

WESTERN STORY

STREET
AND
SMITH'S

MAY 25, '40

10
CENTS

VOL. 182 • No. 5

MAGAZINE

MAY 25, 1940



L. L. FOREMAN • S. OMAR BARKER • HARRY F. OLMSTED

TREMENDOUS PRICE SLASH

Genuine OFFICE SIZE de-luxe MODEL

Standard **ROYAL No. 10**
with late Improved Features

\$105.00 MODEL
MFRS. PRICE
1/3 ORIG. PRICE
Now \$34.85 CASH PRICE
on Easy Terms of 60¢ a WEEK



YOURS AT LESS THAN 1/3 MFRS. PRICE
Buy direct from us and save over \$70.00 on genuine Royal No. 10.
Beautifully rebuilt and unconditional 2 year guarantee. No Money Down—10 Day Trial—Pay on easiest terms.

Thousands paid \$105.00 for this model, but it's yours for only \$34.85 (cash price)

NO MONEY DOWN

NO OBLIGATION. SEND NO MONEY. Try Royal for 10 full days in your home without risk. See for yourself the neat, perfect work it does. Decide without salesman's pressure—without hurry.

10 DAY TRIAL

SEE BEFORE YOU BUY—Test, Inspect, Compare. This Royal is shipped to you on its merit alone. It must sell itself—must convince you of its tremendous value.

2 YEAR GUARANTEE

Our 2 yr. guarantee is your assurance of satisfaction. *You must be satisfied that this is the biggest value ever offered in a typewriter.*

EASIEST TERMS

ONLY 60c A WEEK!

ONLY 60c A WEEK soon pays for your typewriter at this low price. Use machine as you pay for it. Only \$2.50 a month—less than the cost of renting a typewriter. Order your Royal now!

FREE!

ROLL-A-WAY SECRETARIAL TYPEWRITER STAND



All Metal, mounted on casters. Big Working Surface. Correct Height.

Yours at no extra cost with your Royal— if you send your order now. Makes every typewriter portable. Sturdy, Compact, Weighs but a few pounds. Can be moved by touch of finger. Try Royal for 10 days, and stand goes to you immediately on receipt of first payment.

FREE—A complete home study course of Famous Van Zandt Touch Typing system. Learn to type quickly and easily.

AMERICA'S No. 1 TYPEWRITER VALUE!

Royal—the king of all typewriters! A heavy duty office typewriter recognized as a leader the world over. Think of this value! Famous Royal No. 10 completely rebuilt with late improved features—Yours at less than 1/3 mfrs. orig. price. Has all standard equipment—84 characters, keyboard, two color ribbon, back-spacer, automatic reverse, etc. A perfect all purpose typewriter; stands hard, long service. Can be used for correspondence, card writing, label writing, billing statement work, etc. Remember there is no risk! You see before you buy. Fully Guaranteed and backed by 30 years of Fair Dealing.

EXTRA WIDE CARRIAGE ROYALS

14 inch Carriage takes paper 14" wide, has 12" writing line. Only \$3.00 extra with order. 18 inch Carriage takes paper 18" wide, has 16" writing line. Only \$7.50 extra with order.

Accept this offer now— limited quantity and no more when they're gone. Send no money. Try machine for 10 days—Pay on easiest terms. 2 yr. Guarantee. Avoid disappointment—Mail Now.

INTERNATIONAL TYPEWRITER EXCHANGE
231 W. Monroe St., Chicago, Ill.

Over 200,000 Satisfied Customers All Over The World



INTERNATIONAL TYPEWRITER EXCHANGE
Dept. 512, 231 W. Monroe St., Chicago, Ill.

Send Royal No. 10 (F.O.B. Chicago) for 10 days trial. If I keep it, I will pay \$2.50 per month until easy term price (\$39.35) is paid. If I am not satisfied I can return it express collect.

10 inch carriage 14 inch carriage
 18 inch carriage

14" carriage \$3.00 extra 18" carriage \$7.50 extra

FOR QUICK SHIPMENT GIVE OCCUPATION AND REFERENCE

Name..... Age.....
Address.....
Town..... State.....

NOTE: Typewriter stand sent on receipt of first payment. If payment is enclosed, mark here

FIRST AID to Sick Plugs



Clean plugs put engines *back on their feet* and STOP GAS WASTE

Modern fuels - high engine temperatures - and high engine compressions cause a crust of oxide coating to form quickly on spark plugs. The symptoms are waste of gasoline, sluggish performance, and hard starting. Oxide coating forms in 4,000 miles, and you never know it's present. But, thanks to registered AC Spark Plug Cleaning Stations, there's an easy remedy.

Here's the CURE for Spark Plug Troubles

For More Than 31 Years THE QUALITY SPARK PLUG

Buick, Cadillac, Chevrolet, LaSalle, Nash, Oldsmobile, and Pontiac motor cars; Chevrolet, Diamond T, Federal, GMC, and International Trucks; Allis-Chalmers, Cletrac, and International Harvester Tractors...these are some of the well-known cars, trucks, and tractors which use AC Quality Spark Plugs. Trust your spark plug requirements to the same brand of spark plugs which the leading big volume manufacturers select. *Get a Set—and Get the difference*

 <p>LOOK for this SIGN- 70,000 Service Places Display It</p>	 <p>Have Plugs CLEANED Using AC METHOD</p> <p>Cleaning Includes RECAPPING to the Engineers' Standards</p> <p>The Cost is only 5c EACH <i>(the best spark plug cleaning)</i></p>
--	--

AC SPARK PLUG DIVISION
General Motors Corporation
ELINT, MICHIGAN

SPARK PLUGS NEED CLEANING, TOO!

REPLACE WORN PLUGS WITH NEW AC'S

STREET & SMITH'S

WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE

TITLE REGISTERED U. S. PATENT OFFICE

CONTENTS FOR MAY 25, 1940

VOL. CLXXXII NO. 5

The editorial contents of this magazine have not been published before, are protected by copyright and cannot be reprinted without the publisher's permission.

BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL

- MAVERICKS DON'T WEAR BRANDS** **L. L. Foreman** 9
 —As the Preacher discovered when he decided to ride herd on the last of the lawless O'Terrans!

A SERIAL

- BARB WIRE OR BOOTHILL!** **Bennett Foster** 105
 Third of Five Parts
 Will the looming clash between the two factions in the Curampaw be made more bitter by an outbreak of rustling?

SHORT STORIES

- MULE-HEADED HOMBRE** **S. Omar Barker** 51
 When Dogie Dobson took off on that mule the boys sure thought he was trying to outride trouble.
- PAYOFF AT QUARTZITE** **Harry F. Olmsted** 60
 It looked as if Bruce Hamer wouldn't stay in Quartzite long—and the next stop was Boothill!
- POLAR PASEAR** **Kenneth Gilbert** 71
 Outlaw of sea god, old Kawluchi's prowess was a miracle of might.
- WATER WIZARD** **Allan R. Bosworth** 78
 Nick Willoughby's willow rod helped him find hidden water; would it aid him in unmasking a killer?
- DEPUTY FOR A DAY** **John A. Thompson** 88
 Son of a lawdog, young Harlan Chase decided to take all the protection the law could give him—while he rode the owlhood.

WESTERN STORY FEATURE

- RANGE SAVVY** **H. Fredric Young** 70
 —A new weekly feature devoted to cattle country facts and legends.

DEPARTMENTS

- THE ROUNDUP** **The Editor** 6
- GUNS AND GUNNERS** **Phil Sharpe** 97
- MINES AND MINING** **John A. Thompson** 99
- THE HOLLOW TREE** **Helen Rivers** 101
- WHERE TO GO AND HOW TO GET THERE** **John North** 103

COVER BY H. W. SCOTT

All fictional characters mentioned in this magazine are fictitious. Any similarity in name or character to any real person is coincidental.

Publication issued every week by Street & Smith Publications, Incorporated, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Allen L. Grammer, President; Ormond V. Gould, Vice President; Henry W. Ralston, Vice President; Gerald H. Smith, Treasurer and Secretary. Copyright, 1940, in U. S. A. and Great Britain by Street & Smith Publications, Inc. Entered as Second-class Matter, September 4, 1917, at the Post Office at New York, under Act of Congress of March 3, 1879. Subscriptions to Canada and Countries in Pan American Union, \$5.00 per year; elsewhere, \$7.00 per year. We cannot accept responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts or artwork. Any material submitted must include return postage.

Printed in  the U. S. A.

STREET & SMITH PUBLICATIONS, INC. • 79 7th AVE., NEW YORK

10c per COPY
\$2 Six Months
\$4 per YEAR

Read How These Men Got Better Jobs

THEN FIND OUT WHAT RADIO OFFERS YOU *Mail Coupon*

**THESE MEN
DID NOT GO
TO COLLEGE**

*Read about the jobs
they got and the
money they make*

*I WORK ON RADIO
PART TIME
ONLY. I HAVE
AVERAGED ABOUT
\$50 A MONTH.*

JOHN B. MORRISSETTE
309 VALLEY STREET
MANCHESTER, N.H.



*I AM NOW
IN CHARGE
OF THE
RADIO DEPARTMENT
OF AMERICAN AIRLINES
AT CLEVELAND, OHIO.*

WALTER B. MURRAY
MUNICIPAL AIRPORT
CLEVELAND, OHIO.

*I MAKE
\$50 TO \$60
A WEEK
AND HAVE ALL THE
RADIO WORK I
CAN DO.*

H.W. SPANGLER
126 1/2 S. GAY STREET
KNOXVILLE, TENN.

*I WAS WORKING IN
A GARAGE WHEN I
ENROLLED WITH N.R.I.
I HAVE MADE AS HIGH
AS \$400 A
MONTH IN
RADIO.*

E.G. WOLFE
ROUTE 1
BRISTOL, IND.

*I HAVE BEEN
IN BUSINESS
FOR 18 MONTHS
MAKING \$200 TO \$300
A MONTH.*

ARLIE J. FROEHNER
214 WEST TEXAS AVE.
GOOSE CREEK, TEXAS

I will Train You at Home in your spare time for a Good Job in RADIO

Radio is a young, growing field with a future, offering many good pay spare time and full time job opportunities. And you don't have to give up your present job to become a Radio Technician. I train you right at home in your spare time.

Why Many Radio Technicians Make \$30, \$40, \$50 a Week

Radio broadcasting stations employ engineers, operators, technicians. Radio manufacturers employ designers, inspectors, servicemen in good pay jobs. Radio jobbers, dealers, employ installers and service men. Many Radio Technicians open their own Radio sales and repair businesses and make \$30, \$40, \$50 a week. Others hold their regular jobs and make \$30 to \$50 a week fixing Radios in spare time. Auto radios, police, aviation, Commercial Radio and home systems, electronic devices and other fields offering opportunities for all N.R.I. gives the required knowledge for Radio Technician possible full time job.

Many Make \$5 to \$10 a Week Extra in Spare Time While Learning

The day you enroll, I start sending you 64 Extra Money Job Sheets which start showing you how to do Radio repair jobs. Throughout your course I send plans and directions which have helped many make \$200 to \$300 a year in spare time while learning. I send

special Radio equipment to conduct experiments and build circuits. This 60-90 training method makes learning at home interesting, fascinating, practical. I ALSO GIVE YOU A MODERN, PROFESSIONAL, ALL WAVE, ALL PURPOSE SET SERVING INSTRUMENT to help you make money fixing Radios while learning and equip you for full time work after you graduate.

Find Out What Radio Offers You Mail Coupon Below

Act Today! Mail the coupon for my 64-page Book, "Rich Rewards in Radio." It

points out Radio's spare time and full time opportunities and those coming in Television; tells about my Course in Radio and Television; shows many letters from men I have trained, telling what they are doing and earning. Read my money back agreement. MAIL COUPON in an envelope or paste on a penny postcard—NOW!

J. E. Smith, President

Dept. OED, National Radio Institute
Washington, D. C.

MAIL NOW • Get 64 page book FREE



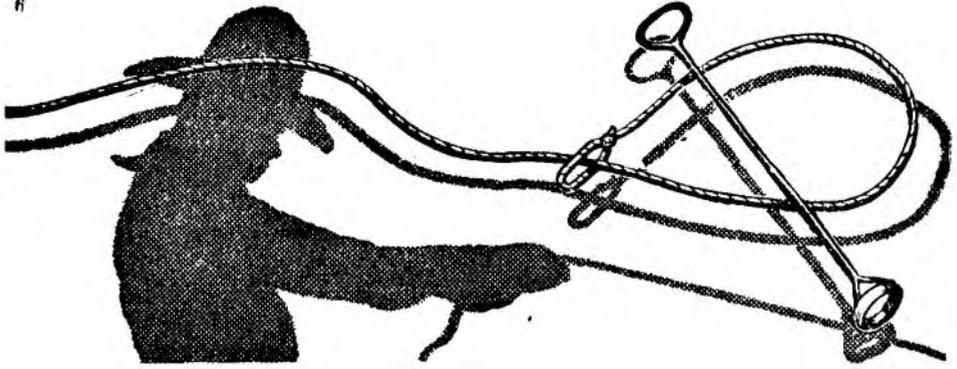
MR. J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. OED, National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Smith: Mail me FREE, without obligation, your 64-page book, "Rich Rewards in Radio," which is one of the best opportunities and tells how you can start now at home to be Radio Technicians. No salesman will call. (Write Plainly.)

Name..... Age.....

Address.....

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



The Roundup

FOR a writer of Western fiction, Allan R. Bosworth, whose story **WATER WIZARD** begins on page 78 of this issue, sure got off to a fine start, and we reckon he knows plenty about that big country out yonder after sashaying over it in a covered wagon. But suppose we let Bosworth tell his own story:

"My parents married not long after reconstruction days on the Gulf coast of Texas, and forthwith started rolling leisurely westward in a covered wagon—my father never could resist seeing the far side of a hill. I was the eighth child. By that time there were two covered wagons, which had rolled nearly to the Pecos. There are few trees in that country, and fewer log cabins, so I lost whatever chance I might have had of becoming president by being born in a tent.

"This was thirty-eight years ago. We rolled westward again, into New Mexico and then back. I liked it—except the night a flood rose into the bed of the wagon where I slept, and busted the little red drum that was my dearest possession.

"Finally settled in Crockett County on the east bank of the Pe-

cos. This was, and still is, ranch country. I did some cowpunching, sheepherding, windmill repairing and fence building, and then the lure of purple distance got me, too. Drifted out of junior year in high school, and went to Houston planning to attend business college. Went one day, and then (1) painted houses (2) sold from door to door (3) fired on a locomotive (4) became a peanut butcher on the Santa Fe in the Panhandle, and (5) joined the navy.

"Served on several types of ships, saw the West coast, East coast, Panama, West Indies, Hawaii and Midway. After the navy came twelve years as a newspaperman in San Diego, Los Angeles and San Francisco. Two years ago I retired to my own little 'ranch'—a hundred and sixty acres of brush and hills and trees in Santa Clara County, California. The place raises nothing but magazine stories, and I hope the crop never fails!"

A bright spot in the day's mail is this letter from Herman L. Zeitz, of Detroit, Michigan, who has some nice things to say about *W. S.*

"I enjoy all your stories," writes Mr. Zeitz, "and I generally read the magazine through when I pick it up. It is the only Western that I have found that does not print the impossible in its stories. I feel a little sorry for our friend, Mr. Bowers, of

Ringling, Montana, whose letter you printed in the March 16th Roundup. I wonder why he doesn't try his hand at grinding out a few stories and see how hard it is. I know! I tried it, but never thought any of my efforts were good enough to publish."

We certainly appreciate your defense, Mr. Zeitz, and here's hoping you'll always find Western Story "tops."

One of our readers has a hobby that is so interesting we think it will be of interest to everybody who loves the West. Dr. R. C. Hill, of Plattsburg, Missouri, wrote us a couple of mighty fine letters telling us the part that Western Story had played in its development. He spends all his spare time carving figures and scenes from Western life—and what a tophand with a pocketknife he is!

According to newspaper accounts, Dr. Hill was born in Abilene, Kansas, and his parents were pioneer settlers in Gypsum Valley. So he grew up with a love for the old West and acquired a keen knowledge of its characters and life. Happily for him, and those lucky enough to see his collection, Dr. Hill had plenty of pocketknife savvy.

He has carved over five hundred figures from pine and cedar—replicas of cowboys, steers, dogs, Indians, stagecoaches, prairie schooners drawn by oxen, and scores of other figures. Then there are scenes portraying roundups, holdups, bulldogging, steer roping, horse breaking, men around a campfire complete down to harmonica and guitar, and many more. He has even illustrated Western stories with his carvings. These carvings are remarkably correct according to scale measurements, garb, and accessories.

Dr. Hill is considered an authority on the early West, and he has seven large scrapbooks containing authentic clippings and pictures—most of them, the doctor says, were taken from Western Story Magazine. His carvings have been exhibited in a number of places, and people never cease to marvel that such perfect work can be done with an ordinary pocketknife.

That's what we call a swell hobby, doc. And the models exhibited in your reception room ought to be a big help to those clients who need to work up a little courage before opening wide to let the drilling begin.

Coming next week—

Ney N. Geer has at last heeded our many requests and brought that gun-handly pair of lawmen, Potluck Jones and Too-bad Tommy O'Neil, back to Western Story in a full-length novel—SHERIFF OF POWDER ROCK—that pulses with action and suspense. Having started out to track down some "hot" sheep, Potluck is plumb surprised, but in full command of the situation when he finds himself elected sheriff and told to settle a blistering range conflict. The story of his adventures is guaranteed to furnish you plenty of thrills and excitement.

Also down in the tally book for next week are GUNSMOKE INTEREST by Wayne D. Overholser, a yarn about a young lawyer who tried to find a substitute for Colt law; CHIEF'S JUDGMENT, the newest adventure of George Cory Franklin's wonder horse; NORTH TO THE NOOSE, a thrilling tale of salmon piracy by Joseph F. Hook, and many other outstanding features, both fiction and fact.

WANTED

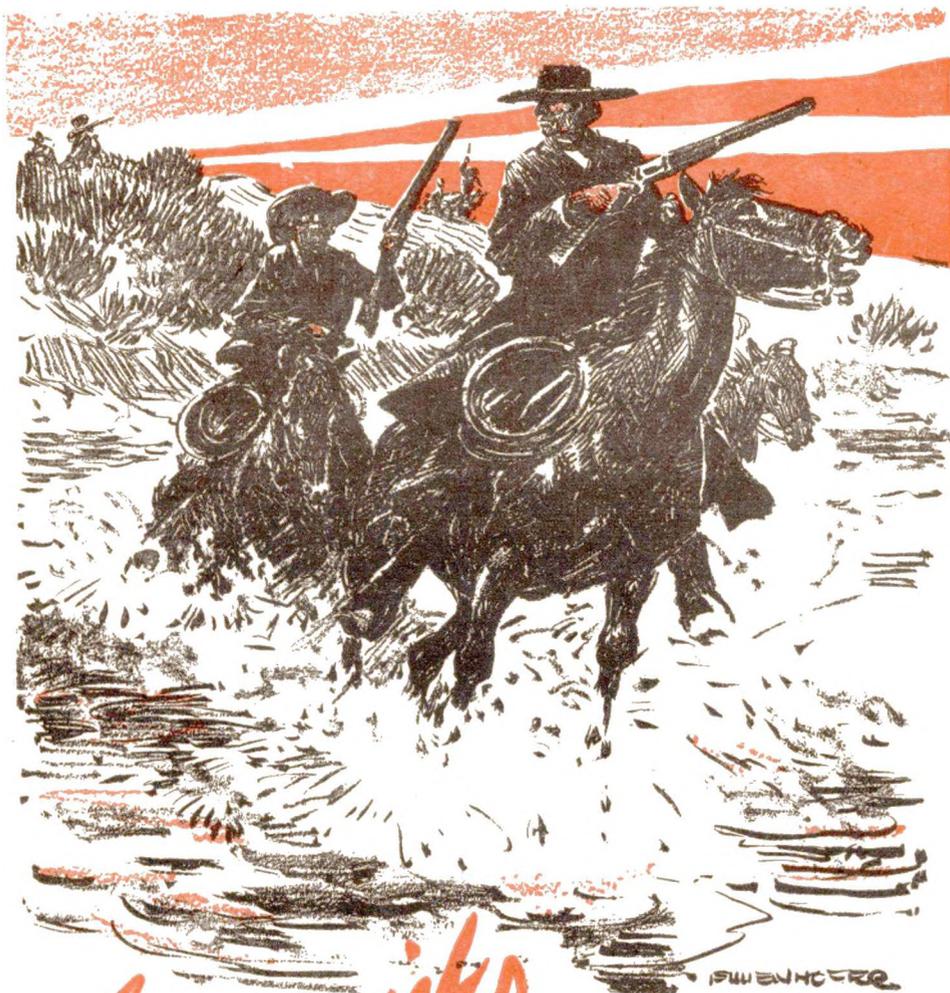
WESTERN STORY MANUSCRIPT
\$2000 REWARD

\$2,000 PRIZE COMPETITION CON-
DUCTED JOINTLY BY DODD, MEAD &
COMPANY AND STREET & SMITH FOR
THE BEST WESTERN NOVEL OF 1940

To the author of the Western novel which, in
the opinion of the judges, is most suitable
for publication, Dodd, Mead & Company, Inc.,
publishers of SILVER STAR Western books,
and Street & Smith, publishers of WESTERN
STORY MAGAZINE, agree to pay the winner

The purpose of this contest is to give to new
writers, and to those whose talent has not heret-
ofore been sufficiently recognized, a unique
opportunity to make a name for themselves in
the Western fiction field.

Send to us for details of the contest.
WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE
79 SEVENTH AVENUE
NEW YORK, N. Y.



Mavericks

DON'T WEAR BRANDS

BY L. L. FOREMAN

CHAPTER I GUN-SMOKE ADIOS

THE three horses made it across the river, splashing and blowing, to the ragged line of the north bank.

Two of them, a long-legged black and a hard-mouthed brute of a sorrel, scrambled up the red clay and crashed into the *brasada* thicket, their riders shielding their faces from the adder-toothed thorns of the

green-and-gold *retamas*. The third horse, a fast little Moro mare, failed to make the bank. The water showed a pinkish tinge where it splashed and floundered, trying to find footing. It uttered one thin squeal before its head went under, and the current tugged it treacherously away from the bank.

The two riders heard the squeal, and swung back through the brush with one accord. The rider of the black had his rope in his hand when he pulled up on the edge of the sloping bank, and he sent it looping out to a small dark head that was bobbing up and down in the water. At the same time, he whipped a glance across the river, and saw horsemen breaking here and there into sight.

"Grab pronto an' hang on tight!" he snapped to the swimmer.

His voice was as harsh as his looks, and as icily calm as his deep-set gray eyes. His face, strong, hard, almost satanic, was the face of a dark and dangerous man who ran his life to a fast tempo. The long coat that he wore, black and of ministerial cut, did not soften his appearance. Nor did his wide-brimmed black hat, stiff and flat-crowned. He was big, tall, a giant of a man, and the black austerity of his garb only accentuated his air of leashed power and lawless self-sufficiency.

The rider of the sorrel drew up by him with a tug that brought his horse back on its haunches. He, too, had the look of danger in his eyes, and an easy acceptance of it. He laughed as he swung out of his saddle, dragging a rifle from its boot, though he swayed as his feet touched the ground.

"Well, the kid needed a bath, anyway," he remarked, and braced his rifle against the gnarled and black-

barked trunk of a giant mesquite, taking aim across the river. "Better snake the tyke out fast, Devlin, an' never mind the skin. They're layin' up to shoot!"

The crack of carbines sounded across the river as he spoke, sending up little smoke balls and raising splashes around the small swimmer. The kid caught the end of the rope, tossed back a tangle of black hair from shining eyes, and called out, "All set, Preacher!"

PREACHER DEVLIN, gun fighter and gambler, wasted no time in gentle pulling. He took a turn around his saddlehorn with the rope, reined the black around, and dug in his heels. The long-legged black lunged ten yards before Devlin drew him up. The kid came through the water and up the clay-bank like a fish being reeled in.

"An' now," observed Devlin, gathering up his rope, "she needs another bath already. Must be a hell's own busy job, bein' a father!"

The braced rifle was thudding away. "Oh, I don't know. Shamrock's a good kid. She looks after herself. I never did pester her about personal matters like that." Captain O'Terran grinned, though his face was queerly drawn. He went to his knees, and braced the smoking rifle again.

A reckless man, Captain O'Terran. A wild, notorious hawk of storm and trouble, forever plunging whole-heartedly into one quixotic lost cause or another and kicking up some private hell of his own between times. He had won his title of captain as skipper of a South American gun runner, and his gay Irish vanity and sense of humor were to blame for his keeping it. His handsome, laughing face was getting gray now, and blood soaked his shirt, but his

eyes still danced to the tune of gunfire as he worked the rifle. One of his bullets hit the river, which was strange, for he was a crack shot. He fell against the mesquite, swore softly, and fumbled his belt for shells.

"Shamrock, m'darlin', come here," he called gayly, and thrust the rifle at her. "Take it, lass, an' show yon dons some shootin'. I got mud in me eye an' can't see straight. Keep your sweet eye bent on that *mogote* downriver. There's where they'll try to cross." He twisted around and grinned at Devlin. "Shall we make a stand here, amigo, or keep travelin'?"

Devlin pulled out his own heavy repeater, fired without apparent aim, and levered another shell into the breech. A riderless horse broke from the opposite bank, skittered around on the edge of the river, and bolted back again.

"Might's well take a breather here, now we've made a halt," he shrugged, after a brief glance at the other man's face. He had seen dying men before.

Shamrock O'Terran, fourteen years old, used her father's rifle like a veteran, and wasted no shots. She, too, glanced at the graying face and could read the signs there. But she showed no more awareness of the knowledge than did Devlin. You didn't get mawkish over a dying man, not even if he was your father and your god. You didn't even let him see that you knew—not if you were an old campaigner, or a considerate man, or an O'Terran. A man had a right to decent privacy at such a time, for reflection and a gathering of his inner forces so that he could step out off the end of the road without stumbling too badly.

So the kid, Shamrock, blinked

furtively and fired with a sort of concentrated animosity at the men across the river. And she whistled through her teeth like a boy, the way the captain always did when his back was to the wall. She was a queer kid, Devlin thought, bushed down beside her and shooting. Her dark eyes that looked too big for her urchin face—they didn't tell you a thing about her, they held such a mingling of brooding Irish melancholy and joyousness, of fierce moods and pensive gentleness. You wouldn't know, if she caught a hated enemy, whether she might kill him with a swift stroke, or forgive and kiss him for his helplessness.

"Damn little savage," thought Devlin, and another thought pressed on him, bringing the beginning of a scowl to his hard mouth. A pity O'Terran had to catch that bullet in his chest, and leave his kid as a legacy to burden another man. He had caught that bullet as they thundered through Tierra Blanca, when the rurales ran out at them on the street. O'Terran had shot the wrong rural. It had been the skinny little one who'd had a gun lined on him, but O'Terran had picked the big one, because the big one had jumped at the bridle of Shamrock's Moro mare.

IT had begun in Candelaria, in the biggest and grandest gambling house on the Mexican end of the Chihuahua Trail. It would always be a mystery why O'Terran had knocked the teeth out of that Mexican monte dealer, and busted up every game in the house. He likely had good reason, and Devlin didn't hold that against him. The dealer, spitting out teeth, had come up from the floor with a tricky little Spanish sleeve gun, and that had been the last of him.

Devlin, bucking the tiger at another table and running in luck, hadn't been disposed to take any part in the resulting fireworks, until he noticed that he and the Irishman were the only *extrangeros* in the place, and that the Irishman had his hands full. And then that durn kid sprang up near the door with a gun and began doing an efficient job of shooting out the lights. She put a hole through the shoulder of a hefty *oficial de policia*, too, when that worthy made a lunge for her. Then things really exploded, and Devlin regretfully left his game and took a hand. He scooped up all stakes in sight, kicked the layout over into the lap of the dealer, slammed down two men who seemed to have objections, and flipped out his pair of long-barreled guns from under his coat with a "Let's go, Irish!"

They'd made it to their horses and got out of Candelaria, but Candelaria carried the grudge after them. Several leading citizens had been hurt, others had lost their dignity, and the gambling palace would never look the same again. The longer the pursuit lasted, the bigger it grew, with new members joining in all along the line, until it seemed to the fugitives that they were rolling up half of Mexico behind them in their dash north for the Rio.

Captain O'Terran stretched out on the ground and pulled his sombrero brim over his eyes, as if settling down for a comfortable afternoon nap. He had always taken things lightly, including his responsibilities as a father. His had been a runaway wedding, and marriage had not cramped his free spirit nor fettered his roving feet, but the girl of his choice had never complained against life with him. He had shown her a bright and carefree world, she

had said with a smile, the day she died. Perhaps he was thinking of her now, for he murmured a name that Devlin did not catch.

A BAND of riders broke from the *mogote* downriver, a tangle of *huisache* and mesquite that covered a point of land jutting out into the stream, and charged into the water with a mighty splashing that practically screened them from sight. At the same time, a second group began crossing upriver. The matter of an international boundary was having little restraint upon the fury of the dons.

"They're out to flank us," growled Devlin, and swung the muzzle of his rifle downstream.

His heavy repeater spat its magazine empty. He reloaded swiftly, dropped two more bullets into what had become a threshing chaos of men, horses and churned-up water, and whirled to give his attention to the upriver group. But he wasn't needed there, he found. The kid, still firing and sighting her shots, had broken up the danger from that quarter.

Devlin fished into his breast pocket, found a villainous black *cigarro* that wasn't crushed, and clamped its end between his strong white teeth. Chewing on it, unlighted, he sat back on his heels and contemplated the south bank.

"I reckon," he remarked, "they've had their fill. Want a drink O'Terran?"

O'Terran didn't answer, but Shamrock did. The kid was kneeling beside O'Terran. She wasn't crying. She was just gazing down at the grayed face.

"No," she said in a voice that was only slightly unsteady. "The captain doesn't want a drink. He's . . . dead."

DEVLIN tapped at the door of the big white house, and stepped back into the shadow of a massive porch column. He didn't have to tell Shamrock to follow suit. Shamrock knew well the uses and conveniences of shadows, when in unfamiliar territory. The house stood in its own iron-fenced grounds at the end of the main street, and had the air of having been added onto the town as an ornament, while never quite becoming an integral part of it.

While he waited, Devlin surveyed what he could see of this town, of Piety, and remembered that the sheriff's office and the jail were located next to the bank, in the Keller Block, across the street from the brightly illuminated Bearcat Saloon. In the darkness of night, the rest of the town could be seen only as a scattering of lights, spread out around the main street.

A rich town, this, full of respectability and law, boasting two fine churches and the tightest jail this far west of the New Mexico line. Its leading citizens were made up mostly of mine owners, wealthy ranchers who could afford a town house, and men of business. Some very fine homes stood back there among the scattered lights. A fine, civilized town, this Piety, and a nice place in which to bring up your children. On Sunday mornings you could walk sedately to church, listen to the song of the crissal thrasher in the blazing Arizona sun, and detect from their thoughtful rectitude, those of the leading male citizens who had lost last night at the Bearcat's poker tables.

Devlin, who preferred red meat to vegetables, didn't care much for the place, personally. However, being broad-minded, he could concede that it had its good points, for those who

liked security and a settled way of living.

"You'll learn to wear dresses here, an' go to school, an' grow up into a lady, Shamrock," he murmured encouragingly.

Shamrock nodded, keeping her thoughts to herself.

The door of the big white house swung open, and a woman came out, gazing about her. She was beautiful, blonde and statuesque, like a Brünnhilde, and the dim light was kind to her, making her more so. She had thrown on a long cape of sapphire-blue velvet against the cool night air, and the color set off her mass of gold hair to advantage.

"Who knocked?" she demanded of the night. Her voice was a rich contralto, a little on the husky side. "Speak up and show yourself, whoever you are—or I'll come looking for you with a shotgun!"

Devlin grinned. "Tie up your wolf, Bonny!" he drawled, and stepped out of the shadow of the column.

At the sound of the deep voice, and the sight of the tall, somber-garbed figure of the notorious gun fighter, the blond Brünnhilde opened her fine blue eyes wide. She opened her mouth, too, in a dazzling smile full of charm and welcome.

"Well, copper my bet if it isn't the Pr—" she began, and cut herself off quickly to sweep a look along the lighted street. "Come on in," she murmured. "Are they crowding your trail?"

"Not this time, Bonny," answered Devlin. "It's somethin' else, but just as urgent. C'mon, Shamrock."

They went inside, and a man standing silent in the darkness across the way stared long at the closed door before cutting off fast up the street toward the Keller Block and the sheriff's office.

CHAPTER II

THE VOICE OF PIETY

BONNY, this is Shamrock O'Terran." Devlin went through the introduction gravely, inwardly amused. "Shamrock, this is Bonny Belle Blue—Miss Blue, I mean."

They stood in Bonny Belle's drawing room, a chamber of almost barbaric magnificence. Bonny Belle didn't blink an eyelash as she took the hand of the small, bedraggled urchin.

"You'll be wanting to rest, Shamrock," she said kindly, as if she were playing hostess to the daughter of a potentate. "I'll show you your room. Of course, you both must stay the night."

When she came downstairs alone, Bonny fixed Devlin with a searching eye. "I've seen and heard tell of you turning up with some queer junkets," she allowed, "but tell me, Devlin, where did you find *that*?"

Devlin, who had discovered and explored her wine cabinet, poured two brandies and handed her one. "Like the kid?" he parried.

"Er . . . yeah, I guess so." Bonnie Belle drank. "Of course, I can't tell much about her until she's had a bath and gets into some decent rags."

"I meant to get her some clothes somewhere along the way." Devlin nodded, "but I was in a hurry, an' . . . hum . . . the country was a little hot. I'll tell you about Shamrock—"

He did, and waited. Bonny Belle Blue, no fool, eyed him keenly. Once she had owned and operated one of the best and most profitable gambling palaces in Tombstone, and had learned a lot about men. She was still young enough to look youthful, and in suitable environment she could be the grand lady.

It was because she wanted to be a lady that she had sold out, retired, and come to Piety, where she lived in quiet and genteel isolation in this big house in the hope of receiving in it as friends the best people of Piety. So far, the best people hadn't called on her, and sometimes she thought her isolation was altogether too completely quiet and genteel.

"Why did you bring her here, Devlin?" she queried, and kept her blue eyes innocent as if she hadn't already guessed.

"Let's see, now—" Devlin twirled his glass, gazing at it. "Did I ever do you a favor, Bonny?"

"You did, more'n once," she replied warily. "What d'you want?"

Devlin put down the glass and met her straight gaze. "I want you to take Shamrock off my hands," he said bluntly. "I want you to bring her up decent. She's got good blood in her, Bonny. Wild, yes, I grant that. Wild as a hawk, like her father. The captain was no angel, but he was by way of bein' a gentleman. It'll be a tough job, but I know of nobody better able to handle it than you, Bonny, an' that's why I brought her to you."

Bonny Belle wrinkled her nose at him. "Don't try to sweet-talk me now, you big blackguard!" she countered. "All right, I'll do it. At that, she'll be company, and this house won't seem so ungodly empty. Yes, I'll make her into a lady, if it kills the both of us!"

"*Bueno!*" sighed Devlin, and a vast relief and a sense of recaptured freedom brought a smile to his hard mouth that was real and rare. "Thanks, Bonny. Knew I could depend on you. Uh—here's some cash that belongs to the kid. The captain left it with me." He stripped off his money belt and

tossed it on the table. It was fat and heavy. He had done well in that gambling palace in Candelaria. "You can bank it for her, an' use it for— Hello, Shamrock. Thought you'd gone to bed."

Shamrock, in a lace nightgown and a satin robe several sizes too big for her, and bathed to a pink and unfamiliar glow, went to the mammoth brass lamp and lowered its flame.

"Men outside, watching the house!" she said briefly. "Somebody must have seen us, and got word to the sheriff. Wait'll I get my pants on, Devlin, before you gun it out of here!"

She turned and darted up the stairs, her bare feet pattering. Devlin whirled swiftly.

"Go up an' head her off, Bonny!" he growled. "She's gone for her gun. It's a matter o' habit with her, when trouble breaks. I'm goin'. Good luck, Bonny."

"Good luck y'self," returned Bonny, and jerked down a window shade. "You need it more'n I do!"

She heard his grim laugh as he stalked out. "Wrong, Bonny. I know what I'm up against. You don't—yet! Adios!"

She stood listening after he left the room, knowing better than to follow him into the hallway. No sound reached her of any door opening and closing, but suddenly voices rang out in the street, half in challenge, half in doubt. A roar of exploding cartridges shattered the quiet night, then yells and the sounds of men scrambling over the iron fence.

Devlin's laugh came again, fainter but still harsh, and then the rhythmic beat of a running horse, fading off into the night.

