to sound hollow under foot, no matter at how slow a pace he led the animals on.

He was under the steepest face of the creek bank on the opposite side when he heard a crackling of brush. He looked up and raised a Colt in readiness.

Two horsemen moved above him and then disappeared beyond the rim of the bank, but still he was able to make out their voices as they sat their saddles near by.

"I heard something in the creek," said one.

"So did I. It was a fish that jumped."

"A couple of 'em," said the first speaker.

"Sometimes they break water together, a lot of them!"

"Why've they got us fanned out like this to-night?"

"I dunno. How should I know? I know we're here, keeping double hours!"

"For double pay!" suggested the other.

"Darn the double pay! I'd rather spend my time in my bunk. I'm fed up with this here wandering around in the night!"

"I'll take the money, boy, and you do the sleepin'."

"We might as well ride up the far end of the bank."

"Maybe. I wonder what the 'Old Man' expects?"

"Trouble. That's all that I guess. He sent over for five extra men from the ranch of Sid Dee."

"I know. He's got the whole mouth of the cup pretty well blocked by this time."

"Come on."

Their horses moved away slowly, and Rhiannon waited until the sounds should die.

"The cup," to which they referred, was that deep indentation in the side of Mount Laurel which inclosed the ranch house and the lands immediately around it. To the northeast arose the vast wall of the mountain itself, and northwest and southeast extended the double arms of ridges which opened toward the hills. It was a natural pocket, and it appeared that Dee was guarding all the outer lip of this reserve with his fighting men.

Easy enough to slip through such a line of guards, of course, but only when one moved with care. Pursued,

and traveling at speed, the attention of those armed men would be sure to be attracted.

So Rhiannon pondered as he stood by the whisper of the water. He could not return this way even if he were lucky enough to have reached the Dee house.

No, if Nancy Morgan once were with him, he would have to break straight back toward the face of Mount Laurel itself, and if he were pursued closely, he would have to find refuge by passing through the hole in the wall. But that would leave them floundering in his rear, as it had left them a hundred times in the past.

He should have made up his mind to that line of retreat before. But he had dreaded revealing his cherished secret even to Nancy Morgan. It had meant life to him too many times; he might have need of it how many times in the future!

Now that the sound of the horses had diminished, he turned to the side and quickly found an easier slope up which he led his animals to the level above; and almost at once they were in the shelter of the woods.

He went through them slowly, pausing often. It was impossible that he should go forward without some noise, and he had proved that this night was filled with hostile eye and ears. But so he came, at length, to the edge of the woods, close to the Dee house, and directly opposite the old wing. Here he tethered the mule with a slip knot, the horse to the pommel of the mule's saddle, and finally took his rifle and turned toward the great adventure.

CHAPTER XXX.

EXIT JOHN GWYNN.

IT was a black night. The stars were hooded over by high clouds; and yet it seemed to Rhiannon that he would have welcomed greater darkness, if it could have been found—the dark of the pit, best of all! For, from the inhabited wing of the Dee house, shafts of light worked through the blackness and stretched out long arms which would reveal him at a single touch.

Two things gave him a greater sense of security—the rising wind, which began to thrash the boughs of the trees and grind them against each other, and the first pattering of rain. Together, those noises should help him forward with his task. They should be a covering to any sounds which he himself happened to make.

Now, then, he went forward rapidly, keeping close to the verge of the trees, and hastily leaving them, when he had to, for the dash toward the old wing.

Under the shadow of its wall, he worked his way to the first window. It was very low. The sill was hardly higher than his knees, and though he found it locked, as he had anticipated, he was not discouraged. With the strong steel bar he set to work as an expert should, loosening the frame slowly and in half a dozen places, before he applied more power. At length it sagged.

There had not been a sound, he was sure.

He lifted out the lower section of the window, therefore, without much further trouble, placed it inside against the wall, and stepped into the house.

It was, of course, pitch dark, but the little bull's-eye without which he never traveled did away with darkness. Rhiannon used it as an artist uses a pencil, making quick strokes and slashes here and there, so that in a moment he had sketched for himself the position and size of everything in the chamber.

Then he picked up the window and fitted it back in place with care. No one, passing, must notice that one of the panes, glistening like polished black basalt, was missing. He even put the

back of a rickety chair against the frame. Then he went on in his venture.

The door to that room was unlocked by a lucky chance, but even so it was not an easy task to open the door. For the hinges were lodged with the rust of years and they moaned faintly at the slightest pressure.

Patience, then, and a certain trick which he had learned many years ago: Never let the pressure relax, but send it forward as slowly as the minute hand of a watch.

So he did, falling upon one knee and gently and firmly applying the pressure. With infinite slowness the door was drawn ajar, but when that happened, a strong draft entered, whistling.

Rhiannon gritted his teeth but composed himself to shut the door behind him as carefully as he had opened it.

That business accomplished, he touched the darkness in which he stood with a few more rays of light, snapping them on and off with the well-oiled shutter of his lantern.

He was in a narrow hall—narrow but with a high ceiling from which the plaster sagged down in one place; at the farther end of the hall appeared a balustrade and the first of a flight of stairs.

To this he made his way, and then started his climb. First of all, he tried the stairs with the weight of his hand and made sure of what he had dreaded, that the wooden structure was so extremely old and loose that it would screech at the first weight. The proper way to mount stairs in silence is to take the side closest to the wall, for there the boards or the stone slabs are most strongly secured, and the weight of the climber acts with the least leverage, but even this precaution was of little use. He had to fall back upon a bolder but more dangerous expedient.

Already there were noises in this house—the tapping of the rain, and the moan and whistle of the wind, together with those faint groans and murmurs which always live in an old house. For those noises he thanked his stars, and advanced.

He went rapidly up half a dozen steps, paused, took three more swift strides, paused, took another, and so with irregular rhythm climbed to the top.

No ear, except the most clever, would connect the squeaking of the stairs beneath him with the weight of a human foot. For we listen to stealthy sounds, regular, softly progressing. These were bold, loud noises, such, for instance, as a shutter of rusty hinges would make, when swayed to and fro by the wind.

He passed a landing—gained the head of the stairs.

There he dropped on one knee to take his breath once more. For, strangely enough, there is no sound more piercing—for its small volume—than the loud breathing of a man.

He waited several long minutes until all was normal with him. Then he began to explore the darkness again with the lantern rays, making out that he was in an upper hallway and at the top of the house, unless there was an attic still higher.

A dozen doors opened to one side or the other, and he hesitated as to which of these he should choose. To shorten the search, he ventured to use more light, and so, examining the hall floor, he presently found a number of footprints in the dust, and a door at which they turned aside.

Here he paused and looked through the keyhole, but found solid, tarry blackness. He passed a knife blade through. The lock was not closed, but the room was in utter darkness. However, on account of those footprints, he determined to enter this chamber at any cost. He rapidly forced the door, taking advantage of a loud squall of wind

to cover the noise which he was making.

The door gave with a sudden sagging. Rhiannon found himself in a square chamber with a table in the center and two broken-down chairs. But, most of all, there was a token that he had come to the thing for which he had searched so faithfully: a bright penciling of light was streaked across the bottom of the door which stood at the left!

No stalking cat could have moved more softly than Rhiannon now! Crossing to the door, he no sooner came opposite it than he saw that in one respect, at least, it was ideal for his purpose. For its face was widely cracked, and a strong ray of light broke through. At the same time, he heard a man's voice—and a woman's made answer. A man's voice—that of Charlie Dee; a woman's voice——

But he would not trust to his memory. He slipped closer to the door, and through the largest crack he looked into a tiny room in the center of which was a table where sat Charlie Dee and, with him, Nancy Morgan!

A great hunger arose in the soul of Rhiannon; and food never could feed it! He had waited, he had hunted, and the quarry was now under his hand.

He tried the knob of the door. To his delight and his surprise, it gave readily. Slowly, slowly he turned it.

They were playing cards—cribbage.

"Fifteen-four, and three twos are eight."

"You're not home to deal."

"I only lack three points."

"Three are a good as a thousand, Nancy. I'm going to beat you this time."

"You always do," said Nancy.

The cards flicked together. Then sudden silence. And, in his mind's eye, Rhiannon saw Charlie Dee turning with a swift and furtive movement in his chair to eye the door, saw that glance fastening on the turning knob—and then the ready hand make a revolver glide forth——

Alert, but grim of face, Rhiannon kept up the steady movement.

"Ten," said a voice within.

"Fifteen-two."

"Twenty for a couple."

"Twenty-five and I take six for that. Is it a go?"

"Not a bit. Thirty—and twelve—and I'm going out, Charlie Dee!"

Rhiannon, relieved, continued the movement, until at last there was the faintest of clicks—he had turned back the bolt of the lock!

And now the door was free beneath his hand. A tenth of an inch he swayed it in. In an instant he could sweep that door open and cover Charlie Dee!

Then, looking suddenly behind him, he was sure that a soft shadow was stirring at his back. No, that was imagination.

"I thought I heard something!" exclaimed Dee.

"So did I. The wind, of course."

"I'm not so sure."

"Charlie, you want to hear things."

It seemed odd to Rhiannon that she should be so friendly with Charlie Dee. But, after all, there was no reason to carry hostility past a certain point. Wrangling words bring only bitterness to the hearer and the speaker.

"Nancy," said Charlie Dee, "night and day I expect some one to try to break into this place and get you!"

"Are you going to keep on the stage till the last gasp?" asked Nancy with a sigh.

Why did she say that?

But Rhiannon had no time to guess or to argue. He cast the door open with his left hand. With his right he leveled a revolver at the back of the head of Charlie Dee.

Opposite him, Nancy slipped down in her chair and threw her hands before her face.

"Quiet!" commanded Rhiannon brusquely.

Charlie Dee had dropped a little forward—there was a gun in his hand as it lay on the table; but he made no real effort to turn about.

"It's John Gwynn, by heaven!" said he. "John Gwynn!"

He seemed stunned by the sound of Rhiannon's voice. The latter thrust the door to, behind him.

It was the last time he would be known in the world as John Gwynn. By this night's work he threw that name behind him, and all his hope of a peaceful life thereafter. Henceforth, he was Rhiannon!

CHAPTER XXXI.

RIDERS IN THE NIGHT.

"PUT your guns before you, Charlie," Rhiannon now advised. "Slip them onto the table. The knife, too, if you don't mind. I want to see 'em all."

One by one, Charlie Dee put forth two heavy Colts. And then a long, rather thin-bladed, hunting knife.

"That's all," said he.

"Not quite," hazarded Rhiannon.

There was a faint mutter in response, and then Charlie Dee took a small two-barreled derringer from inside his shirt and laid that beside the other weapons.

"How did you know about that?" he asked calmly.

"I didn't, I guessed," said Rhiannon.

Nancy Morgan jerked down her hands from her face and stood up.

"You've come for me!" she said faintly. "You've come for me, John Gwynn."

"He's come for you," said Charlie Dee bitterly. "And he's made a fool of me—an absolute fool! John Gwynn—the farmer!"

"My name is Rhiannon," said its owner.

Dee turned slowly, at this, and confronted the big man.

"Rhiannon!" he echoed.

"You've been square with me, Charlie," admitted Rhiannon. "And I'm sorry that I gotta do this. You helped me out of a tight hole the other day. I'm sorry that I gotta pay you back like this. Bad luck, I call it."

"Rhiannon!" murmured Charlie Dee. "But Rhiannon's a man of forty or so, and——"

Rhiannon smiled.

"It was the beard," he answered.

Nancy Morgan said not another word. She had pressed herself back into a corner of the wall and merely stared, as though this was an event to be seen but never to be comprehended.

"There's some rope in the corner," said Dee in the most matter-of-fact tone. "You'll need that, I suppose."

"Sorry," said Rhiannon. "I suppose that I gotta use it. Will you bring it here, Nancy Morgan?"

She picked it up and came to him like a sleepwalker, with a face of stone and staring eyes.

It was strong, quarter-inch rope. With it he rapidly secured the wrists and the feet of Dee. Then he hesitated.

"I hate to use a gag," said he.

"Matter of fact," answered Charlie Dee, "I wouldn't mind giving you my word that I won't call out——"

Then Nancy Morgan cried in a voice that trembled with passion: "Would you trust him? Would you trust Charlie Dee, of all the men in this world?"

Rhiannon shrugged.

"He's been hard on you. I know that. But I got an idea that he wouldn't lie to me about this."

"Thanks," said Charlie Dee. "That's a lot to say!"

"I'd like to ask you one more thing," said Rhiannon. "You look like a man to me, Dee. You never gave me the idea of a low rat that would badger a girl. You don't have to answer: but

I'd like to know what made you treat Nancy Morgan this way!"

"Two reasons," said the other instantly. "She's a Morgan. That goes a long way with us. Second thing is: there's a lot of money up. About a quarter of a million, I take it."

"I don't see how that comes in."

There was a faint glimmer in the eyes of young Dee.

"Some day you may!" he answered quietly.

Now all this time the wind had been rising in violence, and at this point a sudden draft worked through the cracks and made the lamp flame flutter.

"Some one's coming—there's a door open somewhere in the house—or a window!" said Nancy Morgan.

Rhiannon hung at the door only an instant.

"I've got your word, Charlie?"

"You've got it," replied Charlie Dee, and he looked straight at Rhiannon with the blank eyes of a man deep in thought.

Then Rhiannon drew the door open. Nancy looked up into his face—a fleeting glance of fear and doubt and hope, he thought. Then she went past him quickly.

He closed the door as he stepped through and with a ray from his lantern he found the way across the room for himself and the girl.

He carried the lantern in his left hand—the ready revolver in his right, and as they came toward the door, he almost used the gun.

For a flare of light appeared in the hall, and was instantly extinguished. And next he heard a man's voice speaking—the voice of Oliver Dee. Another voice answered, and another. Three men were coming down the hall.

Rhiannon flashed a beam across the room. The window was heavily shuttered. There never would be time to dash those shutters open and escape through—even if it were possible to climb down the sheer wall of the house from that point.

Nancy Morgan did his thinking for him.

She caught his arm and dragged him into the corner just inside the doorway. She only whispered in his ear: "Wait—don't shoot—for Heaven's sake—don't shoot!"

And then the flare of light turned into the doorway and filled the room!

It seemed to Rhiannon, tense with his revolver, that, behind that light, eyes looked straight at him, but then the light went out and three shadows stalked across the room.

"We'll see how things are goin' with Charlie," said the voice of Oliver Dee. "Take a night like this, and anything is likely to happen!"

They gathered at the farther door, through which the light glimmered down the jagged cracks. Nancy Morgan set the right example again, stealing softly away as soon as the three were well over the threshold of the room. Rhiannon followed her into the hallway—followed her to the stairs—followed her down to the first floor.

And he had time to wonder at her greatly. This was the frightened and semihysterical girl he had met on the hill that other night! This was the shrinking creature! And now she was as stealthy and as strong-nerved as a hunting panther!

He bit his lip in wonder and in his first doubt of her. But there was nothing or no one that escaped from doubt in these mad days. The sheriff above all—then Richards—Morgan—Caracci—all the Dees—and, finally, Nancy Morgan herself!

He had no chance to develop these ideas, for as they reached the lower level at the foot of the stairs there was a heavy crash above them, and then a loud shouting, as of many men in a hot dispute.

"This way!" called Rhiannon, and

opening the hood of the lantern, he led the way through the room by which he had entered the house. He jerked in the window, hurled it aside with a crash, and then lifted Nancy Morgan in his arms and passed her through into the wind and the rain.

He was instantly beside her. Inside the house, footfalls were thundering on the stairs; a gun was fired rapidly—no doubt, to give a signal.

"Run!" said Rhiannon, and struck through the wet night for the trees.

He ran with half his strength; instantly a lithe form was up with him.

"Faster!" she called.

She was like a deer, so swift and light; and they dashed on together through the screen of brush to where the mule and the horse waited; and the old gelding whinnied a soft greeting.

Rhiannon pitched the girl into the saddle on the horse as if she had been a sack of barley. He himself sprang onto the mule—a mule against the fleet blood horses of the Dees!

They were hardly in the saddle when two riders went past, flashing dimly in the rain, the water cupping up and splashing from the hoofs of their horses.

Then Rhiannon rode out and headed straight up into the hollow. The girl reined frantically at his side. She rode well, indeed, and while her horse galloped, she tipped from the saddle and shouted: "You're riding straight into the trap!"

He answered: "The hole in the wall!"

She answered something; he could not tell what, but the wave of her hand seemed to indicate that this solution was all she wanted. And on they went, the mule at its full gallop, the girl pulling the horse back to keep the slower pace.

They had to go past the face of the house at a comparatively short distance, and as they did so a shutter was opened—before a window, perhaps—and a shaft of light like a long arm reached at them. Nancy Morgan, a length ahead, rode full into it, and Rhiannon saw the wet gleam of her yellow hair, and that her clothes were already black with the downpour. He himself had no time to swing the mule aside from the same telltale illumination.

A voice shouted; a gun cracked, and a bullet hissed above their heads.

They had been spotted, and now it was a chase indeed!

Rhiannon sent the spurs home. Every second unpursued meant priceless rods gained; but looking back across his shoulder he saw shadows plunge out from the gate of the patio at high speed and then swerve to the right and come streaming after him—horsemen riding for their lives!

He remembered then what the sheriff had said—that Oliver Dee needed merely to whistle and he could fill the hills with armed men! Certainly, on this night he had planted a legion around his house. How, then, had Oliver Dee known that the attempt was certain to be made at this moment? Had he really feared simply that Morgan, the wounded men, might come back and make another attempt?

There was a shrill cry from Nancy. She pointed with a stiff arm to the right, and he saw a horseman break from the trees and bear wildly down upon them.

"Lord help him!" said Rhiannon.

He fired. The horse leaped high, and fell, and the rider rolled headlong. And now the clifflike side of Mount Laurel rose close before them.

CHAPTER XXXII.

WHAT HAD SHE TO GAIN?

JUST at the base of Mount Laurel was a small apron of fallen rocks of all sizes. Some of them were boulders as huge as a house, and sometimes time

had weathered away the stone, so that soil had formed, and there was a cloud of brush and small trees standing out a bit into the level of the valley.

Straight at that fringe of trees Rhiannon bent his course. Then, on the verge of the greenery, he checked the mule and leaped to the ground. Fast as he was, Nancy was instantly at his side. The girl seemed all springs and fiery resolution.

Glancing to the rear, Rhiannon saw the dim shapes of the riders from the house of Dee swiftly coming up, but still well beyond accurate eye-shot. He turned the mule and the horse north, cut them with his quirt, and saw them dash off, snorting.

Instantly, the shadow shapes to the rear swerved to the left, to follow the apparent course of the fugitives. And Rhiannon strode into the brush. The girl was behind him, one hand clutching at the tail of his coat to make sure of him in this utter blackness of whipping branches.

They came out on a swift, smooth slide of water that ran past the edge of gigantic rubble, for here the boulders were at their hugest.

It was hard for Nancy to stand. The wind, deflecting from the polished face of the cliff, shouted with a human fury, and tore at her with violent hands.

Rhiannon picked her up in his arms and stepped into the current. It was so strong that he had to lean well back against it. Every step had to be made slowly, fumbling forward, a foothold at a time. He went down the stream a matter of forty of fifty yards and walked straight at the face of a vast, black boulder. He dipped under its edge. Half the clothes of Nancy Morgan were soaked as he stooped, though he raised her so high in his arms that she had to turn her face from the upper surface of the stone.

Straight on went Rhiannon for half a dozen steps, then climbed from the water into still, warm air. He dropped Nancy to her feet, and sand gritted beneath them.