Bonny Belle remembered Shamrock, then, and ran up the stairs.

She met her coming down, the lace nightgown stuffed into her grimed and tattered canvas pants, a gun in her hand that looked too big for her to handle. And the unreadable eyes of Shamrock O'Terran were now blazing with wrath.

"He double-crossed me!" She fought to get past Bonny. "He's gone off and left me! Hell, I don't want to be a lady!"

THEY talked about her behind her back, and as time went on their whispered suspicions turned to irritation because she did nothing definite to justify their doubts. The folks of Piety felt that she was spitefully cheating them of their rights, and they watched her all the closer. The big white house became a wonder box, suspected of holding all sorts of wicked possibilities. For five years the town watched, with hope and a ready condemnation, not quite knowing what it was that they expected to happen, but very sure that it would have its start in Shamrock O'Terran.

She was a strange girl, vivid and exotic as a Spanish shawl, but she had built around her a wall of remoteness and quiet reserve, in the way that a dangerous prisoner might learn to hold his boiling instincts in leash while he waited for the gates to open. When she walked abroad, with her free and springy step, all eyes followed her. The town folks knew, in their vague way, that here was something wild and elemental, something beyond their ken. The women resented her startling beauty. The men talked behind their hands, and entertained certain private speculations.

They had seen her grow from an untamed urchin into a disturbing creature of hidden fire. They knew her background. But they knew not



Devlin reached Piety just in time to pull Shamrock out of a gun fracas that was blowing the lid off the town.

a thing of what she thought, though sometimes they felt flayed and mocked by a single glance of her dark, scornful eyes. Clothes could not hide the firm and supple lines of her lithe young body, and oftentimes when the wind blew in from the desert, she stood as if listening to some wild song. At such times her color was high and her eyes glowed, and the look she would give to seeking townsmen's eyes would be wicked with veiled scorn.

She usually slowed her step when passing the Keller Block, at the end where the Keller Bank adjoined the sheriff's office. There was a picture of Preacher Devlin pasted up outside the sheriff's office, embellished with bold black print and a flattering cash offer. Piety had not forgotten the night of the notorious

gun master's visit and bullet-studded departure.

Young Mansell Keller often made it a point to be standing in the door of the bank when she passed, and he bowed to her whenever he felt sure that nobody was likely to see him. The only son of the town's most prominent citizen had to be careful and discreet about whom he was seen bowing to.

Bonny Belle, with time hanging heavy on her hands, had formed the habit of noticing trifles. Even in five years she had made no headway with the best people.

"Er . . . d' you like him, Sham-

rock?" she asked, meaning young Mansell.

"He's a hound," answered Shamrock with a faraway look, meaning Devlin. "A big ornery hound, and if I ever get my hands on him I'll tell him so! But there isn't much chance I ever will. Yes, sure I like him. Why shouldn't I?"

That, it seemed to Bonny Belle, was a queer way to put it. She hadn't noticed anything particularly houndish or ornery about young Mansell Keller. Handsome young cockerel, kind of, if you happened to admire a neat mustache and slick hair, but not the type she would have expected Shamrock to care for.

THAT night, Bonny Belle lay awake thinking. She was doing a lot of wakeful thinking these nights, and didn't sleep well any more. Her heart bothered her. Kept jumping and palpitating, and she kept having the crazy desire to get up and run around the town, or scream—anything for action. So Shamrock was having sweet dreams about that young Keller, h'm?

"Leave it to her to aim high," thought Bonny Belle. "But I wouldn't have thought—oh, well. If that's what she wants, fine. It'd make her a lady, all right, marrying him. The town would sure bow and scrape to her then!"

Make her a lady. She had promised Devlin to do that. So far, she didn't actually know if she was succeeding or not. Certainly the town hadn't accepted her as one, and never would, unless—h'm. That young Keller. Bonny thought of her own old dreams, and sighed. She'd failed for herself, but maybe she could do better for Shamrock, if she tried hard enough.

She went next day to old Dr. Pen-

nyfeather, and what she learned from him decided her on the necessity for making prompt plans for the future of her ward.

Dr. Pennyfeather, who was something of an institution in Piety, cupped a hand to his good ear and listened to the recital of Bonny's symptoms.

"Very bad, very bad," he mumbled, and fished out his stethoscope.

"Very bad, Miss . . . ah . . . Blue." He had never approved of her, and a look of bleak triumph in his nearsighted eyes said that the wages of sin is death and very rightly so. "I can give you something that will depress the action of your heart and help you to sleep, but I can't do anything more."

"Sleeping pills, h'm?" Bonny drew her fine brows together. "I've never had to take those things in my life. Can't you cure me?"

The old medico took that as an affront, and eyed her coldly. "When any heart is in the condition yours is in, Miss . . . ah . . . Blue," he said disapprovingly, "no doctor can cure it!"

He was very positive about it, and Bonny thought him an opinionated old cuss, but she took the little white tablets he gave her, paid her bill, and went back home with the certain knowledge in her mind that she'd never live to see next summer.

BONNY began her campaign with a victory. Now that her restless spirit had something definite to grapple with, even the thought of a short vista of life ahead failed to conquer her. She went into battle with fifty thousand dollars and her most dazzling smile, and stormed the private sanctum of Mansell J. Keller, Sr.

Mansell J. Keller—known respectfully in and around Piety as the

Senior—received Bonny with purely professional courtesy. He was president of the bank, owned the Keller Block and a row of store buildings, and had recently acquired one of the largest cattle ranches in the Sulphur Spring Valley range. A big man. An important man. It was said he would probably run for territorial governor some day. He looked and acted like a great man who fully realized his own importance.

"I need advice on how to invest my money," explained Bonny, and gave him to understand that she was just a foolishly helpless woman coming to a tower of male omnipotence and wisdom for aid.

The Senior thawed, and eyed her with a new interest that was personal as well as professional. Bonny congratulated herself. Give a man—any man—enough bait of the right kind, and he quit being a frozen fish and became human. After the Senior learned the size of the sum she wished to invest, his courtesy and kindness increased. He suggested a very interesting proposition, and Bonny snapped it up.

"It'll all be Shamrock's some day," she mentioned as she prepared to leave his bank office. "I've made my will and filed it with a Tombstone lawyer. Everything goes to Shamrock when I die. Perhaps I should bring her over to see you, so you can explain everything to her, h'm?"

"By all means," agreed the Senior warmly. "But let us make . . . ahem . . . a little social celebration of the occasion. Suppose we make it dinner at my house? Say—tonight? Thank you. My son and I will call for you both at seven."

As easy as that. Bonny told Shamrock about it. "I'm a banker!" she announced, striking a queenly

pose. "A partner in the Keller bank! And tonight we are dinner guests of the Kellers. How d'you like that, eh?"

Shamrock didn't say. She looked thoughtful, and asked if Bonny had anything else to show for her money.

Yes, Bonny had a receipt. She showed it to Shamrock. "Of course, it'll take time for the partnership papers to be made out," she explained. "A month or more, he said. But the receipt tells what the money's for, and how much. I better lock it in the safe." She'd had a small secret strong box built into the wall of her house.

The dinner was a big success, Bonny thought. She wore her sapphire-blue velvet cloak and was gallantly complimented by the Senior. Moreover, young Mansell paid a lot of attention to Shamrock. Afterward, it occurred to Bonny that Shamrock had been in one of her strange, quiet spells all through the dinner. But she supposed that was natural. Maybe Shamrock was actually getting a little shy. Well, it was high time. She'd never evinced any shyness about anything before.

Other little social occasions followed. Piety sat up and took notice. But the king and the crown prince could do no wrong. If they had decided to accept at last the occupants of the big white house, then it was probably all right.

"Well, we're ridin' high at last!" Bonny exulted to Shamrock. "They've finally figured we won't bite 'em, and they're taking us in. Y'know, it's a funny thing, but I sleep pretty good now, even when I don't take the doc's pills."

The Senior had a different version of the matter, when he spoke of it to his son in a very man-to-man private talk. "It's like this," he explained to Mansell. "I've spread out

considerably this last year, and I found it necessary to . . . er . . . borrow from cash deposits in the bank."

"That so?" Mansell, stretched out in a chair, was admiring his new riding boots. His father had made him manager of the new Keller ranch, and he dressed the part. "That's a felony or crime or something, isn't it?"

The Senior winced slightly, and lighted one of his specially imported Havanas. "Well . . . er . . . yes, in a way. And the bank examiners are due soon. However, I've made up the shortage. Our friend, the very estimable Miss Blue, gave me fifty thousand dollars for a partnership in the bank. In cash."

Mansell looked up from his shining boots. "You sold her a partnership? But—"

"Of course not." The Senior made an impatient gesture. "I merely gave her a receipt for the money." He stared at his son. "But I want to keep that money. I've got to, or the bank will go under and I'll be investigated! Yes, it's as bad as that, but don't look so scared! How are you getting along with that girl?"

"We-ell—" Mansell forgot his scare, and stroked his trim mustache. "I think I'm making out all right. She doesn't say much, but—"

"Well, hurry it along," snapped his father. "After you marry her, the rest will be simple."

"Simple? But it's not her money."

"It will be soon," averred the Senior. "I've found out that Bonny Belle has heart trouble, and can't live long. Never mind how I found out. It's true. And, as you know, she's leaving everything to Shamrock. So marry the girl—and be quick about it."

"Oh, I intend to, don't worry."

WS—2E

Mansell smirked at himself in a mirror. "She's pretty lucky, getting into our family, considering what she came from, eh?"

CHAPTER III

MURDER IS SO SIMPLE

WHEN Mansell proposed to her, Shamrock O'Terran kept her hands locked behind her to keep from hitting him for the smug and cocksure way he did it.

They stood in the iron-fenced grounds of the big white house. Inside, Bonny was playing the piano and singing to herself. Shamrock gazed at the lighted windows, listening. Bonny was happy these days. She was blossoming out all over again, and more beautiful than ever. Men bowed respectfully to her on the street now, and women exchanged politely pleasant greetings with her. She was becoming accepted by the best people, and glorying in it.

It would be a shame to spoil all that for her, Shamrock decided. It would be a shame not to help lift her up to the pinnacle of her ambition before she died. Shamrock knew about old Dr. Pennyfeather's verdict. Just a few months—

Shamrock looked critically at Mansell, at his dashing range garb, his face and his neat mustache. Just a few months. Well, maybe she could stand it that long.

"Yes," she said matter-of-factly. "I'll marry you."

That same night, she wrote a letter, and addressed it to a fictitious name Devlin had once given Bonny and sent it in care of an obscure *cantina* in Saucedo, a hundred miles away below the border. Devlin had mentioned the place as being one of his hang-outs when in that locality. It was a short letter. Hardly a let-

ter, but more in the nature of a social invitation, with ironic under-currents. It ran:

Miss Shamrock O'Terran
cordially requests the pleasure of
Preacher Devlin's attendance
at her wedding to
Mr. Mansell J. Keller, Jr.,
one month from this date.

She sealed it and stamped it, and held it in her hand, staring at it.

"The big ornery hound!" she muttered, and took it out to the post office.

The day of the wedding was so bright and sunny, it irritated Shamrock. It was to be a church wedding, and she scowled at herself in the mirror, in her bridal dress. Darn such frippery. She felt like putting on her old canvas pants, and marching to church in them, just to see the shocked faces.

DOWNSTAIRS, in the magnificent drawing room, the Senior smiled at a resplendent Bonny and suggested a toast to the occasion. Bonny waved toward the wine cabinet and invited him to choose the poison. The Senior made expert choice, bringing out a decanter of old sherry.

"I notice a small box in there, with a few white tablets in it," he murmured, filling two glasses. "What are they, may I ask?"

"Oh, them." Bonny dismissed them with a shrug. "Just sleeping pills that the doc . . . er . . . Dr. Pennyfeather gave me. I forgot about them. Haven't been using them lately."

"Aren't such things dangerous?" queried the Senior casually.

"Dangerous? Well, not unless anybody was fool enough to swallow more than one," answered Bonny. She was watching the clock and

waiting for Shamrock to come down. "Two or three would kill you dead, the doctor said. I used to take one every night, in a glass of wine. No taste to 'em, that way. 'Scuse me a minute. I'm going to see what's keeping Shamrock."

After she left, the Senior swung his eyes back toward the wine cabinet. He finished filling the glasses, and carried the decanter back. The little round box, lying open, was close to his hand, and he stared at it. Two or three would kill, she had said. There were four in the box. In a glass of wine—no taste to them that way. Maybe that old fool of a doctor was wrong in his verdict. Maybe Bonny would live a long time yet. Such things did happen, often. And if she lived—Better to make sure.

Two or three would kill—two or three would kill. Tasteless in wine. Four in the box. She'd forgotten about them. Didn't use them any more. Heart trouble. Excitement of the wedding. Nobody would wonder, nobody would ask questions. Fifty thousand dollars, in cash, and this house, and everything in it. Everything willed to that girl, and she was marrying Mansell today.

The Senior looked at his hand, picking up the four little white tablets, and felt pride in the fact that it was perfectly steady. Things were simple, when you were clever and cool enough to snatch at opportunity when it came. He dropped the four little pellets in Bonny's glass, watched them dissolve, and stirred the wine with his forefinger.

He had his own glass in his hand when Bonny came back. "She'll be right down," said Bonny, and picked up her glass. "Well—here's long life to the bride and groom!"

"Long life," echoed the Senior, and again took pride in the fact

that he could sip his wine without hurry or a tremble.

Watching Bonny drain her glass, he thought, "Murder is so simple."

HALF on hour later the wedding ceremony was drawing to a dignified close. "—pronounce you man and wife," concluded the solemn voice, and Shamrock felt that he might have been a little more cheerful about it. The occasion was sad enough, as far as she was concerned, without outside help. Maybe the reverend was feeling sorry for this dressed-up dummy beside her. Some women were crying behind her. Probably the mothers of eligible daughters, who also felt sad about it. Mansell had the reputation of being a ladies' man.

A sudden stir of commotion broke out, and Shamrock turned to see what was wrong. She saw a small crowd gathered about somebody, and then she saw that the somebody was Bonny. Bonny sat with her head bowed. She was slumped, she who always sat so jauntily erect with her golden head high, and Dr. Pennyfeather was bending over her, mumbling and shaking his bald head.

As Shamrock pushed through the group, the old medico quavered, "I'm afraid she's gone. All the excitement was too much for her. Her heart was in very bad condition."

The Senor, hovering near, clucked his tongue in distress. "What a pity, what a very great pity! Are you sure, doctor?"

Outside, a red-headed stranger tied his played-out horse to the Bearcat hitch rack, and ran a considering eye over the array of saddled mounts along the street. He had taken note of activity around the church as he rode in.

"I'll pick me a good un this time,"

he murmured to himself, and hitched his gun-slung belts. "Nothin' like a weddin' or a funeral to bring out the best in horseflesh."

He was ragged and travel-stained, with the sharp-edged look of a man who has missed meals and sleep. Tall, big-boned, he moved with deceptive indolence across the street and along the boardwalk. He studied his surroundings with hard care as he approached the church. The best horses were tied there, and he had already decided on a dun with a good head and fast lines. As he came abreast of the sheriff's office, he scanned from habit the wanted bills posted up outside. His own picture looked out at him from one of them, with his name below, Red Rogate.

"Well, now, they sure do print a mess o' those things," he thought, and grinned. His eyes, bright blue against the burned brown of his skin, did not harden, but went brighter and more reckless. Red Rogate was too uncivilized, and looked it, to nurse any long and bitter grudge against the narrow course of organized justice. He took a broad and tolerant view of such things.

He approached the horse he had picked out. Everybody was inside the church. His hand was almost on the dun's bridle when people began pouring out of the building, and he walked on with a sigh of regret. He halted farther on, and lounged unobtrusively in a doorway with his dusty sombrero tipped well over his face. The folks coming out of the church looked very solemn. They were carrying out a woman. Well, now, it did beat all, the way some womenfolks got all stirred up at weddings. He'd have to wait until the street cleared again, or at least until the women got off it. Couldn't grab a horse and shoot your way out

of town, with a bunch of women around. One of them might get hurt. That sure was a beautiful girl, the bride.

They carried Bonny into her big white house, and Shamrock had them put her in the gilt and ivory bed. Bonny, after paying a handsome price for that splendid bed, had never slept in it. It was just too grand, she had said, and she'd never quite got up the courage to rumple those gleaming silk coverlets and pillows. Well, she'd sleep in it at last and it wasn't a bit too good for her. Shamrock vowed.

After the others left the room, Shamrock stood looking down at Bonny's white face for a long time. She patted Bonny's hand, and smoothed back the golden hair.

"Good-by, Bonny," she whispered. "I . . . I hope it didn't hurt."

Cornelius Winterfield came up softly into the room, his hat in his hand. He was senior partner of the Winterfield & Abbot Funeral Parlor. A wizened little man with darting round eyes, he knew his business well enough to make a good living at it. He coughed, bobbed his head to Shamrock, and cast a professional eye at the still figure on the bed.

"You will be wishing to make arrangements for the burial," he intoned smoothly. "Now, I have some very fine caskets. Solid silver fittings—"

"Yes, yes, of course. The burial." Shamrock waved him away. "Please attend to it. I leave everything in your hands."

Winterfield bobbed his head again, backing out. "Thank you. I shall arrange to have the body removed to my premises this afternoon. And please permit me to offer my deepest sympathy."

Alone again, Shamrock went to

her own room. She ripped off her bridal dress and kicked it into the fireplace. She took her old canvas pants and flannel shirt out of her closet, and put them on. When she had worn them last the pants had been rolled up at the cuffs. They fit her well enough when she let them out. She took her gun belt and buckled it on, and slapped her right hand against the gun in its worn old holster. Then she went downstairs.

THE house was full of people. Most of them had never set foot inside the place before, and they were prying politely about, examining things and whispering. One woman had opened the wine cabinet and was peering in at the rich assortment of bottles, shaking her head and clucking her tongue. Two others were fingering Bonny's sapphire-blue velvet cloak, smiling pityingly at its flamboyant gorgeousness. The Senior drifted about, sizing up the furnishings, an estimating look in his eyes, while Mansell looked bored and impatient.

Shamrock descended upon them quietly. Her eyes took on a blaze. The smug, prying rabble!

Mansell was the first to catch sight of her. He shot to his feet, mouth open and eyes wide, staring at her disreputable garb.

"Say, what the—" he choked. "For Heaven's sake, have you lost your senses?"

"No," said Shamrock. "No, I've had 'em all the time, and I've still got 'em." She spoke slowly, bitingly, and the fiery contempt in her eyes brought a shocked hush. "Get out of here—all of you—pronto!"

Mansell gasped. He advanced on her. "You're mad!" he flung angrily at her. "Pull yourself together.

Have you forgotten that you're my wife?"

"No, but I'm sure going to!" she retorted. She surveyed him from head to feet with her blazing eyes. "Why, you smug counterfeit, I wouldn't willingly have your lily-white hide for my saddle blanket! I'm free—*free* again, you hear? A free O'Terran! I'm no tabby house cat, and never will be!" She slapped her holster. "Get out!"

The women made for the front door in a rush, squealing and gabbling. The men followed after them, trying to hold on to their dignity. Shanrock picked up somebody's abandoned hat and flung it after them. It hit the Senior. He turned, and the narrow stare he sent back at her was murderous.

Near the church Red Rogate strolled past the dun again, and swore softly. "Those darn women. He wished they'd keep off the street and stay put, instead of running in and out like this. Some sort of excitement was going on down there at that big white house.

"Where there's women, there's trouble," he thought. "Never fails, an' a poor but honest outlaw just don't stand a chance. But I got to get me a fresh horse, regardless."

Shamrock went and closed the wine cabinet. She noticed the little empty box, and it passed through her mind that there had been four pills in it that same morning. But she paid it small attention. When she came out of the house, people were scattered about in the street, staring at her, and the Senior and Mansell stood at the gate.

The Senior came stalking toward her, his thin lips stretched white with fury. "By Satan, my girl, you need taming!" he grated, and reached to thrust her back into the house before him.

SHAMROCK drew her gun with a single swift stroke of her right hand. "Stand off!" she commanded briefly. "Don't you know you can't tame an O'Terran?"

He snatched at the gun. It went off with a roar, promptly, and he lurched back, claspng a wrist that ran red. "You . . . you little wild cat!"

Shanrock laughed in the Senior's face, and cocked the gun again. "Sure, that's what I am—a wild-cat O'Terran—and I wouldn't be anything else!" She swept the gaping crowd with her cutting contempt. "There's nothing left here to hold me—and I'm on my way! Oh, I've known all about your whispering and your nudging. You've been waiting and watching for me to make a slip. Well, here it is—and, by Satan's boots, I'll make it a good one!"

She slammed a shot at the Keller Bank. Its windows crashed, and a bunch of tied horses outside snapped their bridles in fright and took off along the street, spooking others. Her next bullet whanged off an iron hitching post and buzzed over the heads of the crowd. Men and women dived in every direction, dodging runaway horses and another careless bullet.

The vast bulk of Sheriff Blount came in sight, heaving and blowing. He was honest enough, when his duty didn't conflict with the Senior's wishes. His scandalized eyes sought the Senior now, looking for orders. The Senior, backing with his son across the street, shouted them.

"Take her, Blount, she's gone crazy! Zeigler! Where are you, Zeigler?"

Jupe Zeigler, on the bank pay roll as guard, acted also as the Senior's private bodyguard. He came out of the bank, running. A taciturn and

secretive sort of man, unsmiling, he had a creepy quality about him that made most people shun him. He followed the charging sheriff, and both made straight for the girl with the smoking gun. She was reloading, after pitching three more shots that cost three more windows and caused several buckboard teams to hit for home in a dust-raising bolt.

Somebody else let loose a shot, and Shamrock looked up from her loading. She was enjoying herself, shooting up this town, but if somebody craved to turn it into something more than a frolic, well, she was ready to accommodate him. Her color was high, and her eyes sparkled, and she had the look of a wild bird that has just broken out of its cage.

She saw a red-headed savage of a man she'd never seen before, standing in the dust of the street. Not a Piety man. No, decidedly not a Piety man. He stood out like a scarred lance among umbrellas, and even his grin looked violent. He called to her, "I don't know what the party's about, you untamed wild cat, but I'm all for you!"

His shot had lifted the sheriff's hat. The officer ducked and grabbed it up, fumbling for his gun. Zeigler spun around in his running, and crouched, his right hand streaking under his coat to his shoulder holster. He halted the motion when he saw the redhead's gun, but two more men coming out of the bank behind the redhead stabbed for their holsters, and Shamrock began shooting again.

And Preacher Devlin, entering the town at that moment in response to a month-old wedding invitation, pulled his big black up short and blinked twice in surprise as he regarded the chaotic scene.

"Well, I'll be damned!" he mut-

tered. "What the hell kind o' weddin' is this?"

CHAPTER IV

TALONS OF THE UNTAMED

THE redhead held his gun up, ready to chop down, and met Zeigler's stare. "Make your bet, feller, or pitch in!" he invited.

One of the two men coming out of the bank ducked back at the crack of Shamrock's gun, dragging a wounded leg. The other jumped back with him, and reappeared at the shattered window with a rifle. A Bearcat bouncer burst out through the batwing doors with a shotgun.

Devlin put heels to his horse and swooped down on Shamrock from behind. She heard the swift clatter of hoofs, and whirled, but he came too fast. He leaned out of the saddle, grabbed a handful of her shirt, and slung her up behind him as if picking up a spare blanket on the run.

"Devlin!" She pounded his broad back. "Devlin, you hound—you ornery big hound—you did come!" In pure wild joy, she let out the squall of a roistering cowboy.

"You damn young hellion, I might've known you'd never make a lady!" Devlin growled, and reined the black around in a tight turn. "Now I s'pose I've got to get you out o' here."

Shamrock pounded his back again. "Wait, Devlin, wait! We've got to give my friend a hand!"

"Uh? Who is he?"

"Durned if I know. That redhead yonder. He's got the whole town on his neck!"

Devlin hauled in the black. He took a look at the redhead, figured he might be worth the trouble, and flipped out a gun. "Hey, you—fork

y'self a horse an' get rollin'!" he called, and thumbed two shots.

The Bearcat bouncer looked sick as he dropped his shotgun and retreated on uncertain feet into the saloon. The rifleman in the bank got off one wild shot and quit. Devlin whipped his third bullet between Zeigler's feet. "Run or dance, hombre!"

Zeigler did neither. He was a gunman, and had his pride. He looked fully at Devlin, and spread his hands in resigned acknowledgment. "Guess I'll walk—Preacher," he murmured, and strolled without haste back to the bank.

The sheriff stood goggling at Devlin, until the gun master's satanic eyes fell upon him with pale query. Then he gulped and followed Zeigler. The redhead sprinted to the church, and Devlin set the black to a canter out of town, with Shamrock clinging on behind.

Devlin scowled as he rode, and wished heartily that he'd never come in answer to that damned wedding invitation. He had intended merely to ride through quickly, drop off the wedding gift he had brought for Shamrock, and get out again. The kid, he had figured, deserved that much consideration, seeing that she was settling down to be a married lady.

"Tell me," he demanded, "what hell's caper were you up to back there, shootin' up the town? I thought this was your weddin' day."

"It was," Shamrock agreed carelessly, and laughed. "I was married this noon. I was just sort of annulling it when you rolled in."

The redhead came riding up fast behind them, on a dun horse, and fell into gait with them, listening. Shamrock scanned his face and eyes, exchanged a grin with him, and went on. "You see, Devlin, this

wedding wasn't my idea, exactly."

She explained more fully. "And so," she finished, "after I shot my father-in-law—"

"Huh?" Devlin twisted to look at her. "Kill him?"

"No, I'm afraid not."

Devlin let that pass. "Where's Bonny?"

"She died," said Shamrock quietly. "She died in church during the wedding."

Devlin said nothing, but after a moment he took off his black sombrero and put it on again. "She was . . . uh . . . a good scout," he muttered gruffly, and fell silent again, and they rode that way until the redhead spoke up.

"I reckon," he remarked, "they've organized a posse, an' that might be it behind us. Quite a bunch. Looks like all the town an' a bit more."

Devlin glanced briefly to the rear. "We'll make for the New Mexico line," he said curtly, and heeled the black.

THEY made camp in a hidden fold of the Guadalupe foothills as the sun went down, and Shamrock told the rest of her story. She sat on her heels, sipping scalding coffee from a tin mug. Thoroughly at ease, she gazed at the two men.

They were a hard-looking pair. Devlin, with his strong, saturnine face and chilling gray eyes, had the look of a devil, entirely ruthless, and untroubled by scruples. The redhead looked as if he never should have come in out of the wilds. A reckless, violent pair. A pair of wild hawks. Her own kind of people. She understood them, and felt more comfortable with them, here in this hidden outlaw camp, than she ever had felt in Piety.

Devlin broke a long silence. He

looked at the redhead. "You're Red Rogate, an' you're on the dodge," he stated. "I've seen the bills."

"Right," nodded Red Rogate. "An' you're Devlin." He had no need to add more to that.

They gazed at each other studiously, each taking measure of the other. Both nodded slightly again, and brought their eyes to bear on Shamrock. She was their problem child.

Red Rogate, squatting, rolled himself a brown cigarette. "Uh . . . what d'you aim to do?" he queried.

dryly. "An' would, if I let her. She's an O'Terran. Her father was a heller, an' she's another. Don't let that pretty face fool you! Dammit," he added bleakly, "I might've known you can't tame a wild hawk. They'll break out first chance, every time, an' raise blazes with the chickens!"

Shamrock grinned at him without resentment. "We're all three hawks, if it comes to that," she retorted. "And we can scream mighty



"Me?" Shamrock shrugged. "Why, if you two will help me get a horse, I think I'll head for the California gold fields."

Red eyed her. "Say, a girl can't go rompin' off across country—"

"This one could," cut in Devlin

loud! "If you keep me from going to California, then you'll just have to let me hang and rattle with you, that's all. Suits me. Where do we go from here?"

Devlin bit deeper into his unlighted cigar. "D'you aim to go off an' leave Bonny's money?" he queried.

"Do you think I'd go back to Piety to collect it?" she countered. "I married that strutting dummy, put a crease in his father, shot up the town, and rode out with a pair of . . . hum . . . gentlemen of fortune! No, I think I'll let it go!"

Devlin gazed blandly up at the darkening sky. "That from an O'Terran," he murmured, and shook his head. "The old stock runs to seed. You're not the O'Terran your father was, Shamrock. The captain

never would have run out on fifty thousand dollars!"

Shamrock's head came up. "Are you daring me to go back and try to get it?"

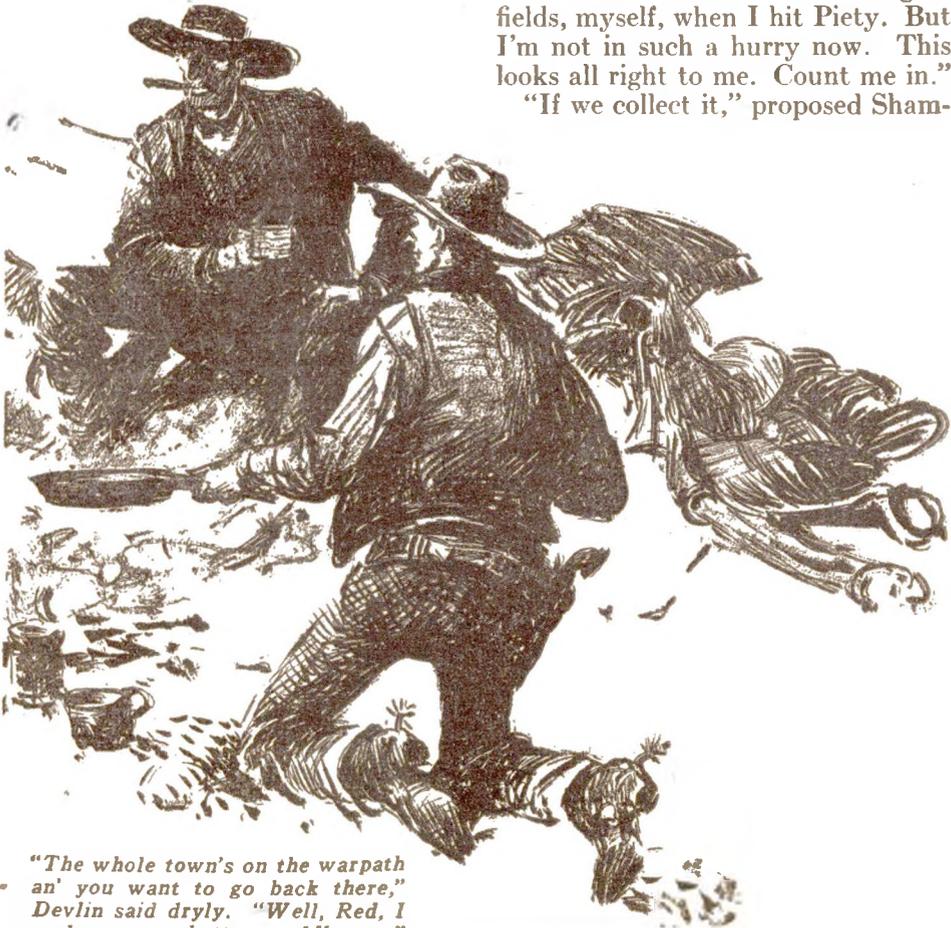
"Well, I wouldn't put it that way," returned Devlin. "After all, it's your money. But I'd maybe lend you a hand to try an' collect it, if you're game."

"Done!" she announced.

"*Bueno!*" drawled Devlin. "Red, you don't have to get in on this if it looks too fast for you."

Red grinned faintly. "I've headed into trouble for less reason," he remarked mildly. "Funny thing, I was makin' for the California gold fields, myself, when I hit Piety. But I'm not in such a hurry now. This looks all right to me. Count me in."

"If we collect it," proposed Sham-



"The whole town's on the warpath an' you want to go back there," Devlin said dryly. "Well, Red, I reckon you better saddle up."

rock, "we split it three ways. Is that agreed?"

Both men shrugged. That was a matter for the future. Devlin thought of the sum, fifty thousand dollars. With that much money, he could settle Shamrock somewhere, maybe, and put the responsibility of her out of his life again. Getting her settled would be a problem in itself. It would be hard to corral her in one spot, and that husband of hers would always have a claim on her if he ever located her. But the first step was to get hold of the money that Bonny had willed to her.

"You say Bonny got a receipt for that money from Keller?" Devlin asked. "Where did she put it?"

"In her safe," replied Shamrock. "She always carried the key of it on a thin chain around her neck, under her dress. I suppose it's still there, if Winterfield hasn't taken it off. He arranged to move Bonny over to his funeral parlor today."

"Hm-m-m." Devlin rose from the fire and stamped it out. "That receipt might come handy. We'll pay a call at that funeral parlor first, anyway. Let's saddle up!"

BREAKING into funeral parlors at night was not one of Devlin's habits, but he had a trained gift for getting where he wanted to go, and the lock on the side window was flimsy.

He slid the window open and eased his long frame over the low sill. Shamrock followed him inside, and then Red, who carefully closed the window again. They stood in quietness, listening. A crack of light, low against the floor, marked the location of the door of Winterfield's office. Muffled voices carrying on a desultory conversation seeped through the crack under the door.

The front windows were bare, and the only illumination in here came from the street, which was lighted in spots by the Bearcat Saloon and the big lantern that hung in front of the bank and the sheriff's office. Devlin sent his hard gaze seeking about the funeral parlor.

Empty coffins stood on black skeletons of trestles, their lids propped open in somber invitation. Others, unfinished, were piled against a wall, the floor in front of them littered with shavings, fragments of black cloth, coffin plates, and a few scattered tools. Two other benches, with cold stone-slabbed tops and screened off from view of the front windows, held two long bundles, covered with white sheets.

Devlin drew down the corners of his wide mouth. The place smelled of death, coffins, and sad finality. A damnably dismal end, this, to a gay life. For himself, when he reached his own destination of death, he'd prefer to meet it out in the careless solitude of the desert, and dispense with all this bleak formality. Bonny Belle would have liked that, too, but she had made the unfortunate error of dying in a town.

Shamrock was tiptoeing toward the slab-topped benches behind the screen. Devlin watched her go. The girl had no nerves. Yet she had feeling, deep feeling. She had imbibed or inherited the philosophy of her father, the captain: Death was not to be feared or cursed as a cheat. You accepted it when it came, recalled the good times, and went out laughing into the adventure of the unknown.

A chair scraped in the office, and the door opened suddenly, letting in a broad shaft of light. Winterfield appeared, talking over his shoulder as he entered.

"No, Alfred," he was saying, "I

don't agreed with you. I think that old Injun died of booze, not cirrhosis of the liver. I know these Mescalero Apaches and their *tulupai* parties. Old Blacksnake Billy was as bad as the rest, for all he called himself a Christian. Your eyes aren't what they used to be, you know, Alfred."

"My eyes are as good as ever. I'll have you know!" snapped a testy voice, and old Dr. Pennyfeather came closely after him into the funeral parlor. "Booze—cirrhosis of the liver—a natural result. Light a lamp and I'll prove—" He fetched up with a bump against the undertaker's back. "Confound it, Cornelius, what did you stop so quick for?"

CORNELIUS WINTERFIELD didn't reply. His skinny head was thrust forward, and he was staring at a tall and motionless black apparition that returned his stare with a pair of chilly, glimmering gray eyes. The undertaker gulped and found part of his voice.

"Woo—woo—who's that?"

"Spooks!" drawled Devlin. "Take it easy, brother, we're just payin' a call on a friend. Shamrock, is that Bonny there?"

"No," answered Shamrock with distaste, replacing the shroud on the first long shape. "It's a drunk-dead Injun in a blanket."

"Eh? What's that? Drunk, did you say?" flared the doctor, his professional indignation overcoming his shock. He had chanced to catch that one word, and he peered mistily at Shamrock. "Young man, I'll have you know he died of cirrhosis of the liver! The symptoms are as plain as—"

"Well, whatever he died of, he's darn poor company for Bonny," commented Shamrock, and went to the next slab. "This is Bonny here,"

she added in a softer voice, and uncovered the golden head.

Winterfield sidled uncertainly forward, watching Devlin and Red out of the corner of his eye. He was flustered, but the girl was a customer and for that he could overlook many peculiarities of behavior, even including breaking into his funeral parlor.

"Er . . . ah . . . I haven't touched her yet," he stammered. "I was waiting to see . . . er . . . that is, I was wondering who was going to pay for— You see, Miss— Mrs. Keller, I mean—"

Devlin waved him quiet. "See if the key's there, Shamrock," he murmured, gazing with unreadable eyes at the white blur of Bonny's face.

"It isn't," answered Shamrock, and turned on Winterfield. "She wore a thin gold chain around her neck, with a little key on it. Where is it?"

"I . . . I . . . a key?"

"Yes," said Devlin tonelessly. "A key. Where is it?"

Winterfield tore his eyes from the stony stare. "I didn't take it!" he protested rapidly. "I swear I didn't! The Senior—Mr. Keller—he came in to look at the body. I . . . I think he took it. I saw him drop something in his pocket."

Devlin looked at Shamrock. "It's too damn bad you only creased that houbre!" he observed dourly. "You could as well—" He stopped.

The building echoed hollowly to a thundering knock on the door, and men's shapes loomed against the front windows with here and there a long glint of gun metal.

"Mr. Winterfield!" boomed the voice of Sheriff Blount. "Mr. Winterfield, open up! Are you all right? Georgia Sam, he swears he saw somebody breaking in here awhile ago!"

"Ah sho' did, Mis' Blount!" seconded the high and unsteady voice of Georgia Sam, who enjoyed the distinction of being the only man of dark color in Piety.

At the same time, a pungently short and unladylike word came from Shamrock. She had been smoothing back Bonny's hair. She stepped back hurriedly, and for once in her life looked almost scared.

Bonny Belle Blue was rising slowly from the stone slab, moaning, her teeth chattering.

CHAPTER V

MARCH OF THE CORPSES

DR. PENNYFEATHER was a stubborn man, with a mind that refused to accept anything that ran counter to precedent and science. He stared in stark outrage at the moving, moaning corpse.

"I don't believe it!" he pronounced positively.

The undertaker had another type of mind. "It's—this is most irregular!" he mumbled. "I've never seen—" The full shock of it caught him up suddenly, and he stood with his mouth open as Bonny sat up.

Bonny gazed unseeingly about her with dazed, wandering eyes. She was crying, and the tears ran down her chalky-white face. Her mouth opened jerkily. "I'm c-c-cold!" she moaned, and pulled the shrouding sheet closer around her with fumbling hands. "I w-want to g-g-go home!"

Winterfield uttered a low howl, turned, and dived for the front door. Red jumped to head him off, grappled, and they went down together, the undertaker fighting like a madman. The pounding shook the door again, and faces were pressed against the front windows, trying to make out what was going on inside.

Shamrock slid out her gun and prodded the doctor with it, forcing him back against a wall. "Stand hitched, doc!" she commanded. "Don't try to make a break and open that door! Bonny—for Heaven's sake, Bonny—are you really alive!"

"I'm c-cold!" chattered Bonny again, still crying softly. She got her bare feet to the floor and stood swaying. Her blurred blue eyes drifted about with the vacant gaze of a baby.

Devlin strode to the side window and peered out. There were men in the side alley. He went into Winterfield's office, blew out the light, and took a look out the rear. More men, and more joining them. The place was surrounded with them. He gnawed on his cigar, one dark eyebrow cocked, and backed into the funeral parlor. If it were just a matter of himself trapped in here, or himself and Red, the problem of breaking out through that ring would be simpler. But what could a man do with a woman who—

He was aware at once of somebody fumbling at the bolt inside the door, as he re-entered the funeral parlor, and the bench where Bonny had been was now bare.

"Stop her!" he barked, and leaped, but he was too late.

BONNY had finally located the way out of this dark, cold, unfamiliar place. Red, busy putting a quietus on Winterfield without too much serious injury, hadn't noticed; nor Shamrock, holding the fuming doctor at bay. Bonny Belle wanted to go home, where it was warm and comfortable. She was chilled through, and her heart, just beginning to throw off the effects of the depressant drug, beat too sluggishly as yet to warm her.

The door opened and she tottered

out, plaintively sobbing, the white shroud hugged around her. Devlin stopped just short of the door. He watched her pause like a lost wraith seeking its bearings, her big blue eyes sorrowful, oblivious of the mob. For a moment there was a hush, and it seemed as if all sound and animation had suddenly deserted Piety, leaving it petrified. Then men began slowly backing away as Bonny advanced. She had just caught sight of her big white house. With a hollow sob of gladness, she drifted uncertainly in its general direction, and held out her shrouded arms as if she wanted to embrace it.

Somebody brushed past Devlin on the way to the open door. It was Shamrock. He seized her and hauled her back. She fought against his hold.

"Let me go!" she screamed. "I must look after her!"

Devlin lifted her off her feet, kicking, and carried her back to the stone-topped benches. He whisked the shroud and blanket off the dead body of Blacksnake Billy, and flung them over her.

"You're right," he growled. "She needs takin' care of. Put her to bed an' keep her warm. But keep your face covered till you get to the house, *sabe?*"

Shamrock caught on at once. When she emerged into the street, she glided rather than walked, her bowed head cowed in the blanket, and the sheet dragging on the ground. A sort of sigh went through the mob. Somebody let a gun fall unheeded to the boardwalk with a loud rattle. One walking corpse was plenty. Two were too much. They had plainly seen the white, crying face of Bonny Belle Blue. They couldn't see the face of old Blacksnake Billy under the hooded blanket, but they could imagine it.

Shamrock glided with ghastly deliberation toward the horror-frozen figure of Georgia Sam, who stood rooted in the middle of the street with mouth agape and eyes popping. Georgia Sam came to life. He screeched once, then the slapping of his feet as he took off at top speed sounded like a stick whipped along a picket fence. Several other men in the mob were not too proud to follow suit, though they lacked his speed.

"I reckon, Red," murmured Devlin, "now's as good a time to leave as any!" He drew his guns from under his black coat as he spoke, and stepped out, and the yell he gave made even Red blink.

THEY charged out through the breaking crowd, knocking men sprawling out of their way, and were fifty yards down the street before anybody thought to start shooting. Devlin ducked into the first alley. Red paused long enough to pitch four shots and add to the pandemonium, before he sprinted on after him. He was laughing when he caught up with the gun master.

"Haven't had so much fun since I stampered a bunch o' bulls through a sheep company headquarters! I swear, though, that yellow-haired gal gave me a turn, comin' to life like that. The doc, he'll never get over it!"

"She acted doped," remarked Devlin. "Wouldn't surprise me if somebody didn't slip a double knockout into her drink, tryin' to kill her. But you don't kill Bonny Blue as easy as that!"

They found their horses where they had left them, tied beyond the town's outskirts, and mounted. Behind them, the town was rackety with a babble of shouting voices, running feet, and a confused clapping

of hoofs. Somebody back there was barking orders, trying to whip some sort of organization out of disorder. The Senior or the sheriff, probably. Devlin listened for a moment before digging heels to his big black. Likely the Senior. He wouldn't be the kind of man to be fooled out of his senses for long by those two walking corpses.

Devlin peered through the darkness, and picked out the roof of Bonny's white house. Red caught his look, and read his mind.

"Reckon there's any chance we could take 'em along? I'm game to try."

Devlin shook his head, a glint of regret in his wintry gray eyes. "Not a chance. Bonny's in no shape to ride, an' Shamrock wouldn't leave her behind like that. Anyway, we got no time. We'll have forty possemen on our tails in a minute, all tryin' to prove they don't know what scare is." He shrugged, gave a yank to his hat brim, and put the black to a lope.

Red, no novice at throwing off pursuit without killing his horse doing it, mentally bowed to a master of the art when they finally drew up and dismounted to stretch their legs. "Got any notion where we are?" he queried. He was new to these parts, and the country all looked about the same to him in the darkness.

"M-m-m." Devlin nodded ahead. "The Pedrogosas lie yonder. Piety is south of us. This country," he added, "will be boilin' for us tomorrow. You can't play hell with a town like Piety, an' still hang around. Us, partic'ly. The word'll go out fast, an' there'll be five hundred bounty-hungry shooters comb-in' every rock an' bush for us, from the Swisshelms to the New Mex line an' down to the border."

RED built a smoke and cupped a match to it. "When I crossed the New Mex line two days ago, a jump ahead of some fellers, I thought to travel fast an' straight through this here Arizona without too much trouble." He blew smoke, his eyes laughing in the darkness. "Funny how things do turn out. Here I am already in plenty bad—"

"An' in bad company," Devlin added for him. "So New Mex is no place for you to run to, h'm?"

"None too healthy," Red agreed. "I had trouble there with sheepmen an' politicians. The sheepmen I could make out to handle, but the politicians were hell. They slapped a bounty on me, an' that made my hide valuable. You know how 'tis. I got too popular. Nothin' like the smell o' bounty to bring out the citizens. I swear, it turns some of 'em from woolly lambs into curly wolves!"

"Well, the wolves'll be gatherin' in Piety, all right," Devlin made grim prophecy. "We went back once an' got out again, but we wouldn't catch 'em asleep a second trip. Keller will be callin' in all his hands, an' a man like that will have plenty on his pay roll who can fight in a pinch. Or he can hire all he wants in two hours."

He pointed north. "With fast ridin, a man could be past the Pedrogosas an' well up into the Chiricahuas before it breaks light. It's rough country up there, and toward the north end there's an old Apache stronghold where all hell an' its imps couldn't find you. I've used it before."

Red squatted on his heels. His cigarette glowed twice before he spoke. "We left that Shamrock girl in a kind o' tough spot, didn't we? An' then there's Bonny. If it's like you figger, an' Keller tried to kill

her so he could keep that money, it's reasonable to s'pose he'll try it again. Am I right?"

"Sure," agreed Devlin, without expression. "An' then there's the money."

"Yeah—there's the money, too. Devlin, d'you aim to try for the Chiricahuas tonight?"

Devlin bent a frosty stare down at him. "Me? Hell no! I was just givin' you directions. I'm goin' to take another crack at Piety tonight!"

Red rose. He went to the dun horse and ran a finger under the cinch, testing it. "I doubt if I could find my way alone," he stated solemnly. "So, if you don't mind, I reckon I'll just tag along."

IT was a late hour for Piety, and it was natural enough that the town should be hushed. The only signs of wakeful life came from the Bearcat, and not much of it there. Across the street from it, the all-night lantern hanging outside the Keller Block spread a pool of light, with a black core formed by the shadow of the lantern's big base, like a mammoth bull's-eye target.

One other light showed. It came from an upstairs window of Bonny's house. Devlin regarded the lighted window, the house, and the town, and his estimate of deadly hidden potentialities was high. Beside him, Red absently hitched his belts and whistled softly between his teeth. They stood by their horses under the dark spread of a black oak, apart from the town.

"What d'you think, Devlin?" murmured Red.

"I think," Devlin decided critically, "the damn town's all loaded an' fused for us! Keller's probably planted a hand-picked bunch of bar-room buckos in Bonny's garden, though I may be wrong. There's

just one way to find out."

They met each other's cool eyes. Neither of them was troubled by nerves, and one more fight was just one more fight, but there was no percentage in taking a suicidal walk into a hidden nest of blazing guns. It offered a slim bet to whoever might do it. They studied what they could see of the house again, and watched the bushes within the iron-fenced grounds, but could make out no movements of waiting ambushers.

"Yeah, just one way to find out," agreed Red. "You're right, Devlin. I'll . . . uh . . . look after the horses till you get back."

"Thanks," acknowledged Devlin dryly. "I had it in mind to do the same favor for you."

Both grinned faintly. Devlin slipped a deck of cards from his inside coat pocket. "Cut for it?"

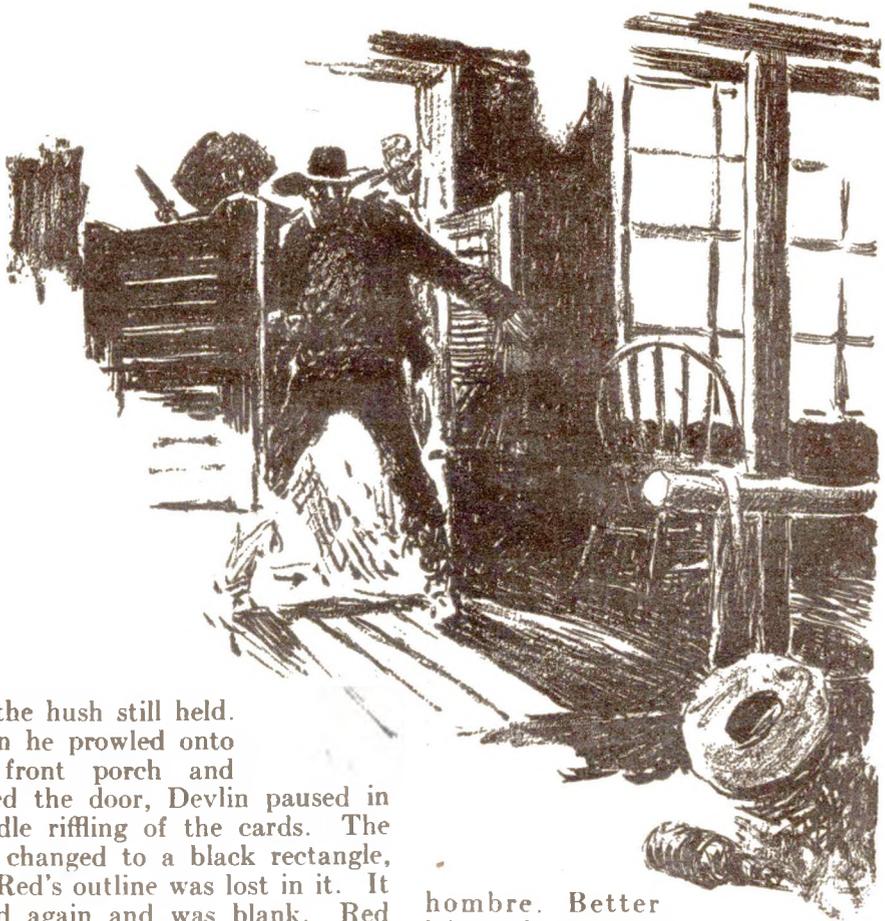
"Fair enough." Red watched Devlin shuffle. He took a cut and looked closely at his card. "Diamond ten."

"Nice card," commented Devlin, and made his own cut. "King o' spades. I'll come after you if you get in trouble. That is, if you're worth pickin' up after!"

Red took out his guns, looked them over, and slid them back. "You'll soon know!" he murmured, and began his wary advance on the big white house.

Watching him go, Devlin idly rifled the cards, his eyes stony. It took Red some little time to make his soft-stepping way to the iron fence, and when he reached it he vaulted lightly over it into the grounds. He crouched for a while against a low mimosa, his head turning this way and that, before going on to the house.

He showed up against the white house like a lean stag crossing snow,



but the hush still held. When he prowled onto the front porch and gained the door, Devlin paused in his idle riffling of the cards. The door changed to a black rectangle, and Red's outline was lost in it. It closed again and was blank. Red had eased on inside.

A sudden explosion of noise shattered the still quietness of the night. Voices shouted, and a gun boomed inside the house, followed by the thumps and crashing bangs of furniture being wrecked in a terrific fight. The gun boomed again, then the noise subsided to the muffled growl of voices. The fight had been short and fierce, lasting barely twenty seconds.

Devlin did not change position or expression. His saturnine face remained hard and invulnerable, but his deep-set eyes went dour and glinted a little colder. "Too bad," he muttered. "He was a pretty good

hombre. Better him than me, though, I reckon."

He kept his baleful stare fixed on the door, waiting to see what next was due to pop. While he waited, his long and hard-muscled fingers went back to their idle play with the cards. He absently shuffled and cut. Each time, his cut turned up the king of spades.

CHAPTER VI

ONE AGAINST PIETY

THE Senior sat in his private office, and smiled as he scanned the sheet of paper in his hand. It was the receipt he had given Bonny

Gunmen piled out of the saloon and, with life hanging in the balance, Red's mount went to bucking.



for her money. He leaned over his polished desk and held it above the glass chimney of the lamp. It curled with the heat, browned, and quickly flamed up. He let it flutter to the floor, watched the paper turn to crinkled black ash, and tamped it to a powder with his toe.

The banker leaned back in his

WS-3E

swivel chair and smiled again. With that scrap of paper out of the way forever, Bonnie Blue could never prove a thing about the money. She'd make trouble about it, of course, if she got the chance, but to his certain knowledge she'd never get the chance. It was a comfortable feeling, and he felt the safer for it, though he always enjoyed a strong sense of safety, especially in this office.

He glanced about him at the familiar security, while at the back of his mind was the thought that it was near time for Zeigler to come and make his report. Things must have gone off all right. It had been several minutes since he heard the sound of shots down at the end of the street. Everything was now quiet again outside, and a few aroused citizens had gone back to bed after the sheriff had called out importantly that he had cinched things down under control.

The office, built into one corner of the bank, had no outside door and only one window. The Senior had designed it himself, not merely as his bank office, but as his business headquarters. Its only entrance was through the bank, and he never let the one set of bank keys out of his personal possession. The single window, heavily barred and blinded with a thick drape, was set too high in the wall for anyone to reach it from the outside without a ladder. The Senior lighted a cigar and puffed slowly, luxuriously. Yes, he decided, there were times when a man could afford to relax and feel safe.

He listened to a tramp of feet coming up the street. Some of the feet turned off, and the Bearcat across the way took on a spurt of noise as men crowded into the bar-room, talking and laughing.

Well, that was all right, if their job was about done. "Let them have their fun," the Senior murmured to himself. They would spend in the Bearcat most of the money he was paying them, and he owned the Bearcat. Good business. It was very convenient, having certain undercover connections that could always promptly supply him with gun slicks whenever he needed them. Better than keeping such a crew reg-

ularly on the pay roll. Cheaper and safer.

The rest of the footsteps continued along past the front of the bank and up wooden steps, and he knew that their destination was the jail, above the sheriff's office next door. After a while the men tramped down again and crossed over to the Bearcat. Quiet settled once more, but for the noises in the saloon.

A STONE lightly struck the outside of the window, and fell to the ground with a tiny rattle. The Senior rose and lowered the wick of the lamp. He pushed aside the thick drape and slid the window up. Zeigler stood below in the side alley, wooden-faced, unsmiling as ever.

"It was the redhead," he reported in a low voice. "A couple of the boys got hurt, but we jumped him before he could do any real good. We'd have finished him, only Blount was there an' claimed him prisoner. He's in the calabozo now, an' Blount's standin' guard all night."

"What about Devlin?" snapped the Senior.

Zeigler twitched one shoulder. "I guess he used his head. He didn't show up. The redhead came back alone. We picked up the dun horse a ways from the house."

"Where's Mansell?"

"Left an hour ago," answered Zeigler. "He took that girl, I mean, he took his wife away, soon after we broke in the house. She fought like a wild cat, sure 'nough, but we helped him tie her in his buckboard, an' he went off with her. He's takin' her to the Trailway House. Gonna tame her, he said."

The Senior nodded approval. Mansell sometimes irritated him with his cocky conceit, but he had always known that no son of his would be lacking in the right kind

of mettle and manhood when called upon to assert his mastery over such a domestic problem.

"And . . . ah . . . Miss Blue?" he questioned.

"She's another wild cat," responded Zeigler, and displayed some faint evidence of feeling as he touched a bruise under his eye. "We had to tie her up, too, an' gag her, or she'd have raised the town. She's still tied in that front room upstairs. Fact is, I don't fancy the job of lettin' her loose, 'less I knock her on the head first. She'd tear me up! What'll I do?"

The Senior pulled at his chin, gazing steadily down at his trusted henchmen. "It would be terrible," he mused softly, "if anything happened to her."

Zeigler, a valuable man, seldom needed more than a hint. "Such as what?"

"We-ell—" The Senior was slowly lowering the window. "That Rogate desperado now, how do we know he didn't set fire to the house before you caught him? He could have, couldn't he?"

Zeigler's secretive eyes went blank and veiled. "Sure," he breathed. "Sure—"

DEVLIN led his horse back under the black oak, and ground-reined him. He chewed thoughtfully on his unlighted cigar in the darkness, and cocked a cold eye over the town. Well, they'd caught Red, banged him up more or less, and slung him into their tight jail. Bonny, perhaps, was in her big house, though that was questionable. As for Shamrock, there was no telling what had happened to her.

"That's a lot o' money to throw over your shoulder," he thought, his mind hooking onto the matter of Bonny's fifty thousand dollars.

He studied the set-up as he would have sized up a poker deal. It didn't look a bit good. The Senior had loaded the deck with gun toughs, and they were congregated in the Bearcat directly facing the bank and the jail. That big lantern hanging outside the Keller Block was another inconvenience. He recalled, too, that a roofless porch ran around the jail. Somebody would be on guard, up on that porch, and it could be reached only by the outside stairway in the street, right where the hanging lantern shed its brightest light.

Devlin took his short saddle rope, and paced noiselessly into the town via a back alley route, his somber garb merging with the darkness. A rope would anyway make no sound, if he got a chance to use it. A pair of fast guns was no answer to this knotty problem.

He stepped deeper into shadow and stopped as he made out the back of the Keller Block in the alley. The reflections from the light in the street threw it into bold relief. A sharp-edged angle of light reached the side of the jail, perched atop the sheriff's office, and the stout figure of Sheriff Blount moved ponderously across it. The sheriff was making his round of the outside cell windows, testing them with a beefy hand as he passed.

Devlin let him pass from sight around the jail before continuing his stealthy advance. The more he saw of it, the less he liked the set-up. One cry of alarm from the sheriff, and the Bearcat would spill an army. As he reached the side alley at the near end of the building, Devlin paused to peer into it, and went motionless.

A man stood just inside the alley, at the other end of it near the street. He moved slowly away as Devlin

watched. A high, barred window quietly slid shut. The man drifted to the street, gazed casually up and down it, and then set off at a brisk gait. Devlin got a glimpse of his face before he vanished, and recognized him as the gunman he had heard called "Zeigler." He sent his glance at the closed window, and could guess who was behind it.

This thing was showing tougher aspects right along, and getting worse instead of better. Devlin scowled at the window, at the jail, and at a corner of the Bearcat that he could see through the side alley. If the Senior was in the bank, locked and safe, there wasn't much chance of getting at him and shaking him loose from fifty thousand dollars. And while the sheriff walked his beat up there around the jail, all bets were against Red's getting out.

Devlin drew out a short-bladed knife, weighed it thoughtfully in his hand, and regretfully put it back. It wouldn't do a whole lot of good to fling it at the sheriff next time he came ambling around. There would still remain the problem of getting up there without being seen, and he could see nothing to hook his rope onto.

"All that beef on him, too," he mused. "Hard to hit a right spot, in this light. He'd likely squeal bloody murder. Anyway, I got nothin' partic'lar against him." He looked at the coiled rope in his hand. There was one thing, perhaps, that he could snag with it. He crept closer and silently shook out the loop.

After a while the sheriff came plodding restlessly around, hitting the bars, more for the sake of something to do than from necessity. A faint noise caught his attention, and he leaned over the rail of the porch, frowning down into the darkness of

the alley. Devlin's rope settled neatly on his shoulders and snaked tight with a jerk around his thick neck.

DEVLIN went hand over hand up the rope. The sheriff's head lolled over the porch rail, his massively stout body sprawled against it. It hadn't taken Blount very long to go limp. His head had whacked the rail first, and that had helped. His mouth still hung open, the way it had been as he strained to yell out, and one hand still feebly clasped a rail support. At the last, he had tried to get out his gun, but had collapsed.

Devlin climbed over the rail and loosened the noose. Blount's face was purple with congestion and his eyes were closed, but gurgling sounds came from his throat as the strangling rope was removed. He'd be a pretty limp man for some time, Devlin judged as he searched Blount's pockets and found a bunch of keys.

At the first cell window, no response answered his muttered query. He slipped on to the next. "You there, Red?"

"Well, for—" The blur of Red's face loomed up behind the bars. "Devlin! Thunder an' blazes, man, how'd you get up here? Look out for that sheriff! He's—"

"Quiet!" growled Devlin. "The sheriff's a little . . . uh . . . under the weather right now. How bad hurt are you?"

"Well, I'm alive an' that's sayin' about all of it," whispered Red. "They clubbed me, jumped on me, an' booted me around consid'able, but I'm still breathin'."

"Here's somethin' that'll ease your aches." Devlin thrust the keys through the bars. "An' here's Blount's gun an' belt. Take it easy

when you come out. You'll be in full sight o' the Bearcat, an' Keller's mob is in there."

Red took the gun belt and the keys, careful not to jangle them. "Devlin, you sure kept your word. You said you'd come after me if I got in trouble, an'—"

"Yeah." Devlin thought of his spade king cut, and grinned faintly. "I gen'rally take care of a friend. You'll have to get y'self a horse. There's a few at the Bearcat rack."

Devlin left the window, trod softly around to the side of the jail porch, and eyed the Bearcat. Here, the porch ran over the flat roof of the Keller Block, but the high false-front would conceal him from anybody who happened to come out of the saloon. He stepped over the rail onto the roof and crossed it in a crouch, quiet-footed as a cat on the prowl. When he came to the end he peered over. He was above the bank, and the barred window of the Senior's office was directly below him.

Devlin shook out his rope again and looked about for something to hook it on. The small and low chimney of the bank's heating stove offered the only possible bet. He looped it, pulled the rope tight, made a careful estimate, and took a double hitch with the rope around his ankle. Then he eased himself over the edge of the roof, headfirst.

He hung head down, his face level with the upper sash of the window. He had buttoned his ministerial coat, and laid his guns on the roof so they wouldn't slide out of his cutaway holsters. It occurred to him now that he would be in a fair fix if anybody happened along. He snapped a finger on the window, and waited for results.

Light broke through as the thick drape was pushed aside. The bot-

tom sash slid up. "Is it done, Zeigler?" came the Senior's whisper.

Devlin hung like a giant bat, waiting, his muscular hands poised. He could just barely see a part of the Senior's forehead. The Senior pressed closer against the bars, peering down into the alley.

"Damn it, Zeigler, where are you?" he whispered irritably. "Why don't you answer me? Is the job done, or has something gone—"

He jerked back with a startled oath as two silent objects flashed downward past his face, but he wasn't fast enough. Devlin's hands darted through the bars and snapped around his throat.

"No, the job's not done yet, Keller," murmured Devlin, and smiled a wicked smile at the white horror he saw in the face of the choking, struggling man. "But it's comin' right along!"

CHAPTER VII

THE BLACK THUNDERBOLT

THE quietness of the town contrasted with the noise that issued from the Bearcat. Both ends of the main street ran into darkness, but here where the saloon and the hanging lantern together made an oasis of light, life went on without slumber.

Devlin and Red made their soft-stepping way along the jail porch, and paused at the head of the stairs that led down to the street. Except for a few saddled horses dozing at the saloon hitch rack, the street was empty. All the noisy life was concentrated inside the Bearcat, and moving shadows on the frosted windows indicated a rousing bottle frolic and impromptu dance going on in there. The Senior's hired gun toughs were having themselves a big time.

"We might's well take the stairs for it," muttered Devlin. "You've got to lift one o' those horses. Try an' do it without a ruckus. I'll meet you at the black oak."

He had walked past that lighted lantern and come up the stairs once, without being seen, and paid a return visit to the jail to find out what was keeping Red. Red had been glad to see him return. He had unlocked his cell, but the keys were no help to him against the main door of the jail, which had a safety lock that could be operated only from the outside. Devlin had taken back the keys and opened it for him.

Red started down the steps, his speculative gaze already running over the horses and picking out the likeliest. Devlin descended after him, watching the barroom doors. If any single one of those frolicking roosters happened to step out, or even look out, hell's gates would burst open with a bang. Devlin thought of the Senior and the sheriff. They wouldn't lie limp forever. Not the sheriff, anyway. As for the Senior, maybe he was dead and maybe he wasn't. A man couldn't hang by his heels all night, just to make sure that the gent he was choking would get over it.

"Wonder if we could find out while we're here what's happened to Shamrock?" Red whispered. "If we knew where—"

A queer sort of cry, hoarse and muffled, froze him to silence. It rose again, stronger and louder, to the pitch of a scream, shuddery with horror and shattered nerves, and threaded with insane fury.

"Great guns!" muttered Red. "Who's killin' who?"

Devlin slid his hands under the tails of his black coat. "It's Keller just wakin' up," he growled bleakly.

"I should've taken more time to—" He stopped, listened briefly to a groan above on the jail porch. "Hell, it's both of 'em! Jump for a horse, feller!"

HE didn't have to urge. Red tore across the street at an angle and jumped at the end horse on the hitch rack. It plunged at sight of him, spooking the rest, and the line of tied horses flung up their heads, snorting and tugging at their bridle reins. Red caught the bridle of his chosen mount, a sorrel, and ripped the reins loose. A sudden hush fell over the saloon, then a quick chorus of shouts as shadows swarmed along the windows, breaking for the batwing doors.

Devlin circled one swift glance about him. He stood full in the glare of the hanging lantern, a black mark for any man to shoot at, and no cover nearer than the alley at the end of the Keller Block, twenty yards away. And Red had run into trouble with the sorrel. As he whipped a leg over the saddle, the spooked horse humped its back and began uncorking a firecracker series of jarring bone shakers all over the street.

The batwing doors slammed open and men came charging out. In the bank, the Senior's hoarse yelling had reached an even higher pitch. At the same time, the sheriff began hollering and stumbling about on the jail porch. The men pouring from the Bearcat let out shouts at sight of the horse and red-headed rider pitching around and raising dust, and clawed for their guns.

Devlin took a long fast stride into the dark disk of shadow cast by the base of the big lantern. As he whirled, long-barreled guns cocked in his hands, his slate-gray eyes were oblique and coldly baleful, the eyes

of a seasoned and battle-scarred wolf that would not be crowded at bay.

Just before he faced the erupting mob, he caught a flickering glow of red down at the south end of the street. Red against white. Bonny's house! The place was on fire. He heard a tinkle of broken glass, and spared another look. Smoke trickled from a broken upstairs window, and a reflected glare of flame shone on a yellow head that was thrust through the broken pane. Dancing shadows made the face indistinct, and a white gag was tied over the mouth, but there was no mistaking that yellow-gold hair. It was the head of Bonny Belle Blue!

DEVLIN swung his guns up level with his wide shoulders, and for an instant stood statue-still. Black-garbed and motionless, surrounded by light, he stood directly under the lantern in his island of shadow. His tall and somber figure merged with it, semivisible and tricking the eye, obscured by the sharp contrast of shadow and bright light.

A gun flamed, and somebody shouted, "It's that damn redhead—he's broke out!"

The sorrel hung its head, bawled, and went straight up in a high-rolling buck, pawing the air. Red went over on the lee side, hanging on with one toe and an arm. He was trying to keep the horse between himself and the saloon, but the sorrel changed ends and went to sun-fishing. A dozen gun muzzles followed its gyrations, seeking the first chance to blast its rider out of the saddle.

Devlin's guns kicked alive with a shattering roar, savagely rapid, and for the space of the first four shots the force of the explosive attack brought its stunned reaction

of shock. A man stumbled backward, pointing at a pair of satanic eyes that glittered above two wickedly spurring flashes. Devlin's guns hammered on without pause or break, using up their twelve shells with lavish abandon. The gun master counted them as he fired. He was gambling those twelve shells, throwing them all into the pot as his bet against the mob. There would be no time to reload.

At his sixth shot, the mob of men broke, firing as they backed for the saloon. At his tenth, the saloon doorway was a jam with them, cursing and fighting, nerve-shaken by the ruthless violence of the abrupt gun storm. One man stood his ground, legs straddled apart, between two bodies that lay bent-kneed and grotesque on the boardwalk. Glaring, he thumbed a jerking gun and snarled at those behind him.

"There's only one of him, you yaller sons! What if it *is* the Preacher? Only one—" He quit all at once and fell on his gun, when Devlin spent his last two shells.

The sorrel was still throwing fits and Red was taking the bumps. Devlin slashed up with an empty gun at the lantern, and ducked out from under, leaving it a swinging, smoking wreck. He leaped at the sorrel's head, hauled the brute down on all four feet, and slapped again with a gun barrel. The horse hit for all outdoors, bucking straight-away down the street, with Red still in the saddle and Devlin hanging onto the horn.

The big white house glowed red at every window. Abreast of it, Devlin eared down the bolting, bucking sorrel as if he were bulldogging a steer, his heels plowing in the dirt and the sorrel's head jammed back against his chest. Red

piled off, threw his weight on the bowed neck, and the sorrel decided to quit. It stood trembling and blowing, all the fight seared out of it.

"Stay with him—an' keep those hombres busy all you can!" Devlin called curtly, and took the iron fence at a jump.

He flung a look upward as he raced for the columned porch. Bonny was leaning far out through the broken window, trying to avoid breathing the smoke that poured out over her head, and her arms were roped behind her.

Devlin bounded onto the porch, and he was reaching for the front door to thrust it open when it eluded him. It swung open ahead of his hand, and he almost crashed into Zeigler coming swiftly out with a gun in one hand. For an instant they stared into each other's eyes. Neither man betrayed shock or changed expression. Each, in his own way, was a master of violence, eternally alert at all times. Devlin's glinting eyes flickered a little, and that was all. His guns were empty and in his holsters.

He stabbed his right hand at Zeigler's gun as the gunman brought it up, driving it with grinding impact against the man's chest. It exploded its first shell, and Devlin struck viciously with his left fist. Zeigler's head snapped back, and he tottered rearward on his heels, his mouth a battered caricature. Yet he gave out no gasp or cry, and when he thumped his back on the floor inside the doorway he made another try at getting off a shot into the notorious gun master. He had kept a hold on his gun.

Devlin kicked the gun from his hand. Fire was just eating through a wall, casting a fitful glow into the hallway and etching in red and black

the hawkish lines of his saturnine face. In a fight he was an impersonal and double-edged blade, calm, deadly deliberate, but now he was no longer chill and remote. The flare of his anger made his eyes slanted and glittering, windowing his mood.

He stooped over Zeigler and picked him up. He did it without seeming effort or haste, and Zeigler at last showed emotion and cracked.

"Devlin! Don't—for the love of —" He read the intention in the merciless eyes.

Devlin raised Zeigler's squirming body high above his head. "If it's fire you like," he growled, "I'll see you get your share of it!"

He hurled full force, and the burning patch of wall became a ragged, glowing hole that belched sparks and smoke. Outside in the street, Red's gun began thudding, and Devlin took the smoke-clouded stairs at a run.

BONNY was still leaning out of the window when Devlin split the door of the room with his shoulder and felt his way to her. The fire had burned through part of the floor and was rapidly spreading. Zeigler had evidently made a certain job of it, and started his fires in several rooms below.

Devlin whipped out his knife as he got to Bonny. He hauled her inside, slashed through the ropes that bound her, and cut off the gag. "Can you walk?"

"I could fly if I had to, to get out of here!" she gasped, but disapproved it by falling against him. The ropes had left her stiff. She had managed to hop to the window, and had been lying there helpless, half in and half out.

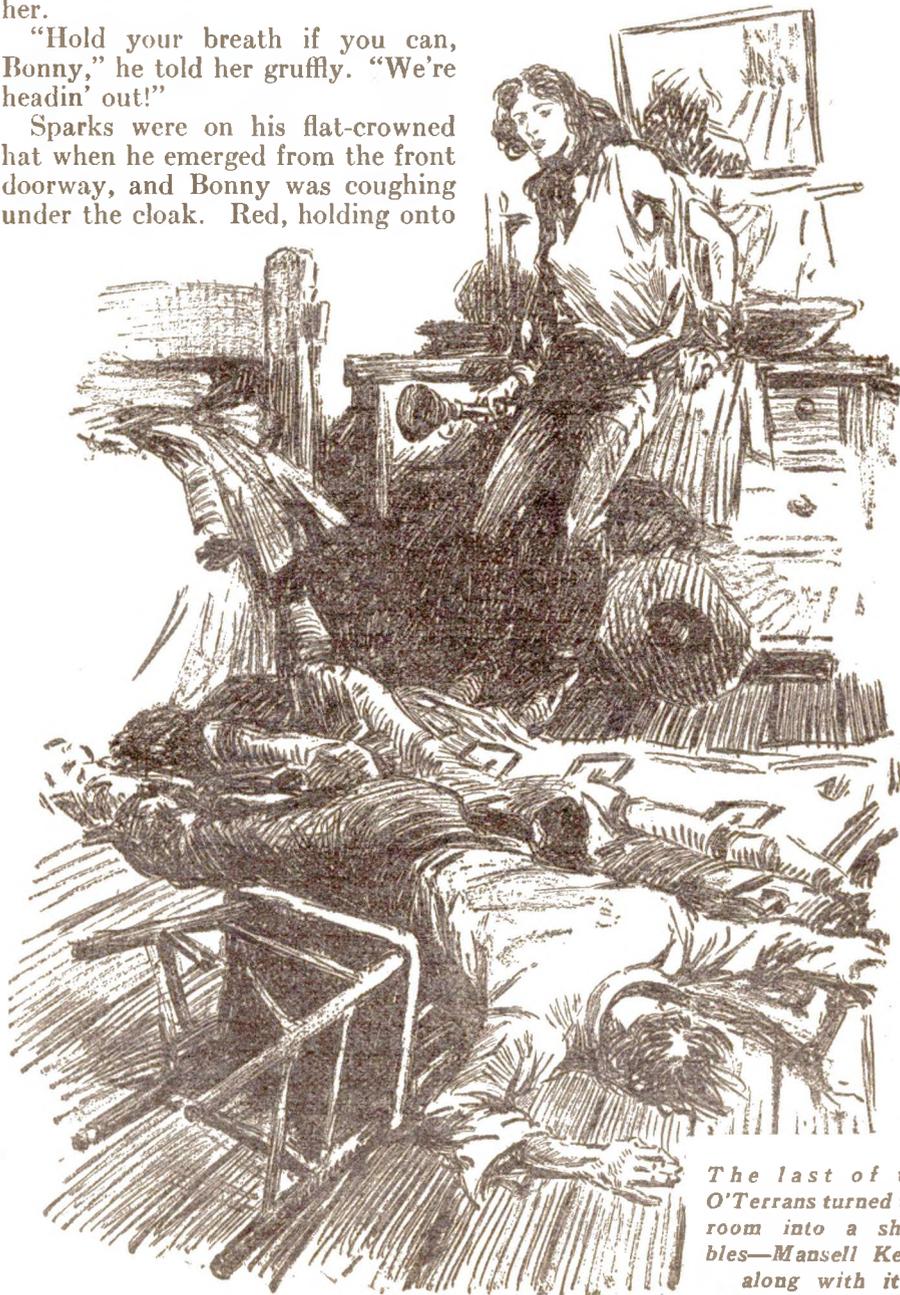
Devlin lifted her and settled her on his shoulder. She was slender

enough not to be too much of a burden. The fire had already crept to the doorway, and the smoke in the hall outside had a reddish tinge. Devlin swept up Bonny's blue velvet cloak from a chair and threw it over her.