They had entered the hole in the wall!

"That finishes off that little job," said Rhiannon with a sigh. "It was a mite closer rub than I expected—but it's over!"

He flashed on his lantern and stood before her, dripping from his shoulders down, but with a stern smile of triumph.

And he found Nancy Morgan not a trembling, frightened child, but a triumphant woman, with joy in her eyes and her cheeks flushed. She actually laughed at Rhiannon.

"And they thought that they could match you!" she said.

"Did they speak of me?" asked Rhiannon sharply.

She seemed to wince a little. Then, "If you *should* come," said Nancy Morgan, "they feared nothing. Charlie Dee said that nothing in the world could break through to me to-night. He said that every inch of the valley was watched. Not even Rhiannon could manage, said Charlie! But you have! And here we are—and this, this is the hole in the wall!"

There was a ring of the wildest exultation in her voice. She took his hand which held the lantern and made him turn it from side to side and reveal the long, sloping shoulders of the cave and the ragged roof above them. And finally she pointed the light down the narrow passage which opened just before them, not more than three feet wide, and cleaving, apparently, through the dark heart of the mountain.

He looked down at her with wonder—with doubt, as well. That first mention of his name, and the way she had flinched ever so little when he asked the hasty question—he did not like it! But he thrust the doubt from him. He felt as though he were losing his mind;

was not the first sign of madness a feeling that all the world is wrong?

"And that's the way out?" she asked.

"That way," he answered. "Shall I make a fire first to dry your clothes by?"

He pointed the light at a heap of dry wood, long ago laid in here by his foresight for just such emergencies.

But she answered. "No, no! Let's go on—let's go on! We're just at the edge of the mystery! Let's go on into the heart of it!"

"What mystery?" he asked her sharply.

She lifted up her face to him and laughed, for she seemed ever bubbling with laughter now—mirth which she could not repress! And her blue eyes were as gleaming and as cold as steel in the midst of this rejoicing!

He had not known her—that was plain. She was no more what he had thought than a house cat is like a mountain lion!

Beautiful, yes. Too beautiful, almost, with those changing, brilliant, thoughtful eyes. He never had seen eyes before like those. Unless he called to mind the eyes of Charlie Dee, when that young gentleman was excited.

"Walk ahead," said he, "and I'll shine the light over your shoulder."

"Walk ahead?" She hesitated.

"Why not?" asked Rhiannon, surprised.

"You go first," she answered anxiously. "You go first—I—I don't want to walk first into that—that darkness, you know!"

And Rhiannon knew in his heart that she was lying most grossly, and disgust and a sort of despair rose up in him, for nothing that he touched—nothing human that he touched remained sound and honest. All crumbled and became false under his hand.

She, Richards-Morgan, Caracci, even Owen Caradac, whose life he had held in his palm, whose life he had given freely back—even Owen Caradac had proved a traitor in the end!

So, half blind with a sort of weary sorrow, Rhiannon turned from the girl and took the lantern ahead of her.

"Keep close behind me," was all he said to her.

"Yes, yes," she answered.

There was a touch of impatience in her voice. And he remembered then that she had not spoken a word of gratitude to him; she was vastly excited and pleased, of course, but her attention seemed bent forward to what was to come.

For that matter, perhaps she had reason!

He had not spoken to her about the man who claimed to be her brother. He would wait until later for that. Wait until some of the soreness had left his mind.

So he walked on until the passage narrowed a bit more and became lower.

"Here's a funny thing," said Rhiannon to the girl, without turning his head. "You look along the walls, here, and you'll find that there's been pick strokes and blasting. Once, a long time ago, this was a drift in a mine, maybe—or a shaft that was sunk through the rock. Think of the work that they done on it! And all to give me a hole in the wall!"

She did not answer. He paused. There was no sound behind him and turning, in surprise, Rhiannon saw a bright spot of light shining against the side of the wall twenty or thirty yards behind him, and above it leaned the girl.

Odd indeed that she should have an electric torch, and one of such power! Most amazing of all that she had found something in that tunnel which interested her so much. How had she found it in the thick darkness behind his broad shoulders.

"Nancy!" he called, and the narrow

tunnel took up his voice and magnified it like a megaphone.

"Nancy, what's the matter?"

She straightened, and her laughter came down to him clear as a bell, and hard, indeed, as metal chiming.

"There's nothing the matter!" said Nancy. "But you gave me the ticket out, and now I'm going to see the show!"

He started back toward her, and then she threw up her hand.

"Go back, go back, Rhiannon!" she called.

He halted.

"What's up, Nancy?"

"I tell you," she cried in a greater excitement, "go back at once, or you're dead, Rhiannon. Go back—you great loon!" she added in a burst of impatient anger.

He winced a little.

"Nancy, have you lost your head?"

"You idiot!" cried the girl. "You'll be losing yours! Back down that tunnel—or else—Heaven help you!"

The brain of Rhiannon spun.

"I'll come to you and find out what's up!"

"You'll never see me again!" rang the hard voice of Nancy Morgan. Then as he persisted in going forward: "Take it, and Heaven help you—you madman!"

She jerked violently at something which he could not make out—it seemed like a ring fixed against the wall. And as she did so a mass of solid rock dropped with thunder straight down past the face of Rhiannon. He barely had time to jump back from its fall; it would have torn him in two as a meat knife cleaves meat!

A violent shudder came in the top of the tunnel above him. A shower of small stones and dust rained down, and Rhiannon turned and fled for his life as another ragged mass of stone was loosed and beat down into the tunnel at his heels.

Half sick, bewildered, he leaned against the side of the rock and played his light over the ruin which filled his tunnel.

The hole in the wall was gone. And the secret salvation which had been his for so long was ended. He hardly cared.

But what weighed like lead upon his very soul was the knowledge that blue-eyed Nancy Morgan, beautiful Nancy, delicate Nancy, had deliberately tried to take his life and leave him buried under countless tons of rock.

And she? What had she to gain by that?

CHAPTER XXXIII.

WHITE LIONS.

SHERIFF OWEN CARADAC had an office in the Laurel jail, but he rarely used that room. He preferred to work from his own little shack at the corner of H and Fourth Streets. There was a vacant lot to each side of him and to his rear. Across the street stood a carpenter's shop, equally framed in vacancies. For Laurel was a boom town of the old days. It had been laid out in the most magnificent manner, with public parks stretched out, and sites for post office, city hall, and other buildings of importance that never came into being. Those who had bought lots had run up frame buildings on their holdings, and sometimes found themselves a quarter of a mile from the nearest neighbor. In fact, Laurel looked like a burned town which had been partially rebuilt, and which will never be restored fully. It seemed to stand upon ruins; which were the ruins, one might say, of its own hopes.

But the sheriff liked the situation of his own place. It commanded a clear sweep of the adjoining ground, and during the day that was a great advantage, for people were apt to have a keen re-

spect for his eyesight and his guns. During the night he had a brood of savage bull terriers, more feared by dangerous men than guns ever could be! There were only two rooms in this little shack—where he had been born and bred. One of them was kitchen, living room, dining room, bedroom, and it stood to the rear. The other chamber served the sheriff as an office.

For this office, having collected his mail for the day, the sheriff started from the post office.

He walked with a loosely, swinging stride, his head high in the air, whistling as he went. And he pretended not to notice that people who saluted him did so with stiff, jerky nods and went past him. He pretended not to notice—as he did repeatedly from the corner of his eye—that they turned after they had passed him, and then scrutinized him with care, as though they never before had seen him.

The sheriff made his whistle louder, and tilted his sombrero a little more to the rear of his head. But darkness gathered in his eyes.

He was opposite the front door of the bank when a fat little man ran out at him. He had a bald head that bobbed upon a lean, weak neck. And his fat, soft stomach bobbed up and down, also, with every stride. He shook a pulpy forefinger at the sheriff as he approached.

"What have you been doing, Owen Caradac?" he called. "What have you been doing to yourself?"

"I dunno," said Caradac, and paused, towering over the fat man.

"I'll tell you, then!" said the banker. "You've kicked yourself right out of your job, if that's what you want to know."

"I didn't ask to know it," answered Owen Caradac. "How come you by the information, might I ask? And who's gunna do the kicking?"

"The whole population of the county!" declared the president of the bank. "They're gunna ask you to step down and out, and if you refuse——"

"There ain't any danger of that," said Caradac. "I can find other jobs in other places. This ain't the biggest town in the world, and it ain't the best town!"

"Is that the way you talk?" cried the other. "Owen, Owen, isn't there any shame in you—the town that raised you? And what am I going to do when you leave? How can I be sure that the bank will be safe? I'll have to buy new vaults and hire two night watchmen—and all because you've been and made such a roaring fool of yourself!"

"Have I?" said Caradac.

"Have you?" shouted the banker. "You've been associating with Annan Rhiannon, ain't you?"

"I have," said the sheriff.

"You've put him on a farm. You've treated him like a brother."

"Did he do the farm harm or good?" asked the sheriff.

"That ain't the question! The question is, for what did the people of this county pay you a salary and——"

"All right," said Caradac. "Let it drop, will you?"

He walked on; the little man followed and pulled at his arm.

"But I want to help you, Owen! I don't want to lose you. It'll cost me thousands of dollars, if we get another sheriff in this county. It's you that have kept the crooks out!"

"Except Rhiannon," said the sheriff.

"Oh, darn Rhiannon," exclaimed the man of money. "What harm did he ever do? Scratched the surface once in a while! Just scratched the surface. Good for our systems. He stirred us up when we got too settled! But on account of him—what made you do it? Will you tell me that?"

"You know all about it, do you?" dryly asked the sheriff.

"It's spread all over from the Dee

place," said the little banker, "that John Gwynn was nobody but Annan Rhiannon!"

"All right," said the sheriff, "did it strike you, then, that Annan Rhiannon was nobody but John Gwynn?"

He walked on up the street, and still he pretended to notice nothing odd in the greetings with which he was met as he advanced. So he came to his shack and stood a moment in front of the garden gate to admire the place.

The garden had no part other than the gate. Within was smooth-beaten ground out of which the bedraggled remnants of a few rosebushes thrust themselves. They never bore anything other than thorns in these days, but the sheriff kept them on out of sentimental attachment to the memory of his mother. For, in her day, this front yard had been made to blossom wonderfully and give up armfuls of flowers of all sorts. And never had the house work been so heavy as to keep her from toiling in the garden soil—while he and his brothers played in the dust of the street.

The sheriff thought of this as he looked at the smooth, dry face of the ground to-day.

He was a hard man, was the sheriff, but something stirred vaguely in him and rose in his throat like words, unspoken forever though they must be.

To the left had stood the remainder of the house—the three rooms which burned down when he was a youth. The shock of that burning had killed his mother. He always felt her death was due not to the loss of the rooms and the furniture in them so much as the destruction of her beloved climbing roses which, twice a year, covered the whole house with a network of white and crimson fragrance. Some stubs of those vines remained, and that was all.

To the passer-by, this house, sun-and-wind worn, unpainted always, surrounded by bare ground, was typical of the sheriff himself. But to the sheriff it wore a different aspect and always appeared to him partly as itself—just large enough for a bachelor to take care of with ease, and therefore perfect—and in part as a mere section of a whole. Ghosts stood before it—ghosts of people and of flowers and of voices.

Once—it was only last winter—he had come out and sniffed the bitter January morning.

"This here frost will do the roses no good!" the sheriff had said.

Then he had looked about him and smiled a little. Of course, the roses were gone and in their place were half a dozen bull terriers who now frolicked in the sun, sleek and shining as so many white seals.

To-day when he stepped inside the gate, they came bounding toward him, barking in sharp, high-pitched yelps; but when they were close they flattened their ears and wriggled forward, as if through water, to lick those heavy, terrible hands. The sheriff cuffed them aside and went forward to the porch. There he turned and surveyed his six white guardians. No other dogs ever ventured into his yard. For if they did, a white bolt struck them down. No men ventured either until he had whistled to the pack and called them off.

Let come what might, the sheriff was content with life—and yet not quite content.

He turned hastily away from his own rising thoughts and went into his office. There he cut open his letters and read. There were at least a dozen, all of them from ranchers of the community, all of them asking one question: Was it true that the sheriff had actually sheltered on his farm for months the desperado and man-slayer, Annan Rhiannon?

The sheriff crumpled these letters one by one and dropped them in his waste-basket. Then he picked them up,

smoothed them, and reread them with apparently loving care.

He looked about him with rather a vague eye.

This office was his idea of a perfect place. He had a swivel chair at his desk. The desk itself was of bird's-eye maple, polished to a wonderful brightness. It was like a thing of gold, to the sheriff. Then he had a bright rug on the floor. He had paid fifty dollars for it, and he rarely entered the room without bending to feel its texture and to admire the straightness with which the long seams ran down its face. In one corner was a tall, narrow cabinet, also of polished wood, in which he kept the overflow of papers from his desk. In the two other corners were stiff-backed chairs.

Never make a man too comfortable. Keep him wriggling if you want to get the truth out of him.

Now, having surveyed all these possessions, the sheriff tilted back in his chair and placed his feet on the top of the desk. His trailing spurs raked long furrows on it, turning the varnish to a white powder. He lay back in his chair and smoked one cigarette after another, and dropped the butts on the floor. One of them found the rug, burned a fuming hole in it, and at last went out.

Still the sheriff smoked until a voice called: "Hey, Caradac! Sheriff Caradac!"

Then he sat up straight and through the window he saw that a cheerful young man was waiting outside his gate. It was the governor's secretary and right-hand man, and Caradac knew why he was here.

"Hey, Caradac, call off your white lions, will you?"

Caradac whistled. The sleek, white brigade gave way, and then followed at the heels of the stranger, sniffing the calves of his legs, their lips curling hungrily.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ALL ABOUT RHIANNON.

"HELLO," said Sam Nearing from the door. "You still got that old bitch, I see."

"Yeh. I still got her. C'min and sit down."

"Shade more foreface and she would take some beating!" said the governor's secretary.

He knew bull terriers, therefore he knew the sheriff well.

"And you've got the young dog, too. I thought you'd sell him. He's not up to the rest."

"He suits me," said the sheriff.

"Of course he does," replied Sam Nearing. "You want dogs, not pictures."

The sheriff waited. He knew that all this was merely the premise to serious conversation. He knew what that conversation would be.

Finally he said: "You made a special trip down here to see me?"

"I did," said Nearing. "The governor wanted me to look things over in this section of the State and tell him about——"

"Rhiannon?" asked the sheriff. He held out the makings invitingly. "Roll one?"

"Don't mind if I do," said Nearing.

He made his cigarette with deft, active fingers. Then he lighted it and said suddenly through the smoke: "Yes, I came about Rhiannon."

"What about him?"

"If it's true, he wants you to get out."

The sheriff smiled a little. He knew that this frankness was a tribute to him from a busy man.

"It's true," said Caradac.

Then Nearing went on: "Of course it's true! The strange things always are true. But the governor wants the full truth. Not just the scraps that the chickens pick up."

The sheriff considered and then shook his head.

At this Nearing went on: "You're one of the best guns in the governor's holsters."

"What am I to him?" asked Caradac bluntly.

"You keep about half the State straight," said Nearing. "Killings make discontent. They don't have killings when Sheriff Caradac is around."

"Thanks," said the sheriff.

"That's why he wants you to talk. You don't have to make a speech, either!"

Caradac tapped the scarred surface of his desk. He looked out the window, but the secretary looked at the desk. He saw the freshness of those scars. The white powder still lay beside the furrows.

"I don't have to make a speech," said the sheriff. "No, of course, I don't. I won't, either."

"You can't explain, Caradac?"

"No. Everybody knows the truth. I took in a crook. And I'm the sheriff. Those are the facts."

"Part of the facts."

"I'd have to undress to show you scars, if you wanted the rest of the facts," said Caradac.

Mr. Nearing looked keenly at him; then he looked at the ceiling.

"The time you disappeared?"

Caradac nodded.

"That was Rhiannon?"

The sheriff nodded again, and Nearing waited politely.

"I don't publish this," said the sheriff.

"Of course you don't, man! I'm a mummy. So is the governor. All he wants is a fair excuse for himself. He'll back you up, and he's strong enough not to have to give any reasons."

"He'd have to pardon Rhiannon to back me up," remarked the sheriff.

At this, Nearing made a wry face.

"How many men has Rhiannon killed?" he asked.

"From behind—from the side—sneaking by night—or ever taking an advantage—not one!"

"He's killed a good many, though," murmured Nearing.

"Napoleon killed a lot more," continued the sheriff.

"That's that," grinned Nearing. "I see how you feel about it. Can you tell me anything more?"

"I dunno that I can." He reflected. "Are you sure this ain't for a newspaper?"

"Not a word."

"Well, I met Rhiannon and he licked me. He beat me. I had the drop on him, too. Nacherally," added the sheriff, "I kissed the hand that beat me. That's all there is to it!"

Mr. Nearing, with truly wonderful tact, said not a word. He remained respectfully attentive; he did not even watch the drawn face of the sheriff too closely.

Suddenly, Caradac said softly: "I could've saved him. I let him chuck himself away again. I was too smart. I held back what I knew. That's what I done! I run him back to the wild again!"

Mr. Nearing was as still as a mouse, for he saw that this man was talking to himself.

Then the sheriff added: "I'm an old-fashioned man, Nearing. Him—he was my partner!"

Nearing leaned forward a little in spite of himself.

"Did you break with him, Caradac?" he asked gently.

The sheriff did not hear.

"You're not seeing him any more?" asked Nearing.

At this, the man of the law turned slowly toward him and laughed a little. His throat worked. The great veins stood upon his forehead.

"I'll see him when he comes for my

scalp," said Caradac. "It won't be long," he added.

They smoked through a long silence, during which Nearing discreetly studied the floor, but at length he managed to say: "The governor realizes that this affair may mean your social position in your community, and your office, as well as the——"

It was the beginning of a prepared speech for the occasion, and the voice of the sheriff tore the speech asunder like a projectile.

"What do I care for community, and office, and position? To the deuce with them all! It's him that I had—and it's him that I lost!"

Said Mr. Nearing; "It's plain that he's a man and a real man, Caradac."

"You never seen his like before," declared the sheriff. "Nor no man will ever see his like again!"

"He made a regular flower garden of your farm, I hear," suggested Nearing, in the same gentle voice.

"Him?" said the sheriff. There seemed little connection when he went on: "My mother made gardens."

But politicians are lovers of human nature, and they love humanity because they understand. So young Mr. Nearing caught a dim hint of the meaning of the sheriff. It was as though a beautiful ghost had swept past his face. Tears came for an instant into the eyes of the governor's secretary, for he was a Westerner, and west of the Rockies hearts are as soft as hands are hard.

Nearing stood up.

"We'll have to think out some way," he said, and turned toward the window.

"Good Lord!" cried he. "Caradac, call them off!"

A girl had just passed inside the front gate, and a volley of six white projectiles leaped at her. They sprang as high as her shoulders. They cascaded like water from a fountain around her.

But there was no more danger in those six professional devil dogs than in six white angels. They licked the hands of the girl. They tried to lick her face. She went forward through them half laughing, defending herself—as if she were leaning into a white hurricane.

So she gained the steps.

Even Caradac was moved to rise from his chair.

"The sneakin', worthless brutes has turned into lap dogs," said Caradac, but his grin belied him. "Kind of a cool one, ain't she, Nearing?"

"A lovely girl, sheriff," said Mr. Nearing, his color quite changed. "Who is she?"

"Her? That's the young Dee girl."

"Come to you for what?"

"About Rhiannon, I guess. Everybody comes about Rhiannon."