"Hold your breath if you can, Bonny," he told her gruffly. "We're headin' out!"

Sparks were on his flat-crowned hat when he emerged from the front doorway, and Bonny was coughing under the cloak. Red, holding onto

the bridle of the sorrel, swapped shots with murky figures darting along the street's shadows. Devlin stalked past him, carrying Bonny, and hurried through the darkness



The last of the O'Terrans turned that room into a shambles—Mansell Keller along with it.

to the black oak. He set her in the saddle of his waiting horse.

"We'll have to ride double, Bonny. Make room for me there." He mounted and reined the black around. "C'mon, Red!"

The darting figures in the street were crowding Red, and he was having a fast time trying to stand them off. The Senior could be heard above the splatter of gunfire, calling for Zeigler to gather all hands. Sheriff Blount bellowed some sort of incoherent order from the porch of the jail, and began cutting loose with his rifle.

Red hit the saddle in a hurry and lashed the sorrel with the rein ends. It wasn't a matter of standing off a bunch of citizens this time. The Bearcat crowd would be out for blood, after being stampeded like that. They were gun toughs, all steamed up and wild to avenge the defeat they had suffered. A lot of them were running around to the Bearcat back-alley corral for their horses.

Devlin's black struck the main south trail, and stretched out into its long, loping gait. Red came rocketing along in the rear, hipped around in his saddle and chopping his shots back at the street. Bonny, riding none too easily behind Devlin with her blue cloak fluttering, held on tight and sighed.

"My grand house! All my fine clothes, furniture—everything—going up in smoke! Devlin, I feel woozy. What's the matter with me?"

"I figure you were doped," Devlin answered over his shoulder. "Did Shamrock tell you how you pret' near got buried for a corpse?"

"Yes. Doped, eh? Now, how—Why, sure! The Senior! I had those sleeping pills in the wine cabinet, and he must have—"

"What's happened to Shamrock?" broke in Devlin.

"Young Keller tied her in a buckboard and took her off," replied Bonny. "They sneaked into the house and jumped us off guard, while Shamrock was pouring black coffee into me. I could kill that young Keller—or both of 'em, for that matter! They sure fooled me. Me, Bonny Belle Blue!"

"Happen to know where Keller took Shamrock?" cut in Red, riding alongside.

"I heard him tell Zeigler he was taking her to the Trailway House, Bonny nodded. "We've got to do something about that, Devlin! He may be her lawful wedded husband, but—well, some things he said, they didn't sound good. And you know that Trailway House. Anything goes there. Seems the Senior owns that, too, on the sly, from what Zeigler said."

Devlin knew the Trailway House. It was all that remained of a squatter settlement that had gone bad and been deserted. It was on the old Cananea Trail where it ran down to the ford of Whitewater Wash. Standing on the last spit of borderland, with the Mexican bank across the river, the Trailway House had its own peculiar uses. A hang-out for furtive travelers who crossed the border empty-handed and returned with smuggled goods; a convenient lodge for men having the money to pay for protection.

The Trailway kept its own small but efficient crew of protectors, who saw to it that high-paying guests could relax their vigilance and sleep with both eyes shut while under its roof. It had been long since any square lawman had been fool enough to pay a call at the Trailway, with or without his star.

"How far is it?" asked Red.

"Could we outride that bunch behind us, gettin' there?"

"By maybe thirty minutes—with luck," Devlin responded. "Bonny, d'you think the Trailway could be busted inside o' thirty minutes?"

"No," said Bonny. "Nor in thirty hours, judging by those who've tried it!"

"You may be right," Devlin agreed. "But we'll take a shot at it, anyway—huh, Red?"

"Sure!" said Red.

CHAPTER VIII

DEATH IN BLUE VELVET

THE Trailway House had originally been built of adobe, like most of the squatter cabins scattered around it, but additions had been built to it of logs and sawed lumber, until now it was a rambling hodgepodge without balance or beauty. A high stockade fence had been erected, inclosing the yard and the horse corral. The fence had a wide gate that usually hung open.

Devlin ran his reflective gaze over the place. The open gateway allowed a cross-section view of the yard and part of the Trailway's front. A few figures lounged on the low porch before the lighted window of the barroom. He himself had put up in the Trailway a couple of times, and knew the lay of it. Its rear stuck out over the bank of the river, on props, and in flood times the water almost touched it. There had been heavy rains in the mountains lately, and the river was running high now. That meant there was no chance of breaking in quietly through a back window.

Devlin pulled up on the trail, and motioned for Red to do the same. Some of the lounging men had caught the sound of their coming hoofbeats, and were rising, trying

to make them out in the darkness.

"Drop off, Bonny," murmured Devlin. "Red, we'll just have to ride in, natural an' easy, an' chance a—"

"Drop off, my bright blue eye!" interrupted Bonny. "I'm going right in there with you. That place doesn't scare me. You're forgetting I ran the Blue Palace in Tombstone!"

Devlin shrugged. At that, Bonny's presence might be a help. Trouble wouldn't be expected from two men who rode in with a woman, though everything depended on how much Mansell Keller had talked when he got here with his unwilling bride.

They rode at a walk through the gateway, left the two horses in the yard, and entered the barroom. The men on the porch took them in at a glance, eyed Bonny with close interest, and remained outside. The barroom, thick and stuffy with tobacco smoke, was well crowded. The Trailway did a flourishing all-night business. All eyes converged on the three newcomers, and a lull fell as they trooped to the bar.

The head bartender nodded to Devlin, recognizing him.

"A table for the lady?" he murmured.

Devlin shook his head. "No. Where's Mansell Keller? I've got a message for him."

The bartender's eyes flicked to the gun fighter's face and away again. "Message? Would it be from the Senior? Mansell left word he didn't want to be disturbed."

"He'll be plenty disturbed when I give him this message," remarked Devlin.

"So?" The bartender absently mopped the bar. "Important, huh? Say, what's the trouble up there in Piety? The Senior sent for a bunch

of the boys to come up, but we ain't heard nothin' since. Mansell, he didn't have much to say, when he showed up. He kind o' had all his mind on that gal he brung along." He winked and looked up at the ceiling. "Sounded like he got a little rough with her a while ago."

Red's bruised and battered face went curiously stiff, Devlin noted in the back-bar mirror. Bonny blinked her eyes and fidgeted, breathing hard.

"We . . . uh . . . better get that message to him," she said huskily.

The bartender looked dubious. "Couldn't it wait till mornin'? Course, if it's from the Senior, then I s'pose—"

"The Senior rushed us off in a hurry," cut in Devlin. "He was in quite a state. The message is mighty important, believe me!"

The bartender surrendered. "All right. You know the way upstairs. The side door. It's the big new room right above here. Have a drink first?"

"Later," drawled Devlin, and led the way out of the crowded bar-room. As he preceded Red and Bonny off the low porch to the side door, the eyes of the gun-slung loungers following them, he pondered as to how they'd get Shamrock out of here. Getting in was one thing. Getting out was something else.

THEY mounted the dark staircase to the second floor, and Devlin paused at the first door on his left. A crack of light shone under it, but no sound came from the room. Red tried to ease past him, reaching for the handle of the door. Red's breathing was deep and harsh, and his eyes held murder. Devlin blocked him off. Gently, he turned

the knob and inched the door open. Abruptly then, as he got a look at the room, he pushed the door wide open and stepped in, Red and Bonny close on his heels.

Shamrock stood leaning against the dresser, her shirt torn and her wealth of hair disheveled.

She held a heavy brass candlestick in her right hand, and tapped it thoughtfully against the palm of her left as she regarded the figure of Mansell Keller, stretched out senseless at her feet.

She lifted her head swiftly at the slight noise of the door's opening. Her eyes lighted up. "Lo, amigos!" she called softly, and grinned a frank and charming grin at them. "Say, I've been wondering how I was going to get out of here without being stopped by those—"

"Keep wondering!" muttered Devlin, and closed the door. He crossed the room and looked down at Mansell. "That's a pretty sick-lookin' husband, Shamrock!"

"What? Oh, him." Shamrock was smiling shamelessly up into Red's eyes. "He tried to get real tough, for a town man. But I slipped my hands loose, and right away his honeymoon struck a snag. My golly, but I'm glad to see you!"

The stairs creaked. Bonny, nearest the door, whined and locked it. They waited silently, listening. A hand rapped on the door.

"Everything all right in there, Keller?" It was the voice of the head bartender, sounding worried. He had evidently got to thinking things over, and grown uneasy.

"Sure, everything's all right," Devlin made reply.

"Why don't Keller answer?" came the sharp query, and the stairs creaked under more feet.

"He's just a little drunk, is all," Devlin answered casually. "Brought

a bottle with him. We'll sober him up an' send him home."

Voices mumbled in low tones on the stairs, and Mansell Keller chose that moment to roll over and groan. The mumbling broke off. "Damn queer, if you ask me," said somebody, after a pause. "I wouldn't think he had time to get *that* drunk."

DEVLIN listened to the feet slowly retreating down the stairs, and to the fading voices. He met Red's eyes. Red hitched his belt and cocked a quering eyebrow. The men of the Trailway were a suspicious lot. They would be waiting and watching for the first sign that something was wrong. There wasn't a chance left of walking out of here on a bluff.

Bonny went to the front window. "They're shutting the gate!" she whispered. "They're— Listen!"

"I already heard it," growled Devlin. It was a dull, faraway rumble of beating hoofs that they heard. The Piety posse was coming, following the old trail. Devlin went to the rear window and looked down at the river below. It was running high and fast, but a man could swim it if he had to. Shamrock could, too, likely enough. But not Bonny.

He turned, and his eye fell on Mansell, who was sitting up groggily and holding his head. "Bonny," he said, "you're goin' to have to forget you're a lady."

"I've done forgot it!" retorted Bonny, with feeling.

"Good." Devlin shoved Mansell over onto his face and began stripping him of his clothes. "Get those glad rags off, Bonny, an' get into these. Pronto, now! Red an' me, we won't look."

"The loss is yours," murmured

Bonny, but she blushed behind his broad back.

When she stood dressed in Mansell's yellow shirt, tan coat and fine California pants, Devlin helped her don the high-peaked cream sombrero, pushing her mass of hair out of sight up under the crown. He tied the flashy silk bandanna for her, too, and stood back to look at her.

"You an' Shamrock are goin' to walk out there through the side door," he bade curtly. "Act drunk, Bonny, an' let your head hang so they won't see your face in the dark. *Sabe?* Take my black an' Red's sorrel, an'— Shut up, Shamrock! It's Bonny's only chance. Red an' me, we'll get along all right. If you get clear, head toward Naco. We'll catch up, somewhere along the way. Go on, now. Get out o' here, the pair o' you!"

Bonny looked back as she unlocked the door. "Well—" She waved at Devlin, trying to be gay about it. "See you *mañana!*"

Shamrock, too, looked back, first at Red and then at Devlin. "Be good, you two." She said it softly, and that was the woman in her. "You ornery big hounds!" she added, just as softly, and that was the O'Terran in her.

DEVLIN and Red stood at the dirty front window, watching. Neither exchanged a word when Bonny and Shamrock appeared below, but both quietly drew their guns and eyed the group of men at the closed gate. The drumming of hoofs was plain and distinct now, coming from the north, and more men were coming out of the barroom to listen. Some of the men stopped to stare at Bonny and Shamrock, mounting the black and the sorrel in the yard. The bar-

tender appeared and moved toward them, shaking his head.

Devlin threw open the window. "Take good care o' my horse, Keller!" he called down.

Bonny, without looking up, waved drunkenly and slumped in the saddle, head drooping and the light cream sombrero shading her face. The bartender looked up at Devlin, and scratched his head. There was something peculiar about this whole business, but he couldn't fathom it, and it was no part of his job to question the son of the Senior, drunk or sober. He motioned for somebody to open the gate for the departing guests, and somebody did. A few of the men grinned as the pair rode out, but most of them were peering toward the north.

Up at the window, Devlin sighted the mass of riders bobbing against the night sky. The gate was being slammed shut again, and Bonny and Shamrock were gone, riding toward the west. He saw them kick their horses and go loping off into the darkness.

Red let go of his breath in a long sigh. "Well, they made it!"

"M-mm." Devlin turned from the window in time to catch Mansell Keller streaking for the door. He tripped him, but Mansell let out a wailing yell before the gun master could clap a hand over his mouth.

"They heard that!" Red jumped to the door and locked it. "They're all starin' up here, but they don't know what to make of it."

The rapid thunder of beating hoofs slackened as the Piety riders approached the stockade. A voice, brittle with authority, rang out from among the party. "Open up, there! This is Keller speaking."

The gate swung open at once,

and the riders began filling the yard. The bartender ran forward, bobbing his head at the Senior. "Your son just left, Mr. Keller," he volunteered. "He left soon after Devlin went up an'—"

"Wha-at?"

Devlin didn't wait to hear more. "Dive an' swim, Red!" he said tersely. "I think I'll bring this plucked bridegroom along. He'll come handy as hostage, should his old man get us in a tight. C'mon, you! Here, drape this over your half-naked hide." He hauled Mansell to his feet and bundled him up in Bonny's velvet cloak. "It'll get wet, but it'll dry again, an' you'll need somethin' on you besides underwear."

Feet hit the stairs with a rush. Somebody aimed a shot from the yard through the front window, putting a hole through the roof. Red crawled out the back window, his boots tied to his belt, and dived.

Mansell didn't seem to know it was his move, until Devlin picked him up and tossed him after Red. He screamed before he hit the water with a splash, and rose spitting and pawing, his mouth full of mud from the shallow bottom of the bank. Devlin cut into the water cleanly and shot up at once. He grabbed Mansell and began towing him.

Mansell screamed again, muffledly through the mud. "I'll drown! I can't swim!"

Shots cracked along the bank, the bullets lashing up little white fountains of water. Red promptly submerged. Devlin abandoned his grip on his captive and struck out for deep water, swimming with long, powerful thrusts. Mansell, cursing and spitting, found his footing on the mud bottom and began wading back to the bank.

Up in the room Devlin and his companions had just vacated, Sheriff Blount whammed away with his rifle, while the men who had stormed in with him swarmed back out again through the broken doorway, seeking better vantage points. The Senior, remaining behind, looked over the sheriff's shoulder. His furious eyes shrank to pin points.

"Blount, you can't shoot worth a damn!" he snapped. "Here, let me have that rifle!"

He snatched the rifle and shouldered the sheriff aside. Carefully, he took aim. Over the lined sights he glared at a murky, wading figure draped in a muddy and bedraggled cloak of sapphire-blue velvet. The Senior bared his teeth in a smile and fired.

THE black and the sorrel stood in the heat of the high sun, their heads turned inquisitively back the way they had come. Their riders, too, gazed back, shading their eyes. One of them threw up an arm and let out a wild squall. An answering call sounded from the two riders coming down the trail.

Devlin and Red drew up, dust billowing about them, and grinned.

"Howdy, gals," drawled Devlin. "Waitin' for anybody partic'lar, or would we do?"

"I guess you'll do," said Shamrock. Her shining eyes said more.

"They look kind of tough and scary to me," Bonny demurred. "Still, we might do worse. Wonder where they stole those horses? Mexican saddles, I see."

They let that do for their greetings, and grinned at one another.

"I reckon," remarked Red, with his eyes on Shamrock, "we might's well be pushin' on to Naco. I got a brother livin' near there. He'd put us up, an' welcome, an' keep

his mouth shut. Shamrock, d'you still like the idea of goin' out to the California gold fields?"

"Sure—more than ever!"

"Now, wait a minute," put in Bonny. "Shamrock, you're actin' scandalous for a married lady!"

"She's neither married nor a lady!" remarked Devlin. "Her late husband met with a kind o' fatal accident. No, Bonny, I had nothin' to do with it, so don't look at me like that. Somebody took a sure shot at your blue cloak. It was dark at the time, an' somehow Mansell happened to have it on. Accept my condolences, Shamrock."

Shamrock thanked him politely, but her mind was on other things. Red was talking to her. "I'm broke," he was saying. "We'll likely go hungrier'n we are now, plenty time, but—"

"But," she interrupted, "we'll have a high old time!" Her eyes sparkled. "Get to the point, Red!"

"Listen, you pair, if you're not too busy," drawled Devlin. He had taken the saddlebags off the black, and was searching through them. "Y'know, when I choked the Senior at his office window, I didn't just let it go at that. I took his keys from his pocket before I dropped him. It looked like as good a time as any to collect Bonny's fifty thousand, so I unlocked the bank an' went in. Had to work fast. By now, the Senior's probably noticed that his safe's empty. I locked it after me, an' put the keys back in his pocket."

He began pulling out packets of bills, while they stared speechlessly at him. "Didn't have time to count the right amount," he murmured, "so I took all in sight an' made sure. Your house was worth quite a bit, Bonny, an' you can charge him for the burnin' of that. Red,

some o' this is yours an' Shamrock's."

Red found his voice. "It's not! It's Bonny's. That right, Shamrock?"

Shamrock nodded full agreement. "Devlin, you and Bonny have done enough for me. I'll not take her money!"

BONNY started to argue, but Devlin interrupted her. "Suit yourselves about it," he said mildly. "Hm-m-m . . . here's that weddin' present I bought for you, Shamrock, when I thought you'd grown into a lady. It was for your other weddin', but it'll do for the comin' one."

He gave it to her gravely. It was a dainty handkerchief box of delicately engraved silver, set with turquoise stones. With a little silver key in the lock, it was an elegant trinket fit to grace any lady's boudoir.

Shamrock took it and stroked it with her fingers. "It's . . . it's beautiful. Thanks, Devlin." She looked at his hard, forbidding face, her eyes a little misty. "I'll take good care of it, amigo."

"Maybe Red can use it to keep his tobacco in," Devlin said gruffly. "Well—get goin', you two. Me and Bonny will follow along."

"You're coming with us?" Shamrock cried joyfully.

"To Naco. I missed one weddin' an' I don't aim to miss another one. After that, you're on your own."

Shamrock and Red rode off, side by side. Devlin dropped the packets of money into the saddlebags and slung them on the back. Then he and Bonny rode after the other two.

With his eyes on the pair ahead, Devlin observed, "Hawks like those just have to scream, an' there's noth-

in' you can do about it, Bonny. They'll smoke up hell wherever they go, an' have a damn grand time doin' it."

Bonny nodded, but concern was in her eyes. "Don't worry about 'em," Devlin cheered her. "I stuffed that box full o' bills, but they don't know it yet. How you feelin', Bonny?"

"Fine, now," answered Bonny brightly. "You know, it's queer that dope didn't kill me, considering what the doc said about my heart."

Devlin grinned faintly. "You've got the heart of a horse, an' that ought to prove it to you. It was probably indigestion, an' that quack didn't know any better. You just didn't have enough to do, meenin' around in that house. You're no more meant to be a lady than Shamrock!"

"You're right," Bonny agreed. "I was miserable trying. The heck with it! After we see them married I'm going back to Tombstone and open up a bigger and better Blue Palace, and get back into the company of good honest crooks. I know what to expect from that kind, and how to deal with 'em!"

Her eyes began to sparkle, the way Shamrock's had done. The old fast tempo of life was calling to her. She laughed, a vibrant glory in her face, and kissed her hand at the sky.

"It's a right long way to Tombstone," Devlin remarked. "Rough country, for a gal travelin' alone an' with money."

"I was thinkin' the same thing," Bonny agreed, and flushed with pleasure.

"So I'll go with you—"

"Oh—good!,"

"As far," Devlin ended blandly, "as Tombstone!"



MULE-HEADED HOMBRE

BY S. OMAR BARKER

SPEAKIN' of saddle mules—though personally I'd rather speak of 'em than ride 'em—I have knowed a few weak-minded waddies willing to argue that a man on a *macho* is a-straddle of the only safe and sure-ridin' animal west of the crick. Which reminds me of Dogie Dobson's famous jaunt on a jassack up there in the Wagon Mound country.

Dogie Dobson's right name was Leonidas, but Breezy Bill give him the nickname of "Dogie" the very first evening that he threwed his puny little ol' warbag into the Dou-

ble K bunkhouse, and he never did crawl out from under it. The name sure fit him, too. Except that he walked on his hind legs, spoke English and played a mouth harp, he'd sure put you in mind of one of them runty, bur-tailed yearlin's that's had to come through calthood without neither milk, mush nor mamma. A dehorned one, at that, and so used to being butted away from the feed rack that he won't even kick back at a pitchfork.

"Reckon you can keep a horse right side up an' not lose your saddle

in a rough country like this?" inquired of Yamp Kendricks when this Dogie Dobson rode up one day beggin' a job.

Now if it had been one of these brash ol' buckskins like Breezy Bill, he'd of said: "Mister, I've rode it where it was so steep that the panthers' tails growed in the shape of anchors jest from hangin' onto the hillsides. Any country too rough fer *me* to work cattle in, I got the spurs to smooth it out with!"

Or a strip of dry whang like Ed Tucker would prob'ly said: "Well, your cows ain't got wings, have they?"

But Dogie Dobson's answer was plumb meek.

"Why, I ain't right sure, Mr. Kendricks," he says, "but I always aim to do the best I can, wherever it is. If it turns out I can't make it on a horse, looks to me like I might maybe do all right on a mule."

"Looks to some folks like hell ain't but a inch wide, too," snorts ol' Yamp, "till they try to jump it. We batch an' chop our own wood around here. You any good with an ax?"

"Why, I'll aim to do the best I know how, Mr. Kendricks. An' maybe I ort to tell you, I'm kind o' a . . . I mean I . . . that is—"

"You mean you got somethin' behind you besides the seat of your pants? Killed you a man? On the scot from the law?"

"Oh, my, no, Mr. Kendricks! In fact, I don't know of nothing I'd dread to do like I would to have to shoot anybody. I always have aimed to be peaceable, Mr. Kendricks. But as I was sayin', I reckon most ever'body has got habits that somebody might not like. Mine's . . . I mean I'm a—"

"Maybe he's tryin' to tell you he sucks eggs, Yamp," offers Breezy Bill.

"Oh, no; not nothin' like that. It's jest that— The fact is, Mr. Kendricks, I'm a mouth-harp player!"

"That's bad," clucks Breezy Bill, turning to Florencio Lopez, the Mexican horse breaker. "Git me a spade, Florencio."

"Espade? For why, señor?"

WELL," says Breezy, "if he's a mouth harper, it's a forewent conclusion that sooner or later we'll have to hang him, an' as it would be tough to git caught without no tree handy, I'm going to plant one. You recollect the last feller that upset our slumbers with one of them blow-suck lip pianos, we hung him from a wagon tongue, but ol' Yamp, he got in such a hurry for the wagon to haul postholes in, that he cut him down too quick an' we had to hit him in the head with the ax to finish him. I don't want us to git caught short of a tree for this here Dogie, in case—"

"Don't pay no attention to Breezy Bill, young feller," busts in ol' Yamp. "He's all beller an' no butt. An' as for that mouth harp—"

"It'll be a relief," interposes Ed Tucker dryly, aiming his glance at Breezy Bill, "to have somebody around that does his blowin' through an instrument."

'Course even Dogie Dobson wasn't so dumb but what he knowed they was mostly hoorawin' him, but his comeback was as meek and earnest as if they'd been serious.

"I'll sure try not to upset your slumbers none, gents," he says. "But I hope you won't mind my playin' some once in awhile of a evening. Seems like it kind o' eases my mind, sort of."

"You got somethin' on your mind that requires easin', Dogie?" inquires Breezy Bill, who don't feel

like he's had his full ration of new-hand hoorawin' yet.

"Oh, no, nothin' like that!" says Dogie Dobson hastily.

But it turned out he had, or else he suffered purty bad from the indigestion. For, in spite of his promise, he did upset the slumbers of the Double K bunkhouse right smart. Not, however, with his mouth harp, which he always played as soft and sweet as a kitten's pur. The fact was, he talked in his sleep.

The first time or two nobody give it much attention except to throw a boot at him or something, which generally hushed him up without even wakin' him, but after while they got to listening, trying to make out what he was saying. The spells didn't come on him every night, by no means, but when they did, it was always purty much the same rigamarole. 'Course a sleep talker mumbles right smart an' mixes his words up as bad as a cow-camp *cocinero* does the ingredients of a son-of-a-gun-in-a-sack. But the gist of it went something like this, mostly in a tone that was purt' near a whimper.

"Listen, Alee! You know I don't want to have to kill nobody . . . coward . . . all right, if I got to show you, Alee . . . but, . . . Listen, judge, I wouldn't do no man harm a-purpose, but this here is how it was . . . ten dollars a head. . . . That's him, all right. . . . Honest, Alee, there wasn't no way I could help it, was there? . . . What you got to take it thataway for, Alee?"

And so on, jest about the same, only after Dogie had been with us a few weeks and tried uncorkin' cattle out of them rough canyons, sometimes he'd throw in a holler about his horse goin' to fall with him.

But if this meek little Tejano was actually scared of a horse fall, he sure never let it interfere with gittin' the

job done. One day Breezy Bill took occasion to try him out by hollering up from the bottom of Dog-pile Canyon for Dogie to come on down and help him with a big steer he'd roped that needed doctorin'. Actually Breezy didn't need no help with the steer, the steer didn't need no doctorin', Breezy hadn't roped no steer in the first place, and there wasn't no way down off the rim that ary one of the Double K hands would have tackled for a hundred-dollar saddle. But Dogie cut loose and come on down. His horse fell with him twice and it took him purt' near an hour, but he jest kept a-comin'.

"He was as pale as a white-haired pup," Breezy Bill told about it, "an' shakin' so bad that if his boots hadn't been stirruped they would of shook right off his feet. I was all fixed to hooraw him some, but when I seen how scared he was, I didn't have the heart. Jest told him I'd done doctored that steer by myself an' turned him loose, and was sure sorry to have caused him such a scare. 'Oh, that's all right,' he says. 'Only I kind o' hate to skin a hoss up thisaway. Now if I jest had me a mule for such work—a mule's hide's tougher'n a hoss', y' know.' Well, I never figgered he'd try it or I wouldn't have hollered for him in the first place!"

But that's the way this Dogie was—willin' as a pet pup, whatever you put him at, and mighty tender with the stock. Jest couldn't stand to hurt nothin' or nobody. In fact, he wouldn't even use a curb bit in his bridle. Natcherly, bein' so meek thataway, he was purt' near hoorawed to death by Breezy Bill. But jest let him git out his mouth harp and start whimperin' out them soft, gentle tunes of his, and even Breezy Bill would set and listen by the hour

without sayin' a word. It was the only thing ever knowed to shut that swivel-tongued booger's mouth for over ten seconds at a stretch.

IN a few months them Double K boys got to likin' Dogie Dobson so well that they begun to worry about the meanin' of that sleep talkin' of his. They argued about it sometimes when Dogie was outside exercising his willingness to work on the woodpile.

"He's killed this feller Alec that he's always talkin' about," opined ol' Yamp Kendricks, "an' got it on his conscience."

"Then where does the judge come in?" says Breezy Bill.

"Maybe thees jodge put him to the jail," offers Florencio, "but he bost out and ron away, so now he's got plenty scare that they gonna come after him. Maybe you don't took notice: always when he see somebody coming— Look! Don't I told you?"

Sure enough, at sight of a distant rider approaching in the dusk, Dogie dropped his ax and came into the bunkhouse, plainly trying not to seem in a hurry.

"Wastin' steps, ain't you, Dogie?" inquired Breezy Bill, who couldn't never leave him alone. "Whyn't you bring a load of wood as you come?"

"I . . . I'll fetch it later," said Dogie.

He went straight to his bunk, sat down on it and the usually gentle look of his mild brown eyes became kind of a glassy stare, while even by lamplight you could see his face was pale.

"How 'bout givin' us some music, Dogie?" asked Breezy Bill.

Dogie just shook his head. Purty soon one hand reached up and took down his shooting tackle from a nail on the head of his bunk. Slowly he

buckled it on. When hoofs sounded outside, he got up and snuck to the door. You could see his hands was shakin' like quakin' aspen leaves.

"You see?" whispered Florencio. "Many times I see him do like thees when somebody comin'!"

Softly Breezy Bill got up, reached for the broom, tiptoed up behind where Dogie was edgin' into the doorway with his back to them, starin' out into the twilight. Then, all of a sudden, Breezy Bill give the broom handle such a whack on the flat plank door that it sounded purt' near like a shot.

"Yeow!" he squalled. "The Injuns are upon us!"

You could see Dogie's muscle meat jump an inch under his clothes, but his feet never budged, nor he never turned his head.

"Dad-burn it, Bill!" he says, quiet but shaky. "Ain't I skeered enough as it is?"

The way he said it must have sort o' shamed ol' Breezy Bill, for although he laughed some, what he done *my pronto* was to grab Dogie by the shirt tail and yank him back inside. Then he stepped out the door his own self.

"Who's there?" he bellers. Then, in case it might be a Mexican: "*Quién es?*"

From the tone of his voice you'd have thought he was an ol' he-wolf offerin' to fight a panther.

"Don't shoot, mister!" drawls a Texas-soundin' voice out in the dusk. "I'll marry your daughter—if she ain't bowlegged. What is this, a wolf's nest with the hydrophoby?"

"Depends on what you're lookin' fer," growls Breezy Bill. "Stranger in these parts, ain't you?"

"I shore seem to be," drawled this long-jointed, lantern-jawed feller without offerin' to git off his horse. "Come ridin' up plumb peaceable to

a peaceable-lookin' ranch to beg permission to camp my hoss herd overnight on your water an' git welcomed like I was a Ranger comin' to roust out a rustler! My name's Abe Tadlock, hoss trader, Wyoming bound with a bunch of broomtails. You the boss here?"

You could hear Dogie Dobson's sigh of relief all over the bunkhouse as he harkened to the stranger's voice.

"It . . . it ain't him!" he says, kind o' dazedlike.

"Ain't who?" grunts Breezy Bill. But he don't wait for an answer, because with all his wind, Breezy Bill was too genuine of a cowhand to throw unpoliteness in a stranger's face and then leave it lay when he found out his mistake.

"Excuse my hellerin' bad manners, Tadlock," he laughs. "I figgered you was somebody else. Light an' come in. The boss is right here, an' the java pot's on."

THIS Tadlock turned out to be jest what he said he was: a hoss trader speculatin' a bunch of Texas ponies up the trail. Ol' Yamp Kendricks not only give him leave to make overnight camp on Double K range and water, but invited him to come bed down with 'em at the ranch. When Tadlock said he reckoned he'd better camp his broomtails off somewhere where they wouldn't be no bother to anybody, Yamp offered him the gatherin' corrals at Ojito Negro and told him he better rest up there over Sunday. Longer, if he wanted to, as there was plenty of grass. Tadlock offered pay, and when Yamp refused it, he said:

"I've got some right smart ponies in that bunch, Kendricks. I'd be mighty proud to have you ride over and pick you out a couple."

"I'm much obliged to you," says

Yamp, "but I don't figger a plains-raised pony would be worth no more to me in these rough canyons than feathers would to a horny toad. They jest ain't got the footing."

"Why, now, if it's sure footin' you're lookin' for," offers Tadlock, "whyn't you lemme give you a little mule I traded fer down on the Palo Duro? He's saddle-broke an'—"

"My good Christian friend," Yamp interrupts him, "when it comes to straddlin' a jassack, I'll take mine afoot, thanky jest the same."

"Every dog to his own diggin's," shrugs the hoss trader and gits up to go.

Quick as he's gone, Dogie Dobson gits out his mouth harp, blows a chord or two, then turns to the boss.

"Yamp," he says, "if it ain't plumb out o' line, I'd kind o' like to have that mule."

"What for?" says Yamp. "If you are cravin' to git yourself kicked, maybe I can 'tend to it my own self!"

"Maybe Dogie figgers he could make a quicker gitaway on a jassack than he could on a pony," offers Breezy Bill with another wink. "They tell me mules don't ketch the excitement from a man when he's skeered like a hoss does."

That was kind of a sharp hook to throw into a mousy little feller like Dogie Dobson. He looks at Bill like a dog does that's jest been kicked, but he don't say nothin', and after a while Breezy tries to sort o' make up for it by invitin' Dogie to side him in to town Sunday.

"We'll natcherly uncork the village an' let 'er dribble out," urges Breezy. "It's good for what ails you."

But Dogie jest shook his head. As a matter of fact, he hadn't been to town a single time since he hit the Double K, and now the boys reckoned they knowed why. Added up

with what all he'd spilled in his sleep-talkin', it meant that he was skeered to go for fear of somebody he might run into there, maybe some officer that would recognize him, or maybe somebody gunnin' for him.

Come Sunday, Breezy Bill and Ed Tucker went gallyhootin' off to town, Florencio Lopez set out to visit some of his kinfolks off south, leavin' nobody but of Yamp and Dogie at the ranch.

"Dogie," says Yamp, along towards noon, "if you sure 'nough got your heart set on bein' a jassack rider, whyn't you ride over to the horse camp and take a look at that mule of Tadlock's?"

Purt' near like a kid that's been given permission to go fishin', Dogie saddled and took out.

Tadlock seemed right pleased to see him, and the mule was already in the corral. He was a tight-skinned thrifty-lookin' little *macho* about eight hundred and fifty pounds, kind o' light bay, with some whitish spots and streaks on his rump like you sometimes see nowadays on them little big-eared smarties the rodeo clowns fool around with.

"Well, there he is," says Abe Tadlock. "Saddle-broke, sound as a dollar and spry as a doodlebug. You want to try him out, Mr.— Excuse me for not recollectin' your name, Mr.—"

"Leonidas Dobson," says Dogie, kind o' apologetic about his funny first name. "But mostly they call me Dogie." He roped the mule and began bridling him.

DOBSON? Lemme see— Why, yes, feller that rode a piece with me the other day was inquiren' if I knowed a Leonidas Dobson, an' where he was located now. Kind o' a bug-eyed feller. Said if I run into you anywheres, to tell you he'd be

libble to turn up most any day. Lemme see— He did give me his name, too—Alec somethin' or other. I recollect he looked kind o' saller-skinned, like he'd been indoors right smart lately."

"Yeah," said Dogie, and went right on saddling the mule. But from the way Tadlock sounded when he mentioned the man's sallowness, Dogie figured he knowed where it come from. It's a look that men don't git rid of for a while when they come out of prison.

So Alec Metcalf sure 'nough meant to keep his promise!

Dogie felt his fingers acting shaky as he tightened the cinch, thinkin' of what must happen if and when Alec found him—as he most surely would sooner or later. But he tried not to give no sign that he was nervous.

"Name's Sam Houston," Tadlock indicated the mule. "If you like him, like I told your boss, he won't cost you a cent."

"Why, I'd aim to pay your for him, Mr. Tadlock. I couldn't—"

"You try him first, anyhow. All set?" Tadlock swung open the gate.

Dogie was pleased at how gentle the *macho* had been to saddle. He was pleased now that Sam Houston didn't require no spurs to start him, but headed right out the gate like he knowed where he was goin'. He was also pleased at the easy, shufflin' quality of his lope, which give such a smooth feeling to the saddle.

What didn't please him, however, was that when he tried to neckrein him around, Sam Houston never bent off his course an inch. What he did do was pick up a little more speed. Figgerin' probly he was jest kind o' hard-mouthed when cold, Dogie let him travel about a quarter hour, plumb enjoyin' the ride. But when he tried turning him again,

Sam Houston jest switched his tail and put on another notch of speed, due southeast.

Purty soon Dogie give up the neckrein method, and single-lined him a good stiff yank on the right-hand rein. But that easy bit of his might jest as well not have been there for all the effect it had on that jassack's mouth.

"Why, you iron-mouthed little knothead!" Dogie give both reins a yank that would of r'ared the average cow pony right up on his tail, and all the results he got from Sam Houston was a grunt and one more notch of speed—due southeast.

They was out of sight of the horse camp by now, headin' up into some little canyons so rough and cluttered with boulders that you couldn't slipped the hind gate of Hades through 'em edgeway. But this mule— Well, he took through 'em like a shot-at coyote dodgin' through a corn patch. Even where it looked to Dogie Dobson like there wasn't room for a one-legged cat to spit, that *macho's* tough little hoofs never missed a stride. Sam Houston, by the gravies, was headin' home to Texas and nothin' could stop him!

After awhile Dogie let up seesawing on the bit, partly for fear of sawing the pore little jassack's lower jaw plumb off, but mostly because, no matter how rough the going was, every time he seesawed, Sam Houston switched that little hair-tipped quirt he wore for a tail and put on speed.

When they topped out on an eastward bench of Wagon Mound Mountain, Dogie clumb off and tried to make a start back by leadin' him. For a minute it was a draw, neither man nor mule gainin' nor givin' an inch. Then Sam Houston begun draggin' Dogie with him, and Dogie figgered that if he had to go any-

ways, he jest as well git back on and ride.

Trouble was, for the first ten miles, Dogie had still nourished hopes of turning the mule and, the first rider he sighted, he was so ashamed to admit to bein' kidnaped by a jackass that he never even hollered for help. Jest waved an' set up in the saddle like he was Texas-bound a-purpose.

The second rider he sighted, way along toward evening, was way out on an open mesa. This rider started to come to him when he waved, and he saw it was Florencio Lopez, no doubt on his way back from visitin' kinfolks. But when Florencio saw what a hurry Dogie seemed to be in, he drew his own conclusions.

"Adios, my fr'en!" he yelled as Dogie galloped by. "That faller, he's look for you in Wagon Mound. You run fast, he sure no ketch! Adios, amigo! Good luck!"

It sure give Dogie Dobson a queer feelin' to realize that Florencio thought he was running away rather than stay and face Alec Metcalf.

IT was this feeling that decided him finally what to do. About dark, Sam Houston taken him hell-bent down over a rimrock, jumped a six-foot gully at the bottom without more'n a hand-width of footing to take off from, and Dogie never even flinched, for his mind was busy. Quick as they come to where he could swing off without smashin' himself into a boulder or tumblin' off a cliff, he quit the saddle all of a sudden and managed to tug Sam Houston to a stop. Every inch of the cowboy in him rebelled at being set afoot this far from anywheres, but he knew what had to be did, and he done it.

Plumb shaky, either from his jaunt on the jassack or from his thoughts, Dogie unsaddled Sam

Houston and turned him loose. Tender-hearted though he was, he would have give him a parting kick if he hadn't been afraid it would turn out to be a swap. As it was, the *macho* jest ambled off a few yards and begun to graze, whilst Dogie set down on a rock and got out his mouth harp. By the time he'd played "Ol' Sandy River" and "The Trail to Mexico" a couple of times, his mind felt kind o' eased, much as it galled him to see Sam Houston still grazing close by, no longer in a hurry now that he was loose.

Dogie shouldered his saddle, picked a northwest course by the stars and set out afoot, back to the Double K—and whatever might be waitin' him there. Cowboy boots ain't built to walk in, and towards daylight he set on a rock for the forty-leventh time and tried to ease the blisters on his heels with a little music. In spite of hisself he had the feeling, every time he moved on, that he was bein' follered.

It was purt' near sundown the next evenin' when he finally come staggerin' up to the Double K bunkhouse, still totin' his saddle. He was kind o' glad there wasn't nobody around to hooraw him, especially Breezy Bill. He yanked off his boots, unbuckled his gun and lay down on his bunk. He was still layin' there, playin' soft, soothin' tunes on his mouth harp, when he heard the other hands ride in.

Recognizing who they was by Breezy Bill's loud voice, he never even raised up when they come stompin' in. There was kind of a queer look on Breezy Bill's face when he saw who was there.

"If here ain't ol' jassack Johnny!" he hollers. "Last we heard of you, Florencio says you an' a bay mule was steerin' a mighty fast course for the far end of Texas!"

"I couldn't turn him," says Dogie, "so I come back afoot."

"Dogie," begins ol' Yamp, "I reckon I better tell you. Yesterday Breezy was in town an'—"

"Yeah," broke in Breezy Bill, "I met up with a feller name Alec Met-salf inquirin' for you. Friend of yours?"

"He was—once," says Dogie. "Till I was obliged to testify against him in court for bein' a rustler. Now he's out of the pen again, I reckon, an' comin' to kill me for it!"

"So you're skeered, eh?" says Breezy Bill.

"I . . . I reckon I ort to have told you boys before," Dogie says. "It's what I've been dreadin' all the time, because— Listen! Who's that?"

From somewheres outside come a thuddy sound, slow and soft, like somebody settin' down his boot heels as stealthy as he knowed how. Breezy Bill stepped quick to the door, took a look and stepped back inside. There was jest the hint of a wink in the glance he give the other boys.

"Well, Dogie," he says, "you've got a visitor outside. You want me or Ed to take care of him for you?"

"No!" says Dogie, sharper, I expect, that he'd ever spoke before in his life. His face was plumb white and his hands all shaky as he reached and buckled on his gun. He stood up, trying to look firm and easy, but not making out very good at it. "It's come, I reckon, an' I've got to face it! But . . . but—"

As he hesitated like what he wanted to say just wouldn't come out, dang if ol' Breezy Bill didn't let out a laugh. Dogie looked at him then, and fire come into his eyes.

"Gol darn it, Bill," he says, "it ain't *gittin'* killed that I'm skeered of! Can't you savvy that it's maybe havin' to kill a feller human being

that works me up so? All right, if you figger I'm a coward—git out of my way!"

"Hold on there!" begins Ed Tucker, who don't never say much. But Dogie, lookin' littler and dogier than ever in his sock feet, shoves past him to the door.

GIT ready, Alec!" he calls out, in a plumb clear voice. "I'm a-cemmin' out!"

In the doorway he stops. Out there in the yard, nosin' some rubbish, is a light bay, rump-spotted mule—and nobody else. For reasons unknown to anybody but a jackass, Sam Houston had give up 'Texas an' follered him home.

"Well, there's your visitor, Dogie," grins Breezy Bill, over his shoulder. "Whyn't you shoot him?"

Dogie whirls around, facing Bill's grin with a look that you can't describe.

"If that's your idee of a joke, Bill, damned if I don't—"

"Wup, feller!" busts in Breezy, kind o' gentle-sounding for the first time in his life. "You've showed us you've got the guts. Maybe you better tell him, Ed."

"Why," says Ed Tucker, who don't waste many words, "we run into this Alec Metcalf in town yesterday. He got to flappin' his tongue purty free what-all he aimed to do, so Bill stepped on it. Metcalf then offered the front end of his gun right quick—but not quick enough. The coroner's jury ruled that Bill shot in self-defense—which he did."

"Why . . . why—" stammers Dogie. "Why, darn it, Bill, I—"

Seemed like he couldn't git it said. Most cowboys ain't right free at expressin' them kind of feelin's noways, and I reckon Dogie was even more timid-tongued than most, but Breezy Bill come to the rescue with a chuckle.

"Maybe now we can git some sleep around here," he grins. "An' by the way, Dogie, now that you're an authority on jassack-straddlin', what—"

"Authority, hell!" busts in Dogie, makin' out to grin. "I ain't never made but two mule rides in my life—both of 'em yesterday!"

"Both of 'em?"

"Yeah. My first—an' my last!" says Dogie, an' pulls out his mouth harp.

THE END



PAYOFF AT QUARTZITE

BY HARRY F. OLMSTED



MILES before reaching Quartzite, Brice Hamers could see the boom camp clinging to its precarious mountain perch like some gigantic earth spider. Gray dust, stirred by huge ore wagons and the hoofs of many mules dimmed its details. And smoke from the smelter hung over it like a pall, darkening the sky.

Miners of a dozen nationalities crowded Quartzite's walks. Their faces turned toward Brice as he rode in, appraising him, weighing him by their own unbridled measure. And, their scrutinies finished, they turned away. Brice smiled. This was old stuff. He belonged to these rough camps and he had learned to hold his own with their rougher elements. It was the quality most easily sensed about him.

Brice crowded close to the walk to allow the passage of a stream of towering ore wagons. Then, spotting the Bonanza Saloon, he racked his pony and went in. He bought a drink.

"Know a feller named Thad Yeager?" he asked the bartender who had served him.

"Thad?" The man laughed. "Who don't know him? He's the richest man in Quartzite. Controls the ore-haulin' business. Big offices in the Troutman Block. Friend of yours?"

"Friend of my dad's," corrected Brice. "Once they were pardners. I'll look him up. Thanks."

He left the place, warmed by the thought that Thad Yeager had done so well for himself, in so short a time. It was less than a year since he had sold out his half of the

freighting business in Amargosa. But Thad had always been a go-getter, and a fine fellow along with it. The dissolution of partnership had been effected amicably. Thad would be glad to see him and would probably not even miss the five-thousand-dollar loan Brice had come to solicit.

Foot-high gold letters identified the offices of the Quartzite Freighting Co., and the rich interior suggested prosperity. Behind the polished counter, a scowling young clerk, with cold eyes and slicked hair, raised a sour visage.

"What is it, please?"

"I'd like to see Mr. Yeager," said Brice, swallowing his dislike.

"About what?"

"That's personal. Tell him it's Brice Hamers, son of his old partner."

The clerk rose, new interest on his cheeks. "I see. He's not in, Mr. Hamers, but when he comes I'll be glad to tell him you're in town. Can you call later?"

Brice glanced at the three doors giving from the space behind the counter. Men's voices struck through the middle panel. Brice nodded. "I'll come back," he said, and left with the feeling that the weasel-eyed clerk had cheated him.

Waiting was not easy for Brice. He not only needed the money, but time pressed if he was to discharge the obligation crippling his father's Nevada Transportation Co. After his noon-day meal, he could stand it no longer. He returned to Yeager's office.

"I'm sorry," the clerk said coldly. "Mr. Yeager is out of town."

"When'll he be back?" Brice asked.

"I can't say. He left no word."

Brice was sure the man was lying. But no voices issued from the inner office now, and there was nothing he

could do. So he went down to the Quartzite House and registered, begrudging the expense. Next morning, after breakfast, he visited Yeager's corral and wagon yard. The place was a beehive of activity. Repairmen swarmed over idle wagons. Bellows roared and anvils rang in the smithy. Mules brayed in the corrals. A leather crew struggled with broken harness. Thad Yeager had a big outfit, efficiently run.

Inquiry appraised Brice that there were two other freight outfits here, neither making hay bills in the fight against Yeager's cutthroat bidding. But nowhere could Brice get a hint as to where Yeager might be, nor when he was expected back. The day dragged. That night Brice was sitting in the hotel lobby, his face buried in a San Francisco paper, when someone came in and took the seat beside him.

Brice didn't look up. The lobby was crowded with men haggling over leases, the fluctuations of securities and the reports of assayers, and Brice had ceased to be interested in their comings and goings. Thus he was startled when a dry voice beside him said:

"Long ways from home, ain't you, Brice?"

THE young freighter's head swiveled to a rawboned, powerfully built jerkliner, over whose firing by John Hamers some fifteen months ago Yeager had voiced the criticism that had resulted in the severance of partnership.

"Eben Steele!" Brice gasped, and his hand went out. "Where'd you come from?"

Steele grinned as he shook, showing none of his former resentment against the Hamers. "Been here since the boom started," he said pleasantly. "Teamed for Western

Mine Haul till Yeager lit here. Joined up with him as wagon boss. What you doing here?"

It was loneliness as much as anything which loosened Brice's tongue. He had always liked Eben Steele, despite the man's unwillingness to take orders, and his friendliness had been returned. So he started from the first and told of his trouble.

"Things are slow in Amargosa," he confessed. "Diggings are getting deep and the Black Jack closed down. Phantom, Greenhorn and Lucky Boy went one shift a day. It hit Nevada Transportation hard and dad decided to drive his own stage—Elko-Amargosa."

"Your old man always was one to pinch a penny," growled Steele, his eyes changing.

"I tried to talk dad out of it, Eben, but no go. About a week ago I drove a buckboard to Elko at night, picked up the Mine Association pay roll and brought it safely back to our safe. There's been some road agents busy out there, and we didn't want to chance fetching it in on dad's stage. That night dad's coach didn't get in, so we went out after it. Found it over the grade, in Bobcat Canyon. Dad was alive, and we got him back to the hospital. But—" He fell silent and Steele's eyes widened.

"You mean—dead?" he asked.

Brice shook his head. "No. His back's broke and he . . . he can't talk. That didn't matter till I went to the safe to deliver the pay roll money to the association manager and found it gone. Me and dad are the only ones who know the combination, so he must have taken the money and cached it somewhere. You know how he worries. But he's paralyzed. All he can do is look at me with frightened eyes. The association is bringing suit in Elko,

and unless I can raise five thousand dollars, quick, we're finished."

Steele clucked his tongue. "You figger to get it here, Brice?"

"From Yeager; yes. I thought for old time's sake he might lend it to me on a short note. That money's bound to show up soon."

"Hit him for it yet?"

"No. He's out of town."

"Like the devil, he is!" Dull lights danced in the jerkliner's pale eyes. "You want to see him—now?"

"Well, yes!"

"Come on!" Steele rose, elbowed through the crowded lobby, Brice following. They hit the street, already thronged with carousing men, threaded their way through. Now Eben cut across the roistering current and into a side street leading sharply up the hill, where small houses hung like cages against the scarp. It was dark here, and silent by contrast. Eben fell back and pressed close, chuckling.

"You've had a hard time seeing Yeager, eh, Brice?"

"Thanks to that young weasel in the outer office," growled Brice. "He's a real tough monkey."

"Tough?" Steele's laugh had a cutting edge. "You ain't seen nothin' yet."

His left hand flicked to Brice's holster, wrapped the butt of his gun. Cold warning poured through the young freighter as he whirled, fixing a viselike grip on Steele's wrist.

"What is this, Eben?" he demanded.

Steele's bulletlike glance smashed him with naked hostility. "You simple fool," he snarled. "You think Yeager will play with the likes of you? He'll not see you—never."

There was murder in his glance and the shock of it stunned Brice. But he rallied as Steele drew his own

gun, and he threw a hard left to the man's unprotected jaw. It chilled Steele, tore his hand from Brice's weapon. As he fell, Brice followed in, knowing the danger of the man's weapon.

Then, with nothing more than a trampling of boots, all the imps of hell seemed suddenly to have materialized to swarm over Brice like ants, pounding, kicking, cursing. A gun barrel took him a glancing blow on the head, then he rolled Steele up, struggling to hold him there and palm his gun. But snaky arms and legs blocked his draw. Hurling shapes dove at him, and he kicked them back. Others, striking from behind, clung and battered him.

DESPERATE, Brice heaved to his knees then to his feet. Steele, still groggy, hung to his legs. But Brice had his gun now. An arcing pistol found his skull as he lifted the piece, driving him down. And though his senses reeled, he caught an in-surg-ing shadow in his sights and let go. Echoes of the gun smash rocketed against the cliffs and a man was down, groaning. And then another weapon was siding Brice's, and his assailants were drawing off. A man was beside him as he rose, calling encouragement, blasting shots at the retreating hoodlums. Then they were gone and Brice's fighting mate was holding him from the chase.

"They . . . they tried to murder me," Brice protested, trying to shake the man off. "I don't take that layin' down."

"Better take it on the double," warned the stranger calmly. "Folks are heading here from the street and they'll ask embarrassing questions. No use being hauled before a judge. Come on."

He led the way between two build-ings, where doors were already slam-

ming, hurried down a slope and into town by devious ways, Brice weaving along behind him. Moments later, they entered the Quartzite House by a rear staircase and found Brice's room. There they sat, puffing, appraising one another. Brice was dust-covered, bleeding from a split scalp. The stranger, a smooth-shaven, small-boned man of indeterminate age, looked no part of a fighting man. Brice grinned at him.

"Looks like I owe you two-bits or so, stranger. Thanks. I was betting a busted flush up there until you took cards."

"Not at all," said the stranger, grinning back at him. "I needed the ruckus to let off the steam of my natural meanness. I'm Lat Menafee."

"Brice Hamers."

They shook hands, and Menafee said: "Who were your playmates, and how come?"

Brice's head shook. "Wagon men, Menafee. I can't figure it."

"Sure it wasn't robbery? You carrying money?"

"None, and they knew that. For two days I've been trying to see Thad Yeager. His wagon boss said he'd take me to see Yeager, but up therè he turned on me. His men must have been laying there, waiting for the play to come up."

"Yeager, humph!" Menafee rubbed his chin. "Mighty serious charge against a big man like him. What you aim to do about it?"

"What can I do?"

"You can't take this to the law unless you like trouble, Hamers," Menafee said frankly. "Yeager can buy every lawman in Quartzite, probably has. You may learn that to your sorrow if that playful wagon boss reports it. We left a man laying on the ground up there and folks

here are getting fed up on robberies, knifings and shootings. They'll want a victim. If I was you, I'd stand my hand. When the sheriff grabs you, if at all, I may be in a position to do you some good."

"Thanks again," Brice murmured. "But I still aim to see Yeager. I have to. Maybe he'll have an explanation."

"Talk soft to him," warned Menafee, and stuck out his hand. "I'll look you up later."

He left the room and, when he was gone, Brice suddenly realized he had talked a lot to this Menafee man without learning a thing about him. What was he in Quartzite?

THAT night Brice slept fitfully, worried about his seemingly fading chances to contract a loan, puzzling about that affair on the dark street, half fearing the possibility of arrest. But, the night having passed without a visit from the sheriff, he rose with the feeling that Steele had not reported the incident. Somewhat easier in his mind, Brice went to breakfast. Later, standing on the walk in the hard sunlight, he saw something that brought a frosty smile to his lips.

Across the street from him, four men dressed in black broadcloth and silk hats moved along the boards, engrossed in low-toned argument. Brice watched them enter the Crystal Gambling Palace and stood rooted, surprised and a little awed. One of that quartet was Thad Yeager—not the Thad Yeager he had known in Amargosa, but a dandy grown heavy with soft living, like a banker or a politician. And then Brice had a feeling of foreboding that Yeager might now resent being reminded of a less glorious past, by a bird of lesser feather.

Then Brice thought of his father,

lying paralyzed and helpless while the Nevada Transportation, all he had in the world, died on its wheels. There was grim determination on the young freighter's face as he crossed the street and shouldered into the gambling resort. The rising wildness of his temper must have scorched Thad Yeager, where he sat with his three companions over their whiskey glasses. And though the man's back was turned, he swiveled around and met Brice's eyes. He rose hurriedly, made a sign to the others.

"One moment, gentlemen," he said, and turned to Brice with a bold and hard curiosity. He held out his pudgy hand, but there was little warmth or friendliness in his voice as he said, "Sorry to have missed you, Brice. What did you want to see me about?"

Brice felt the musty breath of the void between them, closed his senses to it, and chanced everything, putting the last first. "About a loan, Thad."

"Yeager's features clouded, and about him was a sense of studying and listening, of absorbing the full significance of what might be here. "A loan," he echoed. "That needs time to go into, Brice, and I'm very busy. Make an appointment with my secretary."

Brice's voice was bitter. "I tried that, Thad. This has to be handled now."

A grudging interest flickered in Yeager's eyes. "What has to be handled? I don't understand."

CLIPPING his phrases to the bone, Brice told his story, pleading for a short-term loan to save Nevada Transportation. He paused, breathless, waiting, while Yeager continued to regard him with

a hard, unyielding, careful stare. And through it, Brice studied the man, reaching out for some hint of the black apparition which had brushed him last night. He found none, and came to the reluctant conclusion that Eben Steele's action had been born of his old resentment against the Hamers. He could settle with Steele later, but right now the loan was of primary importance.

"I'm sorry to learn about your father, Brice," Yeager said smoothly. "I want to help, but this catches me short. The earnings of Quartzite Freighting have gone into the business. Beside that, I've just bought the Troutman Block, and I'm in mine securities on heavy margin. Still"—he hesitated, contemplating his outspread hands—"I believe I can help." He pulled out a jeweled watch. "Come see me at eleven. We'll sit down together and work something out."

Fear had turned to the warmth of hope, and Brice trod on air as he hit the street and walked down to the post office. There was a letter for him, and for minutes he stood there at the desk, afraid to open the envelope bearing the name of Dr. Riley Beaton, the association medico, who was caring for his father. Finally, overcoming his fears, Brice ripped off the end and read the letter.

DEAR BRICE:

Your father is recovering, though he cannot speak and may never do so. But it is the business I am writing you about. The association manager has had criminal complaints issued against you and your father. They've served your father but do not know where you are. I will not tell them. The association has entered a bid of two thousand dollars for your company. The judge, I'm told, will accept it. That will leave a three-thousand-dollar deficiency. Hoping you have raised the money to avert this, I am

Yours,

RILEY BEATON.

Brice wandered unseeingly along the walk and out past the borders of the town. And for all his hope of success in the pending meeting with Yeager, a sense of defeat weighed heavily upon him. "*Criminal complaint!*" "*Your father may never talk!*" "*Three-thousand-dollar deficiency judgment!*" Those phrases leaped out at him, bombarding his brain.

Nine thirty dragged on to ten, then to ten thirty. The morning seemed endless. It was near eleven when Brice headed back. He was nearing Yeager's office when, through the dust stirred by a string of lumbering ore wagons, he saw Eben Steele coming toward him. Eben Steele, with his old arrogant indolence and the personable smile hinting none at all of the deadly treachery that lay inside him. All the terror of last night's crucial moment came flooding back, waking in Brice the sudden acute hunger of an active fighter. He paused to watch the man, saw him turn into Yeager's office as if he owned the place. And it came to Brice then that Yeager must be in on what had happened last night—in it up to his eyebrows. It lacked only five minutes of eleven. Steele had been summoned to the rendezvous to make good in what he failed to do last night.

This was showdown, and Brice knew it. He brushed aside the painful toiling of his mind, loosened his gun in its leather and entered the office of Quartzite Freighting.

"Sit down and wait," ordered the slick-haired watchdog behind the counter. "Mr. Yeager is engaged."

Brice scowled and sat, keening his ears to the mutter of voices in the back office. Voices uplifted in quarrel. The clerk pursed his lips in a whistled tune, to dim the growing

clamor, Brice thought. But he heard enough to enlighten him.

"Don't change the subject on me!" That was Yeager, taunting. "You've called my hand; I'm showing my cards."

"And cutting me in on half the chips, Yeager." Steele's voice rang with dry, deadly certainty. "Sure, that business backfired last night, but it leaves me with enough to put you away for a long stretch. Do I get a half interest in Quartzite Freighting? Or do I go to the law?"

There was a prolonged silence. Then: "You've got me, Steele." A chair scraped. "A half interest it is. You're my partner"—Yeager's voice went suddenly savage—"but a dead one!"

A gun thundered, muffled by walls and dulled by the rumble of great wheels on the street. Brice came to his feet, paused a moment, then broke for the counter, hurdling the gate. The white-faced clerk, having risen, flashed to intercept him. "Here! Get back! You can't—"

BRICE hit him, putting all his bitterness and sense of frustration into the blow. It swept the man aside and down, out cold. And Brice was whipping out his gun as he shouldered into the private office. He paused abruptly. Eben Steele lay before him, on the floor. Thad Yeager sat at his desk, watching Brice over his leveled gun.

"Come in," he said quietly, "and lock the door. That's it. Now, Brice, about that loan; still want it?"

"Yes, but—"

"I can't loan you five thousand dollars," Yeager said crisply, "but I can make you a gift of it. And all you have to do to earn it is to confess that you killed Steele."

"Me?" Brice stared. "You're crazy, Yeager."

"Oh, no; not crazy, Brice. You fear the law; you needn't. This dog"—he pointed to the body—"was holding me up when you came in and killed him. I'll swear it. You understand I can't afford to jeopardize my position here. I'll pay well to prevent that and see you cleared."

"No!" Brice declared angrily. "I'll shoulder no man's killings. Not after what you tried to do to me last night."

"What Steele tried," corrected Yeager. "That's where we split. Fifteen thousand, Hamers. Last call. You'll be sorry if you don't take it."

"Meaning what?"

"Meaning if you don't accept, I'll see you hung for the murder anyway. This works two ways, Brice." He paused to listen to the turmoil in the outer office, the sudden rattling of the knob and pounding on the door. "Hurry, man, which is it?"

Brice didn't answer. Under the impact of heavy shoulders, the door came off its hinges. Men came surging in, led by a stocky man wearing a badge. He looked at the body, then at the two men facing each other with guns in their hands.

"What goes on here?" he demanded gruffly. "Who killed Steele?"

Brice met Yeager's eyes, read the challenge there. And it flashed into his mind that he had neglected to clean his gun last night. "I killed him," he said, and handed the sheriff his gun. "It was him or me."

As the sheriff led him along the street, through the ranks of hard-eyed, muttering men, Brice felt humiliated and ashamed. His first arrest rankled, and there was scant comfort in the thought that his only alternative would have been to kill Yeager and run for it. An act dooming his father, Nevada Transporta-

tion, and himself. This way there would be money to save the business, pay doctor bills and tide them over the Amargosa depression. A few days in jail was small price to pay for those things.

The taciturn sheriff booked him, locked him up and departed, leaving him to his unpleasant thoughts. Along about sundown, the lawman admitted Thad Yeager. The man came close to the bars, smiling.

"I've fixed it with the judge," he announced. "He'll throw the book at you day after tomorrow."

Brice came up off his cot, vaguely alarmed. "What do you mean?"

"Case is made, Hamers." Yeager was sneering openly now. "You came to my office repeatedly, demanding to see me. Finally you knocked out my secretary and came in, demanding money. Steele tried to stop you and you killed him. You fool, did you think I'd pay you fifteen thousand when I could get you hung easier?"

He went out, laughing softly. And Brice stood there for a long time, his heart seemingly halted. But his mind was busy, and he knew the full and damning truth. He had come to Yeager for help and had found only ruin. He had to get out of here. In a frenzy he tested bars and

walls of his cell. They spoke his doom.

He was all but exhausted with despair when the sheriff came with food at nightfall. Seeing Brice's limp dejection, the man came boldly into the cell.

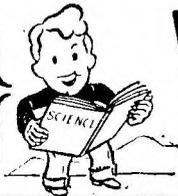
"Shame to waste good food on gallows bait," he taunted. "Make it snappy."

He was putting the tray on the cot when Brice hit him, knocking dishes spinning. He caught the sagging man by the throat, bore him against the bars. Holding him there, he ripped solid blows to his jaw until the sheriff hung a dead weight in his arms. Pausing then, he listened. No alarm. It had been done quickly, without much noise. Brice worked swiftly. He ripped a blanket, tied and gagged the lawman and placed him in bed. Then, with the man's gun in his holster, he headed for Yeager's office, the friendly darkness of the alley hiding him.

LIGHTS burned in the freighting office when Brice opened the door. The outer office was untenanted, so he stepped over the counter gate and walked in on Yeager. The man was kneeling before the open safe and he rose and spun about as Brice turned the key. The

CURTISS Butterfinger

WHAT IS THE
OLDEST SCIENCE
KNOWN TO
MAN?



IS RICH
IN PURE
DEXTROSE
THE SUGAR
YOUR BODY USES
DIRECTLY
FOR ENERGY



ASTRONOMY

CANDY IS DELICIOUS FOOD

WS-5E

... ENJOY SOME EVERY DAY

boss of Quartzite Freighting shot his hand to his shoulder holster.

"It's suicide, Yeager," Brice warned him. "You want it like that?"

The hand fell away. Yeager, white, trembling, said, "How'd you get out of jail? You—"

Brice took his gun, shoved him into a chair. "I walked out," he said curtly. "You think I'd stay to be hung by your lies? Listen, Yeager, there's just one cure for a double-crosser."

His gun bored the man's belly, and Yeager blanched. "No, no, don't kill me, Brice," he pleaded. "That won't help you, needing money like you do. I'll pay fifteen thousand—anything. And I'll tell the truth about—"

"The truth ain't in you," Brice said coldly.

"I'll lay the money in your hand. I'll do anything, only—"

"You're a rat, Yeager. I can't kill you. Get the money."

Sobbing, Yeager leaped to the safe, jerked open a drawer and pawed among sheafs of papers. The echo of a softly closing door came from the outer room, made Brice stiffen, and he listened attentively. His eyes were not off Yeager for more than a second, yet when they returned the man was facing him, laughing—over the barrel of a gun.

"You fool!" he taunted. "This is your end, Hamers. Your luck's done, and what devilish luck it's been. I hired Steele to kill you last night, thinking you had come to square for the Amargosa steal. You outsmarted him. I thought I had you safe in the jailhouse, but it doesn't matter. Now I'll kill you, and the law will thank me."

Brice hung on one phrase. "To square for what Amargosa steal?" he asked.

Yeager laughed. "Playing dumb, eh? Stalling for time. So you want a loan to save your chicken-coop outfit? That's good. I haven't five cents to my name, Hamers. I've flown high, made my half of Nevada Transportation go a long way. But it wasn't enough. The five thousand from your safe saved me, and you came here to borrow it back. What a joke!"

Brice stared at him, his lips flat, a hooded threat in his eyes. So that was where the association pay roll had gone? Funny, he reflected, he hadn't remembered that Thad Yeager also knew the combination. And now the knowledge had come too late.

The doorknob rattled and Yeager started, his laughter fading, his muddy eyes shifting. An authoritative knock and a voice:

"Yeager! Let me in!"

"Who is it?" There was uncertainty in Yeager's voice.

"The law speaking. Your game's up, man!"

Yeager's lips twisted. Without warning, he shifted and sent a slug crashing through the panel. It was the break Brice had prayed for. His own weapon leveled as Yeager's pistol swung back. Two guns blared, Yeager's bullet smashing the wall behind its intended target, Brice's lead striking home.

Yeager's face reflected a new emotion as he reeled, doubled and shrank. For an instant he glared at Brice, then dropped his gun, whirled and ran toward the rear. But he was done. He staggered drunkenly, moaned and fell, rolling to his back. And Brice went over to look at him with a pinched, intent glance.

Yeager's eyes flickered open, stared at Brice and closed. He sighed once, noisily, then sagged like a punctured balloon. The door was

bulging from the pressure of men's shoulders and Brice went over and turned the key. Men crowded in, led by Brice's strange little gun partner of the preceding night, Lat Menafee. Among them was Tuck Orndorf, the sheriff of Brice's home town.

MENAFEE grinned as his eyes took in the office. Then he had motioned the others back and put his hand on Brice's arm, feeling the bicep. "You work fast, Hamers," he said.

Brice nodded miserably. He was finished, and knew it. Orndorf had come to take him back on the embezzlement charge; he was a fugitive from a murder charge, and the sheriff of Quartzite lay bound in the jailhouse, sweating for his blood.

"Yeager was a cheat and a scoundrel," he declared heavily. "He fooled me, like he's fooled everybody."

"Not everybody," corrected Menafee. "Uncle Sam has been interested in his wild stock games for some time. I had just completed my mail-fraud case against him when Sheriff Orndorf came with word of Yeager and Steele stopping the mail stage in Bobcat Canyon and putting your father over the grade."

A ray of hope warmed Brice. "How'd you learn that?" he asked Orndorf.

The sheriff stepped forward. "Your dad came out of it, Brice, and told us the whole ugly thing. The charge against you is washed up, but the five thousand dollars--"

"Yeager took it," said Brice, a little bewildered. "He bragged about it. We could pay that back, I reckon, if I didn't have to answer for Eben Steele's murder. Yeager's the only one who could have cleared me for that, an' he's dead."

"Murder?" Menafee laughed. "It's not murder to kill a wanted man. There may even be a reward; we'll see about that. And, as for paying back the association, it will be easy if you shift your outfit to Quartzite and take over Yeager's business. I think that can be arranged, don't you, sheriff?"

Tuck Orndorf grinned. "Easy. With all you've got on Yeager, I doubt that anybody will be anxious to make a fight to play his hand. You've got the world by the tail, Brice."

Brice could hardly believe his ears. "There's one other thing," he said hesitantly. "I beat up a sheriff to get out tonight, tied him up and leeked him in one of his own cells. He'll be gunning for me plenty."

Both lawmen laughed. "I think you taught Tompkins a good lesson, Brice," said Menafee. "He's a politician learning the sheriff business at the people's expense. Don't worry, he won't be anxious to let folks know he let a prisoner handle him and get away. Come on. We're getting too much of a crowd here. Let's finish our business in the hotel."

And Brice followed him, feeling like a man just awakened from a nightmare to find his fears dissolving in the sunshine of a newer, brighter day.

THE END.



RANGE SAVVY

by H. FREDRIC YOUNG

The Florida stock whip is an instrument used by the Florida cowpoke for turning recalcitrant cattle when they make a sudden wild dash for a thicket. Tradition tells us that its rough ancestor was brought to Florida by the early Spaniards.

Stout buckskin goes into its manufacture, rawhide being too frail a substance to stand the hard wear and tear that becomes the lot of this whip. It is skillfully plaited in a round and gradually tapering plait



to a point within a few feet of the smaller end; from this point on to the beginning of the single ten-inch buckskin thong "cracker" at the smaller end, it is of two twisted strips of buckskin nicely tapered. Tallow and pine tar, mixed, are applied frequently to keep it flexible. The length varies from eighteen to twenty-two feet, being attached to a short handle. The cowboys are very skillful in snaking out the thong after an outlaw steer, and can crack it inches from the animal's head. The sound, as loud as a six-gun report, is usually enough to turn the beast. Good whips of this kind may cost as much as forty dollars.

Two new innovations in fighting forest fire are the "fire danger meter" and the "brush buster."



The fire danger meter is a gauge which registers atmospheric humidity and warns rangers when fire hazards are high. The brush buster resembles a war tank, and can cut an eight-foot swath through the undergrowth faster than eighty men can do it by hand, thus isolating many ruinous fires.

Rustlers were very adept at one type of hoodwinking honest cattlemen out of a good calf. Coming upon an unbranded calf with its mother, the calf was branded with



its mother's brand, but only enough to singe the hair. At a quick glance it appeared the calf had been branded, and if the animal escaped inspection by the owner, after it was weaned the rustler would again rope the critter affixing his own brand into the hide. After that the animal was his, and a calf so branded was known as a "sleeper."

Geronimo, savage Apache Indian, often proved his mind very superior to that of his despised white brothers, but this story at least tends to prove equality between the two.

Riding along a narrow trail, Geronimo came face to face with one of the possemen after his scalp. Each eyed the other, and each saw that the other was armed only with a single-shot rifle. Neither

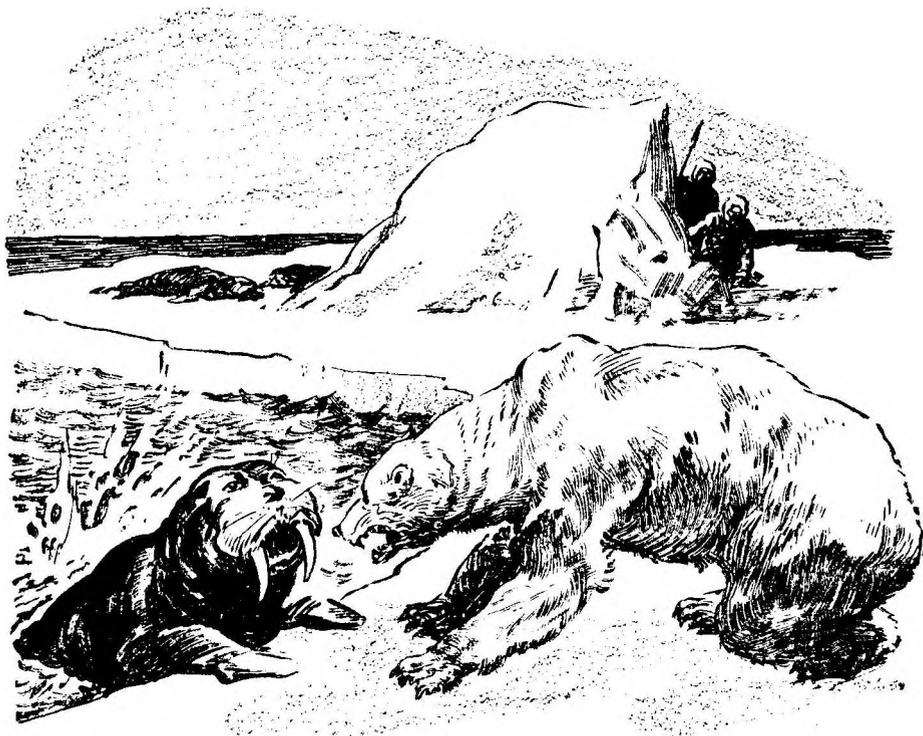


attempted a chance shot, and pretty soon the crafty Indian dismounted and hunkered down on a rock. The white man followed this example set by Geronimo, and all through the day they sat motionless, watching each other like hawks.