Nearing smiled. He took out his handkerchief and brushed some dust from a sleeve; he pulled down his coat in front and kicked his feet lightly to shake the wrinkles out of his trousers.

The sheriff observed with a smile that appeared in his eyes alone.

"You'd better go in to the back room," he said. "She didn't come to a dance. She come to the sheriff of the county."

"I just want to meet her, Caradac," whispered Nearing.

"You jus' get out of here before you're throwed out. You may find some coffee stewin' on the back of the stove. Help yourself."

"Lovely girl!" sighed Nearing, and went slowly into the kitchen.

A light, quick tap came at the door.

"Come in!" roared the sheriff.

The door opened. He was revealed in his newly discovered position, feet on the desk, hat on the back of his head.

"Hello, Miss Dee! C'min and sit down. Whatcha want of me this kind of hot weather?"

She took the chair Nearing had been in, and drew it up close to Owen Caradac. When she sat down, she could lay one hand on the edge of the desk. And there she laid it—a slender, olive-brown hand like the hand of a Mexican girl, except that the nails were pink and white. And her eyes were as dark as the eyes of a Mexican, but there was no hint of smoke in them.

"You've come about Rhiannon," said the sheriff harshly.

"I have," said she.

"Well," said he, "what do you want?"

"Him," said Isabella Dee.

CHAPTER XXXV.

WHAT ISABELLA WANTED.

TO this frank statement the sheriff replied by interlacing his big fingers and wedging them under his chin, so that his head was supported as on a tripod, and his grin, half savage and half amused, was turned full upon her. He looked like a primitive creature, this Caradac; a creature of an earlier type, before the long æons had refined humanity with more delicate features, more supple limbs. He was simply roughed out flesh and bone. His hands looked like clay studies, blunt and enormous. His brows were heavy and irregular masses of bone, deeply hollowed beneath for the eyes. They gave him a look half thoughtful and half wild—those deep-set eyes.

And Isabella Dee was another type, the product of a later age, made with precise delicacy.

"You—Rhiannon!" said the sheriff.

She nodded with perfect cheerfulness.

"Him—that lump!" said the sheriff.

"Exactly," said Isabella.

"Him—he's the same kind of a dish as me," said Caradac.

"But an artist spiced him," said Isabella.

"Of course," answered the sheriff, "you may see it that way. But what about the way that he settled down and become a regular farmer?"

"He didn't settle down. He burned up," replied the girl.

"He worked as regular as a ticking clock."

"And he worked day and night—like a clock, not like a man."

"Now, how d'you know that?"

"Everybody talked about it. And from an attic window I could see the farm. There'd be a light there at two in the morning, often! I've come back from a dance at three, and heard his anvil clanging."

"Ever see him swinging a hammer?"

"Charlie did. I didn't have to."

"You didn't?"

"No, he looked that way."

"You sound kind of partial about him."

"I am partial about him. Terribly!"

"He's new, that's why," said the sheriff. "He's rough and you're smooth."

"D'you think that I've been raised among lambs?" she asked him.

"I dunno, Isabella. This sort of beats me. You forget him. You chuck him over your shoulder and leave him lay!"

"He's too big for me," chuckled Isabella.

"He'll get small in time," declared Caradac. "You'll take on with some of these boys that you've been raised with."

"Maybe I will," answered she, as frankly as ever. "But I don't feel that way about it now."

"He's gone wild and he'll never be tame again," said Caradac with gloomy conviction.

"Look here, Owen Caradac," said she. "I come to you crying with a hurt finger. You ought to tie up the finger and make a fuss over me, and say how sorry you are. Instead, you say the

finger will get well—some day. Then you give it another whack. Is that kind?"

"How bad are you hurt?" asked Caradac.

"Very bad," said she.

"You don't look it."

She opened her purse and took out a little mirror in which she viewed herself critically—at close range and at arm's length.

"Well," she sighed, putting the mirror away, "I've missed a lot of sleep, anyway."

Lemme ask you: "How do your folks take the idea?"

"I haven't spoken to them about it. Mother would take it pretty hard."

"I don't see your father askin' for congratulations, either."

"He wants me to marry some land," said she. "That's the only trouble."

"Not worried about the way that Rhiannon smashed up his place—and then got away from all the Dees?"

"Oh, he says that he'll tie Rhiannon over a slow fire and cook him and feed him to the birds. That's the way that dad talks. He's never halfway."

"And he don't mean what he says?"

"Of course not! Annan Rhiannon's a man. Dad knows that, you see!"

"Humph," said the sheriff. "You talk like a baby."

"I could talk a lot more like one," declared Isabella. "I'm just around the corner from tears this very minute!"

"Look here," said the sheriff, and placed a square-tipped forefinger on the desk, "look here, Isabella. You got sense. You listen to me."

"I'll listen, Owen. But say it in words of one syllable. I'm not a student this day."

"He's wanted. Rhiannon is wanted a lot. For a lot of things. He's held up a train. He's killed men!"

"Self-defense," said Isabella.

"Self—oh, dash it, Isabella—if you're gunna talk that way!"

"I dunno," droned Isabella sadly. "You don't seem to help me much. Of course, I know that he's not a Sunday-school boy! But he can settle down. He's proved that on your farm."

"*His* farm," corrected the sheriff.

She opened her eyes a little.

"If he'll take it. But I could only make him take a half interest. He's that way. But you see, Isabella, you never would have a chance to marry him."

"Maybe not," sighed Isabella. "He's lost his head about that Nancy Morgan, of course. I suppose he'll marry her?"

"What do you make of her?" asked Caradac.

"She's a gold digger," said Isabella. "Of course, I hate her for taking him."

"That's nacheral. But if she's a gold digger, will she waste time on Rhiannon?"

"I don't think so. I hope not! She just wants to get something out of him."

"What?"

"I don't know."

"Who does?"

"Charlie does. Charlie knows nearly everything about everybody, it seems."

"But getting back to Rhiannon. The more he cared for you, the less he'd come close to marryin' you. His life ain't worth a nickel. He knows that. You ought to know that."

"I'm going to go to the governor," said she.

"And what'll you do there?"

"Fall on my knees and cry."

"What good will that do?"

"He's one of these strong men with a strong chin," said Isabella. "You take a man like that—he never can stand to have a girl cry. I'll keep at it till he pardons Rhiannon for me."

The sheriff grinned.

"D'you really think that that would work?" he asked.

"No," she replied, "but that's some-

thing to do, at least. It's better than sitting still with my hands folded in my lap."

"And what do you want me to do about it?" asked Caradac.

"You'll see him before long, of course."

"Perhaps," said Caradac, and made a wry face.

"Why do you do that?" she asked.

"No reason," said Caradac. "Go on. When I see him, what am I to do?"

"Tell him that the latch string is hanging outside."

"Your door or your father's door?"

"Both," said she. "I'm going home to tame dad now."

"Can you do it?"

"It's easy," said Isabella. "He's really just a baby, if one knows how to handle him."

"All right," said Caradac. "Now, suppose you get Rhiannon pardoned—which you can't. Suppose you marry him—which I doubt. Then how you gunna live?"

"With Annan Rhiannon, of course."

"Look here. You're all polished up. You've been East. You've been finished."

"Not so finished," said Isabella. "Not so polished, either. Not so polished you could see me in the dark!"

"You'd like a lot to settle down and milk cows and fry bacon and make butter, you would!" said the sheriff with irony.

"Wouldn't I, though!" said Isabella. "And take care of the baby, too!"

"Well," grinned Caradac, "you're willin' to look on the dark side of things, I see."

"I am," said Isabella. "Now look here, Owen. Tell me what it's all about—Nancy being kept at our house, and all that? And what do you know?"

"Honey," replied the sheriff, "I'm all tangled up like a calf in a rope. I got a few ideas, but they ain't worth trotting out now. I'm working. That's all I gotta say. How's Mortimer?"

"He's going to get well."

"That's good news."

"I'm going back home," said Isabella.

She hesitated at the door. "When you see Annan Rhiannon——" she said.

"I'll tell him everything."

"But gently, Owen. Gently, please!"

She paused, laughing back at him, but when he watched her down the steps, he saw that her face was very sad indeed. The bull terriers swarmed about her again, leaping, barking. She gained the gate with a struggle, and was gone down the street.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

GUNS OR BARE HANDS?

WHEN young Nearing came into the room again, his eyes were on fire. He walked nervously up and down.

"Never heard of such a thing in my life!" said he. "But she's a jewel—she's a fairy princess——"

"She is," said the sheriff.

"She's worthy of a king!" cried the governor's secretary.

"Or a millionaire," said the sheriff, and yawned.

"Dash it," said Nearing, "something has to be done!"

"About what?"

"About her."

"Well?"

"She's got to be brought to her senses."

"How?"

"Must be shown that she's throwing herself away!"

"She'll never throw herself away on him. He wouldn't take her."

"Caradac, be reasonable."

"I am, son! He wouldn't have her. He ain't that kind. Would he break her life in two? No, he'll simply bust her heart instead. Because he's a good man!"

Nearing answered with violence:

"You're out of your head about that fellow. He's a killer—a thief, Caradac."

The sheriff raised one finger. "You say it because you don't know," he replied gently. "But don't say it again."

"Man, man," groaned Nearing, "would you really trust him?"

"Look!" said the sheriff. "I hounded him for years. I trailed him everywhere. I went around and solicited folks so's to get a higher price put on his head. I've killed hosses to catch him. He's killed hosses to get away. It's been a war between us. Outside of me, life was a joke with him. But finally he got me good. Fair fight. I was down and out. Look what he done! Here I sit. He brought me through. He worked on me day and night. He never made no bargain, neither. Now, Nearing, that ain't all. I couldn't tell you all. All I say is: Rhiannon is white!"

"A white train robber, eh?"

"He began young. He had a wrong steer when he was a kid. Seventeen or eighteen. What does a kid know about anything at that age? You go back, and if Isabella wants to see the governor—give her a chance to cry on his shoulder, will you?"

Young Nearing drew himself together with a sigh.

"Look at the way she talked," said Nearing. "Right from the shoulder. Starts right off—she wants him—Rhiannon. She loves him. No beating about the bush. What a woman she is! And broken already. Smashed, done for! Darn it, Caradac, what a shame we can't do something!"

"Like marry her—one of us?" said the sheriff. "I tell you what, we ain't big enough!"

This the governor's secretary paused to consider.

"I see what you mean," he said at last. "Of course she's a cut above. Rhiannon's a cut above the other pirates, too. Well, I'll go back and do what talking I can for him!"

"If you succeed," said the sheriff, "I'll tell you what. I'll give you one of those dogs—cheap!"

"Thanks," grinned Nearing. "Not enough foreface to have in my yard. So long, Caradac!"

The storms in the souls of the young never last long; Nearing was whistling as he went down the street, and the sheriff turned slowly to his work.

He began to sort out papers from his desk drawers, from his cabinet. He took out files, and fat manila envelopes lined with linen for greater endurance and wearing ability. From the envelopes he took photographs here, photographs there. He picked out papers from the files and arranged them. He began to pin this odd assortment together with infinite care, worrying and fussing over his labor.

The day wore on. The evening came. He was still at his toil when the dusk grew so thick that the ache of his eyes made him look up and see that the night was almost there.

Then he went to the kitchen and cooked his supper. He was so absent-minded that he allowed the bacon to burn in the pan. He allowed the coffee to boil over.

He sat down to cold potatoes, pale coffee, burned meat, and ate mechanically. Then he went out to his front porch and watched the stars. The Sickle of Leo was high in the sky; the Pleiades like a puff of diamond dust. It eased the heart of Caradac to watch those distant faces, for everything human about him was a burden to his very soul.

A buckboard jogged up the street with creaking wheels and rattling bed. It halted opposite his house. He heard two men speaking together; then they drove on.

It was as if they had stopped to look at a house in which a murder had been

committed. Somehow that small thing carried home to the mind of Caradac more clearly than all else the knowledge that his life work was ruined. He had spent his years and his blood to win the total confidence of the community. He had made his name a symbol of courage and of honesty up and down the far-flung range, and now in a moment the work was undone.

He, looking backward, could see clearly that he never could have succeeded, because, sooner or later, Rhiannon would have been recognized.

True that the outlaw's face was utterly disguised by the shaving of the beard, but, nevertheless, some men are like burning glasses. Focus them long enough on anything, and the smoke will eventually rise, and Rhiannon was that sort; the sheriff could see it now. His personality would have shown itself in some fierce, rugged gesture.

In the meantime, his own life was ruined. Rhiannon's also. And into the vortex Isabella Dee was drawing. He tried to remember her careless laughter; but he could not close from his mind the thought of her sad, still face as she left.

He brushed his hand through the air before his face, as one does to drive away mosquitoes. Then he forced himself to concentrate on the street. Boys were playing in the deep dust, rolling, yelling. One of them began to cry. He was taken into the nearest house. But there, through an open window, he continued to sob until the pulsing sound entered the mind of the sheriff.

Life, he decided, was like that; there were always tears near by and happiness was more name than reality. Men followed it, hunted it, but never could have it; just as men hunted the wild deer but never could have that, either. For when it was taken, it was dead!

A man passed, flicking his fingers on the picket fence with a subdued rattle. The terriers rushed at the fence with a fury of snarling, and the stranger jumped to the farther side of the walk with an exclamation:

"Brutes!" said he, and then hurried on.

Another man came, a large silhouette in the night. He leaned on the gate and the dogs rushed at him with their savage clamor. He thrust the gate open.

"Look out!" cried Caradac, standing up.

But the dogs had fallen to either side and grown silent. They swirled in a white pool about the feet of the big man as he came slowly up the path to the porch. He climbed the steps. He stood over Caradac.

"Rhiannon!" said the sheriff.

"It's me," said Rhiannon.

"Take a chair," said Caradac. "You walked in?"

Rhiannon did not take the chair. "I walked in," he said.

The sheriff was silent. He had planned exactly the words which he would use, but now they failed in his throat, which labored but brought forth no sound. After all, words were of little purpose here. Action alone counted with Rhiannon.

"They're stirred up a good deal, Annan," said the sheriff at last. "They've got three posses out."

"And where's your posse?" asked Rhiannon.

The sheriff did not reply.

"Why don't you take the trail?" asked Rhiannon.

Again Caradac was silent.

"There ain't much light," said Rhiannon, "but there's light enough, I guess."

"I guess there is," said the sheriff.

"What'll you have," said Rhiannon. "What'll you choose? Knife, or gun—or just bare hands?"

Caradac sighed and looked up to the sky. It seemed to him that all the stars were beginning to whirl.

"I dunno," said he. "You pick what you want."

"Hands," said Rhiannon, "will take longer."

"Guns, then, if you want."

"All right," said Rhiannon. "Where'll we stand. Here?"

"If you want," said the sheriff.

He rose from his chair. Once more words stormed up against his teeth, but he could not speak. Then he added: "Maybe down in the yard would be better. There used to be a garden——"

He checked himself. He saw that the words had no meaning.

They stood opposite each other, dimly visible, ten paces apart.

"When that dog howls again," said Rhiannon.

"All right," said the sheriff. But he subjoined: "If you need a hoss afterward, you'll find 'em in the shed behind the house. The black one is the best."

Rhiannon said nothing.

And then the dog howled in the distance, shrill and long.

The sheriff drew his Colt with practiced speed and fired from the hip—fired from the hip at the far-off Pleiades.

There was no answering shot. He saw the gleam of a gun in the hand of Rhiannon, and that was all.

"Darn you!" said Rhiannon slowly. "Darn you, Owen Caradac! You won't even finish what you began?"

Only then did the sheriff understand.

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

AN ALASKAN SCHOOL TEACHER

THE vast stretches of the North have bred some very hardy women, one of whom is Iloe Slade. It is true that Miss Slade was originally a San Francisco girl, but since she was twelve years old she has spent by far the greater part of her time in Alaska and, with her father, has traveled by dog team over countless frozen trails of the Yukon country. This mode of existence has been an admirable preparation for her present work, which is that of teaching school at various Alaskan posts. Her present job is at Kennecott, Alaska.

And how she loves the primitive life connected with such a position! Snow and ice cover the ground virtually eight months of the year, and the only means of transportation is by dog team. However, there is no terror in any of this for Miss Slade. She is an adept in the use of snowshoes and skis, and is quite fearless in the management of her savage team of malemutes and Mackenzie River huskies.

With her father, she has hunted moose, caribou, and the great Kodiak bear.

"Any normal girl," Miss Slade explains, "can learn to drive a dog team, handle a rifle, and cover great distances on snowshoes, but my great ambition now is to master the Eskimo kyak, a native canoe of birch, covered with walrus hide. You sit in a little opening in the center, making the kyak virtually water tight, and then, when you become really accomplished, you simply make that little boat do everything but talk."

Roamin' Free

By Harry R. Keller

SOFTLY burned the moonlight, ghostly magic gleaming
Out across the waste lands, through the gray mesquite;
Down along the ridges where the drowsy mists were dreaming,
Slowly rode a cowboy, chanting low and sweet.

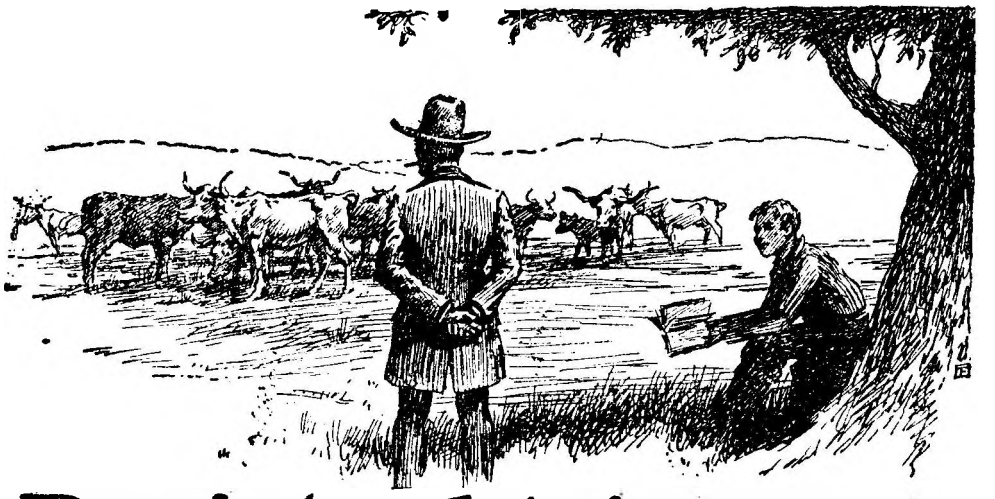
From the plodding pony's feet the silver sands were sifting;
High above their murmuring ran the mournful tune,
Floating out to vanish in the purple shadows shifting,
Shivering, and dancing in the madness of the moon:

"A thousand miles from Anywhere my broncho hoss come lopin',
Splashin' through the shallow fords, trampin' sod and shale;
Down from out the distance where the Painted Hills are slopin',
Heaven's sprinklin' star dust all along the trail.

"Headed for the rocky range loomin' vast out yonder,
Marchin' slow and steady to the dronin' desert drums;
Grubstake in our saddle pack, naught to do but wander,
Lookin' for To-morrow—but To-morrow never comes.

"To-morrow's always hidin' while the mornin' mists are creepin';
But it doesn't matter so we two are roamin' free.
Somewhere in the ranges lies our El Dorado sleepin',
Mebby so we'll find it, my broncho hoss and me."

Song and singer blended with the shattered shadows falling
Yonder where the light lay silver on the dune;
Far across the sand hills came a coyote's calling
Softly—and a bat flapped black against the moon.