As the sun began to plunge behind a high escarpment, Geronimo grunted, reached for his horse, and said, "Uh, me go home."

And he rode away, a free man again. Neither had dared chance a shot for fear of a miss, which would have left him at the mercy of the other.

Mr. Young will pay one dollar to anyone who sends him a suitable item for RANGE SAVVY. Please send these items in care of Street & Smith, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y. Be sure to inclose a three-cent stamp for subjects which are not available.



POLAR PASEAR

BY KENNETH GILBERT

THE two Eskimo hunters, fear written in their round, moonlike faces, crouched on the great ice pan, gripping crude weapons. Three hundred yards away their *bidarka*, a skin-covered canoe, was drawn up on the pan. Between them and the *bidarka* was death.

Toomlik, strongest spearman of the Hiuts, clutched the haft of his stabbing-harpoon grimly. Old Nitkeo, wrinkled and wise but no longer an active man, fingered the handle of a curved skinning knife in silence. They waited, hoping that the fickle breeze which puffed and faltered across the immense sweep of the

arctic ice pack would not veer suddenly, and betray their presence to the gaunt polar bear nosing along the slush where chill wavelets lapped at the broken edge of greenish ice.

They wanted to kill the bear for there was hunger in the Hiut village, but this situation was not to their liking. It was one thing to overtake the bear in the water as he swam from one pan to another and, by the skilful handling of their *bidarka*, keep clear of his rearing lunges while they stabbed him to death. It was quite another thing to meet him face to face on an ice floe. They guessed by the thinness

of his flanks that he had probably not eaten for days. He would not hesitate to attack. The breathing of the two men slowed, the thick lids over their flat black eyes narrowed to mere slits. The bear was moving directly toward them!

Other factors entered into the situation. There was an oily deceitfulness about the sea, although the weather-wise Eskimos knew that before long a fierce *williwaw* wind would come screaming out of the north and the ice pack would break and scatter. Unless they escaped from this predicament, gained their *bidarka* before the blow came, the floe on which they were standing would be driven through the great strait and into the open sea beyond. Waves would probably wash away their canoe when the wind rose. Yet they dared not move toward it because of the bear. Suddenly Toomlik made a barely audible sound, touched Nitkoo's shoulder. But the old hunter had seen the same thing.

On the surface of the water, just opposite where the bear stood, appeared a dozen or more roundish, dark blots. There were whiskered faces, the gleam of ivory tusks. The vanguard of the walrus herd had come north again and was resting before penetrating more deeply into the ice pack, where there was not only safety from hunters but also a plentiful supply of clams to be rooted from the sandy bottom of the vast arctic shallows. At the moment they were full-fed and sleepy—and the ice pan was inviting. They did not see the bear, whose creamy white coat blended with his snowy background, but the bear instantly saw them. Slowly he flattened on the ice, invisible save for the shoe-button black tip of his nose. Even the Eskimos, fear mo-

mentarily forgotten, stirred in responsive excitement at sight of the walrus herd.

Here was food vastly more abundant than the lean and stringy bear, although fully as dangerous. In the herd were several bulls with formidable tusks curved like scimitars, their hides so thick and tough that they could hardly be penetrated by the sharpest lance driven with all the power of a strong arm. But the bear, likewise with food in mind, would probably spoil the hunters' chances. Toomlik muttered, half lifted his lance. Old Nitkoo laid a restraining hand on him.

"Wait!" whispered the aged hunter. "The bear will help us. Look! Even now he prepares his ambush!"

They saw the white beast flatten himself on the ice, burying his black nose between forepaws, fully understanding that this single distinguishing mark could be made out by the herd bulls when they came closer. Soon the herd would swim to the floe and climb out for rest before resuming the journey north. But at that moment the beady eyes of the bear made out something likely to upset his hasty but clever plans.

OFF to the left of the herd the water heaved violently; there was a gurgling sound, and then the bristling mask of a walrus bull, far bigger than any of the others, appeared. Instantly the bear recognized him, and a growl was choked off in the throat of the white killer. For this was the dreaded Kawluchi, the outlaw bull who haunted these waters and had twice nearly killed the bear while the latter was pursuing a seal. Just ahead of the slashing tusks the bear had gained the safety of the ice, realizing that he would stand but little chance

against the outlaw in the water. Although nothing apparent had happened to disturb him, Kawluchi roared suddenly with a sound like an ice floe splitting in two.

It was a challenge to battle, and the herd bulls heard and understood. They bellowed terrifying answer and moved threateningly toward Kawluchi—but stopped before they came too near.

"They are afraid!" whispered old Nitkoo. "Watch, Toomlik! You may see something that even these old eyes have never beheld. This is a sea god!"

But Toomlik knew better. Outlaw bull walrus were by no means uncommon, although never had he seen one as big as this. Yet he understood how it came about that they were outcasts.

Usually it began when they were calves. If the mother of an immature bull was killed, he would rarely be adopted by another mother. Invariably the old females, hating anything that came near their own offspring, would drive him away. The surly herd bulls resented the presence of the orphan, anyway, and would kill him if he ventured too close to them. Thus the stigma of being an outcast was fixed upon him and it would endure all his life unless something unusual happened to change the attitude of the herd toward him. Long ago they had forgotten why he was driven out; all they knew was that he didn't belong with them, that he was an outlaw. They avoided him as best they could. Probably Kawluchi understood all this and had determined that now his moment of revenge had come.

He was unafraid of the smaller herd bulls, having vanquished other outlaws nearly as powerful as he. When the herd bulls made a bluff of

attacking, his piggish eyes flamed red in response and, with a gurgling roar, he dived and launched himself for the battle.

Panic seized the herd, for they knew what was coming. So aroused were they by the threat that they milled about uncertainly, the herd bulls roaring uneasily but seemingly having no idea of what could be done, other than face the outlaw. Even the cows feared him, knowing that he would kill them as readily as he would one of the bulls if he overtook them. Terrified, they took the only means of escape left open—they swam straight for the floe where the white-death lurked, looking like an innocent hump of snow on the ice!

Nitkoo made a clucking sound. "Soon they will be killing, Toomlik!" he exclaimed softly. "The bear is watching them, not us! We can reach our *bidarka!*" He led the way and Toomlik trailed him. Bent low, they cut a wide circle around the bear, moving softly, yet swiftly. But before they reached the skin-covered canoe things had begun to happen.

Too late had the herd decided to reach the floe in order to escape Kawluchi. One of the bulls at the rear of the herd flung his body half out of the water with a horrible, choking sound, then vanished in a froth traced with red. Terror seized the other bulls and they bawled in short, sharp blasts as they increased their speed. The polar bear, suddenly confronted by the spectacle of a dozen monstrous beasts driving straight at him, got up uncertainly and backed away. He had hoped to kill one walrus, probably a young cow; it was quite another thing to face so many fear-crazed behemoths, among them several formidable bulls. He took a few steps backward, showing his teeth in a wrin-

kled snarl and making a whining, coughing sound.

Perhaps the walruses saw him, but their terror of the death pressing from behind was greater than fear of this white enemy. They blasted defiance of him as they flung their ponderous bodies out on the ice with a gracefulness remarkable for such bulky bodies. As the bear continued to retreat, although he had by no means given up the idea of garnering himself a meal, the Eskimo hunters reached their *bidarka* and launched it hurriedly. As they did so another bull felt the slashing attack of Kawluchi.

"Quick!" panted old Nitkoo to his companion. "The sea god fights for us, that we may have meat. Two bulls are dying. They will not sink while still alive!" It occurred to Toomlik that what old Nitkoo proposed was a suicidal thing. So long as Kawluchi ranged the water off the floe it meant death if he discovered them. He would rip their frail craft to shreds with a single blow of his powerful tusks, and they surmised that his vitality would withstand more than their puny weapons.

"He is no sea god but a mad bull," replied Toomlik, catching up one of the double-paddles. "He will kill us unless we get away now. We can come back with more men and finish him off. You are an old fool, Nitkoo, and crazed with hunger!"

"He is a sea god, I say!" replied the other positively. "You are too young to have wisdom, Toomlik. If you do not do as I say, I will tell the tribe that you are a coward!" Toomlik made no answer but stroked with his paddle as they approached the battle scene cautiously. More than death he feared ridicule among his people.

Save for that one glimpse they

had not seen Kawluchi again but they knew he was down below, wreaking havoc with his ivory swords, for the water was churned and sometimes a bloody bubble broke on the surface as a wounded bull gave up breath from punctured lungs. The rest of the herd was now out on the ice, and Kawluchi was busy finishing off the injured bulls. But now a second battle broke out, this one on the great ice pan.

PERHAPS the hunger of the bear overcame his caution; perhaps the constant challenge of the herd stirred his fighting instincts to a point where they could no longer be restrained. One by one the walruses flung themselves awkwardly at him, falling short of their mark, for they were clumsy out of water. Suddenly the bear found himself backed against a hummock of ice—and realized that he was trapped!

But only for a moment. With a blood-chilling roar he hurled himself at the nearest walrus, a cow. He struck her twice in the face with his heavy forepaws, blows which would have snapped the neck of an ox, yet they only stunned her. Then, the fury of battle upon him, the bear charged into the herd, striking this way and that, leaping clear of the chopping tusks. The immaculate whiteness of the snow became stained with blood. The bear was a veritable terror, and in the frenzy of his killing urge he seemed more than a match for the cumbersome beasts, although they were vastly superior in weight and numbers.

"Hoh!" grunted old Nitkoo in the *bidarka*. "This night the Iliuts will feast, Toomlik!" But the younger hunter was still dubious; it looked like a foolhardy thing that they were doing, and only the threat of being branded a coward kept him to his

task. The light canoe slid over the troubled waters and approached close to the edge of the floe.

But now the battle beneath the water was apparently ended. Old Kawluchi had evidently gratified his blood lust, for two of the bulls struggled feebly on the surface, bleeding from deep wounds inflicted by the outlaw's tusks. Suddenly Toomlik ceased paddling and caught up his harpoon. He had seen a dark, bulky mass moving swiftly beneath the surface. Nitkoo screamed warning, but it was too late. With all the power of his strong arm Toomlik drove the harpoon downward, letting go of it and paying out the long, slender line of dried walrus hide, which was fastened to the spear's handle.

"Turn!" cried Nitkoo, paddling fiercely. "Turn, or the sea god will kill us!"

In his terror he added epithets directed toward young hunters who scorned the old ways and who did not believe in such things as sea gods; young fools who defied fate by harming Kawluchi, who had been sent there by the rulers of sea and air to aid the Iluits in their hour of starvation. Impressed by what he had done, as much as by the old man's blistering words, Toomlik caught up his paddle and sent the *bidarka* swirling aside just as Kawluchi broke water with a bellow of pain and fury.

For a long instant the monstrous beast lay there on the surface, breathing heavily from the effect of his underwater struggle, shaking himself as though to free his body of agony. The harpoon, driven a feet or more into his blubber and flesh, hung there just back of his shoulders. Then his flaming eyes spied the *bidarka* and, as though un-

derstanding at once that these humans were the ones who had injured him, he blasted hatred and defiance and dived.

"Cut!" yelled old Nitkoo. "Cut the line, fool!"

Startled by the imminent death he had invoked through his rash act, Toomlik obeyed mechanically. The walrus-hide line slithered over the side, then the *bidarka*, propelled by all the strength the two men could put into the paddles, shot away like a frightened fish—and not a second too soon. In the exact spot where they they been when Kawluchi saw them, the whiskered head rose abruptly and the fearful tusks lashed the water. But the *bidarka* was ten feet away, leaping through the water as though alive. As Kawluchi sank again, Nitkoo swung the canoe toward the floe, at a point below where the bear and the herd were fighting it out. The shrewd old hunter knew that their only hope of safety lay in getting clear of Kawluchi; next time he attacked he would not miss, for his speed in the water was greater than that of the *bidarka*. The flimsy craft touched ice, and both men jumped out, drawing the canoe well up on the floe. A moment later the vengeful head of Kawluchi appeared, and he roared at them in baffled rage.

Perhaps his bellowing was heard and understood by the herd, now coming off second best in their battle with the bear, for at his gurgling challenge, they turned and made swiftly for the water again. It may have been that they thought he likewise had climbed out on the floe and was among them; or they may have decided that fighting the white beast which lunged among them, striking with fearsome paws, was a losing battle. Those who were still able to move turned and lumbered

swiftly toward the sea and plunged in.

But the bear was not to be denied his victory. Paying no attention to the walrus he had stunned, he charged after the fleeing members of the herd. As the last of them struck the water with a slithering splash, he reached the edge of the floe. And at that moment the terrifying head of Kawluchi appeared just before him.

It might have been that the walrus bull had determined to follow the human hunters out on the ice. Gone, apparently, was his desire to wreak further vengeance on the herd; he was more concerned now with the human beings who had wounded him. The sight of the bear confronting him diverted his fury toward the new foe. With a strangled bellow he launched his vast bulk out of the water and on the floe.

THIS was what the bear wanted. So far he had vanquished all other walruses who had attacked him out of their natural element; he would make short work of this bull, big though he was. Again his mighty left forepaw came down full on the bristly mask raised before him, a blow which would have crushed the skull of an *oogaruk*, or sea lion. But it merely made Kawluchi grunt. The bull countered with a vicious chop of his tusks which ripped deeply into the bear's chest, and the pain of this touched off the last of the bear's surly temper. Roaring, he sprang on the bull's neck, sharp claws setting themselves in the blubbery flesh while his strong jaws bit deeply, seeking the spine.

But Kawluchi was no ordinary bull walrus. His strength was prodigious. He reared to the very tips of his flippers, rolled with astonish-

ing agility. The bear's claw-hold on the tough hide slipped and, before he could spring clear, his hind quarters were pinched beneath the massive body. Squealing with rage and pain, he sought to strike back at the giant crushing him. But there was no defense against those long ivory chopping knives, and in a moment the bear was a limp and misshapen mass.

Yet old Kawluchi had not gone unharmed. Victories over the other bulls had cost him dearly, and the bear had likewise taken toll. But there was no dimming of his fighting spirit. He came up with a throaty blast of defiance as the excited Toomlik raced in to seize one dangling end of the harpoon line. If Toomlik could tear out the harpoon, he could use it for another and more telling blow, for Kawluchi was now exposed on the ice. Toomlik caught the line, threw his weight against it and the harpoon tore out of the blubber. Again Nitkoo screamed curses, but Kawluchi, save for a single bellow, apparently did not mind the pain. At least he was free. Toomlik, drawing the harpoon toward himself swiftly, was in the act of seizing the weapon for a final death blow when the cries of Nitkoo penetrated his consciousness.

"No! No!" yelled the old hunter. "Look! The sea god goes to rejoin his own kind!"

Toomlik paused, for an astonishing thing was happening. Seemingly Kawluchi understood that fight had gone out of the walrus herd, that their best bulls were beaten. He saw their dark heads bobbing on the surface of the sea as they moved rapidly away from the floe. Likewise his ancient enemy, the polar bear, was dead. The humans, too, were apparently afraid of him. But more potent than these realizations was

the fact that the herd, confused by the loss of its leaders, was moving about uncertainly. An old urge, stilled all the years that he had been an outlaw, a lonely urge, ruled him now. For, ignoring the human hunters threatening him, he bawled mightily at the vanishing herd and started after them.

His great body slid into the sea from the edge of the pan with astonishing smoothness. Only once did his head appear, while he fixed the direction of the herd. Then he dived, as though realizing he could make better time beneath water than on the surface, and struck off to overtake the frightened and disturbed members of his own clan.

Old Nitkoo let go a gusty sigh of relief. "Tonight we feast, Toomlik, as I have said!" he chortled. "But for me you would have aroused the sea god until he had either killed us or held us back until the bulls in the water had sunk. But now we have meat! Two bulls are out there, and we can get them with the *bidarka*! Two more are dazed on the ice, one a cow. And there is the bear. We feast, Toomlik, because the sea god has given us food. Come!"

Toomlik followed wonderingly as

old Nitkoo led the way toward the *bidarka*. Once they had garnered the wounded bulls, it would be an easy matter to kill the two walrus remaining on the ice floe. And the bear would await their pleasure, for no longer was he a killer. The Diuts would feast as they had not done in many moons.

Even as Toomlik ran forward he was stirred with awe at what he had seen. Maybe these oldsters such as Nitkoo knew things which the young hunters had yet to learn. Maybe the giant Kawluchi was really a sea god. It was all strange and bewildering.

But to old Kawluchi himself there was nothing very mysterious about it. By now he had overtaken the herd and swam among them, and no bull challenged his presence. Perhaps they sensed that in such a gladiator they had ample protection against such enemies as man, or even the white beast of the floes. Outlaw he may have been, but he was now their leader. Obediently they trailed behind him in the water as he steered a sure course for new and bleak regions where no enemies lived. Kawluchi, outlaw since calfhood, had at last regained his heritage.

THE END.



WATER WIZARD

BY ALLAN R. BOSWORTH

WHEN a man's as old as Nick Willoughby, he isn't much good on a cow ranch any more. Seems like all of him starts tuckering out at once, like an old horse that's been "sole-owed," as they say down on the Nueces, where more than one horse has been run to death. His muscles kink up, and his joints are mighty stiff to unhinge out in camps when a norther is blowing and the bedding ground is damp. His eyes are kind of faded, as if maybe they've looked on their share of purple distances and sunsets and trail herds rolling by, and they water some, like too much alkali dust and mesquite smoke have blown into them.

Give Nick Willoughby a saddle and a couple of grunts to get up, and he'd fit into it like he was grown there, with his old back straight as a windmill rod. But when Ogle Bastrop and Ed Gorland saw him coming up the road to the Fiddle Back Ranch, he was walking, bent under a bedding roll. Ogle saw that the tarp and blankets didn't weigh much; Nick was really stooping under the load of sixty-odd years.

"Yonder I go, thirty years from now—if she don't rain mighty soon!" Ogle said. He was a tall, spare man, and south Texas had stamped his speech and his mannerisms with an easy-going softness. He shook his head, watching the old man cross the dry fork of Coyote Creek, where drought had shriveled the stunted willows. "Poor old devil! And I ain't got anything for him here."

Ed Gorland had come to the Panhandle from somewhere north, bring-

ing money and an uncalled-for arrogance with him. A powerful, harsh-spoken sort, he had neither softness nor patience about him. He grunted.

"Well, why should you? Let tramps look out for themselves, Bastrop; they'll always be tramps. It's time you worried over your own affairs. I'll give you five thousand for those five sections. If anybody had ever told me I'd be offerin' a thousand a section for Panhandle land, I'd have told them they were crazy!"

Ogle Bastrop whittled thoughtfully on a bar of the corral fence. "It's worth easy that, if the rest of the ranch is worth it," he said. "I mean I couldn't raise cattle, years like this, without that strip of live creek coming out of the canyon up yonder. Nope, I can't sell that, Gorland."

Nick Willoughby came on through the mesquites, following the wagon road that hugged the horse-trap fence. Too old, too tired to take short cuts, Ogle thought. He turned toward the weather-beaten ranch-house and shouted: "Concho. Come here a minute!"

Gorland paid no attention to the walking man. "You're in a tough place," he argued. "What good is water if you can't feed your beef? If this winter's dry as the last, you're sunk. Now, I want to bring my cattle down from the Indian Territory, and I've got to have water. Tell you what I'll do. I'll lend you the five thousand, and take a mortgage on the five sections. On condition"—his pale eyes were narrow

and chill—"on condition that you take down your fence so my stock can water at the creek."

OGLE studied this, whittling thoughtfully. Concho Weeks, who would have been called a foreman if there had been enough hands on the Fiddle Back to warrant a

foreman's job, shambled loose-jointedly down from the house.

"The five thousand," Gorland went on persuasively, "would feed your cows through the winter. By spring maybe I could build a reservoir."

"I'll think that proposition over," said Ogle. "Might take you up on it." Then, to Concho: "Here comes an old, busted-up puncher. Look-



"I'm snow blind," old Nick said. Gorland laughed and raised his gun.

ing for a job, I reckon. Most we can do is feed him a couple of days and send him on. Take care of him, Concho."

"You're too damn soft-hearted, Bastrop!" criticized Gorland. He walked over to the hitching rail and lifted a stirrup to tighten his cinch. Old Nick Willoughby trudged up through dust made by his shuffling feet.

"Howdy!" he quavered. "One of you gents the boss?"

"I am," Ogle said kindly. He saw that the old man had once been tall; his clothes were ragged now, but clean, and his gray beard and mustache were neatly trimmed. What impressed Ogle most of all was the light in Nick Willoughby's faded eyes. It was more than a light of self-respect: it was bright, and rather strange.

"Name's Nick Willoughby," said the newcomer. "From Nueces way. I'm looking for a place to spend the winter—do a little trapping, maybe. You bothered with lobo wolves?"

"Some, but—"

"Loboes pull down a lot of calves," the old man went on serenely. "I'm a fair trapper. And it don't take much to keep me. I can build a dugout."

Ogle Bastrop smiled. "I come from the Llano, myself," he said. "What I started to say, old-timer, was that we ain't got any calves to speak of. No rain for eighteen months. No feed. Not even any water except up yonder in the canyon, before Coyote Creek sinks in the ground. So the wolves ain't much of a problem, right now. We got bigger ones."

Nick Willoughby put down his bedding roll and wiped dust from his face with a red bandanna. He looked back down the slope toward the dry fork, holding his grizzled

head high, and his eyes were still bright.

"Why, there's plenty water around here, mister," he said slowly. "Only thing, it's under the ground. Not far, though. What you need is a windmill between here and that draw. Might not even have to put up a mill. Might be artesian."

Ed Gorland lifted his stirrup from the saddlehorn and came back to the group, his pale eyes glinting. He winked at Concho Weeks.

"Sure looks like water down there!" he jeered. The slope was gully-scarred by forgotten rains. Nothing grew on it but dwarf mesquite and tumbleweeds that had died months before. A whirlwind eddied up from the straggle of willows, sucking a bent spiral of dust into the hot sky.

But old Nick nodded as if to himself; Gorland's sarcasm did not touch him. "Shore," he said simply. "The water's there. I can tell. I'll find it for you, if you want me to. Show you where to drill."

Ogle Bastrop took his elbows off the corral bar. "You mean you can witch for water?" he asked almost eagerly.

"Yes. Let's go down to the crick. I have to get a forked willer. I'll show you."

Ogle clicked his skinning blade shut, and shoved the knife into his pocket. "Come on!" he answered.

Ed Gorland let out a derisive snort. "Don't be a fool, Bastrop!" he advised. "Anybody who'd believe that old superstition in this day and age is completely locoed. The very idea of being able to locate water with a willow stick—why, man, it is crazy!"

He toed his stirrup. Old Nick Willoughby was walking toward the dry creek, as if he hadn't heard.

"But I know it's been done!" Ogle told Gorland, and followed.

Concho Weeks was caught between curiosity and disbelief; he stood rooted, his mouth open.

"Damned fool!" Gorland growled. "Well, it's his business, I guess." He straddled the roan, and looked down at Concho. "Tell Bastrop that five thousand is waiting for him on a mortgage—when he wakes up!"

AS he walked along old Nick seemed to become straighter, younger. "It's a gift," he confided as they neared the willows. "I don't know how it works, but it does. I just feel the willer branch come alive in my hands. She p'intns down, right at the water. Closer the water, harder she pulls. It's a gift. My pa could do it, too."

Concho followed them, now. Old Nick cut a pronged limb from the stunted growth, and came a little way back up the slope.

"Of course, there's water under the draw bed," he said. "What you want is water somewhere up toward the house. You could raise feed on this slope if you had it. Alfalfa, maybe."

Then he took a prong of the willow in each hand, and held it breast-high, the single end extended level. He began walking in a lateral direction along the slope. He looked like a somnambulist.

Concho Weeks stared, swearing under his breath. Nothing happened, but there was the old man's bearing, his assurance. It was a sort of stage presence, and yet Nick Willoughby was oblivious to his watchers. It was as though he had confidence that his gift could not fail.

The divining rod slanted downward. Old Nick stopped. As he had said, it was alive in his hands.

"Here," he told Ogle Bastrop.

"The water's here." He marked the spot with his boot heel. "Let's see, maybe it runs nearer the house."

He began his strange walk again, crossing back and forth over an imaginary line that ran eastward up the slope. But the line was not imaginary to old Nick; each time he crossed it, the willow branch bent. Finally he turned toward the house, letting the divining rod guide him along a twisting course until he had almost reached the corral.

Here he stopped. "She goes mighty deep, from now on," he said. "Right here, I'd say eighty feet. Farther down the slope, it's sixty. It may not be artesian, but you'll get a good flow."

Ogle Bastrop was impressed by his simple sincerity. Mechanically, he watched another whirlwind spin between him and the dry creek. "Old-timer," he breathed, "I'm going to gamble on it! Drilling a well here will take all the money I've got; maybe more. But water on this slope would be worth it."

"It ain't a gamble," Nick said quietly.

Ogle gripped his shoulder. "If you want, you can stay on at the Fiddle Back this winter."

THEY were drilling, now, and had been for weary weeks, while hard luck dogged the rig and its crew and Ogle Bastrop wondered just how much longer he could take care of the expense. Concho Weeks never tired of telling cowhands in Tascosa of the gift Nick Willoughby had. The gift was as yet unproven, but nobody who had any contact with the old man could fail to believe him.

"Just like a magnet, I swear it is!" Concho said. "Why, the old coot could find a can of tomatoes lost in

the Sahara, if somebody'd give him a willer fork. He—"

"How far down is the hole now?" asked one of Ed Gorland's riders.

"Sixty-odd feet."

The cowboy grinned and nudged a companion. The Fiddle Back's dry hole was becoming a joke over that portion of the high plains, where cattlemen had always depended on live springs and waterholes. "You fellers shore you ain't just poundin' sand down a rat hole? You was down sixty feet three weeks ago!"

"Outfit lost a drillin' tool and had to fish for it," Concho explained. "Besides, they been goin' through hard rock."

Ed Gorland was getting impatient. He had bought the range that adjoined the Fiddle Back a couple of years before, when conditions were normal. Now the waterholes on which he had to depend were like stinking buffalo wallows. His cattle were still beyond the North Canadian; he was anxious to bring them down and put them under fence before the blizzards came. If the winter turned out dry, he'd have to have access to Ogle Bastrop's stretch of Coyote Creek.

More irritating than all this was that part of Gorland's nature which made him obstinately determined to get the thing he was denied. It annoyed him that Bastrop continued to refuse.

"You need money to pour into that dry hole you're digging!" he told Ogle for the twentieth time. "Why don't you either sell or give me a mortgage and the use of that water?"

The answer to that was that there wasn't too much water, and Ogle Bastrop was nursing along a pure-bred, white-faced strain he didn't want mixed with Gorland's cattle.

"No," he said doggedly. "And the hole won't be dry."

"Maybe not. I hope not, for your damn-fool sake. But if you hit water, it's by pure accident. I see the old man has holed-up over yonder by the canyon. He's camped close to water, anyway!"

"Lobos run there," Ogle explained. "I bought him a string of traps and some grub. He'll likely catch a few wolves on your land, too."

"He'd better stay off my range!" Gorland said churlishly. "I got no use for the old faker, and you can tell him so." He eyed the sky hopefully. "Looks like rain. If it rained good, I wouldn't have to beg you to let me lend you money."

But it didn't rain. Instead, wind came out of the north and drove the tumbleweeds and the dust across the plains, and sent a thickening, slate-colored scud of clouds through the sky. It turned freezing cold, and then began to snow.

Ogle Bastrop had seen snow in the Panhandle before; sometimes it was as good as water. But this blizzard was different. It laid a hard, sleety cover over all the drought-burned bunch grass, so that no cow could paw through it to get food, and it spread a crisp, white blanket of snow above that.

Ogle hoarded the wood that was so scarce in this plains country, and burned cow chips in the sheet-iron stove while the blizzard raged. The drilling crew was still pounding away at the ground. Then, above the clocklike hammering, Ogle could hear a new and growing sound. The bawling of hungry cattle, drifting down out of the shelter of the canyon, turning to the man who owned them in hope of being fed.

But there was no money to buy feed, and no credit. Ogle waited another day, and the snow stopped

falling. But now it was crystal clear, with no warmth in the sun, and a thin, icy wind whining down across the bleakness, a wind straight from the snow-clad Rockies in Colorado that would never melt the snow.

Ogle listened to the pathetic howling of the hungry cattle, and then got out pen and ink. He wrote a note that gave Ed Gorland a mortgage on the five sections of watered land, plus use of the range until the five thousand dollars was repaid with interest.

Then he sent Concho Weeks riding to Gorland's place, hoping the money was still available. Ogle himself wrapped his neck and ears in a woolen shawl and prepared to take the wagon out of the barn with the last few bales of alfalfa.

"On your way, coming or going, stop by and see how old Nick is getting along," he told Concho. "Tell him he can come down to the house, if he wants. He must be having a mighty tough time, in this weather."

OLD NICK WILLOUGHBY had been getting along all right, until the day it cleared. He left the warmth of his dugout that morning and ran his trap line. When he came back with the hide of a big lobo that was taken in the creek canyon, he felt as if his eyes had been turned directly into a white-hot fire. The familiar slanted rectangle of the dugout door faded and danced before him. The darkness, once he was inside, felt good to his burning eyelids.

Old Nick was from the Nueces country, but he had heard of snow blindness, and so he made a poultice of tea leaves and applied it to his eyes. The next morning they were better so he went to look at his traps again.

WS—6E

In a little brushy draw that gullied down to the creek canyon, old Nick found another lobo trapped. He killed the snarling animal with one shot from his big .45, and tried to wipe the blinding dazzle from his eyes as he knelt to skin the wolf.

When he arose twenty minutes later, the white glare beat against his faded old eyes with the force of a whiplash. The landscape shimmered and blurred and dimmed into a smarting darkness.

Old Nick rolled the fresh pelt under his arm and started down the gully, groping about in an almost total blindness, fully realizing that unless he could find the dugout or make his way to the Fiddle Back, he would be frozen to death.

There was no panic within him. When a man has lived as long as Nick Willoughby had, he becomes philosophical about death. The trail that led to Gorland's place from the Fiddle Back skirted the high canyon rim somewhere yonder, and he thought he would be able to find it.

He knew that he was almost to this trail when he heard a shot.

Old Nick paused. The wind had stopped; he couldn't tell one direction from the other. But the shot was loud and near.

"*Halloo!*" called old Nick.

There was no answer. He started forward again, lost his footing on a treacherous ledge, and had to run to keep his balance. In this manner he plunged down the slant and into the level of the trail.

He heard a startled exclamation. Ed Gorland's voice. He could not see that Gorland was just straightening above the body of Concho Weeks, who lay sprawled in the snow with a bullet hole in the back of his sheep-lined jumper, right under the left shoulder blade, nor could

he see the roll of bills Gorland was stuffing into his pocket.

"So, you saw me, you damned old fool!" Gorland growled. "It's the last thing you'll ever see, Willoughby! The last thing you'll see this side of hell!"

Old Nick drew a puzzled hand over his eyes. "But I can't see," he quavered. "I'm snow blind, Gorland. I heard somebody shoot and come this way so they could lead me back to the dugout. I'd be much obliged if you'd do that for me."

"You can't see?" Gorland straightened and made certain. He jabbed the muzzle of his .45 within inches of the old man's face, and Nick didn't flinch.

Gorland stepped back, then, with a grunt. His pale eyes narrowed, and he chuckled softly, to himself, as he let them rove over Nick Willoughby. The old fellow had a .45—the same kind of gun he had just used to kill Concho Weeks.

"Sure!" Gorland said heartily. "Sure, I'll take you to your dugout, Nick. Provided you'll do something for me: come up next spring and locate a well for me."

"I'll be mighty glad to do that," Nick Willoughby promised. "I'm always glad to help, and I don't believe in chargin' anything for it, either. A man with a gift, like mine, ain't got any business takin' money for it. It don't rightfully belong to him. Where are you, Gorland?"

GORLAND was behind him. Instead of answering, he brought the barrel of his .45 down heavily on the crown of old Nick's worn Stetson.

"A man with a gift!" mocked Gorland, looking down at the crumpled figure. "You're certainly a gift to me—coming along like this!"

Then he chuckled again, because

the set-up was so perfect no amount of planning could have improved it. Nobody would be able to prove that he had taken a short cut to kill Weeks and get back his five thousand, even if anyone suspected. It was going to snow again in a little while, and his tracks would be covered. He had meant to roll Weeks' body over the canyon cliffs, where the snow would hide it until the spring thaws came. But now that wouldn't be necessary.

He inspected Nick's revolver, and left the empty under the hammer. Then he lifted the old man's frail body to one powerful shoulder, carried it through the thin brush, and let it slide over the canyon rim.

The fall might not prove fatal, although it was a good sixty feet down to the willows that hugged the base of the cliff. But if old Nick ever recovered consciousness from the blow on the head, snow blindness and exposure would take care of him.

Gorland carefully scraped snow over the footprints, just to make sure, and covered the tracks around Concho's body. He led the Fiddle Back sorrel back toward his own place. That would help further to avert any stray suspicion if Gorland were the man who went to Ogle Bastrop to report that Concho's horse had returned with an empty saddle.

Now he had the Fiddle Back owner right where he wanted him. He held the note for five thousand, and Ogle Bastrop was still broke. Chances were, Bastrop would be forced to sell the five sections outright. All along, Gorland had intended that something would prevent the mortgage from ever being paid. He smiled, thinking how Bastrop, the easy-going fool, had himself provided the set-up by sending Concho for the money. It

wouldn't have been so easy to cover up Ogle Bastrop's death.

A DULL throb of pain hampered the mists clinging to Nick Willoughby's consciousness. He stirred feebly, finding he could move his arms and legs. A willow branch scratched his face. He thought: What happened? What am I doing here? and then remembered Gorland. Gorland had been going to lead him back to his dugout.

The old man sat up. Something was wrong. Gorland had threatened him angrily at first, then had turned unaccountably friendly. That shot—

He had to get to the Fiddle Back. He struggled to his feet, sinking knee-deep in the snow that almost covered the willows, the snow that had saved him. His eyeballs ached, and the lids burned as if frost had seared them. For a few minutes he could see objects close against his face, but then the white dazzle drove against his brain again, and he could see nothing at all.

"Maybe Gorland put his iron on a calf, and then shot the Fiddle Back cow it was followin'!" he speculated. "I got to find Ogle, got to tell him."

Suddenly he knew, though, that it must have been something worse than the shooting of a cow. Besides, there were very few calves on the Fiddle Back.

He knew approximately where he was. The trap where he had caught the lobo was not far from the gap through which Coyote Creek flowed to lose itself in the plain. It turned into a dry draw, then, after the water had gone underground, and twisted down past Ogle Bastrop's place—

Then realization seared his brain! That was it! *The water went underground!*

A smile cracked old Nick Wil-

loughby's gaunt, bearded face as he fished for his skinning knife and groped among the willows. He found a pronged branch about a yard long, and cut it.

A man with a gift like his never ought to take pay for using it, because it didn't rightfully belong to him. But he ought to use it to help his friends, and he ought to use it for good against evil.

He put the willows against his back and then moved straight out from them, walking as a sleepwalker would wade through the snow. Away from the base of the cliff a few yards, the wind had blown hard, and the snow was not so deep. He knew that if there were water in this part of the creek, it would be frozen thick enough to bear his weight, and he walked without fear.

The south was downstream. To his left. He took a few more steps and came into the open.

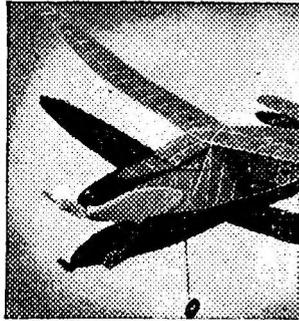
All at once there was the magical, electrical pull in his hands. The feeling of life and power—a cosmic, unexplainable quickening of the willow wand!

Old Nick knew he was over the stream bed, then. Still smiling, he turned left.

The distance was five miles by the trail. It must have been nearer nine along the twisting bed of the dry draw. More than once Nick stumbled and fell on the slippery, smooth-washed stones. Always he got up again, gripping the precious willow branch, thrusting it before him. Walking patiently where it led, through the strange darkness.

He lost track of the hours and wondered if night had come. And just when he had the worried thought that he might pass the Fiddle Back unseen, he heard the distant clatter of the well rig.

Win
\$25



EACH MONTH WITH A MODEL AIRPLANE YOU GET FREE!

Each month during May, June, July, August and September, 1940, Street & Smith will hold contests to determine who construct and fly the country's best Class C models. There will be 100 awards—\$265.00 in all—twenty prizes each month for five months, as follows:

1st prize each month—\$25.00

2nd prize each month—\$10.00

3rd to 10th prizes each month—A Meadow Model Kit of the Korda-Wakefield Model—Value \$1.00 each

11th to 20th prizes each month—A Comet Model Kit of the Cahill-Wakefield Model—Value \$1.00 each

GET YOUR AIRPLANE FREE

With a year's subscription to WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE we will send you FREE a "Sun Spot," Class C, 36-inch wing-spread model kit which we have had designed especially for this contest by Joe Ott and which you may enter for the prizes. Full details will be mailed you.

STREET & SMITH PUBLICATIONS, INC.
Dept. My-K4, 79 7th Ave., New York, N. Y.

I am inclosing \$4.00. Kindly send me a "Sun Spot," 36-inch wing-spread, Class C, Model Kit FREE with a one year's subscription to WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE and full details of how I may win up to \$25 a month. (This offer does not apply to Canada.)

You can send me FREE the details of the contest; I may subscribe later.

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY STATE

Even then, he knew he couldn't head straight for the sound without stumbling through scrub mesquite. He kept to the stream bed until the noise was at its loudest, and then he turned up the slope, following the willow wand toward the corrals, as he had done once before.

THEY saw him coming. Ogle Bastrop had long before finished feeding the last of his alfalfa to the cattle, and was worried about Concho's absence. He came down to the drilling rig to hear its two-man crew reassure him and tell him that Concho should be all right in a snow no heavier than that which had just begun to fall.

And here came Nick Willoughby, following his willow magic.

Ogle jumped to meet him. The old man's eyes were rid-rimmed and watering; they were the fixed, un-winking eyes of a man who might have been blind for years. But they had a light in them that wouldn't die.

"Nick! What's the matter?" Ogle said anxiously. "Can't . . . can't you see?"

Old Nick shook his head. "Snow Blind," he said, and felt Ogle's arm go around his stooped shoulders. "I come to tell you somethin' wrong, Ogle; I don't know exactly what. I heard somebody shoot, and I run across Gorland on the trail. He was mad. He knocked me on the head and shoved me over the cliff. You better ride up that way and see what it was."

Ogle Bastrop swore. He knew what it was. "Concho!" he breathed. "That devil Gorland—"

Then he looked up the trail, and hustled old Nick out of sight behind the drillers' tent. "We won't have to go up there, Nick. Here comes Gorland now, leading Concho's

horse. You stay out of sight. Get in here!"

Gorland was riding toward the ranchhouse. Ogle shouted to him, and Gorland turned down by the pounding rig. His broad face wore an expression of alarm.

"Concho!" he exclaimed, swinging down and dropping his split reins. "His horse came back to my place a little while ago. I'm afraid he's— Wait a minute, Bastrop! Don't be a damned fool! Put up your gun!"

"Put up your hands!" Ogle retorted. "Boys, would one of you mind lifting this hombre's pistol and going through his pockets? See if he's carrying five thousand dollars— Yes, and give me that note, too. I'm lifting the mortgage now."

The money was there. Gorland's arrogance came back with a bluster. "That's *my* money, Bastrop. I had ten thousand on me when I paid Concho. I didn't come down here to be insulted. I came to do you a favor!"

"You came to stick your neck in a rope!" Ogle corrected grimly. "It's still your money. I wouldn't touch it, except to turn it over to the sheriff for evidence!"

Gorland sneered. "You'll have a hard time getting a loan anywhere else, Bastrop. You're a fool if you think you can pin anything on me. I've got a hunch who jumped Concho. That crazy old trapper. Old Nick. He—"

They all heard the swishing sound, and the sudden patter of drops of water falling on the tent. "Rain!" Ogle Bastrop breathed, as if he couldn't believe the word, and then the swishing hiss grew louder, and with it came a gurgling sound.

"Rain, hell!" yelled one of the drillers. He jumped to the engine and shut off the drill. Ogle realized belatedly that he hadn't heard the last few strokes of the heavy bar down there in the ground. "Rain, hell!" grinned the well-rig man, coming back. "You got an artesian well, Bastrop!"

Ogle held out his hand and felt the water spray into it. The tool, still in the well, was making the water spurt higher than it would when the drill was withdrawn. It was like sticking your finger into a faucet.

"I can borrow plenty of money, on the strength of that water!" Ogle told Ed Gorland. "It was there, just like old Nick said. By the way, you started to say something about him and Concho. That reminds me. When Nick saw you shoot Concho he—"

"The old fool's snow blind!" Gorland said quickly. "He couldn't see anything—" Then he bit his tongue.

Ogle Bastrop smiled grimly. "He could hear, though. And he could cut a willow wand and find his way here to warn me. Come out of the tent, Nick! We got this rattlesnake's fangs pulled!"

THE END.





DEPUTY FOR A DAY

BY JOHN A. THOMPSON

THE way Harlan Chase looked at it, the owlhoot trail was his only choice, now that a bank back home in the town where his father was marshal had branded him a thief.

Because his dad was busy elsewhere, Harlan had been entrusted with the job of getting the big Mawson Mine pay roll from the bank and

taking it up to the mine office. It was the first time he had ever handled such a large sum of money. Almost awed, he watched the teller count out bills as swiftly and unconcernedly as if they were cigar coupons.

"Thirty-one, thirty-two, thirty-three. Ten, twenty, five, six, seven,

and eighty cents," droned the teller. "Thirty-three hundred and twenty-seven dollars and eighty cents."

Harlan scooped up bills and change, stowed the pay roll in his saddlebag, and left the bank. Half-way down Main Street some impulse caused him to pause and count the money again. He did so carefully and went suddenly cold. The pay roll was five hundred dollars short! The teller had made a dreadful mistake.

Excited, worried, Harlan rushed back. He tried to explain the mistake that had been made.

The teller shrugged. "Your tough luck if you lost the money, kid. No mistakes rectified after leaving the window."

Harlan argued. It was no use. Young, on his first job of trust, he became panicky. He couldn't return to the mine five hundred dollars short. He had a little money of his own, but nothing near five hundred dollars.

A desperate idea came to him as he realized he was standing before the Gay Devils gambling hall. Perhaps, if he used his own savings, he could run them up to the amount he needed!

Sweat was streaming from Harlan's face when he left the Gay Devils. Not only had he lost his own money, but he had risked several hundred from the pay roll. Now there was a deficit of nearly a thousand dollars. He rode out to the mine. Maybe Mawson would give him a job and let him work out the deficit. Damn all banks, anyway! He hated them and their high-handed, superior ways.

Mawson didn't see it from the kid's angle. He refused even to listen to Harlan's story. Called him a thief and a cheat, and swore he would prosecute. Desperate, Har-

lan hunted up his father. He knew strait-laced, gambling-hating Rance Chase would be angry, but surely he wouldn't turn down his own son for all his New England conscience.

Rance listened to his son's story. When Harlan finished, the old man's lips trembled slightly.

"It's a pretty thin story, son," he said slowly. "You better give yourself up."

The pain those words cost Rance Chase never registered with the overwrought youngster. They only made him angry. When a fellow's wrong and knows it, he's apt to fly off the handle pretty easy.

"All right," he stormed. "If I've got the name, I might as well have the game. I'm ridin'. If you want me, come and get me!"

Harlan looked back once as he galloped out of town. His father was standing out in the center of the dust-filled street, immobile as a statue, his right hand resting on his undrawn gun butt.

SHERIFF BEN WINTERKILL was plenty angry. First his segundo had resigned suddenly to get married, and start life on a small spread of his own in the foothills of the Bearclaws. Pete Kane, his other deputy, was off in the southern part of the county on business that would keep him away at least three days. That left Winterkill alone in Little Windy.

On top of that Trigger McTeague and his wild bunch had crossed over into the desolate lava-butte country that comprised much of his territory, and the biggest shipment of currency sent by the Little Windy bank in many months was going out on the morning stage.

What rankled most in Winterkill's breast was his recent interview with Aldrich Bailey, the banker.

Winterkill had suggested that he ride herd on the stage until the money was safe in Dobson. Bailey had merely smiled in his peculiarly irritating way and refused the offer.

"You could make it all right, Ben," he had said. "But think of the horse."

Ben Winterkill tipped the scales at two-twenty, fleshed out as he was with the fat a big man acquires after he has given up an active outdoor life for a more sedentary occupation. Back from the bank, he sat down heavily at his spur-scarred, table-top desk, hardly aware that the door had opened behind him.

"Heard you need a new deputy," said his visitor abruptly.

Winterkill looked up, surprised. With a motion that could give lightning a ten-second start and beat it to the finish, the stranger whipped out a gun and pushed its cold muzzle hard into the sheriff's belly.

"Well, I'm it," he continued serenely. There was a faint, mirthless grin on his young, long-jawed, wind-tanned face. The stone-gray eyes that frosted into Winterkill's meant business.

"Get out a tin star and pin it on me," ordered the stranger.

Ben Winterkill had been a lawyer too long to be a fool at the same time. He obeyed the order, groping for the badge kept in the desk drawer. A loaded gun lay in the same drawer. He weighed the chances of using it, and decided against them. Something in the bleak, yet handsome, face of the tall youngster warned him that any false move would be utter folly.

"You can't get away with it, kid," the sheriff said quietly.

The gun wielder's eyes narrowed. "It's goin' all right so far," he declared.

A thin smile played across Win-

terkill's dry lips. "Recognized you the minute you came in, Harlan. Guess that's why you caught me off guard. Never looked for sidewinder habits in a Chase. You're the spit an' image of your dad at your age. Maybe that's as far as the resemblance goes."

"What if it is? Give me that star."

Winterkill went on as if Harlan hadn't spoken. "Rance Chase and me lawed together for years down in Texas—"

"Cut out the gab," interrupted Harlan. "Pin that badge on my shirt, or do I have to gut-shoot you to make you savvy?"

Winterkill stood up. "Talkin' tough," he said, fumbling with the star, "is like whistlin' in the dark. Never made a real hard case out of anybody yet. Your dad—"

"Leave him out of it!"

Harlan's voice was almost a scream, exploding the shrapnel of bitter, conflicting emotions that rose in him at the mention of his father's name. Without so much as a glance at the star on his chest, he reached a pair of handcuffs from their hook on the wall and snapped them over the sheriff's wrists.

"We won't bother about no oath of office," he said grimly.

Forcing the sheriff out the back door, Harlan prodded him across the high, solid-walled prison yard to the little four-celled jail building in the rear. He thrust his prisoner into one of the empty cells. Leaving him bound and tightly gagged, Harlan grinned with satisfaction as the snap lock on the steel cell door clicked when he swung it shut.

"Time you get them ropes chawed off, it'll be too late to do you any good," he called back as he left the building.

Returning to the sheriff's office, he locked the front door and went out,

stuffing the key in his pocket.

At first, as he walked down the street toward the First—and only—National Bank of Little Windy, Harlan was watchful. His long-fingered hands hung stiff, close to the butts of his black-handled guns instead of swinging naturally at his sides. Strangers looked, saw the star, and nodded affably. Harlan grinned and nodded back.

Little Windy, he thought, was a peaceful place. Not like the tough, hell-for-leather mining town he had left back in Arizona. Harlan didn't recognize the cow-town quiet as a tribute to Ben Winterkill's sagacity and power as a lawman. He had handled the big man easily enough. But he had never seen Ben on the prod or swinging into action. Little Windy had. That made a lot of difference.

TURNING into the bank, Harlan asked for the president and was directed to a buzzard-necked little man whose flinty eyes peered over the rim of pince-nez glasses at him from a railed-in open office, at the front. Harlan went over.

"I'm the new deputy," he announced. "You've got a lot of dinero goin' out on the stage. The boss figgered I'd better tail along."

The banker looked up sharply. "I told Winterkill not to bother," he said coldly. "I'm sending my own guards. The money will be safe."

Harlan shrugged. "Just the same I'm ridin' with the stage."

Aldrich Bailey studied him closely. He wasn't used to being talked to like that in Little Windy.

"Stranger here, aren't you?" he asked.

"So far," answered Harlan. "I'll get acquainted."

He wished that "stranger" part had been entirely true. It had been

a break for him when he learned earlier that Winterkill was in need of a deputy, and the only Rimrock County law officer in town. That luck had already been partly counterbalanced by the fact that the sheriff recognized him because he had been an old law mate of Rance Chase's.

Bailey rubbed his thin hands together. "All right," he said finally. "I'll tell the guards. The stage is almost ready."

"I'll get my horse," said Harlan. There was something fishy about Bailey, he decided as he left and hurried to the livery stable. He didn't know just what it was. Maybe it was all in his mind because he had soured on bank and bankers since that business back home in Arizona.

The stage was ready when Harlan returned. Two taciturn, sour-faced guards stood outside the bank, rifles cradled in their arms, as an employee carried heavy canvas sacks out and deposited them on the floor of the Concord coach. The guards looked up when they saw Harlan.

"You the new deputy?" one of them grunted.

Harlan nodded stiffly from the saddle. His scheme to rob the stage disguised as a law officer sent to protect it was working out nicely. But he was anxious now to be out of town and on his way. The guards shot him a single covert glance and whispered something to each other. Harlan couldn't catch what they said.

The stage driver, a grizzled, wizened, gray-whiskered oldster, swung around in his seat to study the new deputy. He started to say something, but evidently thought better of it when one of the guards climbed up beside him. The other guard seated himself inside the stage beside the sack of money.

"Let's go," he called to the driver.

Harlan rode along beside the stage. A few miles out of Little Windy the sandy road twisted upward to skirt the hem of the straight-sided, canyon-cleft buttes that ringed the base of the pinnacle-spined Bearclaw Mountains. It was a wild country of weathered lava flow and little vegetation, in sharp contrast to the rich, unfenced grazing lands on the open plain south of Little Windy.

Several times it seemed to Harlan that the stage driver wanted to tell him something as he rode close to the swaying vehicle. But apparently each time he changed his mind and kept his mouth closed.

Where Windy Creek—a tiny trickle in a deep, boulder-strewn wash most of the year, but a raging torrent in flood times—broke out of the foothills would, Harlan figured, be a good place to spring his surprise. Unsuspected, believed to be a law officer sent to protect the stage, he could throw down on the driver and guards when the stage slowed to make the perilous descent over the high creek bank. Once the money was in his possession he could climb the buttes that crowded the road on the left and make his getaway across the Bearclaws.

Dropping back to examine his guns, his lowered eyes caught the bright glint of sun on burnished metal. Six inches of rifle barrel had been slipped out alongside of the stage window. The barrel was pointed his way. Harlan swung toward the other side of the stage. The rifle barrel disappeared, appeared again, aimed upward at his chest. Harlan wondered if the guard suspected his plans and was glad his keen eyes had forewarned him of the danger.

The clattering, dust-raising cavalcade reached the edge of Windy

Creek. The stage driver pulled in his horses, gripped the reins tighter, and his body tensed as his foot bore down heavily on the brake. The horses dipped out of sight down the steep bank. The stage wavered a moment on the brink, then tipped forward, swaying and creaking.

Now was the time, thought Harlan.

SUDDENLY the crash of gunfire filled the wash. The little stage driver stood a moment, turned his head, his eyes frantically seeking Harlan.

"Look out, feller!" he warned. "It's Trigger McTeague!"

A rifle slug from inside the stage tore past Harlan's shoulder as he spurred to the edge of the wash, his own guns out. The boulder-filled stream below swarmed with masked men. The mounted bandits blocked the road, rifles raised and smoking. They had attacked the moment the stage showed over the edge.

Harlan was a target from two sides. The bandits below pumped lead at him, taking him for the worth of the star that gleamed on his shirt front. But the sniper in the stage was his more dangerous adversary. Harlan swung toward the stage, both guns spouting death that splintered through the wooden panels of the ancient vehicle. A return bullet whipped through his high-crowned Stetson, slapping it from his head.

The stage driver sat helplessly with hands held high. Out of the corner of his eye Harlan saw one of the masked men take deliberate aim and trigger. The old man swayed and fell to the ground, dead.

The sheer, uncalled-for brutality of the act struck Harlan with all the force of an open blow. It snapped something inside him. For the first

time he saw outlaws as they really were. Deadly, venomous men. Killers. He saw what he himself had been heading for.

The next instant he was a fighting fury, determined to avenge the killing of the old man whose name he didn't even know. It made no difference that the odds against him were terrific. He was wiping out his own transgressions in a blood path of spurting gun flame and lethal lead.

Bullets sang. A slug cut through Harlan's left shoulder, searing like a white-hot blade, its impact slewing him half around. He was on his feet now at the edge of the creek bank, triggering fast. Both false stage guards were dead. One spilled out of the shattered door as the stage, impelled by the frightened, plunging horses, started down the slope and struck a high rock that sent it crashing on its side.

The second guard jumped when the stage fell. He fired back at Harlan from the ground and ran slithering down the bank toward his comrades. Harlan got him before he reached the creek floor. With convulsive jerks his body rolled almost to the bandits' feet.

Above the bedlam of shots, Harlan heard Trigger McTeague's booming voice.

"Get him, damn you, get him! He's alone."

"Some of us rush him, and some ride up the creek and circle from behind," suggested one of the masked men.

McTeague agreed. While some of the bandits remained where they were, the rest wheeled their horses and clattered down the wash. Harlan didn't know how far they would have to go before they could find another place where the creek bank could be scaled. He prepared to meet the rush from those in front.

Crouched at the upper rim of the bank, he had a position of advantage against the bandits charging up the slope. But he was heavily outnumbered. The attack came swiftly. He triggered desperately at the on-rushing men. Two fell. The thin rank broke as the repulsed bandits whirled and scattered back to the shelter of the big boulders that dotted the floor of the wide stream bed.

Blood was dripping from Harlan's right leg. A ricocheting shot had plowed into it below the knee. From the pain he knew the bone was broken.

The bandits gathered for another rush. Harlan had only time to reload one six-gun. He tried to pick off those in the forefront of the charging line. A slug knocked him backward. He jerked his gun up. One man was over the top, rifle pointing down at him. Harlan triggered. The hammer fell with a sickening click on a spent chamber.

Seconds seemed like minutes as the gloating bandit took time to make sure his aim was true.

A gun crashed deafeningly from behind Harlan. Dazed, Harlan saw the bandit fling his rifle upward in a high arc as he dropped from the saddle and hit the ground. Harlan turned. Ben Winterkill was behind him, smiling queerly.

THE sheriff swung from his horse with amazing ease and lightness for a man of his build.

"Is this private? Or can anybody get into it?" he asked. His quick eyes took in Harlan's predicament. "I'll cover you while you reload."

"You'll be trapped," said Harlan without looking up as his fingers raced over his gun belt, plucking fresh shells out, flicking them into his guns. "Half the gang's gone down

the wash to circle back."

"There's a big rock," said Winterkill, nodding toward an upjutting slab of stone a few yards back from the creek bank. "It'll give us some protection. What you doin' on the edge of the rim, anyhow?"

"I didn't want them to get the money," said Harlan. "It's in the stage."

The sheriff's eyes clouded momentarily. "That's what I thought," he said harshly.

Harlan read the distrust in Winterkill's voice, but there was no time for explanations now. Attackers were coming up over the rim. They seemed surprised to find two men instead of one at the top. Under a scattering fusillade Ben and Harlan reached the rock the sheriff had pointed out. It offered a protecting breastwork from which to shoot but was exposed to open attack from behind.

"If we can whittle this bunch down before them others—" began the sheriff, but he was already too late. With a shout of triumph the riders who had gone down the wash were streaming toward the rock, approaching from the side behind which the cornered men crouched. A singing bullet flattened itself on the rock near Harlan's head.

"We've got to charge them," Harlan said grimly. "They'll shoot us like fish in a barrel if we stay here."

The sheriff nodded. Only one thing would aid them in their mad dash. That was the unexpected boldness of the move and the fact that neither of the trapped men was afraid to die. Both knew they were making their last stand. Each was resolved to fight it out gamely to the finish.

"Ready?" said Winterkill. "You take the boys in front. I'll take the new crowd."

The double charge was suicide. But it was blazing gun glory for Winterkill and Harlan. In the crescendo bombardment of shots that burst forth in the acrid, smoke-filled air, the sheer, unkillable nerve of the two men first baffled, then disconcerted the bandits. The latter was used to fighting in a pack or from an ambush, with the certainty of easy victory established before they started. Now, with the close in-fighting that was forced upon them, it was a case of man to man. And the bandits faltered.

Harlan fought like a whirlwind, experiencing almost unendurable pain from his wounded leg. It doubled under him now when he tried to stand, dropped him foolishly to the ground. He was trying to pull himself up to one knee, as he wiped blood and sweat from his eyes with the back of his left hand. Hearing the clatter of horse's hoofs bearing down on him, he looked up almost into the face of the hulking, rattler-eyed leader of the bandits, Trigger McTeague.

"You're the damn buzzard!" the outlaw snarled. Then his voice broke into a horrible, fiendish laugh. "I ain't goin' to shoot you till you crawl some more. I want to see you jerk and squirm when I pump lead into you."

Harlan's brain was spinning. He felt very tired as he lifted himself to one knee. A revolver cracked and a slug cut the leather on his boot toe.

"Back down and crawl, I said," growled Trigger.

Weakness made Harlan drop to the ground. He had to use his wrists to push against the earth, and try to lift himself. As he paused to get his breath, twin blasts roared in his ears. A chunk of lead tore through his right hand, slapping the gun out of it. The hot wind of another

creased his cheek. With a supreme effort he raised his head, saw Trigger gloating down at him, ready to fire again.

Suddenly Harlan's left wrist twisted, jerked upward in the miraculously swift gun movement he had, and he fired with his six-gun muzzle leveled at the towering figure almost on top of him. Trigger's hate-filled eyes opened wide in astonishment, glazed over as his big body sagged slowly and then fell heavily to the left.

Harlan watched Trigger fall before he smiled faintly to himself and closed his eyes. It was quiet when he opened them and his senses slowly returned to a pain-racked world. His body felt as if it had been dragged at rope's end behind a horse over miles and miles of rocky road. Slowly the memory of the bloody gun battle came back to him. He looked around for Ben Winterkill, but did not see him. Apparently he alone was alive in a field of dead.

EVERY motion a series of painful jerks, Harlan crawled to the edge of the creek bank, peered over and saw Ben Winterkill down at the water's edge. The sheriff turned and looked up at the sound above him.

"Steady there, fellow!" he called up to Harlan. "Just fetchin' a hatful of water to see would that bring you to."

Harlan closed his eyes again. They opened easier the second time. Winterkill was beside him, wiping his face with a wet bandanna. He offered the youngster a drink out of the inverted Stetson which he had converted into a makeshift water bucket.

"Make you feel better," he said. "You're stove up some, but I reckon you'll pull through."

"The money," Harlan said slowly. "Is it safe?"

Winterkill grinned. "It ought to be, seein' it never left the bank."

Harlan rose up on one elbow. "It . . . never . . . left—"

"That's right, kid. Seems like, indirectly, you done more than wipe out the Trigger McTeague bunch. You caught a bigger fish—Aldrich Bailey." The sheriff pointed down to the stage. Lying beside it were the canvas sacks the bank had shipped. Several of them had been ripped open by Winterkill, and spilled beside them were their contents, a jumbled pile of iron washers.

"Bailey's been kind of pushed lately," the sheriff continued. "I thought it was sort o' queer when he refused my offer to go along with the stage. Your hornin' in upset his game. Bailey ain't used to bein' crossed in Little Windy, so when you told him you was goin' to go along with the money, he hot-footed right down to my office to give me hell again. That's how come I didn't stay roped up as long as you figured I would. Bein' mad, I worked on Bailey because I was wonderin' why he didn't want no law along with that stage. Guess he thought I suspected more than I actually did. Anyhow, he broke down and told me."

"You mean he arranged to rob his own bank?" Harlan asked.

"Better'n that," went on Winterkill. "The shipment was insured. Trigger and the phony guards was to split the loot with Bailey. Then Bailey got real smart. The dry-gulchers couldn't squawk, so why ship any more? The double cross would net him double money. The insurance he'd collect and the money itself, which would never leave the bank."

He looked at Harlan sharply.

"Had ideas about that cash yourself, didn't you?"

"Fool ideas," Harlan admitted. Suddenly he found himself telling the sheriff the whole story, starting with the day he left Arizona.

"I figured somehow you'd got in the wrong corral till I seen the way you went after the McTeague bunch," the sheriff said slowly. "A man don't fight that hard just for money."

He got up suddenly and stood for a moment staring up the trail. "Company comin'," he said, and started down the road afoot. The lone horseman rode a lather-flecked black stallion, and he sat his saddle straight as a ramrod, the lips of his drawn face set in thin, hard lines. If Winterkill was surprised at Rance Chase's sudden appearance, he didn't show it. Rance spoke first.

"Ben," he said, "have you seen my boy, Harlan? I've got to find him. Trailed him to Little Windy."

"Rance, you're all excited," Winterkill said. "What's the play?"

Rance repeated the story Winterkill had just heard from Harlan. "I went down to the bank when the kid left," Rance concluded. "Hemler is a friend of mine. We checked and the kid was right. The teller had short-counted him."

"Harlan's over there. Sittin' down," Winterkill said quietly.

A wave of fear swept over the marshal's face. "Am I too late, Ben?" he said slowly. "Heard firin' back on the road."

"The shootin's over," Winterkill

chuckled. "Rance, that offspring of yours is the dangedest, fightin'est deputy I ever pinned a star onto."

Rance colored, but relief and pride showed in his eyes, belying the anger in his words. "Blast that whelp, Ben. He had no right to ask you for a law job. Did he tell you—"

"Nope." Ben grinned. "But Harlan's a powerful persuadin' youngster when he wants to be, Rance."

Harlan was standing up when Ben and his father came up to him. As soon as they had met, Ben turned to Rance.

"Round up our horses, Rance."

When Rance left, Harlan turned to Ben. "Here's your star," he said slowly. "I reckon I'm your prisoner, sheriff."

Winterkill looked at Harlan. "Put that thing back on your shirt," he said grimly. "Do you want to make a liar out of me in front of your dad? The reward on the McTeague gang will more than square you with the mine pay-roll money you lost. The bank found the other five hundred."

"You mean—"

"Uh-huh, I do," said Winterkill, "and listen, fellow, if Rance ever finds out how you come by that star in the first place, he wouldn't ever talk to either one of us again. Which'd be a shame because right now he's doggone proud of you, kid. Besides, I'd kind o' like to keep on speakin' terms with a man like Rance Chase."

"Me, too," said Harlan softly, and he meant it.

THE END.





Guns and Gunners

By PHIL SHARPE

WHAT is the Springfield rifle? Are there different kinds of Springfields? Where are Springfield rifles manufactured? Are all Springfield rifles government rifles?

These are extremely interesting questions, since they refer chiefly to the United States army rifle and, while United States rifles have been manufactured in many places, they are called Springfields merely because the government small-arm rifle manufacturing plant is Springfield Armory, located in the Massachusetts city of that name. Its history dates back over a hundred and fifty years.

The foundation of Springfield Armory goes back to 1776, when the council of Massachusetts passed a resolution establishing a supply depot at that point and also at two or three other places in Massachusetts.

As a manufacturing depot, the first work at Springfield Armory on record seems to be the making and filling of cartridges for muskets, paper affairs in which the musket ball was wrapped in paper with a charge of powder behind it and the lower end twisted to close the seal. In use, this was torn off by the soldier, usually by biting, and the powder poured in the muzzle of the musket.

The paper and wrapped ball was rammed in to act as a wad.

Shortly after, military stores from all over New England were transferred to Springfield to insure them against capture by the enemy. The activities of this depot included all military problems, the storage of ordnance supplies, of food, fuel, clothing, equipment from military horses, mules, tents, and other supplies.

The Revolutionary War closed in 1781 with defeat for England at a cost to the British government of more than \$700,000,000. At that time Springfield supply depot was practically demobilized. Most of the employees were discharged, and for several years there was much inactivity in the town.

On April 26, 1782, the Continental Congress passed a resolution directing the secretary of war to establish magazines to hold public ammunition in Springfield. A magazine was built near a location now occupied by Springfield Armory's present administration building. It

was used for sixty years and torn down in 1842 because it had become a hazard to residences in the vicinity.

Under provisions of an act of Congress approved April 2, 1794, Springfield Armory was completely altered. Records show that up to this time no firearms were manufactured at Springfield, the place merely serving as a storage depot for supplies. Shops were established for the repair of military firearms before this, but up to this time the United States army had never officially adopted any particular form of rifle, using miscellaneous arms from all available sources.

That same act of Congress of April 2, 1794, permitted the government to acquire the land amounting to two hundred and ninety-seven acres and eighteen rods, which is approximately the same size as the armory today. The land was originally obtained under ninety-six separate leases, the earliest being dated June 23, 1795, and the last August 2, 1870. Land was bought after the leases expired.

Springfield Armory is actually two separate plants today, known as the Hill Shops and the Water Shops, names held over from the old days. Today they call the main buildings the Hill Shops, and those on the other side of town, down by the river, the Water Shops. Water power is no longer used, of course.

Springfield Armory underwent normal construction developments over a period of more than a hun-

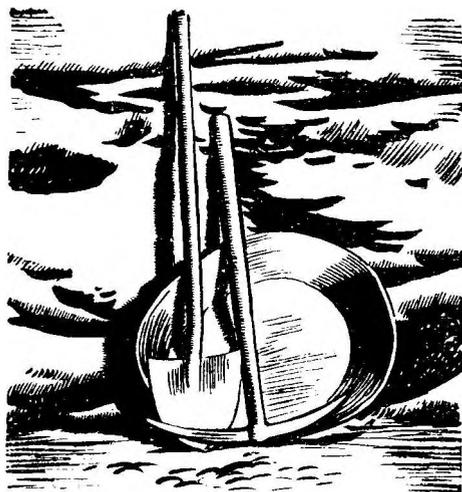
dred years, and in 1902 additional machinery was installed to provide an output of four hundred rifles a day of eight hours, or one thousand rifles in a day at twenty-four hours. These improvements were made in anticipation of the construction of the present Model 1903 Springfield. No further additions to the parts and equipment were made until the beginning of the World War.

In 1795 the first muskets were manufactured at Springfield Armory. It took a month to complete twenty of these, and they cost twenty dollars each with an additional five dollars for the various accessories. In that year four hundred and forty-five muskets were made at Springfield Armory. This is the smallest number ever produced in one year up to date. The original pay roll shows forty employees who in one month received a total of \$4,495.75.

Springfield Armory has produced some thirty-five different models of muskets, carbines, and rifles, beginning from early smooth bores and running through to the present Garand automatic rifle. It is the government's sole small-arms manufacturing plant. In November, 1918, the daily output was 1,500 Springfields with the largest number of employees ever on the pay roll. Salaries totaled \$10,510,554.51.

Thus it will be seen that all rifles manufactured at Springfield Armory are entitled to the term "Springfield." Today we merely apply it to the famous Model 1903 still in service in the army.

This department has been designed to be of practical service to those who are interested in guns. Mr. Sharpe will gladly answer any question you may have concerning firearms. Just address your inquiries to Phil Sharpe, Guns and Gunners Department, Street & Smith's Western Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y. *Be sure you inclose a three-cent stamp for your reply. Do not send a return envelope.*



Mines and Mining

By J. A. THOMPSON

NO ONE who has panned a stream and found gold, or searched a lonely mountain slope and discovered on it a vein of gold-flecked ore will deny the fascination that is part and parcel of prospecting. Pocket hunting is a form of prospecting that increases the thrill a thousandfold. Perhaps because the element of chance, always present in ore hunting, enters into pocket hunting so prominently. Perhaps because the stakes are big.

Thousands and tens of thousands of dollars' worth of gold have been taken time and again from the rich, scattered bunches of almost virgin metal with which parts of the famous Mother Lode gold country in California seemed to be permeated. The first bonanza pockets were found in shallow surface and near-surface veins. They were literally nest eggs of golden wealth for their discoverers. Later deeper mining disclosed other pockets farther down

in many instances. At other times the veins simply petered out into disappointing nothingness.

It is G. B. M., of Utica, New York, aware of the gamble involved in pocket hunting, but intent on tackling it nevertheless, who has most recently brought up the subject. In his letter he says, "Any pointers you can give me as to formations or indications favorable to pocket formation in the Mother Lode country will be greeted with cheers, although I realize pocket hunting is very often almost entirely dependent on chance. Are there any other famous 'pocket' districts out there in States other than California?"

Checking back on the gold pockets that have already been found, and from which sums totalling hundreds of thousands of dollars have been extracted, one of the most likely leads seems to be the crossing or intersection of two or more gold-carrying veins. Moreover, chances apparently are improved if the veins intersect at angles approximating forty-five degrees. Sometimes such intersections have been found to bulge with a fat, gold-filled pocket of bonanza ore. So if you have a couple of likely veins that trend toward an intersection, follow them down to their crossing point by all means.

Any sudden change in the angle a vein makes as it cuts through the surrounding rock also tends to create pockets of concentrated gold deposition. And cases have been known where the gold pocket only edged or feathered into a large vein, and the major part of the values kidneyed out into the country rock itself.

Another fairly common feature of many pocket producing veins is that, unlike the general run of gold-lode

ores, they fail to show any consistent, even low-grade, gold content throughout. This applies particularly to the larger fissure veins in which the gold may be lumped and spotty, and much of the vein entirely barren. At times small fingers of rich ore string through cracks and crevices in the vein matter. Such tendrils of yellow metal are frequently the first real sign of a pocket close by.

Many of the old-time pocket hunters in the Mother Lode country believe that the smaller veins and tiny crisscrossing quartz stringers which cut through the metallic, bluish slate out there are the most likely pocket-gold bets. Good pockets have also been found in veins cutting through the local greenstones, and in decomposed schist rock formations, particularly in El Dorado County, where pocket-mining areas stretch from Placerville clear up into Placer County.

It is generally supposed that the wearing away of some of these rich, close-to-the-surface pocket veins originally provided the gold in the incredibly rich bonanza placers found there following the great stampede to California back in '49.

In prospecting for pockets, it is best, once you have hold of a likely stringer or vein, to stay with it. Follow it down, if necessary. But don't lose it, or attempt to cut into it at depth. Some of these veins are short-lived. By trying to tunnel into an extension of such a vein deeper down, you might either lose

the vein altogether or undershoot a pocket that would have been found by following the vein.

Surface stringers, especially when found in rotting, decomposed rock, can often be prospected and mined by simply using a pick and gads to pry the vein material out and break down the adjacent rock. If a pocket *is* found, often all that will be needed to get the rich gold itself is a hand mortar and pestle, in which the rock can be ground and the gold later panned out of the powdered quartz matrix, or vein material.

Should deeper work be called for, powder and drills will be necessary for sinking on the vein. Use your powder sparingly, particularly if you think you are close to a pocket, a vein swelling, or conjunction of veins that may offer rich gold deposition. A careless, heavy blast might blow your pocket right out.

Aside from the Mother Lode country of California, the region around Grant's Pass and Gold Hill in southwestern Oregon is also famous as "pocket" country. And just remember that many a wealth-producing pocket has been discovered only a few feet beyond the point where some previous prospector gave up.

To T. D., a Canadian reader from Toronto, Ontario: Yes, indeed, gold has been found and mined in Nova Scotia. The Sherbrooke district, about ninety miles northeast of Halifax, has produced over \$4,000,000 in gold from the country around Goldenville.

● We desire to be of real help to our readers. If there is anything you want to know about mining or prospecting, a letter inclosing a stamped and self-addressed envelope sent to J. A. Thompson, care of Street & Smith's Western Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y., will bring a prompt authoritative personal reply.

Letters unaccompanied by a return envelope will be published in the order in which they are received. But as space is limited, please keep such letters as brief as possible.



The Hollow Tree

By HELEN RIVERS

Some time ago we received this note from Ernest Williams, a World War veteran from Texas. "Thanks for printing my S O S for Pen Pals. As I promised to answer all letters, I wonder if it would be possible for you to let those who didn't receive a reply from me know that it was because they failed to inclose their name or address? One of the most interesting unsigned letters came from a Pal living in Wolf Summit, West Virginia—the envelope was postmarked Clarksburg, West Virginia. If you can locate the writers of these letters I'd be grateful."

Well, Ernest, we hope this little notice comes to their attention and that you will soon be hearing from them. And now here's our first plea this week:

Dear Miss Rivers:

Will you give a Nebraska cowgirl a break by printing this letter so she can get some Pen Pals? I am nineteen years old and live on a ranch in the heart of the sand hills. I love all outdoor sports, especially horseback riding and ice skating. I also enjoy letter writing, so come on, everybody, both young and old, and sling a little ink my way. I promise to answer all letters and will exchange snapshots. Blondie Phillips, Cody, Nebraska.