Rangeland Aristocrats

(The Polled Hereford)

By Ira D. Mullinax

Author of "The Herefords," etc.

WHEN Warren Gammon, a shrewd and skillful live-stock raiser, left his Iowa farm to attend the great exposition at Omaha, Nebraska, in 1898, he had not the faintest notion he was starting over a trail toward fame as a cattle breeder. Yet that little pleasure jaunt marked the beginning of a new chapter in bovine history, one that bulks with increasing importance as the story unfolds through the passing years.

Not only did Gammon know cattle, he had imagination, and he needed merely a suggestion to set him to work on a plan for their improvement. Over in the live-stock section of the great exposition, Gammon found an exhibit of strange-looking cattle. They were being shown by W. S. Guthrie, of Atchison, Kansas, who called them "Polled Kansans." They looked exactly like the Herefords on hundreds of Western ranches, except that they had never developed horns.

Gammon wes aware of the constantly increasing popularity of Hereford cattle; he knew the stock raisers' liking for hornless beef animals, and he was convinced that there would be a big demand for hornless Herefords. On returning home, he began crossing Herefords with Red Polled cattle—a naturally hornless breed of English origin—with the intention of developing a Hereford whose "muley" characteristics would be dependably transmitted. This was not entirely satisfactory, since it mixed the blood of one breed with another, producing crossbreds and grades rather than purebreds.

About that time his son, B. O. Gammon, was making a study of Darwin's famous book, "Origin of Species." He interested his father in the book, and as the elder Gammon read, he became deeply impressed with Darwin's statement that variations are constantly occurring in all species of animals. These strange variations from established type are called "sports," "mutations," or "freaks of nature." Good examples are pigs with five feet, two-headed

calves and other oddities occasionally seen in every stockman's herds.

Hereford cattle without horns were such "freaks" in the days when Gammon first saw them thirty years ago, but this hornless quality in cattle was a thing much to be desired It had been no small factor in making the Aberdeen-Angus cattle popular and had caused many stockmen to look with favor on the Polled Shorthorn, the Galloway, and also the Red Polled breeds.

Numerous Western ranchmen like hornless cattle because they ship to market better and often command a higher price. When shipped long distances in crowded cars, there is far less loss from bruising and goring, as both beef and hides are uninjured. They are safer and pleasanter to handle, less dangerous to children and attendants. They seldom worry and fight each other at feeding and watering places. They occupy less room in sheds and cars. They cause no loss among horses, sheep, hogs, or other cattle where it is necessary to handle a variety of stock together. Various other facts in favor of hornless cattle are often brought out by men who raise them.

In order to get rid of the horns, thousands of cattle are every year dehorned, a cruelly painful and often dangerous operation, to say nothing of the time and expense involved. All these things are avoided by handling a breed that is naturally hornless.

The Hereford, already so popular on Western ranches, would be still more desirable if a hornless type could be developed, Gammon reasoned. He soon succeeded in producing polled Whiteface calves, but they could not be recorded in the herdbooks of the American Hereford Cattle Breeders' Association because they carried the blood of some Aberdeen-Angus, Red Polled, or other alien ancestors. Gammon met this situation by organizing, in 1900, the American Polled Hereford Cattle Club and establishing a herdbook for these cattle, which still are known as Single Standard Polled Herefords.

About the same time the National Polled Hereford Breeders' Association was organized by W. S. Guthrie, of Atchison, Kansas, who had made the historic exhibit of hornless Whitefaces at the Omaha Exposition. For several years its headquarters were maintained at Chicago, but about seventeen or eighteen years ago it was merged with the American Polled Hereford Breeders' Association.

Before Warren Gammon began the experiments which were to place Polled Hereford securely on the live-stock map, other stockmen had made similar attempts to build up a hornless type of Whitefaces. One of the earliest was Welton Winn, of Santa Anna and Canyon, Texas. He is said to have conceived the idea in 1885, when he bought a Hereford bull in Missouri and mated him with some naturally hornless cows. But his progress was slow and when the American Polled Hereford Cattle Club was organized by Gammon in 1900, Winn became a member and had all his cattle registered which the organization could accept under its rules of eligibility.

To Warren Gammon is given the chief credit for developing the Polled Herefords and making their merits known. After reading his son's copy of Darwin and thinking about the freaks that occur among cattle, he decided to collect all the freakishly hornless Herefords he could find. He believed that if placed together in one herd their descendants would one day all be hornless. With this in mind, he sent a circular later to all the Hereford breeders in the United States and Canada, inquiring about purebred Herefords that had failed to develop horns. Through this inquiry he found a registered bull named Giant, whose

owner was George W. Fadley, of Horton, Kansas.

That was only a beginning. Gammon was persistent, convinced he could make his dream come true. For eight years he kept sending out letters in search of purebred hornless Herefords. At last his efforts were rewarded by the discovery of ten hornless cows, seven of which he bought. He also located and purchased four polled bulls. The first purebred hornless calf to reward his experiment was born in 1902. It was a bull and was named Polled King. As Gammon kept on with his work an increasingly large percentage of the offspring were hornless.

Out of all this, the Double Standard Polled Herefords were developed. A Double Standard is any purebred Hereford naturally hornless and registered in the American Polled Hereford Record at Des Moines, Iowa, as well as in the American Hereford Record at Kansas City, Missouri. Except for its "hookers," it has all the characteristics of any other Whiteface.

"Double Standard" refers only to this twofold registration and does not necessarily mean that a Hereford of that description is the offspring of two hornless parents. Its sire or dam, or both, may or may not have had horns. If its anncestors were all sufficiently aristocratic to be registered in the "Who's Who" of Hereford society, it also may be recorded in the herdbook of the American Hereford Cattle Breeders' Association. But if it has no horns it must also be registered in the records of the Polled Hereford Association at Des Moines, Iowa.

Single Standard Polled Herefords are a distant strain, being merely high-grade Whitefaces that are naturally "muley" and with ancestors of some other breeds back a few generations. Neither they nor any of their descendants can ever be recorded in either the American Hereford or the Double Standard Polled Hereford Record, owing to this infusion of alien blood. Since the Single Standard Record was established twenty-eight years ago an average of about one hundred and forty-four cattle a year have been registered in its herdbook, the total recently having reached practically four thousand.

The Single Standard strain has made but little headway, shown but a small increase, and is not now maintaining its numbers. The amount of Single Standard Polled Hereford pedigrees now being recorded is negligible, and it seems only a matter of time when they will pass entirely from the scene.

On the other hand, the Double Standards have steadily increased and are being raised by a constantly mounting number of stockmen. Since its incorporation in 1900, the American Polled Hereford Breeders' Association has had two thousand two hundred and thirty-four members, of which six hundred and sixty-five now are active, and nearly sixty-two thousand Double Standard animals have been recorded in its herdbook.

Cattlemen accustomed to reading Polled Hereford pedigrees can readily tell by an animal's registration number whether it is Single or Double Standard. A Single Standard bull, for instance, might be recorded as Good Boy 3000. An excellent example of the Double Standard is the herd sire, Bullion Garfield 14806-632729, owned by Johnson Brothers, Jacksboro, Texas. The first, always the smaller number, indicates that he is recorded in the Double Standard Polled Hereford herdbook, while the larger number shows he also is registered in the herdbook of the American Hereford Cattle Breeders' Association. The Single Standards have only one number, the others always two.

In 1907, the breeders reorganized and formed the present association. At

that time there were only five members and only one hundred and thirty-one Double Standard animals had been recorded. Both the association and the number of Polled Herefords have grown steadily since then. These hornless Whitefaces now are produced in every State in the Union, except Delaware and New Jersey. Iowa, where the breed was first developed, has more herds than any other State. In recent years, they have been exported to the vast beef-producing regions of South America, as well as to the Philippines, Australia, Mexico, Hawaii, and Canada. They are steadily increasing in popularity with Western cowmen.

For ten years, Warren Gammon served as secretary of the American Polled Hereford Association. Then his son, B. O. Gammon, the boy who learned about cattle breeding from Darwin, was chosen secretary, a position he still holds.

Polled Herefords have all the beef-making and other desirable qualities of their horned kindred. Like them, they are not noted for milk production, although occasionally a Whiteface cow is found that is above the average as a milker. They are essentially beef animals, however, and are not kept for dairy purposes.

Polled Herefords never have brought as high prices for breeding stock as the horn-wearing kind, although at the big markets they command as high figures as any other beef animal. The highest price ever paid for a Polled Hereford bull was $14,500, and for a cow $3,625.

Admirers of these animals comprise a steadily increasing group of enthusiastic cattlemen. They confidently predict that these hornless Whitefaces will eventually become the dominant beef breed in America. Offering numerous arguments to sustain this belief, Polled Hereford breeders have adopted a slogan: "Nothing gone but the horns."

"Why, they ask, "should a naturally peaceable beef animal carry a pair of bayonets?"

A RANCHMAN AND HIS BUFFALO

ONE of the several large herds of buffalo maintained in the United States for a number of years was that located on the range near Pierre, South Dakota. This herd, however, has long since been threatened with extinction through lack of interest shown in it when it became part of a privately owned estate. Very recently, though, efforts to build up the herd have been made by Mr. Henry O'Neill, a prominent cattle breeder and dealer, of the western part of the State.

The genesis of this particular herd dates back to 1883, when it was becoming apparent that the buffalo on the plains of Dakota were rapidly disappearing. At that time, Fred Dupree, an old-time fur trader and respecter of the ancient order, captured a small band of seven buffalo calves and hauled them to his home location on the Cheyenne, where he protected them and allowed them to multiply up to the time of his death.

After that, the herd passed into the hands of a stockman, James Philip, who enlarged his domain in order to accommodate the herd, which reached the number of seven hundred. As a matter of fact, the government, interested in the project, aided Mr. Philip by granting him land for his enterprise at a very nominal sum.

Unfortunately, when Mr. Philip died, his heirs disposed of most of the animals, principally by slaughter, for the markets of the East. And the once noble herd had dwindled almost to nothingness when Mr. O'Neill took charge and, with the aid of the government, began his good work of salvaging the few sad remnants of the great bison herds that were once at home on the prairie.

The Butt of the Joke

By Roland Krebs

Author of "Bathed in Glory," etc.

WHEN most folks have the blues on Monday mornings, I'm usually always glad, because it's on Monday I get my copy of *Variety* and get to see what's doing among my old pals of the days when I was a vaudeville star and not a cow-puncher here in Montana.

On one Monday recently, though, I was so mad it would have been dangerous to cage me up with a wild cat—dangerous for the wild cat. You see, I'd laid my theatrical paper down to go into the R Bar R bunk house for a fresh pack of cigarettes. When I came back, half of *Variety* was chewed to tatters by Butter, the pet goat of Mrs. Bucky Durbin, our foreman's wife.

I never did like that danged goat. He wasn't called Butter because he was soft. It was on account of him butting. He's snuck up behind me and every other puncher on the R Bar R at one time or another and butted us.

That may be a goat's notion of good, clean fun, but it's awfully easy to get tired of if you're on the receiving end.

Well, anyway, I chased Butter with a stable fork and then spent a half an hour trying to put the shreds of the newspaper together again. I'd just about got it to a point where I could read it when "Shrimp" Nolan, the R Bar R's midget cow chaperon, came duncing along and sat down in the grass beside me.

"Reading about the show business, hey?" he said. "It must be swell to be a actor, Al."

"Oh, it's like everything else; it's got its bright side and its drawbacks. Behind the glitter it's a tough life, Shrimp."

The "Pewee" stared off into space, chawing a blade of grass.

"I've always sort of had a hunch I would have made a pretty good trouper," he confided.

Yeah, who ain't?

"As a matter of fact," Shrimp Nolan went on, "I'd still like to give it a stab."

"Forget it," I advised. "It's a much harder life than you think."

"I like to do hard things. I ain't any softy. Believe me, Al, if a op-

portunity ever presents itself, I'm going to grab at it—I don't care how uninviting it may be."

"If the opportunity ever comes along, you pass it up," I warned Shrimp Nolan. "Then you won't be sorry."

"If the opportunity shows up, watch me grab it!" he came back. Then he sat up suddenly, as a guy does when he remembers something. "By the way, here's a letter came for you today."

The handwriting in the address looked familiar and, sure enough, the letter was from an old friend of mine, Joe Bostwick, who's got a strong act with his sister, Florence, billed as "Hercules & Diana."

Most outsiders have a idea, from having heard the expression, "May all your children be acrobats," that folks in these dumb acts are a lot of tramps and no-accounts. That's hooey. Some of the nicest troupers I've met have been tumblers, trick-bicycle riders, trapeze twisters, and the like. There weren't none of them any better than Joe or Florrie Bostwick, either.

Anyway, Hercules was writing to say that him and his sister were going to open in about three weeks on the Coast in picture-house stage presentations and how did I feel about a visit from them on their way West.

You see, lots of my theater friends stop off at the R Bar R from time to time. They like the chance to get fresh air and good living for a week or so, and the folks around the R Bar R are glad to have them, because, naturally, they're entertaining.

So, after getting the foreman's O. K.—why, I phoned a telegram to Herk for him and his sister to come on.

Around the end of the week they showed up and, the minute I saw him look at her, I knew Shrimp Nolan felt himself falling in love with Florrie. The Shrimp's main weakness is Alberta Pritchard, the Snake Hollow school-teacher, but he feels, I guess, that he ain't got such a fat chance there and so from time to time he does a little falling-in-love on the side.

Of course, I introduced the Shrimp, and he almost melted when Florrie gave him a big smile. I often think a dame can sense it when a gent's heart does a backward handspring for her, and I guess Florrie was smiling out of amusement, reason for same being that she was about twice as big as our Mr. Nolan. The gal was plenty good-looking, but she was a big dame, as you might expect of a strong act.

The Shrimp's head almost went backward off his neck when Florrie absent-mindedly took a Louisiana pecan nut out of her coat pocket and cracked it between her teeth. When she saw him staring, she smiled again, got out another nut, cracked it, and handed it to him.

"Good gosh, Al!" the half-pint exclaimed to me later when him and I were alone. "Did you see her crack them nuts with her teeth? I wouldn't have thought it was possible."

"She was just keeping in trim—just practicing," I said.

"Practicing? Practicing? Practicing for what?"

"She's got a teeth act, Shrimp," I explained. "You see, their routine shapes up something like this: Her and Herk come out, Florrie in tights and him in a leopard skin, and he picks her up, tosses her around, lifts her, poses her, and chucks her around. He's what's known as 'an understander.' Later, a trapeze is dropped down from the flies and Florrie gets up on it.

"She's got a belt, fastened with a strong rope to a block of rubber. Herk slips on the belt, she bites into the rubber and, hanging by her knees, she holds him up off the floor by her teeth. Florrie always carries around pecans

and sometimes walnuts and just cracks them up to keep her jaws strong. They usually carry a third party in the act who is much lighter than Herk and she does all kinds of tricks with the lighter guy."

"Golly," Shrimp Nolan remarked, "she'd sure amputate a hand if ever she bit for a sandwich and missed, wouldn't she?"

That evening Herk and Florrie and me had a long lung-to-lung confab, and then Herk told me that he'd been instructed to get some comedy into his business.

"Somehow, Al," he told me, "I just don't seem to be able to think of no funny stuff to work into our routine. I've thought of trying to be a funny tramp in ragged clothes, but that gag's been done to death. So has the clown slant."

I wanted to help, but then pantomime was never my racket and no idea burst upon us.

Next day Florrie noticed that there was a tall oak tree near the ranch house, with a limb sticking right out at a right angle to the trunk, and she thought it would make a dandy spot to practice if she could rig her trapeze from there.

"Do you think anybody would mind?" she asked.

"On the contrary," I assured her, "it'll go over big. The boys around here will like it better than a show you pay to get into."

Florrie could get around like a monkey. I wish you could have seen the boys' mouths open when she climbed up that tree like it was a flight of stairs and rigged up her trapeze. And they opened them mouths almost far enough to fracture a jaw when they seen her work-out.

"Golly!" old "Biffalo" Bull remarked as he watched her lift Herk up by her teeth. "I wish I had that gal's molars. They'd go great on some of the steaks that's come out of the cook shack here of late."

Just as Herk was letting hisself back on terra firma, who should come ambling along with a snout full of newspaper but Butter, the goat. Butter took one good, long look at Herk's leopard skin and decided he didn't like it. He charged.

"Hungry Hosford," though, stepped into the breach with a fence rail and chased Butter off, bleating and blahing.

After that, Florrie got a gunny sack and filled it up with about a hundred and fifty pounds of rocks. This she fastened to the belt.

"Tell me what's the idea?" I asked her.

"Why," she laughed, "that's going to be my practicing dummy. That's just about the weight of the sort of guy we've been using in the act for me to throw around and for Herk to catch. We'll have to cut out the stuff of Herk catching here, though, because the rocks are too hard."

At the moment I noticed that the Shrimp, who was standing next to me and admiring the girl friend, gulped and half stepped forward.

I guessed it! He heard opportunity knocking at the door with a chance for him to go on the stage.

"Miss—uh—Bostwick," he stuttered, "couldn't I—uh—substitute? I can do a few little—uh—tricks—handsprings, and stand on my hands, and so on."

"Why, I'd be delighted," Florrie announced, beaming on the halfwit.

Gee! Shrimp Nolan couldn't get into the belt fast enough to suit himself.

"You won't drop me, will you?" he hesitated, just before Herk handed him up.

"I've never dropped any one by accident yet," Florrie laughed, taking the rubber block out of her teeth and hold-

ing the little guy in mid-air by one hand.

"You don't sneeze all of a sudden or anything like that?" the Shrimp persisted.

"Don't worry, kid," my girl friend said. "You won't get hurt. After a bit I'm going to drop you, but Herk'll catch you and handle you just like you were a baby. And he never misses, either."

Well, sir, it was all we could do to keep from laughing out loud as we watched the Shrimp, pop-eyed, being twirled around in the air. Herk felt he needed catching practice and Florrie swung our Mr. Nolan swing-fashion back and forth over and over again, finally letting go the rubber and dropping the short guy gracefully into Herk's strong arms.

Florrie's climax was to have her brother twist the rope holding Shrimp Nolan around and around till it was all wound up, then let it unwind, and at last, when the little guy was turning like a pinwheel, let go and let Herk grab him. Three times they did this, and Herk never came anywhere near spilling our little puncher.

Say! When they finally finished with the Shrimp, he had to sit on the ground and hold on. Dizzy? I-yi-yi! He was so seasick he couldn't eat no chuck that evening, but he seemed just as happy, because Florrie put cold cloths on his aching dome, patted his forehead, and told him how wonderfully he'd done.

Thus encouraged, the kid was back under the spreading oak next day, getting himself threw around some more. He got real enthusiastic and did become very helpful to Herk and Florrie. He got so he could turn a few cartwheels and handsprings when Herk, catching him from above, tossed him to the ground.

First thing you know, the little clown told me he had struck the two for a job and they'd said he could have it.

Now, don't get me wrong when I tell you I tried to talk Shrimp Nolan out of it. It wasn't that I didn't want to see Hercules & Diana get a break. It's not that I'm sour on the show business. I simply felt that a good friend like the Shrimp is, with his simple notions and ways, is much better out here in the healthy atmosphere of Montana than he would be doing four and five shows a day, seven days a week.

So, I tried to show him he was making a mistake, but I had no luck. No, sir! He was going to work his way up, beginning as a tumbler, and finally winding up, I suppose, as a great Shakespearean trouper.

"Never mind! You'll get a good strong jolt one of these days, and then you'll know I was right," was my closing shot.

Shucks! Far from me talking him out of this nonsense, he got more enthusiastic, carrying it so far as to send to San Francisco for a leopard skin like Herk's, which he wore out under the oak after that.

Just a couple of days before Herk and Florrie were fixing to push on to the Coast, I noticed on several occasions that Herk was stumbling around with an absent-minded stare on his pan like a guy trying to think of something.

"Try as I do, I don't seem to be able to dig up any idea for comedy in the act," he complained to me.

So we put our heads together again and thought some more—of nothing of any account.

Our dome-straining was broken up finally by Florrie and the Shrimp appearing for the daily work-out, the Shrimp in his leopard skin, imagining, I suppose, that he looked like a noble pagan gladiator in a Roman circus.

They pitched into their practice

work, Herk still wearing his absent-minded expression, but going through his routine mechanically.

Nothing out of the ordinary happened until right around the time for Florrie to drop Shrimp Nolan and for Herk to catch the little fellow and toss him into his handsprings. Then lots happened.

Florrie was just getting ready to drop our Mr. Nolan when I heard a loud *"Bla-a-aah!"* It came from a bunch of shrubbery on the other side of the oak.

You know who it was!

Butter had been masticating a sock, which he dropped to let go that *"Blah!"* when he saw Herk and the leopard-skin that he disliked so much.

Shucks! There wasn't time for me to interfere. I was too far away.

Butter lowered his head and, with bleats and blahs, he charged on Herk. And, at that moment, Florrie let go of Shrimp Nolan.

As Herk caught the little guy, he wheeled about to see what the bugle calls were behind him. By that time Butter was almost on top.

Like I said, Hercules was absent-minded. If you were in his fix, you'd want something to throw at the goat, wouldn't you? Well, being absent-minded, Herk knew he was holding something—which was the Shrimp—and him being so strong and the little puncher, therefore, being so light, he forgot it was a human being he was holding and he threw.

Bam! Shrimp Nolan hit Butter smack-bang on the head and him and the goat rolled over together.

Butter, being made of tougher stuff, struggled to his feet and galloped away, bellowing angrily. I don't guess any goat likes to have people thrown at him.

Shrimp Nolan, though, didn't get to his feet until Herk and Florrie helped him up.

"Gee! Mr. Nolan, I'm terribly sorry," Herk apologized, perspiring. "I was absent-minded and I forgot when I threw you that you were—uh—you."

"Are you hurt much, Mr. Nolan?" Florrie asked.

The little coot looked at them both stupidly for a minute, then said, "Well—no; but I feel awfully shook up. I feel wabbly." Then, like as if he regretted admitting any weakness or softness in front of Florrie, he added: "Naw! I ain't hurt at all."

Suddenly, Hercules clapped his hands together, smiled, and yelled, "I've got it! There's the comedy twist to the act I've been looking for."

"How do you mean?" the Shrimp inquired.

"We'll have a butting goat in the business, see?" Herk explained enthusiastically. "We'll train him to interfere all through the turn. It'll get a lot of laughs. Then, as a climax, I'll heave you at the goat. After some practice, we'll be able to do it without hurting you even a little bit. Man! It'll zowie them!"

Shrimp Nolan looked at him and from him to me with a puzzled pan. Having himself thrown at goats didn't seem to appeal to him as work for a great actor.

Then he seemed to remember bragging to me how he was going to grab if his opportunity to go on the stage showed up. He hesitated before answering. He was undecided—for about one half a minute.

Butter decided it for him. Butter had retreated to behind the shrubs and reorganized himself. He had seen the weakness of his strategy—announcing his attack with his blahing.

Butter charged again, but this time silently and we didn't know it until we——

Ka-zump! The goat hit the Shrimp from the rear and our Mr. Nolan

went over forward and slid five feet with his stomach and face to the ground. Butter galloped off, bellowing triumphantly. The Shrimp just laid there till we sat him up and steadied him.

After a while, he looked unsteadily into my eyes.

"Al," he said, "you told me that sooner or later I'd get a jolt that would make me see my mistake. I just got it. Being heaved at goats four and five times a day ain't my notion of a profession.

"Besides, Herk here says he was absent-minded. Supposing some day some guy in the audience would razz him and he'd want to throw something at the fellow and he was so absent-minded he threw me across the footlights. Where would I be? How would I feel? I'm a small guy, all right, but I ain't a missile. No, sir, Mr. Hercules! I'm through with the show business. If I went into your act, the animal in it wouldn't be the goat. I'd be it."

"Oh, pshaw! It certainly would have made a swell piece of comedy business," Herk sighed.

"Yeah, maybe—but not for me," the Shrimp said.

BIRDS OF THE WEST AND NORTH AMERICA

The Tree Swallow

(Iridoprocne bicolor)

BROTHER to the barn swallow, this tree swallow is distinguished by his full white throat and breast and his black back and head shot by metallic tints of blue and green. Oddly enough, his wings extend beyond his tail. Usually, the tree swallow may be seen resting on telegraph wires.

A true and early harbinger of spring is this swallow, who makes his home wherever he can be sure of plenty of insects, as these are his only food, with the exception of the wax bayberry which he has been known to eat in extremity.

His natural home is in the hollow of a tree which he lines with dried grass and some feathers, but he will also occupy any kind of an empty box or gourd that is convenient. In this the female lays six white eggs. There has been much discussion, though no satisfactory conclusion has been reached, as to why nearly all birds who lay in dark holes produce pure white eggs. Perhaps it is because they are so well hidden that nature sees no use in wasting her coloring matter.

Beginning in July, after the second brood is well matured, the swallows start collecting in flocks for their migration. Until late October they may be seen gathering and making their way toward Central America, where they spend the winter. Although the tree swallows are in predominance, the barn, bank, and cliff swallows are numbered in the flocks.

Because during migration these birds usually roost near water, some people have had the idea that they dive into the water and bury themselves in the mud during the winter months. Doubtless this choice of temporary location is due to the fact that near marshes and water grow low bushes, particularly that of the bayberry, which not only affords some protection from storms but also, as has been said, serves as a welcome source of food at a time when insects become scarce.

Because the tree swallow is most often seen around barns and houses, it is thought by one authority to be of even greater value than the bank swallow, since it catches vast numbers of flies, mosquitoes, and noxious insects. It is also the only one of the swallow family which ever winters in the United States, spending that period in the Southern States where frost is rare.

Not Another Dollar

by Howard E. Morgan

Author of "St. Nick of the Woods," etc.

"IT'S a wonder—yes, sir, it sure is," "Hard Luck" Horgan muttered to himself, as he urged his horse out of its persistent walk for the hundredth time in as many minutes. "It sure is a wonder that that buyer should have had cash money right in his pockets to pay for them cattle. But he had it. Danged ef not!"

The old rancher drew out the unfolded sheaf of new bills and thumbed them through. "Three hundred and fifty dollars—right to a penny. Most real money the HL Ranch has earned in gosh knows how long."

At the entrance to a wooded, rock-littered draw, Hard Luck dismounted and leading the sleepy-eyed old horse, plodded on, continuing his pleasant ruminations as he went: "And won't the boys be surprised, though? Ol' Hard Luck showin' up with some real dinero. Enough to pay all back wages and more besides. Waal, mebbe the HL's streak o' hard luck's done petered out. Just a few months more and we'll be out o' the woods. With any luck, that is. Ef only——"

"Stick 'em up!"

Hard Luck jumped as though a bullet from the gun in the hands of the masked man who faced him had actually thudded into his body. But the sad-faced old ranchman—consistently unlucky though he might be—was no coward. He swore sulphurously and his gnarled hands remained reluctantly half raised. His horse pulled free and scrambled noisily away into the bush.

There were two of them, Hard Luck saw, both young fellows, both masked. What Hard Luck did not see, as his quick thoughts struggled to find a way out of his predicament, were the two other masked men who had crept up behind him on silent feet.

The spot was the entrance to a wooded draw on the edge of the desert just beyond Errol City. At a glance, the old ranchman had recognized the bandit chief as "Stope" Benjamin. For upward of two years the Benjamin gang had terrorized Essex County. Although young in years, Stope Benjamin was an experienced and skillful operator in his chosen profession. During the past six months, a dozen or more successful holdups were credited to the Benjamin gang. So opportune were the bandits' actions, that it was being rumored that the gang contained substantial citizens of Errol City among its members. This latter was one of the things that crossed Hard Luck Horgan's mind as he stood there, hands half raised, peering down into the grinning face of Stope Benjamin, the highwayman. How could that red-headed rascal have known that Hard Luck Horgan was, this particular day, carrying money?

But this was beside the point. Hard Luck's wonderment, conveyed by his muttered ruminations a few moments since, had not been sincere. Actually, he had offered to dispose of those HL cattle for cash in hand, and for cash in hand, only. Upon leaving the HL Ranch for town the day before, there had been no possibility of a slip-up in this respect. The boys, back there at the ranch, knew that he intended returning with real money. If he did not have that money when he arrived, some very unpleasant things conceivably might happen. Some of the boys might even leave him. This would be heartbreaking to Hard Luck Horgan. He treated the half dozen punchers on his pay roll like sons. He would far rather lie there at that grinning bandit's feet with a bullet through his heart, than return to the HL Ranch to-day, without money.

As had been previously intimated, Hard Luck Horgan was no coward. He saw two men facing him, one with a leveled gun. He was still unaware of the two men standing close behind him. Stope Benjamin and his companions were grinning. They thought he was scared half to death. The darned young cockydoodles! With any kind of a break—just a little luck—he could take at least one of 'em with him!

With an inarticulate cry, the old man snatched at the black butt of the old gun in his belt. But his gnarled hand had hardly started downward when the two bandits standing behind him went into action. Just as the old man's calloused fingers touched the butt of his gun, the heavy barrel of a six-gun, wielded by the hands of one of the unseen bandits at his back, came down with crushing force atop the old man's head. With a gusty sigh, Hard Luck Horgan crumpled, face forward, upon the hot sand.

Hard Luck struggled back to consciousness some time later to the accompaniment of a painful roaring in his ears. The shimmering yellow sand spun about in red and black blurs before his eyes. He was very sick.

But Hard Luck Horgan had been knocked out before. He knew the signs, and, in a remarkably short space of time, lurid curses, rasping out through his parched lips, would have informed a chance observer that the old man's blurred senses had cleared, resurrecting the unpleasant event just past.

Hard Luck's first act was to reach toward the inside pocket where that sheaf of bright new bills had reposed. The money was gone, of course. Still cursing, Hard Luck struggled to his feet and began looking for his horse.

At his call, the wise old beast—which had fled far up the draw at the time of the holdup—came running, hoping, apparently, that the remainder of the trip to the ranch would be made in short order, so that supper would soon be forthcoming.

But Jinny, the horse, was due to be disappointed. With his whiskered face set in purposeful lines, Hard Luck Horgan turned right about toward Errol City. The instant he had found his money gone, he had decided to act upon the only alternative left to him.

"Long Bill" Neblett, a lifelong friend, was now the fairly well-to-do proprietor of the Neblett General Store in Errol City. Long Bill Neblett and Hard Luck Horgan had been comrades twenty years before when both had ridden for the now famous Miller 101 Ranch. Neblett had retired from active ranch work ten years since. He had made money in Errol City, selling the necessaries of life to such as Hard Luck Horgan.

Despite the bad fortune which had dogged him for years, Hard Luck Horgan had come up in the scale of life, too. Following many years of hard work, he had scraped together enough money to purchase the HL Ranch from Hosiah Lowenstein. But the HL Ranch had been mismanaged for several years before Hard Luck Horgan had taken possession of it; this fact, coupled with the misfortunes following hard one upon another which had attended Horgan's administration of the ranch had soon translated the HL Ranch into the "Hard Luck Ranch" and had added to Patrick Irving Horgan's name the distasteful appellation of "Hard Luck." Long Bill Neblett was still Hard Luck Horgan's friend, despite the fact that Long Bill had lent, and lent, and lent Hard Luck money until it was beginning to hurt. Upon the occasion of his last loan to Hard Luck, Neblett had made his position very clear.

"I'd do anything in the world for you, Hard Luck, and you know it," he had said; "even so, there ain't no sense in throwin' good money after bad. The HL Ranch is a good ranch, but I don't think you'll ever make anything of it. Now, me—I'm making money. Sell your danged ranch for anything you can get for it, come down here, and go into business with me."

Hard Luck's spectacular answer to this proposal angered even the ever good-natured Long Bill Neblett. Following the uncomplimentary exchange of conversation that ensued, Long Bill and Hard Luck had parted in a huff. Long Bill's last words had been a solemn vow never to lend Hard Luck Horgan another dollar. Right now, the old rancher would sooner have parted with his right leg than to again approach Long Bill Neblett for a loan; on the other hand, he absolutely would not return to the ranch without money.

Hard Luck's interview with Long Bill Neblett, an hour later, although pleasant in every way, was not productive of results. Although honestly sorry to hear of his old friend's new misfortune, Long Bill steadfastly refused to loan the HL Ranch any more money.

"It ain't that I ain't willing, y' understand, Pat," Neblett said, "on'y, before, I told you I never would loan you another dollar. I've never yet broke my word—you know that. And I ain't goin' to start now. Send your men in here for anything they need; their credit's good."

Hard Luck had heard all this before. The one obstacle which he knew he would never be able to overcome, however, was that relating to Long Bill Neblett's word. The old storekeeper was almost a fanatic in regard to this one matter. The keeping of his word through hot fire and high water, as Hard Luck himself was wont to brag, was something more even than a matter of religion to Long Bill Neblett. As long as he had known Neblett, Hard Luck had never known his old friend to break his word.

So it was that the two men parted —Long Bill honestly reluctant to send his old friend away without the needed money; Hard Luck Horgan, outwardly

calm, but inwardly harboring a grudge against Long Bill Neblett and his tight-fisted ways.

For the next couple of hours, Hard Luck wandered about Errol City's dusty streets like a lost soul. He discussed with every one who would listen to him the story of his misfortune, always winding up with a vigorous denunciation of Long Bill Neblett.

Hard Luck's credit was still good at Delaney's saloon. So it was that, by midafternoon, the sharp edge of his troubles had been smoothed away through the assimilation of much of Delaney's conscience-deadening whisky. It had been a big day in Errol City. The fall round-ups were over and the entire personnel of several neighboring ranches were in town enjoying a good time. Hard Luck's kindly old heart was sad when he considered the fact that none of his own men were there. The reason for this was, of course, that they had no money.

Hard Luck was not a drinking man; so, by early evening, the unusual quantity of liquor he had drunk began to affect him.

Just when things in general were livening up somewhat, Old Hard Luck went to sleep, grizzled head on arm, at a corner table in Delaney's saloon.

Hard Luck slept on and on, all through the evening's festivities. He was finally awakened in the gray dawn by Roz Delaney, himself. With kindly words, the saloonkeeper ushered the old man out into the street. Hard Luck did not know what Delaney was saying, but he sensed the friendliness in the latter's manner. He did not know either when Delaney slipped two shiny twenty-dollar gold pieces into his pocket.

Walking somewhat unsteadily, Hard Luck plodded on up the brightening street toward Long Bill Neblett's stable, where he had left his horse.

Neblett's General Store occupied a big new building on the outskirts of the town, the main part of the little cattle town having long since been claimed by prosperous saloon owners.

As he drew near the store, the bitterness in Hard Luck's heart against Long Bill Neblett revived. His anger served to a considerable degree to sober him. He looked savagely in the general direction of the big square building, sitting so smugly there directly across the street, and swore softly under his breath.

"From now on, me and him is through," Hard Luck assured himself. "A man ain't my friend when——"

The old rancher's ruminations ceased abruptly as he glimpsed the figure of a man skulking about the side of the store. Instinctively, Hard Luck edged into the shadow between two unpainted shacks and peered forth.

After a comprehensive survey of the deserted street, the man across the way approached a side window of the store, and after working briefly with a tool which looked to Hard Luck like a very broad, flat, chisel succeeded in noiselessly opening the the window. Hard Luck was thunderstruck. Robbers entering Long Bill's store! It hardly seemed possible. That store was protected with all kinds of burglar devices. Everybody knew it. Long Bill made it a point to see that every one did know it. In addition to this protection, it was well known that Long Bill himself was still a tough customer to tackle. He slept with a sawed-off shotgun at his elbow.

All these things were well known in Errol City. It did not seem logical that a prospective thief would tackle a job of this sort without first making some inquiries. Such inquiries would inevitably have convinced the thief in question that Long Bill Neblett was a good man to let alone. Of course, Long Bill might not be at home?

Even as these thoughts passed through

Hard Luck's mind, there was a sound as of the distant clatter of an alarm clock. "There it goes," he muttered, "there goes the alarm! Trouble's due to pop most any minute now."

But nothing happened. Standing there, hand on gun butt, shifting uneasily from one foot to another, Hard Luck Horgan watched and listened.

In the minutes that followed, he made out two other dark shapes. There were several horses beside the stable in the rear. A man watched these horses. There was a guard at each of two different places outside the building. That made three. The fourth had entered the store—and—Long Bill was, without question, away from home.

But even after he was assured of the object of those skulking figures; after he was sure, too, that Long Bill Neblett was not at home to protect his property —for several long minutes, Hard Luck Horgan did nothing. The old bitterness was still strong in his heart. Long Bill was no longer a friend of his. Why then should he interfere? No reason in the world, Hard Luck told himself angrily. The penny-pinchin' ol son of a gun deserved to lose his money. Hard Luck shrugged his conviction of this seemingly logical reasoning and started to turn away.

But he did not go far. At the end of the little alley between the two buildings, he turned right about and, gun in hand, came back. What was he thinking of? Well, he couldn't stand by and see poor old Bill robbed. What if he was a tightwad? This was a free country; a man had a right to live his life as he saw fit. If old Bill Neblett did not wish to loan Hard Luck Horgan money, Long Bill Neblett was entirely within his rights as a United States citizen. So Hard Luck argued ponderously with himself. And he was speedily convinced.

Cold sober now, the old man slid the long-barreled six-gun out into his hand and crept cautiously along the street, holding well within the shadow cast by the low building. Some distance farther on, where a towering cottonwood sent its black shadow well across the street in the path of the moon, he crossed the street. His movements from then on would have done credit to that Patrick Irving Horgan whom Long Bill Neblett had known twenty years before.

With remarkable speed for a man of his age, Hard Luck circled swiftly about the stable. He came up to within a dozen feet of the horse guard before being discovered. The bandit swung about with an oath, reaching for the gun in his belt even as he turned. But the advantage was all with Hard Luck. The old man sprang upon the bandit like a panther. His horny fist connected solidly with the guard's jaw. The latter dropped like a rotten log. In a brace of minutes, Hard Luck had securely bound and gagged his prisoner.

"So fur, so good," he muttered, wiping his dry lips with the back of his hand. "On'y three left, now. With a little luck——"

But for the next few mintues it looked as though Hard Luck Horgan's brief flare of good fortune had left him. Although he could have sworn that his encounter with the horse guard had been absolutely noiseless, when he rounded the corner of the stable he found himself face to face with the two bandits who had been guarding the outside of the store. So surprised was he that he lost a fraction of a second. This small loss proved to be almost enough to climax Hard Luck Horgan's unfortunate life with one last stroke of bad luck.

Guns in the hands of both bandits roared and spat fire at almost the same instant. One of the bullets passed so close to Hard Luck's cheek that he could feel its hot breath. The second bullet struck him in the right leg. It was as

though a huge battering ram, propelled by mighty hands, had struck that leg and whisked it from under him. His body twisted sidewise and he fell with a surprised grunt, flat upon his back. Two more shots thrummed harmlessly over him as he lay there. Lifting himself only slightly, the old man raised his gun a scant few inches from the ground and fired at the nearest of the two human targets. The bandit, who had been running swiftly, came to a teetering stop. The gun dropped from his outstretched hand. He clutched with both fists at his breast, then, gently collapsed upon the ground.

The second bandit, witnessing this sample of deadly marksmanship, grew suddenly cautious. He stopped in midstride and danced nimbly sidewise, as Hard Luck, squirming about on the ground, sought to bring him within focus of the long barrel of that deadly gun; and, when Hard Luck finally fired his gun, the man was already safely out of range behind an angle in the wall of the store.

Hard Luck's right leg was numb from the middle of the thigh down. Cursing the useless limb, the old man struggled upright on his good leg and hopped back toward the stable.

Just as he reached the long, low building, a thunderous roar of shot sounded from the back of the store. Bullets thudded into the stable wall at his side, made little furrows in the sand at his feet. But Hard Luck did not stop until he had untethered his horse. With considerable effort, he finally pulled himself up on the animal's back. Then, holding the reins in his teeth and reloading his gun, he rode out into the open and straight toward the spot from which this last fusillade of shots had come.

But no more bullets greeted him. Quick suspicion caused the old man to again circle about toward the stable. He was just in time to espy the two remaining bandits, running swiftly, vault upon their horses' backs and start away.

Losing no time, Hard Luck emptied his gun at the two swift-moving targets. He was reasonably certain that none of his shots took effect.

Although a piercing pain shot through his wounded leg with every movement of his horse, Hard Luck unhesitatingly turned straight across the desert on the trail of the two thieves. One of those two men had toted a heavy handbag, or satchel. Money from Long Bill's safe, evidently. But they wouldn't get away with it! There was no faster horse in Essex County than old Jinny. She was fresh, and, chances were, the bandits' mounts were not. It was absolutely necessary that Hard Luck overtake them at the earliest possible moment. The wound in his leg was bleeding badly. No telling when he might keel over. Also, it was a matter of only a few miles across the narrow neck of the desert to the hills. Once in the mountains, the two thieves would be safe.

Within the first five minutes, both bandits realized that their pursuer's horse was by far the fleetest of the three. Both realized, at practically the same instant, that they would be overtaken before they could reach the mountains. Hard Luck had known this from the first; hence was he prepared, in a way, when the two men stopped and, dismounting, brought their guns into play. Hard Luck's first shot dropped the horse of the bandit nearest him. Hard Luck was sorry about this; he had aimed at the man, but shooting from horseback in the uncertain light was, at best, risky business. But even as he turned old Jinny from her course and swept about in a wide circle, the desert's yellow face grew bright. Red streamers of light had appeared abruptly on the eastern horizon. In just a matter of minutes now, the sun would appear.

Around and around, Hard Luck circled. He made no attempt to use his

gun. Both bandits were attempting to find shelter of a sort behind the dead body of the horse. The other horse, uninjured, had broken away and was even now streaking it back toward Errol City. Several tentative shots followed the old man as he circled. Hard Luck paid no attention to these. There was plenty of time, now. He was in no real danger, unless a lucky shot should seek him out. Automatically, he counted the shots. There had been four shots fired from the bandits' two guns, all told. Two or three more and he would charge. Before they had time to reload their guns again he would be upon them.

But Hard Luck's plans were subjected to a radical change. Very suddenly, the old man grew faint. He swayed in his saddle, and only by a mighty exertion of will power did he keep from falling.

Gritting his teeth against the cloying faintness, the old ranchman straightened his sagging shoulders, and, with a sudden motion, drew Jinny to a plunging stop. "Guess I won't be able to wait until you two boys empty yore guns," he muttered. "I'm feelin' kind of woozy. Better git in my licks while I kin."

Sensing his purpose, both bandits came up on their knees and waited for the charge, guns leveled. Clamping his jaws tight against the giddiness that threatened momentarily to overpower him, Hard Luck bent low over his horse's neck, and, with his long gun spitting fire, jabbed the startled Jinny solidly in the ribs with his heel. The old horse snorted and sprang into the air.

It was this involuntary jump of old Jinny's that undoubtedly saved Hard Luck Horgan's life. The first four shots from the bandits' guns went wild. The next couple were directed at what was at best an uncertain target. The last two found their mark, one scraping painfully along Hard Luck's ribs, the other crashing into his right leg less than six inches from the first wound.

Not one of the old rancher's shots had found their mark. Firing blindly, due to his giddiness, the old man had not really expected to score a hit. Both the bandits, however, had confidently expected to do killing damage with the several bullets which they had been permitted to fire at that crazy old fool who was riding down upon them.

When neither the horse nor its rider showed visible evidence of being hit, they could scarcely believe their own eyes. When no more than ten feet away from the crouching men, Hard Luck, calling upon the last of his reserve strength, prodded Jinny painfully in the ribs. The old horse shot forward, both feet outthrust as though in protection against the living objects which she knew she must strike if she obeyed her master's peremptory bidding. Strike them she did. An unshod hoof caught the first bandit in the neck. The second, yelling, sprang sharply aside. But not quickly enough. Hard Luck, temporarily free of faintness in the excitement of the moment, struck out swiftly with his clubbed gun. The heavy gun barrel landed with crushing force alongside the bandit's ear.

Fifty paces farther on, Hard Luck Horgan suddenly collapsed, and rolled like a sack of meal off the back of his horse.

Some time later, the sheriff, accompanied by Long Bill Neblett and a volunteer posse of Errol City's townsmen, arrived upon the scene. They found what at first glance appeared to be three dead men, a dead horse, and one badly frightened mustard-colored old horse, which answered to the name of Jinny. But not one of the three unconscious men was dead. Long Bill Neblett's watery blue eyes filled with tears when Hard Luck Horgan looked up into his

face—and grinned. Wanly, it is true—still, Hard Luck Horgan grinned.

"Darn bull-headed ol' fool," Hard Luck swore affectionately. "But I got 'em, Bill. Got 'em all."

Something choked Long Bill Neblett's throat so that he couldn't talk; he nodded violently, however.

"Everythin's here," the sheriff said, drawing near. He held in one hand a small black bag which gave forth a pleasant clinking sound as he shook it, and in the other hand a sheaf of brand-new bills.

Hard Luck's bloodshot eyes lighted. "Dog-gone," he muttered, wonderingly; "my—my—money?"

"Guess mebbe," the sheriff answered. "There's—lemme see—three hundred—three hundred an' fifty."

"That's right—to a penny," Hard Luck almost shouted, coming up on an elbow. And then, dropping back into the circle of Long Bill Neblett's arm in response to a stab of pain: "Funny I didn't recognize them fellers, Bill," he muttered, white-lipped. "But—but—guess mebbe I was kind of cuckoo," he finished, grinning.

Long Bill Neblett once more merely nodded.

But Hard Luck Horgan, that sick man, refused to be still. "An' where was you, Bill, when the war was goin' on?" he asked.

"Out t' yore place," Long Bill answered, refusing to meet Hard Luck's bloodshot eyes.

"My place?" Hard Luck could scarcely believe his ears.

"Yeah. I—I—left four hundred dollars—out there—for you——"

Hard Luck Horgan swallowed hard. "Broke his word, Bill did," he muttered to himself.

Long Bill Neblett grinned, shamefacedly. "Waal, mebbe so, Pat," he admitted. "But, really, I'm owin' you a hundred dollars, right now. There's over two thousand dollars in that satchel. I didn't know you was the feller what rid them hombres out of town, an' before we started out, I broadcasted a reward o' five hundred dollars to the bird what got thet money back. Waal, clear as daylight, you collect that five hundred, an', onless I'm greatly mistook, Stope Benjamin an' his three fren's is wuth another thousan' to you."

Patrick Irving Horgan's weary senses laboriously absorbed this information. Finally, he grinned and sighed contentedly. "Hard luck streak's done bruk," he murmured; then, still smiling, he lay back, fainting, in Long Bill Neblett's arms.

THE GRANDFATHER OF ALL HOPTOADS

A TOAD believed to be somewhere near seven hundred and fifty thousand years old has recently been discovered near Denver, Colorado. The toad has been christened Pleisty, because his origin goes back seventy-five hundred centuries to the Pleistocene period.

It is conjectured that, in that age, the animal probably crawled into a mud ball for his customary interval of hibernation. Then, there must have come a landslide or some other disturbance that buried his lair, which, in the course of the centuries, gradually turned to stone.

Pleisty seems to be entirely blind—at least, in the daylight he is. But he can move about a little. His size is that of the average golf ball. And his future home will be the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, where he is being sent after a lease of over half a million years on the stone wall of a house.

Injuns Don't Laugh

By Hugh F. Grinstead

Author of "Master Brain and Mister Gun," etc.

UP a steep path that wound toward the top of an irregular rocky cliff toiled three men. One of them was large, indeed somewhat too generously provided with flesh. It was plain that he was in unfamiliar surroundings; city streets and brick walls would have been more to his liking. He stopped frequently to drink from the canteen he carried. Occasionally, he would offer a drink to his tall and slender companion, but the third man received not so much as a sip of water from the canteen. This third member of the party was, without doubt, an Indian, the characteristics of two widely differing tribes being apparent in his features. Very likely a little Spanish blood flowed in his veins.

A cove, a small inlet between the hills, lay below the winding trail, and in the center of this comparatively level space stood a cabin, the humble abode of the Indian. It was made of weathered boards, scraps of canvas, and whatever the builder had been able to accumulate for the purpose. The earth about the shack was bare and parched, no green thing flourished in the cove or clung to the steep slopes above it, unless a few prickly cactus and thorny shrubs could be called verdure.

Had the men been at the top of the cliff they could have seen the blue waters of the California Gulf flashing in the morning sunlight to the east, perhaps as far as the first barren island that lay offshore. To the west of them and all about lay a region as desolate as one could hope to find. Had it not been for the fact that the place could be come at by water, it would have been inaccessible to any but the most experienced.

The Indian went always in the lead, picking his way over loose stones and between huge rocks that had tumbled from the ledge above in generations past. The tall, slender man came next, never more than a step or two behind the guide, and his hand was never far from the butt of the heavy revolver at his waist. The big man came last, and when he called a halt all must stop.

At such times the Indian would drop

down in the trail where he happened to be, to stare stolidly before him while the two white men conversed in a tongue unintelligible to him. There was a welt across the Indian's bare shoulder, and his chafed wrists told plainly enough that he had recently been bound with thongs, and in no gentle manner.

"I tell you this is all a piece of foolishness, Potter," declared the heavy man, at a short pause in the upward climb. "You should have made the old savage understand that we would kill him right on the spot if he didn't tell where it was."

"He understands all right, after what I done to him," replied Jule Potter, his long teeth showing in an evil grin. "You don't understand Injuns none, 'Duke.' Like as not, he'd ha' lied about where it was, figgerin' we'd kill him anyway soon's we found out all we wanted to know. Then if he'd 'a' told us right, it would be like huntin' a needle in a haystack fer us. No, he'll take us right to his hide-up."

"Why would he, if he thinks we'll kill him anyway?"

"He ain't certain about that, an' besides he'd face death sooner'n he would torture. I told him about them six other different ways of torturin' that I learnt from the Yaquis an' the Chiricahua Apaches. That, an' the taste I give him a little while ago, has made a believer of him. Bein' half Yaqui hisself, he savvies what real torturin' is."

"Just the same, I believe he would trick us if he got half a chance," he said.

"He won't git a ghost of a chance! I'm right here to plug him first time he acts funny, an' if I don't git him, you will."

"It's a lot of work for half a dozen pearls, even if we get them," grumbled the big man as he mopped the wet and grime from his face.

"Oh, we'll git 'em all right, an' half a dozen black pearls like them ain't to be sneezed at, not even by a feller that's figgered in big jobs like you have. If we can believe half we hear, that one pearl's worth nigh a thousand, an' I reckon they never was two fellers needed a thousand dollars any worse'n we do right now."

Duke Shultz and his versatile partner were certainly on their uppers, and had been for some weeks. Lately engaged in the somewhat perilous occupation of smuggling certain forbidden articles across the border, they had suddenly found themselves much wanted by the authorities on both sides of the line. This had meant a hasty excursion into less-frequented parts for a season. The flight had been made at a time when their pockets contained little of either the silver coin of the southern republic or the less weighty currency of their native land.

It was Jule Potter's idea, this trip down the coast as far as the pearl fisheries. They would never be looked for in this out-of-the-way place, and there was a chance to recoup their failing fortunes here. The story of the old Indian with the big black pearl that he refused to sell had been told as far away as Yuma. He kept it for luck, so it was said, and it was true that he found more good pearls than others engaged in the same business. And the black pearls of Lower California, the few that are being found now, are among the finest in the world.

Sight of the big pearl was what the two men craved. After that, gaining possession of it would be a simple matter. Through cautious inquiry and persistent search they had found the Indian's cabin. They had first posed as pearl buyers, but the wary old savage declared that he knew nothing of pearls, least of all did he have any to sell. Finally, after seizing him and tying his hands behind him, they had cruelly beaten and tortured him into a promise to show them the place where he kept

his pearls—as many as the fingers on one hand, he said.

Of the two white men, Potter alone could speak Spanish, and the Indian knew no English. Thus the tall, slender man became chief spokesman and interpreter. What little the Indian chose to say was addressed to the man who could understand him, and he in turn passed on to his companion whatever he deemed necessary. But Duke Shultz could never be sure that his own questions or threats reached the ear of the dusky captive in their original sense, or that the replies he received were correctly interpreted by his tall companion.

"What did he say, Potter?" he demanded, when the Indian half turned in the trail and muttered something.

"Said we'd be there in a few minutes," Potter promptly replied.

"I don't believe that was all he said," growled the big man. "Fact is, I doubt if you understood it yourself."

"Suit yourself about that, ain't nobody beggin' you to believe it," retorted Potter, his eyes narrowing at the implied accusation.

Nothing more was said for a time, and Shultz clambered sulkily after the other two. The mounting sun blazed fiercely against the bare rock, loosened pebbles cascaded downward, fine white dust rose from their scuffling boots and set the big man coughing. His soft muscles rebelled at the unfamiliar task set for them. He chafed and fumed at the slight hardship, at the delay in coming at the thing desired. Always before he had secured what he wanted with little muscular effort. Honest dollars of his earning were few.

Jule Potter, for all his knowledge of the outdoors and familiarity with tasks accomplished with the hands, was no less a villain. There were few crimes of which he had not been guilty, murder among the rest. Not because they were bound by the ties of friendship had the ill-assorted pair cast their lot together. Accomplishments peculiar to each had made the partnership mutually profitable up to this time.

"I believe the whole thing is a wild-goose chase," Duke Shultz impatiently declared when they finally reached a broad shoulder of rock and stopped for a moment's rest. "Why would anybody come away up here to hide a thing?"

"Injuns has got their own notions," replied his companion.

"Like as not his pearls, if he really has any, are hid down there around his wikiup. My way would be to bump the old beggar off proper and do our own looking."

"An' make a mess o' things right at the start."

"I think you've made a mess of them already. It was all your idea, dragging off down here a hundred miles, looking for a pearl that probably never existed outside of somebody's imagination. This old Indian is just stalling for time, for a chance to make his get-away or do some mischief."

"Well, he won't git no such chance, not till he's showed us the place where he's got them pearls hid."

"The old savage is laughing at us right now."

"You're plumb foolish, Duke. Injuns don't laugh."

"Maybe not, but just the same I don't believe he's got a thing hid up here."

"What's your idea in comin' along, then?" Potter snapped. "You keep chawin' about me leadin' you on a wild-goose chase; if you don't believe they's any use in climbin' up here, why don't you go back an' wait in the shade?"

"Uh-huh, you'd like for me to do that now, wouldn't you?" Shultz grunted with ill-concealed suspicion.

"What do you mean by that?" Potter demanded, scowling.

"I guess you know well enough what I mean."

Potter made no direct reply to this, but his face reddened and his nails bit

into his palms as he closed his lips against an outburst of angry words. He swung on his heel, spoke a word to the Indian, and the little procession moved on again.

They soon stood upon a wide shelf of rock, a smooth wall on one side, a sheer drop of sixty feet on the other. The two white men followed their guide cautiously, although there was ample room for three to walk abreast with safety on the shoulder of rock. The ledge widened and narrowed by turns until they were forced to proceed single file at one place. Then it widened again at a deep niche in the wall.

The recess formed could hardly be called a cave, though it was roofed by an overhang of solid rock. Fine sand lay in tiny rifts, caught in the recess among the rocks during fierce windstorms. It also filled the irregular depressions and shallow basins in the rock, smoothed over as neatly as if it had been done by hand.

The Indian halted at the shallow cavern. He ran his fingers through the sand caught in a natural rock basin at the height of his waist, stood back with open palms extended, and uttered a dozen words in Spanish.

"Says his pearls is all buried in that sand," Potter volunteered. "Figgers we'd rather dig 'em out ourselves so's to be sure he ain't holdin' back nothin'. I'll say it's a good hidin' place, too; with a dozen or so of them sand pockets around here, an' all of 'em alike, feller would never hit on the right one unless it was pointed out to him."

Apparently forgetful of their irritation of a few minutes before, the two white men began to delve eagerly into the pocket of dry sand. The Indian leaned against the rock and watched them, his face as expressionless as if he were taking no interest whatever in the matter. He might have reached out his arm and touched the big man, but so far as the others could see he remained motionless. Unarmed as he was, there was nothing to fear from him; and as long as he made no attempt to run away, the white men left him to himself.

Potter found the first pearl, half the size of a small pea, then Shultz recovered one slightly larger from the sand. Each laid his find on a projecting rock and continued the search. They would take up a handful of sand, look through it carefully, and throw the sand away. Thus the cavity in the rock was being gradually emptied of sand. They would soon reach the bottom and recover whatever lay there.

The spirits of the men rose at sight of the first pearl, they were in good humor with each other now, and talked freely as the search went on. Potter could have reminded his companion of his own superior judgment in following the Indian to his hiding place, but he held his peace. The mind of each man was centered on what lay at the bottom of the cavity under the sand, for in spite of his professed disbelief of the story, Duke Shultz feverishly fingered the sand in search of the big black pearl the size of a marble, which was the Indian's luck piece.

Thus the cavity in the rock was almost empty of sand when they found two more pearls, one of them scarcely larger than a grain of wheat. Then they were at the bottom of the cavity, scraping up the last remaining grains of sand in a frantic search for the pearl of great size and wonderful luster. Each man had a feverish desire to be first to touch it. But they were doomed to disappointment, for when all the sand was out they saw nothing but the smooth surface of rock. Evidently the story of the big black pearl was all a myth, after all.

The two men straightened up and looked at each other, then their glance naturally turned toward the Indian. He stood with folded arms, apparently not having stirred from the spot where he

had stood while they searched the sand pocket for the hidden pearls.

"I never did take much stock in that story about a pearl as big as a cherry," Shultz began with a return to his fault-finding tone.

Ignoring the speech of his companion, Potter was talking to the old Indian, a few quickly spoken words in Spanish that contained a threat as well as a question. The Indian was positive and deliberate in his reply. When he spoke, making a single gesture, Potter's face took on a new and puzzling expression.

"What does he say about it?" questioned the big man.

"He says, why, he says, that if I'll look in your jacket pocket I can find the big pearl," Potter replied in a voice that was not quite steady. There was a menacing gleam in his eye as his hand involuntarily slipped around toward the weapon at his hip.

"You—you mean——"

"I mean if it's there, you know how it got there," Potter replied evenly.

"Well, it's not there, the lying old scoundrel! I'll——"

With a curse, he whirled upon the Indian, who remained aloof, indifferently witnessing the mounting wrath of the white men as they confronted each other.

"Don't you go an' harm that Injun yet, not till he's told all he knows," Potter interrupted, as he took a step forward to interfere if necessary. "No need to git wrought up; if you didn't fish that pearl out'n the sand an' drop it in your pocket, you can easy prove it."

"You think I did that, hid the pearl so I wouldn't have to divide with you?" demanded the big man.

"I have seen you play some cute tricks with cards, an' I ain't sayin' you'd be above hoggin' that pearl if you got the chance. If you want to prove you're playin' a straight game, all you've got to do is to turn your pockets wrong side out."

"I turn my pockets for no man, my word is good enough."

"Your word!" sneered Potter. "Couldn't be but one reason you wouldn't turn out your pockets. At first, I thought the Injun might be tryin' somethin' funny, but from the way you act I'm believing you've got that pearl now."

"Believe what you please; I'm not so sure the Indian told you anything of the kind, anyway."

The men were facing each other, barely three feet separating them. No match in weight for the larger man, Potter did have a long reach, and he was quick. He suddenly dived forward and struck up the right hand of the other, at the same time thrusting his own left into the sagging pocket at Shultz's side.

Unable to draw his weapon, Shultz involuntarily struck at his belligerent partner. The blow failed to land, and the next moment Potter fought free and jumped back. He had accomplished his purpose, for he triumphantly held up a softly gleaming object that was black and the size of a small marble. That it was a black pearl of magnificent luster could not be doubted.

"So that's the reason you wouldn't turn your pockets," he snarled.

The eyes of the big man widened in surprise; he stared at the coveted prize.

"I—I didn't put it there," he stammered weakly, at once conscious of the lameness of his denial in the face of visible evidence of his guilt.

"Reckon you'd say it just dropped in there accidentallike," Potter jeered.

There followed a moment of tense silence, in which Duke Shultz sought for an adequate refutal of the testimony against him. He presently jerked himself erect and hurled toward his sneering partner a counter accusation.

"I believe you had it in your hand all the time, you thief!" he blustered, seeking to bolster his argument with a loud voice.

Potter greeted the statement with a harsh laugh in which there was no mirth. "Likely I'd ever ha' showed it to you if I had, now ain't it?" he taunted. "It's there now, anyway, an' I reckon it'll stay there. Since you tried to hog the whole thing an' lie about it when I caught you, you ain't got no share in this lucky pearl," he added with a gesture of finality.

The flabby muscles of Duke Shultz twitched with ill-concealed rage, a consuming desire to kill possessed him. He halted a movement of his hand toward the weapon at his hip when he recalled Potter's ability to beat him to a draw by half a second, ample time in which to kill a man. But there were other methods to remove the only obstacle that lay between him and sole possession of the rich prize that he had glimpsed.

His attitude was disarming, his hands far from the butt of his weapon, when he suddenly lunged at the other man with a speed not to be expected in one of his size. Taken by surprise, Potter lost half the time necessary to draw his gun. It was but halfway out of the holster when the thick arms of Shultz caught him in a bearlike embrace, from which there was no wriggling free.

The men staggered from the niche in the cliff and out upon the shelving rock, each struggling in vain to trip the other. Unable, either of them, to get at a deadly weapon without giving the other an equal opportunity, they heaved and clawed in an endeavor to gain some advantage. The Indian was forgotten for the time, everything was obscured by the blind lust to kill. They struggled in silence, first one, then the other, gaining a slight advantage.

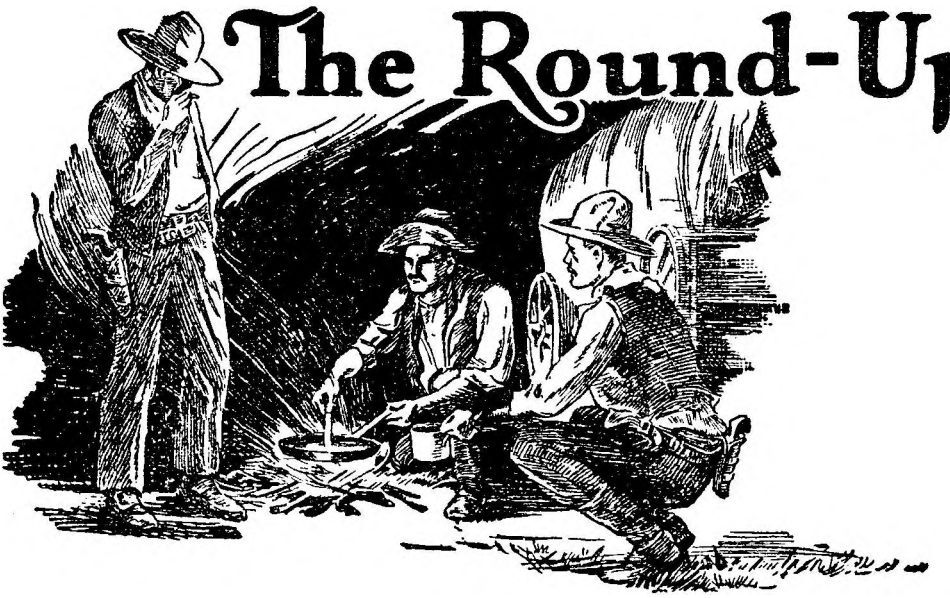
Finally, Shultz released his hold on his wiry antagonist long enough to dart a hand into a hidden pocket. When the hand came out it held a gleaming blade, which slithered upward in the sunlight. The hand quickly descended, and the blade sank to the hilt between the ribs of Jule Potter. But quick as had been the movement of the big man, it had given Potter, his arm released for the first time, ample time in which to draw his gun, point it toward his heavy antagonist, and pull the trigger.

Whether either the knife-thrust or the gunshot would have proved fatal was never to be known. Neither man fell at once, but both stood swaying drunkenly, still clutching futilely at each other. They were within four or five feet of the rock's rim. Potter staggered back two short steps, tripped over a point of rock, and fell. When he went down, he carried the heavier man with him. Their bodies lay at the brink, poised a moment on the very edge of the rock, then went whirling downward, turning over and over as they fell, to the rocks sixty feet below.

Jule Potter had said that an Indian never laughed, but had not the ears of the white men been dead to all earthly sounds forever, they must have caught the weird chuckle of the red man as he stooped to pick up from the bare rock, where Potter had dropped it, a lustrous black object—his lucky pearl.

Had any one been looking on, he doubtless would not have been conscious of any movement of the Indian's hands, yet he could have seen that they held nothing an instant later, while a search would have revealed the big pearl reposing safely in a fold of the garment the old conjurer wore. He might as easily have placed it in the pocket of another.

The Round-Up



GUESS Charles W. Brown, of Black Diamond, Washington, must have missed out on the meetin' we held here, when "L. W. S.", of West Montreal, Canada, held forth about the ability of a man on a horse to run down an antelope, for Charlie, he remarks:

"I've been a reader of this here magazine of ours for years, and have listened to most every kind of argument on every kind of subject without tryin' to lip in. But just you please slide off the saddle a minute, Boss, and kindly listen to me, folks, for I'm goin' to try and find out what kind of a horse that man rode when he roped antelope. Also, please tell me, was the antelope crippled or was it stuck in the snow?

"Now I'm a lover of horses, and have ridden horses for over forty-five years, and I have roped almost everything that a horse could run down, *but,* I never caught any antelopes that way. I have lived in Montana and seen lots of antelopes there. I have worked in Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, and seen antelopes in all three of these States, and I don't say that in certain circumstances a man on a horse can't run down an antelope, but to get right on a horse and run down an antelope! I'll say that it just can't be done."

Charlie, if you'll get a January 5th copy of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, and read what is there recorded about what L. W. S. said, I think you'll agree with the author and L. W. S. that it can be done. Frankly, we have never even tried to run down an antelope on a horse, but we think it can be done. We think so for this reason: A man can walk down a horse. Why? Because a man uses his superior intelligence, taking only a few steps, sometimes no steps at all, to the horse's hundreds and thousands of steps. So put a man on a horse—a slow horse—and he can run down a fast horse that is running free, every time. Why? The man on the slow horse again uses his human intelligence and short cuts the fast, free horse till he's worn himself out. It seems to us that a man on a horse could run down an antelope in the same manner. But L. W. S. intimates that an antelope runs himself out in a wild burst of speed, or a series of

bursts of speed, and that it is then that the man on the horse can run the antelope down.

However, the argument is still and always open, and we will gladly welcome those of you who would like to express yourselves on one side or the other.

Say, folks, if here isn't good old Bill Meyers, Station D, Danville, Illinois. He hasn't been around for a long time, by far too long a time, for Bill is always good company, and, what's more, he always has a good yarn to tell. Yes, you've got to tell us a story, Bill. Shame on you for stayin' away so long. Come, pronto, a yarn.

"HOWDY BOSS AND FOLKS? So it's a yarn you must have. Well, a few issues ago I read in WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, in one of the stories—I forget which one it was, now—about moving a claim shack by loading it on a wagon and hauling it over to another claim, and it brought back to my mind a comical incident that happened to me the day they moved Murdo, South Dakota.

"From the fall of 1881 until the spring of 1905, Chamberlain, South Dakota, had been the end of steel for the Sioux Falls branch of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway. However, due to an act of congress, which reclaimed all the arid land of the West and proposed the establishment of irrigating systems to water such lands and turn them into a farming country, the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway awoke from its long nap and, crossing the Missouri River at Chamberlain, continued its serpentine crawl to Rapid City, the metropolis of the Black Hills.

"I was working for the Seven L outfit the summer of 1905, and that fall, while making a long circle one day on beef round-up, Bob Chapman and I happened to ride by the little inland village of Murdo. Seeing that they had the houses, seven in all, jacked up and the running gear of a lumber wagon under the corners of each house, we stopped to inquire how come.

"Well, we found that the new grade had missed the little town, and that the people were getting ready to move over to the railroad. It was four miles to the new grade, across a stretch of country as level as a floor, so it was not much of a job.

"Bob and I, however, seeing that there was a saloon in Murdo, concluded to take a little refreshment, and we sure did.

"Staking out our horses, we bought a case of beer and two bottles of 'Yellowstone,' and, crawling under the saloon, we proceeded to refresh ourselves.

"Along about four o'clock, that afternoon, Bob, a trifle befuddled, shook me awake, and when I opened my eyes I never got such a jar in my whole-put-together; we were lying right out on the bald prairie, and the sun had nearly cooked the pair of us. I vividly remembered crawling under the house, but I couldn't remember anything happening after that.

"What tickled me was this: Bob was plumb lost. Crawling over to me, he mumbled through sun-cracked lips, 'S awful! 'S turr'ble! Darned, if it ain't! Th' sun's got me darn near roasted! I wonder where we're at, anyhow?'

"Laughing at him until he got sore at me, I scrambled up, and in a few moments found out why we were alone on the prairie.

"They had moved the town while Bob and I slept. And to make a better joke on us, some one had taken our horses along, and we had to hike over to the railroad to get them!"

Speaks now a gent from a long way off, one Tom Byrnes, 9 Woods Street,

Missing Page

Missing Page

a white lady who was taken prisoner on the way to the Black Hills, in those troubled days of which you all know. She later married the great Indian chief, Spotted Tail, of the Rosebud Sioux, but I know very little about her, as she died when I was very young.

I was educated on the reservations, and I've lived on several of them, both in North and South Dakota. I wish with all my heart that I were on a ranch where I could ride horseback over the plains that my father's tribe once roamed. But, instead, I'm a vaudeville trouper, traveling about the country giving exhibitions of Indian dances, singing Indian songs, and telling Indian legends. It is very hard to be forever living in a suit case, when I would really like to live in the mountains, near some noisy little stream that comes tumbling down the mountainside. My name, Wanda, means "the spirit of the water," in our Indian language. So you see that Wanda is truly one who has the spirit of the wanderlust.

I know the Dakotas from one end to the other, and also Montana, where I am at present. I am very anxious to work into Wyoming and Colorado, but, as I have to earn my living as I go, I cannot make long jumps, and I can never tell in which direction I will go next. It all depends upon where I can get booked up. As I pass through wonderful ranch lands I see ranches and homes everywhere—yet I am alone, with no friend to talk to, without even a horse to ride— That's why I'll be glad to have letters come to me through the old Holla.

WANDA.

Care of The Tree.

Out where the West begins.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: I have lived out here in northeastern Utah since the Ute Indian reservation was opened to homesteaders in 1905. I drew a homestead, and I've been ranching ever since. There are now two hundred and fifty thousand sheep and twenty thousand beef cattle on the one-time Indian reservation. There are some twelve hundred Indians still located here.

This part of the country is at an elevation of over five thousand feet, and we have sunshine here three hundred and forty days out of the year. There are one hundred lakes in the mountains north of here, and such wild game as deer, beaver, mink, coyotes, et cetera, in the mountains. We are a hundred miles from the railroad, but the highway passes seven miles to the south. Spring Creek Ranch, our home, is a horse and cattle ranch, but we raise turkeys and bees as a side line. Taken all in all, Lapoint, out where the West begins, is a good section of the West to head for. J. J. C.

Care of The Tree.

Chaps and spurs do not always make the cowboy, but a Hollow Tree friend-maker badge makes you the friend of the cowboy.

Twenty-five cents in coin or stamps sent to The Hollow Tree Department, Western Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City, will bring you either the pin style or the button for the coat lapel. In ordering, be sure to state which you wish.

Fur farming in the Northwest.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: There have been a number of letters in the old Holla from folks interested in fur farming. My husband and I are engaged in rabbit raising, and we're doing so well that we are planning to raise other fur-bearing animals also. We believe that there is a great future in fur farming, and the Northwest is an ideal place for the ranches. For any one wanting to live out of doors most of the time, this is certainly the ideal life.

We'll be very glad to hear from folks interested in fur ranching, and from those who are interested in our Oregon State. There are many beautiful lakes in Oregon which abound in fish and waterfowl. Crater Lake, situated sixty-eight miles north of Klamath Falls, is, of course, the greatest of them all. It is one of the natural wonders of the world.

We'll be very glad to hear from you, everybody. MR. AND MRS. VANCE HUTCHINS.

The Red Rabbit Hutch,
Klamath Falls, Oregon.

The Bar C L Ranch.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: I lived in northern California when I was a youngster. Not that I'm very old now—only just fifteen! My grandmother owned the Bar C L Ranch in Willow Creek Valley, and my father was "top" hand. It was a fifty-five-hundred-acre ranch, with about five hundred acres of timber land. I'd give a good deal to be back

there, now that I'm old enough to enjoy horseback riding and the life of the cowboy. But I live in Nevada, a country of deserts and mines. There have been a few big gold strikes, including Weepah.

I live not far from the Sierra Nevada Mountains, and I can hike about five miles from town and find dozens of old mines and prospect holes. There is one mine with the shaft half caved in. There are also a good many small canyons. In some of these there are old cabins. Sometimes, I come across old mining sluices, and sometimes an old tunnel which goes into the ground about a hundred yards or so. It is fun to poke around in these canyons and investigate the old prospect holes.

Nevada is one of the States that has the purple sage. It is beautiful to see, this sage-brush, when it turns purple in the fall. I hope there will be a lot of the juniors of the Gang who will want to write and find out about Nevada, the mines, and the ranches.

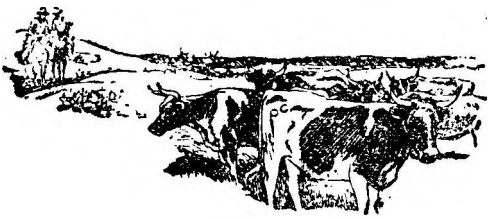
Ed. C. Shirley.

128 East Sixth Street, Reno, Nevada.

"I live in the Black Hills of South Dakota and can tell any one interested a good deal about this part of the country. I'm twenty, and would like to hear from members of the old Hollow, everywhere. Will exchange snaps." This Gangster is Willis Brown, Care of The Tree.

"This hombre would especially like to hear from Salt Lake, Utah, region, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Oregon, and from those who know the woodlands of these sections. I'm a war veteran, age twenty-nine, and have lived all over the South and Southwest. Spent a year in France and Belgium. No, I'm no cow-puncher." Address this Gangster's letters to J. E. Smith, 11457 South Modjeska Avenue, Lynwood, California.

"I hail from Granger, of the dear old Lone Star State. I am fond of the outdoors, and enjoy camping, fishing, and hunting." Miss Tex, Care of The Tree, is an eighteen-year-old Texas girl.



COWS AND THE WANDERLUST

TRAVEL is all right in its place, and so are cattle. But the two do not combine well. In fact, at San Mateo, California, it is now the consensus of opinion that cows are at their best in the stable environment usual to their kind. And residents of San Mateo are in a position to know, because their town was recently besieged by a herd that belonged at the San Mateo Jersey Dairy Farms.

The cows, however, unexpectedly seized with the spirit of adventure, escaped unobserved from the farm and paid San Mateo a visit. One citizen, hurrying to catch a train, was scared almost to death by bumping into one of the animals that was placidly chewing its cud on his front porch.

It was not long, therefore, before the police were notified. The matter seemed outside their scope, however, so the village poundmaster was pressed into service. He instigated a private round-up and, when it was finished, had eighty-five of the cows in his pound, where they managed to pass a fairly comfortable night.

Meanwhile, the manager of the San Mateo farm missed the cattle at the very outset of his day's activities. So he paid the pound a visit and claimed his herd. To his chagrin, he was charged the sum of two dollars apiece for their board overnight. The outing expense for the whole herd mounted to a very fair sum.

MISSING

This department conducted in duplicate in DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE and WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, thus giving readers double service, is offered free of charge to our readers. Its purpose is to aid them in getting in touch with persons of whom they have lost track.

While it will be better to use your name in the notice, we will print your request "blind" if you prefer. In sending "blind" notices, you must, of course, give us your right name and address, so that we can forward promptly any letters that may come for you. We reserve the right to reject any notice that seems to us unsuitable. Because "copy" for a magazine must go to the printer long in advance of publication, don't expect to see your notice till a considerable time after you send it.

If it can be avoided, please do not send us a "General Delivery" post-office address, for experience has proved that those persons who are not specific as to address often have mail that we send them returned to us marked "not found." It would be well, also, to notify us of any change in your address.

Now, readers, help those whose friends or relatives are missing, as you would like to be helped if you were in a similar position.

WARNING.—Do not forward money to any one who sends you a letter or telegram, asking for money "to get home," et cetera, until you are absolutely certain that the author of such telegram or letter is the person you are seeking.

CALCUTT, CHARLES.—About fifty years old. Last heard from in 1896, when he was leaving New York City on the Fall River boat. Information appreciated by M. F., care of this magazine.

PORTER, G. E.—Miriam was run over the day you left. She calls for her dear daddy. We need you. Come home at once. Have moved to Albert K.'s house on George Street. Your loving wife, B. L. P., care of this magazine.

ZELMA.—I am waiting and watching for your return. A. S. M., care of this magazine.

SMITH, JAMES E., or G. W. BURKE.—Left Scotland for Canada, in 1920. Last heard from in Westwood, California, in 1924. Information appreciated by his mother, Mrs. S. Smith, 192 Elder Street, Govan, Glasgow, Scotland.

HAZEL.—Do you remember December, 1913? If you do not care to let me know where you are, please write to me through this magazine. I was married in 1914. Have changed location. Mother and dad in the same place. Have important news. Your cousin, Nellie, care of this magazine.

BOYLE, CLAUDE OLIVER.—Information appreciated by Dorothy V. Steck, care of Lookout Mountain Security Company, Route 3, Golden, Colorado.

WADE, TRESSIE.—Dark hair and eyes. Last heard from in Kansas City, Missouri. Believed to have married and moved to Osawatomie, Kansas. Information appreciated by her niece, Frances L., care of this magazine.

PREVATT, H. B.—Thirty years old. Last heard from at Dallas, Texas, July, 1927. Information appreciated by his old pal, Paul Craddock, 3665 Kuhlert Avenue, Louisville, Kentucky.

CARLETON, PERCY R.—Fifty years old. Last heard from in New York, in 1915. His mother is Mrs. Frank Thompson of Monroe, New York, and he has a sister named Marion. Have important news. Information appreciated by F. G., care of this magazine.

JOHNSON, ALBA ERNEST.—Last heard from somewhere in Arkansas. Please write to your sister, Meda, Box 482, care of Mrs. Harris, Welland, Ontario, Canada.

YAROVITZKAYAA, MRS. EATA RAISIE, BROOHA, DEANE, and EASACK.—My name was Reva before I married. I would appreciate any information about these people. Address Mrs. A. E. Trescott, 1400 Boston Boulevard, Lansing, Michigan.

GOLLINGER, CHRISTOPHER, JACOB, JOHN, BILLIE, SARAH, KATE, LIBBIE, LOUISE, ROSELLA, MINERVA, and MALINDA.—My sisters and brothers. We were all born in Canada. I would like to have information concerning them. Mrs. Tillie Gollinger Dishaw, 607 Turtle Street, Syracuse, New York.

McALINDEN, CORNELIUS.—Born at Lurgan, County Armagh, Ireland. Last heard from in Montreal, Canada, in 1914. Information appreciated by William Corey, 57 Rodman Street, St. Catherines, Ontario, Canada.

MEADE, FLORENCE, BETH, EDWARD, and JAMES.—Last seen in Virginia, in 1915. Information appreciated by their brother, Richard Basil Meade, Box 31, Hueneme, California.

GREEN, H. J.—Last heard from in Rocky Mount, North Carolina. I have good news for you. No one will know where you are if you write to your brother, Paul Green, Box 421, Schoefield Barracks, Hawaii.

BROWNING, LEWIS R.—Thirty years old. Six feet tall, blue eyes, and black hair. Has two gold teeth. Formerly of Allentown, Pennsylvania, and Springfield, Missouri. Last seen in Kansas City, Missouri, January, 1927. Please write to Stella Conklin, 1103 East Twenty-second Street, Kansas City, Missouri.

MURPHY, J. J.—I love you. Have not moved. Please write for letter held for you. Address Patricia, care of this magazine.

BIG SAILOR BOY.—Was just in from China, October, 1928. Please write to Eva, care of this magazine.

EWERS, CLARK D.—Please write to Mrs. Charles Watkins, 314 West Bluff Street, Pendleton, Oregon.

MRS. TRACY or ROBERTS, nee FRANCIS.—Left St. Thomas, Canada, for Detroit, Michigan, in 1922. Has not been heard from since. Has a daughter, Mabel Roberts, and a son. Information appreciated by George Arthur Tracy, 1928 Monongale Avenue, Swissvale, Pennsylvania.

YOUNG, ORAL.—Have you your divorce? Please write to Bert, care of this magazine.

LEACH, MRS. MARY E.—Last heard from in Brooklyn, New York. Please write to Mrs. A. Moses, 727 Lincoln Avenue, Tarpon Springs, Florida.

MARTIN, JAMES.—Last seen in February, 1922, at Kane, Pennsylvania, at the Pennsylvania railway station. Please write to Minnie, care of this magazine.

WIGGINS, MARY.—Mother is very ill. Father died in 1923. Twenty years brings many changes. Please write to your sister, Ola Wiggins, Box 1569, Dallas, Texas.

BLOSSOM.—We both forgive you. Mother is heartbroken. Please wire us at home or write to Mother, care of this magazine.

ROLLINS, BESSIE.—Last known address, Route 1, McCall Creek, Mississippi. Please write your brother George, care of this magazine.

MORTON, RAY.—Was in San Diego, California, in 1923. If you ever think of Toots and Coronado Island, please write to Toots, care of this magazine.

MORRIS, VIRGIL.—Was discharged from the navy at San Diego, California, in 1922. Please write to your old friend, Babe, care of this magazine.

SON.—Please write to your mother, Mrs. Gussie Schroedor, care of Mrs. Eleanor Kolas, 498 Tenth Avenue, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

BROTHER BILLIE.—We miss you so. Mother is waiting to hear from you. All is forgiven. Please come home or write to Sister Eleanor, care of this magazine.

HENSLEY, CLARA and ORA.—Last heard of from Amarillo, Texas, February, 1927. Information appreciated by an old friend, Leo C. Dunn, Abilene, Kansas.

ATTENTION.—I would like to hear from any one who served in the 153rd Aero Squadron during the World War. Address William C. Mechling, American Legion Hospital, Battle Creek, Michigan.

DAGMAR, HELEN.—I love you forever. Please let me know where you are and write to Will Daddy, Sioux City, Iowa.

PEGGY.—Why don't you answer my letters? Please write to Pal, 326½ South Main Street, Los Angeles, California.

WEEKLEY, MRS PEARL.—No one against you. Your daughter, Jewell, is coming to live with us soon. Please write to your mother, Mrs. A. E. Gordon, care of this magazine.

SULLIVAN, CORNELIUS, and son, JOHN ANDREW.—Last heard of from Walnut Creek, Cropid County, Kansas, in 1877. Information appreciated by his sister, Mrs. Emmaline Agee, Wagoner, Arizona.

MAYNARD, or JENNINGS, A. A.—Your son has had an accident and needs you. Please write to your daughter, Dora, Box 25, Palms Station, Los Angeles, California.

CARTER, JOHNNIE.—Last seen by his mother, Mrs. A. J. Carter, and his sister, Mrs. Liza Clark, at Caddo, Texas, thirty-seven years ago. Information appreciated by his niece, Mrs. Cora Sartain, Box 34, Portales, New Mexico.

H. S. C.—Harry and Kate, communicate with your dad. No trouble. Please write to D., care of this magazine.

DAN P. OF CHICAGO.—Last known address, 14 North Goetho Street. Do you remember the girl at the Princess? I have important news for you. Please write to Baby, care of this magazine.

NOTICE.—I was left at Mercy Hospital in Detroit, Michigan, in February, 1912. I was adopted from there when I was about two weeks old. Had brown hair and eyes. Will my mother please write to Billie, care of this magazine?

He Left His Calling Card

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THREE bloody finger prints on the cash register! He might as well have left his calling card — his doom was already written! These silent witnesses told the story—identified him —convicted him! Live through these thrilling adventures right with Detective McDonald as he gets Arizona's first finger print conviction. Mail the coupon below and get this gripping story FREE, with 12 others just as exciting!

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Name _____

Address _____

City and State _____ *Age* _____

PADDY.—Please send for letter. Address Francis, care of this magazine.

TURNER, BRYAN D.—Please send for letter. Address Marie, care of this magazine.

RODGERS, HARRY S.—Last heard from at Kelly Field, San Antonio, Texas, March, 1923. Please write to your mother, Mrs. L. R. Rodgers, Box 234, Jessup, Georgia.

MRS. W. J.—Who advertised for Walter D. We are holding letters at this office. Please send your address.

MIX.—Who advertised for Sallie Bowman. We are holding letters for you at this office. Please send your address.

LYONS.—Would like to hear from relatives of Thomas Lyons. He is nearly seventy years old and in poor health. Was born in Boston, Massachusetts, and left there at the age of seventeen. Please write to Reader, care of this magazine.

MARTIN, MRS. EDNA.—Left Monroe, Louisiana, for Chicago, Illinois. Please write to your old friend, E. N. LaCroix, Whelen Springs, Arkansas.

SELBY, HENRY.—No matter what the trouble is, we are the ones to help you. Can't stand it any longer. Please come home or write to your wife, Myrtle, care of this magazine.

NORMAN, CHARLES EMMET.—Twenty-four years old. Born in Chelsea, Massachusetts. Was placed in a home near Boston. Son of Mary McCue Leddy and Hugo Norman. Information appreciated by his brother, James Leddy, care of this magazine.

DENMAN, HARRY.—We were both in the Williamsburg Home, in Brooklyn, New York. I have been to the home twice since and have been told that you were trying to locate me. Please write to your sister, Florence Denman, care of this magazine.

ROBBINS, REX.—Information appreciated by his mother, Mrs. J. R. Robbins, Crystal Falls, Texas.

MASHBURN, LLOYD.—Left Lincoln, Nebraska, in January, 1926, for California. Information appreciated by his friend, Billie, care of this magazine.

NOTICE.—I was left in the Indianapolis Orphans' Home, Indianapolis, Indiana, on College and Heenar Streets, in 1888. Will my people please write to me? Mrs. Hazel Stegall, 3922 West Seventh Street, Fort Worth, Texas.

MARTIN, CHARLES, and children, **NELLIE** and **JEFFERY.**—Last seen in Portland, Maine, in 1923. Information appreciated by Earl H. Blanchard, Box 135, Zellwood, Florida.

NILES, HAZEL, LOUIS, and **MARY.**—Please write to Earl H. Blanchard, Box 135, Zellwood, Florida.

GOODLING, PAUL, and sons, **RUSSELL** and **ROBERT.**—Last heard from in Columbus, Ohio. Information appreciated by Beulah, care of this magazine.

HOWELL.—My mother's name was Blanche Howell, and she had a brother named Earl, who was last heard from in Gypsy, West Virginia, in 1911, at which time he was twenty-three years old. I would like to hear from him or any of my mother's people. Sylophine Lehew, Route 1, Metz, West Virginia.

BAKER, BILL.—Tool dresser in oil field on Sinclair well near Madison and Olke, Kansas. My husband worked on the same lease. Have news for you. Please write to H. S., care of this magazine.

WILLIAMS, RALPH.—Last heard of in Sacramento, California. Believed to have moved to San Francisco. I have left Salt Lake City, Utah, and am now in San Francisco. Please write to Orson Teasdale, 2691 Bryant Street, San Francisco, California.

McDONOUGH, ANDREW.—Believed to have left Butte, Montana, thirty years ago, to visit in Bismarck, North Dakota, en route to St. Paul, Minnesota. Information appreciated by a friend, E. B. D., care of this magazine.

DUCHIEN, ARTHUR CHARLES.—Please write to Orin L. Stone, 1325 North Eighteenth Street, Salem, Oregon.

MULLENS, BERT.—Information appreciated by Leona Mullens, 24½ South Mont Street, Dillon, Montana.

HAMLIN, CHARLES, and wife, **SALLIE HAMLIN COLVIN,** and her children, **LESTER COLVIN, SOPHRONA COLVIN, AMANDA MITCHELL,** and **JENNIE GOOD.**—Information appreciated by Ella M. Morrell, 214 Howard Street, Cadillac, Michigan.

MORRELL, CHARLES.—Son of Otis Morrell, born in northern New York. Last heard from in Washington. Information appreciated by Ella M. Morrell, 214 Howard Street, Cadillac Michigan.

HAMLIN, JOSEPH STEPHEN, and wife, **PATIENCE COOK.**—Lived in Cornwall and Huntington, Vermont, and last heard from in Nicholville, New York. Information appreciated by Ella M. Morrell, 214 Howard Street, Cadillac, Michigan.

BELL, GLENN or **FRED.**—Nineteen years old. Brown hair and eyes. Please write to Peggy of H. L., care of this magazine.

LALLY, ANTHONY T.—Last heard of in Buffalo, New York. Everything O. K. at home. Am still at the same place and have important news for you. Please write your brother, H. J. L., care of this magazine.

TISHKO, PETE and **MIKE.**—Left West Virginia in 1918. Would like to hear from them or any of my other relations. Anna Tishko, Pine Bluff, West Virginia.

OTEN, MR. and **MRS. FRANK.**—Kept a boarding house at Healton, Oklahoma, in 1924, where the tank builders stayed. I have important information for them. Please write to F., care of this magazine.

TONKS, EARL W.—Last heard from two years ago, while working in Sylvan Lake, Alberta, Canada. Please write your mother, Mrs. A. N. Tonks, Ontario, Canada.

PAULMAN, NEAL.—Last heard from in 1918, at Cedar Grove, Shreveport, Louisiana. Information appreciated by his old friend, Leon Downs, Company F, 144th Infantry, Texas National Guard, 1312 Park Avenue, Dallas, Texas.

FRANKS, LeROY E.—Remember the "Gordons" of Dallas, Texas? She loves you and will explain all if you will write to Baby Girl, care of this magazine.

LEA, PAULINE.—Last heard from when she traveled with the Lyceum, in 1924. Please write your old friend, Mrs. Dorothy Reinke, 422 College Street, Cordell, Oklahoma.

SPECIAL NOTICE.—Would like information concerning William Harding, councilor for Newcastle-on-Tyne, England, who died in America in 1851. He was in the lumber business. Left an estate to William Saint, schoolmaster at Humshaugh, which was unclaimed, due to deaths in the family. Am anxious to locate some of his relatives or any one who could give me information concerning his estate. Please write to J. G. Waitt, 23 Annie Street, Sea View Road, Sunderland, England.

WETMORE, I. M.—Last heard from in Oilfield, Illinois. Please write to Wattie E. Wetmore, U. S. Forest Ranger, Gold Beach, Oregon.

WETMORE, HORACE and **MAGGIE.**—Last heard from in Muncie, Indiana. Please write to Wattie E. Wetmore, U. S. Forest Ranger, Gold Beach, Oregon.

WILSON, MRS. LUELLA.—Last heard from in the oil fields of California. Her son, Theodore D. Randall, and daughter, Inez Harris, of Bakersfield, California, have not heard from her for twenty years. Information appreciated by Wattie E. Wetmore, U. S. Forest Ranger, Gold Beach, Oregon.

CLARKE, JOHN.—Last heard from in Cleveland, Ohio, three years ago. Your mother and sister are waiting to hear from you. Several deaths in the family. Please write to Mrs. Sabina Clarke, 13 Brighton Street, Broadway, Belfast, Ireland.

SNODGRASS, CLARENCE.—Twenty-two years old. Red hair and blue eyes. Last heard from in Savannah, Missouri, in April, 1928. Information appreciated by Mrs. Pauline Dyett, 119½ G Street, Rock Springs, Wyoming.

FOGERT, LEO J.—Played trombone in United States army band. Last heard from in Pennsylvania. Please communicate with L. D. S., care of this magazine.

GRIMM, JOHN.—Formerly of Knoxville, Tennessee. Was at Camp Severe, Greenville, South Carolina, in 1918. Please write to Helen Steward, 600 Richmond Street, Cincinnati, Ohio.

RING, WALTER.—Used to be a barber on Central Avenue, Knoxville, Tennessee. Please write to Helen Steward, 600 Richmond Street, Cincinnati, Ohio.

BENWAY, DOT.—Left Sheffield, Massachusetts, in June, 1928. Please write to Billie, the Sailor, care of this magazine.

TRANK, DAVID.—We are with your father. He says you are welcome and wants you to come home. We need your help. I forgive you, for I know you are not to blame. Please come home or write to your wife, Mattie Trank, 1309 Altamont Avenue, Schenectady, New York.

S. A. C.—Who quarreled with his younger brother in Jefferson City, Missouri, in 1917, and who left there in 1919 or 1920. I am interested in you and your welfare. Please forget the past and write to Harry, care of this magazine.

LOUISE.—Haven't heard from you since you left 705 Lemon Street, Palatka, for Daytona Beach. Want to hear from you. F., care of this magazine.

What Spell Does This Strange Book *cast over its readers?*

Examine it free for 5 days. If it does not give color, charm and magnetism to your personality, return it within the 5-day period—and the examination will have cost you nothing!

Here is a book that seems to cast a spell over every person who turns its pages!

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"Instantaneous Personal Magnetism," just completed after fifty years of research and study, is now off the press and ready for you. Edmund Shaftesbury, founder of this interesting system, devoted a lifetime to it. Such men and women as Queen Victoria, Cardinal Gibbons, Lord Beaconsfield, Gladstone, Henry Ward Beecher were among his friends and pupils.

"Instantaneous Personal Magnetism" tells how to draw people to you at once, irresistibly—how to be popular everywhere, in any society—how to be a magnet of human attraction, popular and well-liked wherever you go!

It not only tells exactly how to accomplish these things—it tells how to accomplish many of them without delay—*instantly!* How to develop your mental, passional and personal magnetism!

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Personal Magnetism is not necessarily inborn. It can be cultivated, fostered, until it becomes a natural part of you. Your eyes, hands, lips, voice, bearing—all radiate personality of an individual kind. All lend themselves to the one great fundamental quality known as *Personal Magnetism.*

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Release this dormant magnetism within you—and watch yourself become more and more successful, popular!

Give verve, color, magnetism to *your* personality—and see what a difference it makes in your life!

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You may send me "Instantaneous Personal Magnetism" for a 5 days' free examination in my own home. I will be the judge. Within the 5-day period I will either remit the special low price of $3 in full payment or return it without cost or obligation.

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Full size Davenport Table with Top 48 in. x 16 in.

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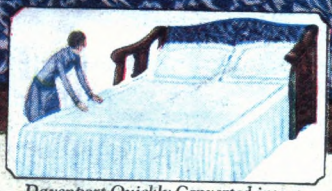

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Slashing $30 off the regular price, Mr. Spear offers this beautiful 3-piece Velour Bed-Davenport Suite **below actual factory cost,** the *biggest bargain of his career.* It's new—new cane panel frames, new 1929 style, new comfort, richer beauty—the peak of 36 years of value-giving.

And, as a still greater inducement, Mr. Spear insists that you have IN ADDITION this stunning Davenport Table. "Win more friends for Spear & Company. Sell way below the regular price! Include a valuable gift! Make this a gigantic value"—these are his very words.

What an astonishing offer! This suite, without table, would cost you $90 elsewhere.

That isn't all—this exquisite suite will be sent to you for only $1 with order. You have 400 days to pay—13 easy monthly payments—30 days FREE trial. If you are not completely satisfied, return suite and table. We will refund your $1 and transportation charges both ways.

You know the increasing popularity of velour living room furniture! This one is not only a charming, colorful suite for the living room, but a full-size comfortable double bed is embodied in the davenport.

A living room and bedroom suite combined! Just like having another room—a spare bedroom for the unexpected guest. The davenport opens with a single easy motion into a restful full size bed for 2 adults. You do not sleep on the upholstery—bed compartment has its own link fabric spring. During the day bedding is concealed in the interior. Interior bed section is 72 in. by 48 in. when open. Davenport overall, 54 in. Rocker and armchair, 24 in. wide overall. Height of backs from seat, 20 in. The right proportions to assure complete comfort and restfulness.

The sturdily constructed, attractive frames are of selected and seasoned hardwood, finely finished in rich Brown Mahogany. The new, distinctive cane panel ends are ultra-fashionable. Covering is an excellent grade of Figured Velour in a handsome blue and taupe pattern that will harmonize with any furnishings. The backs are upholstered in the new overstuffed effect. Interior upholstery of fine sanitary materials, deeply overlaid with pure cotton batts. Strong coil springs in the seat of each piece prevent sagging. All 3 pieces are wonderfully comfortable. Davenport has 18 springs in seat—rocker and armchair have 9 each. This is a suite which you will be proud to own, and will give years of wear.

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