Jessie and Edgar will answer all letters—

Dear Miss Rivers:

While hunting for adventure in Western Story Magazine we came to rest under the shade of the Hollow Tree and became interested in the Pen Pals we found there from far and near. We are two husky hillbillies who like to have lots of fun. Jessie is eighteen and I'm twenty. We would enjoy having Pen Pals throughout the world regardless of their age. Now all you Pen Pals who say you never get any answers from the Hollow Tree, just give Jessie and me a chance to write to you. We'll exchange snapshots. Here's hoping we hear from everyone—Jessie Scott and Edgar Watkins, CVA Company 117a, Sewanee, Tennessee.

Help Margery go adventuring via the mail route—

Dear Miss Rivers:

I'm calling everyone on land or sea, adventurers or stay-at-homes, in the United States or foreign countries. Write to one who can't go adventuring, but would like to, via the Hollow Tree. My hobbies are collecting stamps, scents, post cards, curios and souvenirs. I will send a souvenir of Oregon to the first fifty who write and will answer all. Margery McMichael, 1906 and F Streets, Springfield, Oregon.

The Mustang Kid is dabbling his loop—

Dear Miss Rivers:

It's very seldom you hear a Westerner call for help, but I'm casting my loop for Pen Pals and am asking you to help me herd them this way! I am a young man twenty-four years old and I can ride, rope, shoot and skate. I have traveled through thirty-one States and can tell you about my adventures. I was born and raised at Ponca City, Oklahoma, and lived for four years on a large ranch where I got my nickname, the Mustang Kid. I like all sports; boxing, football and baseball are my favorites, and I also enjoy dancing. I would like to hear from boys and girls from foreign countries as well as the United States, so come along, Pals, and write to me, C. A. Nelson, c/o Augusta Hotel, R. R. No. 1, Box E, Guthrie, Oklahoma.

From Australia comes this plea—

Dear Miss Rivers:

Just another plea from overseas for Pen Pals. I am a lonely Australian girl seventeen years old. I play for a woman's first grade cricket team which is the only sport I am interested in except horseback riding. I am taking up photography as a hobby. I'll be writing to you often for some Pen Pals. Dorothy Willard, son, 43 Kissing Point Road, Turrumulla, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia.

This rancher needs help—

Dear Miss Rivers:

I am a forty-five-year-old rancher and although I've written to many of the members of the Hollow Tree, I haven't had any luck in getting answers, so I wonder if you will publish my plea. I'm looking for a partner to help me

carry on, someone around my age. Here's hoping I have some luck this time. Robert Fabrice, Zurich, Montana

Foreign pals, especially, wanted here—

Dear Miss Rivers:

I enjoy the Hollow Tree very much and would like to have some Pen Pals write to me. I am twenty-two years young and enjoy dancing, swimming and most other sports. I would especially like to hear from Pen Pals living in foreign countries, but all will be welcome. Pearl Oblinger, New Martinsville, West Virginia

Gather round, folks, and cheer Jimmie up—

Dear Miss Rivers:

I am twenty-nine years old and a little disgusted 'cause I've had so many bad breaks the last couple of years. Here's hoping I can join up with the Hollow Tree gang and have them help me chase the blues away. I've been on my own since I was fifteen years old and have had a little experience in most everything. I worked in the movies for a few years and also on the stage and have traveled from coast to coast. I have lots of things to write about and will tell you about the studios in Hollywood and anything you'd like to know about the big city of Chicago. I will exchange snapshots and answer all letters, so come on, Pen Pals, young or old, from all points in the world, and write to me. Jimmie Leonard, 839 East 40th Street, Chicago, Illinois

Joyce is a young cowgirl—

Dear Miss Rivers:

I am a South Dakota cowgirl fifteen years old and I sure would like to find a Pen Pal. My favorite pastime is reading and my hobby is photography. I play the guitar and sing Western tunes and popular song hits. I have played on the radio. I love to dance, can skate fairly well, and I also enjoy skiing.—Joyce Hammer, Chance, South Dakota

William Boyd fans write to Eugene—

Dear Miss Rivers:

I am a country boy fourteen years old. My favorite sports are swimming and horseshack riding. I would like to hear from Pen Pals, especially fans of William Boyd who plays Hop-a-long Cassidy. Eugene Hostford, R. F. D. No. 1, Eldsworth, Michigan

The Hollow Tree has helped Bertha before—

Dear Miss Rivers:

I haven't missed a copy of Western Story Magazine since 1937 and, during that time, have made some very dear friends among the Hollow Tree club. Now I am asking for lots more Pals of all ages to write to me. My hobby is collecting pennants, and I hope to have one from each State in the Union soon. I am a Texas gal down near the Rio Grande and am a long way from home, so all youse guys and gals, fill my mailbox. I'll answer each one and send you all a souvenir of California. Bertha Crawford, Box 354, Mar Vista, California

August just wants a fair deal—

Dear Miss Rivers:

I wonder if there are a few Pen Pals in the Hollow Tree who will give a lonely boy a square deal. I've tried answering letters in the Hollow Tree, but have never received an answer. I am

nineteen years old and my hobby is writing letters and collecting post cards. I would like to have pals in all forty-eight States. I play the guitar and sing, and if anyone wants to exchange songs, it's all right with me. I promise to answer all letters and the more the merrier. To the first person who writes me from each State, I'll send a surprise. So come on, all you pen-pushing pals, give a lonely boy a break. —August Incognito, 293 Terrace Avenue, Jersey City, New Jersey

Don't ignore this letter—

Dear Miss Rivers:

Please print this plea for Pen Pals before I die of loneliness. My mother is in the hospital and I had to give up my job and come home to take care of my young brothers. I have lots of time on my hands which I now spend chewing my fingernails or tearing my hair because I have no Pen Pals. I like the movies, dancing, hunting, fishing and reading, and I'm a good cook, if I do say so myself. I'd like to hear from pals living in the Northwest, especially, but don't let that stop you others from writing. All are welcome. Mable Igo, Strange Creek, West Virginia

F. A. has led quite an interesting life—

Dear Miss Rivers:

Can an ex-marine pull up a chair and tell his story? I am thirty years old and have been knocking around a bit in my time. I was in the marine corps for a while, tried a hand at sailing, was stranded in China, missed ship in Bombay, worked in steel mills, and even took a try at door-to-door selling! Now I am the most lonesome man in these parts and would like to get lots of mail. I will answer all letters. F. A. Reid, Box 13, Station A, Toledo, Ohio

Leona collects maps and things—

Dear Miss Rivers:

I am seventeen years old and would like to have Pen Pals from every State in the Union. My hobbies are collecting post cards and maps, and I would like to receive some from each State. I also collect songs and will gladly exchange with those who wish. Here's hoping my mailbox will be overflowing. Leona Kasper, Rt. No. 4, Pierz, Minnesota

William's chief interest is in race horses—

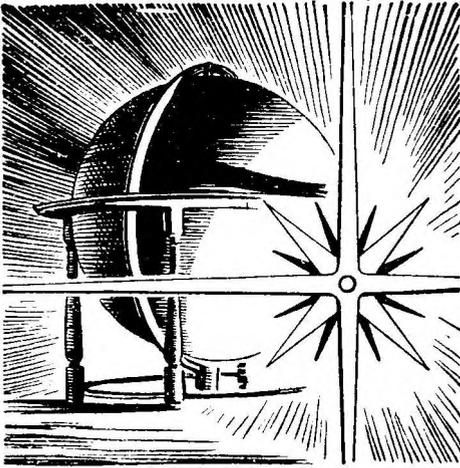
Dear Miss Rivers:

I long to receive letters from folks who are interested in horses. I have lots of time to write letters in the evenings and would like to hear from young men and women. My hobby is collecting pictures of famous race horses, and my favorite sports are fishing, riding and swimming. I am twenty-nine years old, and at present am working in a tungsten mine. I have visited the Santa Anita and Hollywood race-tracks and have seen some famous horses run. —William Tichy, c/o Pawnee Mine, Aguanga, California

Answer this plea—

Dear Miss Rivers:

I am a soldier twenty-two years old and I would like to hear from Pen Pals from all over the world. I like all kinds of music, and my favorite sports are hiking and reading. My hobby is stamp collecting. I will exchange snaps with everyone. Private Kenneth Frost, Company B, 3191 Infantry, Post of Manila, Manila, Philippine Islands



Where to go and how to get there

By JOHN NORTH

AN interesting letter from H. E., of Kansas City, reads: "I used to do some shooting when I was younger, and now that I have the chance to get out into the open spaces, I'd like to start all over again. One thing that I've been interested in is elk. Is it true that elk are practically extinct? I've heard other rumors that there are a few left. Is it possible to go elk hunting? And, if so, where?"

There are lots of elk left, H. E., and if you want to see real quantities of them, the place to go is to Jackson's Hole, in Wyoming. That is a historical section in its own right, but now it gets a lot of publicity because of the elk herd that centers around there.

In the winter they come down out of the mountains when all the natural feed is gone or frozen over, and the government feeds them by the thousands. As the weather breaks

and they can rustle their own food, they wander back toward the hills again.

And here's a funny thing about those elk. Once they are on the feeding grounds they are tamer than range cattle. When you ride among them you're likely to have to shove them out of your way. If a man is on foot they either walk around him or give him a gentle push with their horns. They don't pay any attention at all to vehicles, either.

But once they are off the feeding grounds the elk turn wild again, and then it's up to you to pit your wisdom against theirs if you want a set of antlers to decorate your den and up to seven hundred pounds of meat for your refrigerator.

Sixty years ago these wild elk furnished food for pioneers and Indians, and sport for a few rich people. But nowadays, when the season is open on them, anybody can go get one whose car will run up hill and who has the use of a .30-30 rifle and the price of a license. The census on these animals shows that there are no less than twenty thousand of them roaming the neighborhood of the Jackson's Hole country alone.

The history of this herd is interesting. About fifty years ago there were such great losses from starvation that folks in that vicinity started feeding the animals, and this was kept up until the State itself took over the task. It was the State that built up the present refuge which now covers over twenty thousand acres of land. Two thousand acres of this is devoted to raising hay for their winter feed, from which nearly two thousand tons a year is cut.

They say that a confirmed trout fisherman will go a long way to fish a stream he's heard only rumors

about. Here's J. D., of Detroit, who wants to go up to Alaska just for the trout.

Well, J. D., you're going a long distance, but you won't be disappointed. And you've got me stumped when you ask which is the best fishing spot there. To tell you the truth there are so many fishing spots in Alaska that it would be completely wrong to say that one is better than the other in general.

As to your question about when to go, you will find good fishing there from spring until September, which should be long enough. During these months, you get so much daylight that you don't want to go to sleep at all. After September, if you are inland, you will find the rainy season coming on, and by the time that is over winter is upon you.

As to fishing spots, you might go up around Seward and try out the Russian River. This stream is famous for big trout, and when you get there you can obtain local information as to the favorite spots.

If you take a trip down the Richardson Trail through Paxson to Valdez you will come near Summit Lake and Paxson Lake. These two waters have fine grayling and trout. The latter lake also has quite a name for its Giant Mackinaws.

You might stick around Paxson for some time and get plenty of value out of it. The Sulkana River is near there and you will find some fine fishing in that, as well as in the lake itself.

However, I should caution you that you are not in the heart of the paved-highway country up there, and so you will have to trust more or less to luck for transportation from place to place. You probably can get from place to place by riding miners' busses, or even perching on top of a truckload of mining machinery or canned groceries. But no man who would go that far for fishing would balk at a little thing like that.

Another reader, D. J., of Pennsylvania, doesn't want to go so far away from home. He asks about fishing in the East, particularly in Cameron County, Pennsylvania.

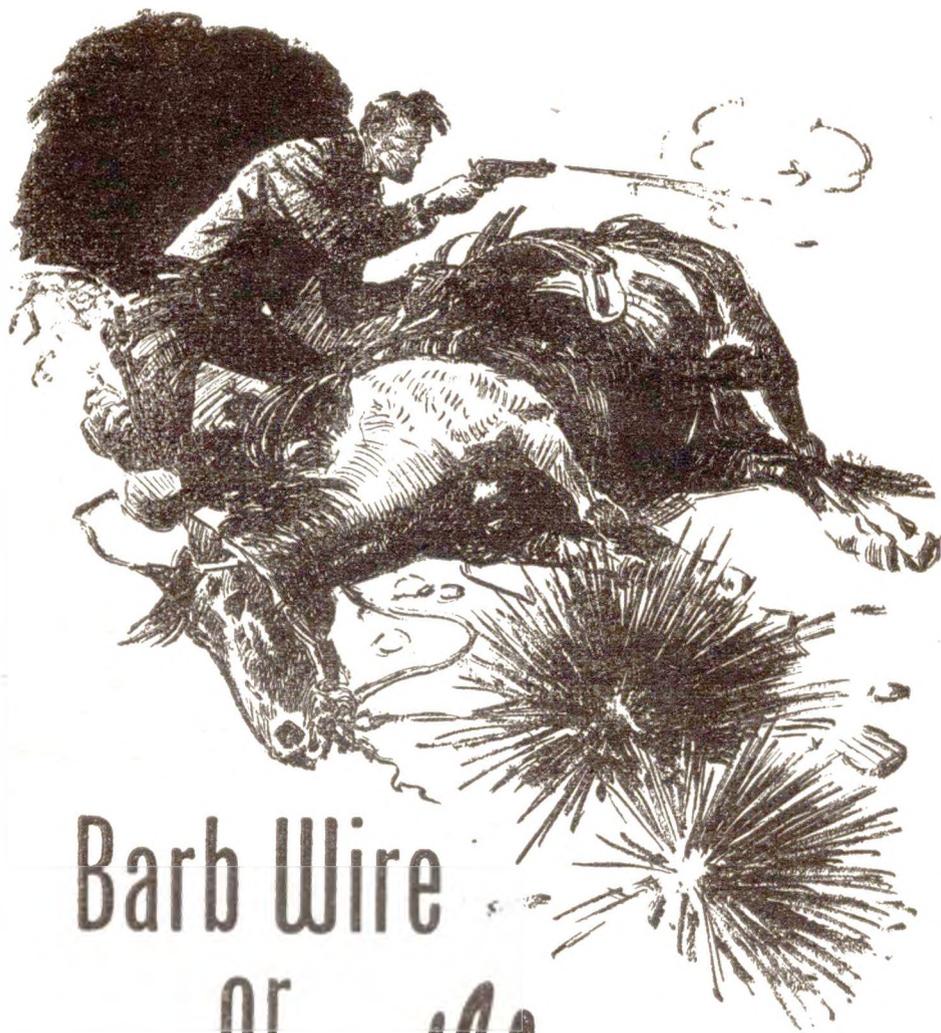
You won't be disappointed, D. J., for Cameron County is in the very heart of the fish-and-game country of Pennsylvania. The town of Emporium, which you mention, is almost centrally located in about five hundred square miles of fine fishing water.

Look up the Driftwood Branch which flows between Driftwood and Emporium and drop a hook anywhere along its eighteen miles of wide, free-running water, containing holes and shoals and a large assortment of fighting fish. Whether you like brook or brown trout, you will find them here. It isn't, however, the best rainbow water in the world.

Other fishing spots in this section are: Hunts, Sterling, Wykoff, Brooks, Grove, Jerry, Lushbaugh, Portage Creek, Elk Cowley, Deep Creek, Clear Creek, North Creek and Rich Valley.

● We aim to give practical help to readers. Mr. North will be glad to answer specific questions about the West, its ranches, homestead lands, mountains and plains, as well as the facts about any features of Western life. He will tell you also how to reach the particular place in which you are interested. Don't hesitate to write to him, for he is always glad to assist you to the best of his ability. Be sure to inclose a stamped envelope for your reply.

Address all communications to John North, care of Street & Smith's Western Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.



Barb Wire or Boot Hill!

Part Three

BY BENNETT FOSTER

The Story So Far:

Serious trouble looms when the big ranchers of the Curampaw begin to fence in their land. In a year of scanty rainfall and poor grass, it is a move that is not taken easily by the smaller owners who

have been accustomed to letting their cattle run on the open range.

Sheriff Lee Pryor, of Marksham, is the first casualty. His bullet-riddled body is found near a fence started by Phil Killane. Dave Cloud is appointed to replace the dead sheriff and is summoned to the Elite Saloon to stop a fight between Handy Andy Blare, Phil Killane's foreman, who had brought Pryor's body to town, and Wade Samis, one of the smaller ranchers. Dave

arrives at the saloon to find that Blare has shot Samis and holed up in the barroom. Risking a shot from the infuriated foreman, Dave enters the barroom covered by young Joe Chase, who has a shotgun. Blare is about to surrender when he is struck down by a rifle blast coming from behind Dave.

It is assumed that Joe Chase accidentally killed Blare, but Dave, after a study of the shotgun, decides that it was not the death weapon and that the foreman was killed in cold blood. Spreading word that he has Blare's personal possessions in his office and is going to investigate them for clues, Dave that night secretes himself in his office, in the hope that the murderer will appear. Toward midnight he hears someone enter, calls out and is answered with a shot.

CHAPTER VII

EXPERIMENT WITH DEATH

WHEN Dave Cloud opened his eyes, lamplight was streaming into them and he closed them again hastily. His head was one vast, aching, throbbing pain, and as he cautiously opened his eyes once more the pain was even sharper. This time Dave kept his eyes open. Pug was bending over him, his blue eyes wide and anxious. Amador Saiz hovered just behind Pug and a voice that Dave could not identify, announced: "Gentlemen, a hard head is a godsend. A veritable godsend. Now give him a little whiskey."

Pug shoved an arm under Dave's shoulders, drew him to a sitting position and placed the hard rim of a bottle against his lips. Dave gagged on the liquor, got some of it down and, with watering eyes, saw Quincy Adams Beauchamp standing beside his desk.

"You all right, Dave?" Pug asked anxiously. "Hey, Dave! You all right?"

Dave reached up a wavering hand and touched his head. It was swathed in bandage. He blinked his

eyes and looked questioningly at Pug.

"What happened?" he demanded.

"Amador heard the shot an' run to get me," Pug explained. "He looked in here an' you was lyin' on the floor so he come a-runnin'. I was on my way up here an' met him. When we come in it sure looked like Katy-bar-the-door. You was on the floor bleedin' from a wound in yore head an' Beauchamp was raisin' hell in the jail. We got you on yore bed an' I tried to bring you around. Then Amador remembered that Beauchamp was a doctor and got him in here, an' he said you'd been grazed, but that you wasn't dead. We been workin' on you ever since. What happened up here, Dave?"

"I had a trap set an' it caught me," Dave answered. "Who all knows about this?"

"Just us here," Pug replied. "We ain't had time to get anybody else."

"We don't need anybody else." Dave's returning strength was reflected in his voice. "This is between us. Amador, if you talk you'll lose your job; an' if you talk, Beauchamp, I'll put you in jail for the rest of yore life."

"The secrets of a patient are inviolate, sir." Quincy Adams Beauchamp drew himself up to his full stature. "Have you never heard of the Hippocratic oath?"

"I've heard all kinds of swearin'," Dave answered. "You keep yore mind on keepin' your mouth shut or stayin' in jail. Now I want to talk to Pug. Amador, you go on back to your room. Beauchamp, you can sleep in that cell tonight. I won't lock you in."

Amador, shaking his head uncomprehendingly, went to the door. Beauchamp went with him, but paused at the door. "You'll have

to be quiet for several days," he warned Dave. "Your thick head saved your life, but you'll have to be quiet."

"I ain't got time to be quiet," Dave said impatiently. "You fellows go on."

AMADOR and Beauchamp departed. When they were gone, Dave turned to Pug. Briefly he told what had happened, cursing himself for his lack of matches. "If I'd got a look at him," he complained. "If I'd only had a match an' got a look at him, this thing would be all over."

"Yeah," Pug growled, "it sure would. You'd be dead. That feller done pretty good shootin' in the dark. He'd have done better if you'd struck a match. After this you'll take no more fool chances alone. I'm goin' to be with you."

"What did you see down at the Home Ranch?" Dave asked. "You stayed there, didn't you?"

"I seen a bunch of damned good poker players," Pug answered. "I lost eight dollars. These strangers that have drifted in ain't strangers to each other, Dave. They're all acquainted."

Dave nodded.

"An' there's two of 'em ain't friendly," Pug observed. "They act like a couple of strange dogs. An' Barry Trevis is in town an' three of them are goin' to work for him tomorrow."

Dave shook his head, and frowned at the pain the motion brought.

"How are we goin' to account for yore head bein' hurt?" Pug demanded. "An' for yore bein' out of that room at the hotel? We're goin' to have to lie, Dave."

"An' no new thing for either of us," Dave retorted. "I banged my head against a door or somethin',

an' if anybody wants to know why we weren't in our room it's none of their business. The sheriff don't have to tell everybody what he done or why."

"You didn't recognize the feller that come in?" Pug asked.

"Of course, I didn't see who it was," Dave said impatiently. "It was dark. He's a damned good shot, whoever he is! If we keep our mouths shut maybe we can find out something. Tomorrow I'm goin' through Andy's stuff. There's something there that'll tell us what we want to know. Give me another drink, Pug. My head hurts like the devil. Maybe a drink'll help it."

Pug turned to the desk to get the bottle. There was none there. "That damned Beauchamp!" he growled, and picking up a lamp, hurried to the jail. When he came back he carried the lamp and an empty bottle which he put down on the desk. "Drunk it all," he said dolefully. "He's full as a tick again. Want—"

"Let it go," Dave said wearily. "I'm going to rest, Pug. Either blow out that lamp or shade it. It hurts my eyes. An' you might just as well stretch out an' get some sleep. We'll be busy tomorrow."

When morning came, Dave awakened to a leaden headache. The pain had subsided during the night and he had dozed fitfully. Pug was moving about the office making preparations for the day. Every motion hurt Dave's head, but, nevertheless, he got up, cleaned up as best he could, and when Pug brought in a fresh bucket of water, washed himself.

Pug removed the bandage about Dave's head. Examining himself in the mirror, Dave could see exposed the long red welt of the wound across his temple.

"You'd better get Doc Freeman to fix that up," Pug advised, looking critically at the wound.

"He'd know it was a bullet wound," Dave replied. "Put the bandage back on it, Pug. I'll get somethin' for a headache down at the drugstore. Come on; let's get out. I don't want anything to eat, but I've got to show myself."

When they returned to the office after their brief trip to town, Dave lay down, his pain somewhat relieved by a bromide he had bought at the drugstore. He remained on the cot while Pug, under his directions, went through Andy Blare's effects.

Amador came in and announced that Beauchamp was sleeping. He looked curiously at Dave and went out again. The search continued. Grip, bed, even Blare's saddle were examined, but nothing was found that might possibly afford a clue as to what the nocturnal visitor had sought. There was nothing that was out of the ordinary at all.

"We've missed it," Dave said glumly. "Let's go over the stuff again, Pug." They went over it again, and Dave, who felt better now, helped in the examination. Again they found nothing of enlightenment. The grip was repacked, the bed rerolled; saddle and bed and grip were stacked in the corner.

"Go on out to dinner, Pug," Dave ordered when they were finished. "I'll get some coffee from Amador. That's all I want. You'd better hang around town this afternoon and see what's goin' on. I've got to stay in."

Pug nodded and went out.

Dave rested. He loafed on the cot, thinking, trying to straighten out in his mind all that he knew about the case. It was easy enough to collect the scanty facts he had,

but from them he could build nothing. The facts went just so far and then stopped.

ABOUT three o'clock Dave had a visitor. Joe Chase came in and sat down dejectedly. His face and eyes showed the strain and the worry that he had undergone. Dave was sorry for Joe. If it had been possible he would have assured the boy that he was guiltless, that he had not killed Handy Andy Blare. Joe talked a while, beating all around the subject, but never quite coming out with what he had to say. Finally Dave did the best thing he could.

"You've been worryin' about Blare," he said brusquely. "Quit it, Joe. If he hadn't been killed, he'd have got me. You made a good play comin' in to back me up. I won't forget it. Your shotgun's all cleaned up an' you can take it along with you."

"I never want to see it again," Joe said bitterly. "Keep it, Dave."

"You take it on home," Dave ordered, and, rising, went to the gun case against the wall and brought out the weapon. "Stay out of trouble," he said, passing over the weapon.

Joe put the shotgun back on the desk. "I've given it to you," he said obstinately. "I don't want it. You kind of helped me out, Dave. I was feelin' pretty bad."

"Go on home an' try to forget it," Dave advised.

Joe Chase did not immediately depart. He lingered in the office. "I'm sellin' my cattle," he blurted suddenly. "Carl Sobran's goin' to buy them. They're droughty as all get-out an' I won't get a price, but I'm goin' to sell 'em an' pull out."

"On account of the fencin'?" Dave asked sharply.

"Partly that," Joe admitted. "There's not enough open country for all of us to run in. I don't own much land. I've just got three sections. I guess I'll go north." His voice was listless.

"Come in an' see me before you go," Dave told him. "Don't let this business about Blare get you down, Joe. And don't be in a hurry to sell yore place."

"I've made up my mind," said Joe. "I'll come in, Dave. So long."

He went on out of the office and Dave, sitting down, frowned at the shotgun. Joe Chase was leaving the country because he had killed Blare. Dave was sure of it. But Joe had not killed Blare. If Dave told him that, Joe would stay. Dave was in a quandary. He did not know what his course of action should be.

After leaving the courthouse, Joe Chase went on down the street. At Pop Olafson's restaurant he hesitated and then, opening the door, went in. Grace Arnold was behind the counter, reading a letter. She looked up at the sound of the door opening. Joe walked over and seated himself at the counter.

"Did you want something, Joe?" Grace asked, glancing up from her reading.

Chase shook his head. "No," he answered, and then, after a pause: "I'm goin' to sell out an' leave here, Grace."

The girl laid her letter aside. "Going to leave?" she asked, surprised. "But you were just getting a good start in cattle, Joe."

"They're fencin' up the open range," he said slowly.

"But when you talked to me you said that wouldn't matter." The girl's eyes were fixed on Joe's face. "You said that you would lease some land. You had it planned that you

could lease from Barry Trevis. Did he go back on the deal?"

"I haven't talked to Trevis," Joe said. "I'm . . . I guess I'll just pull out, Grace."

The girl leaned on the counter, her rounded elbows resting there. "Is it on my account, Joe?" she asked.

"That's part of it." Joe's face reflected his feelings for the girl. "I don't know, Grace. Maybe I could stick it out if you— But what's the use? You an' Wade—"

Anger kindled in Grace Arnold's blue eyes. "Wade Samis and I are through," she flared. "I'm done with him!"

"What's he done to you?" Joe Chase's voice was sharp. "If he's hurt you—"

The girl laughed, a thin edge in the sound. "It isn't particularly pleasant to be jilted," she said. "But it's a good thing for me. I'm glad I found out what kind of man he is."

Joe's knuckles were white as he gripped the edge of the counter. "I'll see Samis," he said angrily. "What did he do to you, Grace?"

"Nothing at all." Grace tossed her blond head. "Nothing at all, Joe. But"—her eyes were bright beneath her lashes as she looked at him—"don't be in a hurry to leave, Joe."

Joe got up. He was a lengthy youngster and he towered above the counter and the girl. "I'm goin' to talk to Wade Samis," he growled. "He's done something to hurt you an' I won't stand for that. But don't you worry, Grace. I'll be around here. I'm not goin' to leave."

Turning abruptly, he strode toward the door. When it closed behind him, Grace got up from her chair. She stared at the door and spoke bitterly, utter venom in her

voice: "Now, Wade Samis," she whispered, "now maybe you'll see! You and Jessie Killane!"

WHEN Joe Chase left the sheriff's office, Dave replaced the shotgun in the cabinet and, going to his desk, wrote a note to Pug. He was tired. There was a good bed and conveniences awaiting him at the Commercial House and he saw no reason for not utilizing the room he was paying for. Accordingly, he left word for Pug concerning his whereabouts, with instructions to lock the office, and departed. He was loafing on the bed in his hotel room when Pug came in, his round face serious.

"Dave," he said, "every one of them fellers that have come in has been hired. Vincent's got three of 'em; Frank Trilling has got two. Trilling's sore as a boil over that letter I wrote an' you signed. He give me his commission an' badge an' a piece of his mind. If the rest of his mind is like the chunk I've got, it's too hot to handle. An' Buck Evans down at the Home Ranch pulled me over to one side an' he says that he heard Vincent an' Trilling talkin' about a meetin' they're goin' to have. Somethin' about this fence business, an' Buck says that you an' me figger in it some place."

Dave nodded. "I knew that they'd hire gunhands," he said wearily. "An' I knew they'd have a get-together. It isn't the big fellows I'm worryin' about, Pug. It's the little ones. When they start to get together then's when hell will begin to pop. I wish it would rain."

"So do I," Pug agreed. "From what Trilling says, he's pretty near got all his land fenced. Barry Trevis has got his lower end fenced already. In a little while these fellers

are goin' to start ridin' their pastures an' puttin' out strays. An' then all hell will turn loose, an' I'm not talkin' about just a little hell neither."

Dave nodded soberly. Pug got up and walked over to the window. "You goin' out to supper, Dave?" he asked.

"No. I'll get something sent in from the dining room." Dave's head still ached dully and he lay quiet on the bed.

"Then I'll go on," Pug announced. "I'm goin' to hang around town an' see what I can learn. Be back by an' by." With that he donned his hat, tucked his gun in his trousers and was gone. Dave lay staring at the ceiling. After a time he closed his eyes and slept.

All through Marksham, as supper was finished, lights blinked out and other lights appeared. In Morgan Freeman's surgery a student lamp burned on the chemistry bench and the doctor, occupying a stool, held a test tube above an alcohol flame. The liquid in the test tube bubbled and boiled. Freeman selected a reagent bottle from a shelf, used a pipette to draw liquid from it, added the measured amount, drop by drop, to the test tube, and watched vapor pour from the tube's mouth. Carefully then he made notes on a piece of paper, placed the test tube in a rack and, selecting another tube, reached again toward the shelf of reagents.

As the doctor worked, he hummed, unmusically, the sound a good deal that of a bumblebee contentedly buzzing above a patch of clover. Under his manipulation the liquid in the test tube changed color, fading from red to white as he added acid. Again he held the tube above the alcohol lamp, watching the color change.

Outside the surgery, bent so that

her eye almost touched the keyhole, his housekeeper, Natividad Sena, cousin by marriage to Pablo Sena, watched the doctor's movements and the liquid in the little tube, her eyes fascinated. Here, plainly, was the devil's work. How else could water change color, turning from white to blood-red? How else could two liquids, both colorless, when added together produce a smoke that fumed up and that, sharp and acrid, carried even to her nostrils? Natividad crossed herself rapidly and, repressing a sneeze, hurried away. Meanwhile, in his surgery Dr. Freeman, all unsuspecting, continued to work at the chemistry bench, absorbed in his hobby.

CHAPTER VIII

NO GUNMEN NEED APPLY

FOR a week Marksham basked in tranquility. Dave Cloud and his deputy, Pug Wells, inhabited the sheriff's office, occasionally taking short journeys out of town. Pug complained of the inaction, but Dave told him to be patient.

"So far," he told Pug, "I've run into a stone wall. Everything's wrong. I'm tryin' to find out who killed Lee Pryor, but I haven't got any place. All I know is that Andy Blare knew something about who killed Lee. I'm sure of that because of what's happened; but Andy's dead. Now I'm going to let things soak awhile."

"Just sit, huh?" Pug growled.

"Just sit," Dave said firmly. "The best peace officer I ever knew, and pretty near the wisest man, was old Jason Shepard. I was a deputy marshal under him. When we got hold of somethin' that was too tough to figure out he always used to say to let it soak, tint somethin' would happen that would bust it wide open. An' it always did, too. Some



Featuring in pictures **The SHADOW**, America's most popular mystery character, and

THREE MUSKETEERS

With D'Artagnan—the most exciting story of all time!

IRON MUNRO

The Astounding Man, born on Jupiter, adventures in a new universe.

FRANK MERRIWELL

Always introducing something new in sport and adventure.

NICK CARTER

The super sleuth you saw in pictures now appears in the comics.

HORATIO ALGER, JR.

One of Horatio Alger's beloved characters in a mysterious adventure each month.

BILL BARNES

The famous aviator fights strange mysterious men who try to rule the world. And Many Others.



**ALL NEW COMICS
NOT REPRINTS
10c PER COPY**

little thing, Pug; somethin' that we don't see an' can't think of, is goin' to turn up. When we get hold of it we'll know who killed Lee Pryor."

"An' when we know that?" Pug said questioningly.

"Then," Dave drawled, "we go to town."

"One thing," Pug said after a moment's musing, "we ain't had much trouble about the fencin' so far. We been out of town two or three times because some feller had cut a fence between posts, but there's been no real fence butcherin' yet."

"They ain't ready yet," Dave said softly. "It takes a man a long time to get untracked, Pug. But underneath this whole country there's something stirring an' it's goin' to break."

And so the life of Marksham moved along, only touched by the currents that swept beneath it, that, flooding in from the range country about, rose like a tide against its placid shores. True, there were signs of those tides. Tom Forest unloaded wire and placed it in his warehouse. Wagons at the loading platform of that warehouse were piled with spools of wire and kegs of staples.

Natives, placid inhabitants of the sunlight, went to ranches, there to toil with post-hole diggers, wire stretchers, tamping bars and hammers as the wire went up. Men met together to talk, low-voiced, looking all around them before they spoke, as though they were afraid to be seen together.

Hard-faced strangers drifted into town and out again, sometimes nodding to one another as though they had met before. Tom Forest sold boxes of ammunition, as well as wire and staples. On the slope of the mesa men cut posts. Barry Trevis, hiring a new hand, asked: "How

did you hear about this?" and the new man answered: "There was a travelin' man over in Ardmore. I heard him talkin'."

Carl Sobran took a trip and came back with a satisfied expression about his eyes and mouth. North, along Curampaw Creek, two hard-bitten men moved into a deserted cabin, keeping a fine string of saddle horses in a small pole-fenced trap. All through the Curampaw the tides ebbed and rose, gradually coming to flood point.

ON Wednesday of that peaceful week, Dave Cloud had a caller. He and Pug were in the sheriff's office when Phil Killane entered, his daughter preceding him. Killane stood just beside the door and Jessie came over to Dave, who had risen. The girl was smiling.

"Do you still have your prisoner?" she asked after greetings had been exchanged.

Dave's puzzlement showed on his face, and Jessie amplified. "The old man you had in jail. The one who had been a doctor."

A smile broadened on Dave's face, and he nodded. "You wouldn't hardly call him a prisoner, though," he said. "Pug an' me been keepin' him. He sweeps out the office an' around the jail an' he kind of helps Amador. Yeah, we got Doc Beauchamp. Why?"

"Because I want him," Jessie answered.

Phil Killane's blue eyes met Dave's puzzled gaze and the little man nodded. "No reason why we can't take him, is there?" Killane demanded with asperity. "We'll give him a home, good place to stay, an' plenty to eat. Jessie wants him an' so do I."

Instantly Dave understood. Under his gruff exterior, there was a

tender streak in Phil Killane, a genuine desire to help the weak and helpless. If Phil Killane wanted Beauchamp, it was from sheer goodness of heart, plain humanity, and Dave Cloud was not the man to curb such an instinct.

"I can spare him all right," Dave said after a swift glance at Pug, "but I don't think you want him, Jessie. He gets drunk about every other day, an' he chews tobacco. Pug an' me got him cleaned up some, but he ain't a parlor pet."

"I want him, just the same," Jessie answered firmly. "We do want him, don't we, dad?"

Killane nodded and Dave said thoughtfully: "I guess you can have him then—if he'll go. If you get sick of him, Jessie, you can bring him back. Pug an' me are gettin' to where we kind of like the old jasper."

"Where is he?" Jessie asked.

"Out back," answered Dave. "I'll take you." He accompanied the girl out of the office, leaving Pug and Killane alone.

Pug was naturally combative and Killane was no peacemaker himself. Left alone there in the sheriff's office, they stared at each other, the stare gradually becoming a glare.

"Havin' any trouble out yore way?" Pug asked suddenly.

"No," Killane answered. "I've always taken care of any trouble that arose, suh."

"Yeah," Pug said. Then: "Hirin' any hands, Killane? Trevis an' Vincent an' Trilling an' them seemed to think they was short-handed. They been hirin' quite a few men."

"I have a sufficiency of men," Killane said shortly. "I understand that my neighbors have been hirin' men."

"How's the grass?"

"I have enough for any cattle.

There are a number of strays in my pasture. We'll put them out."

Pug grunted. "An' water?" he asked.

"We could do with a rain; in fact, we need one."

Pug rubbed his jaw, square and angular beneath its covering of hard flesh. "Yeah, an' some wind to turn the mills," he commented. "What you goin' to do after you turn out them strays, Killane?"

"Ride my fences," Killane said with some asperity. "You have a great curiosity about my business, suh!"

"Everybody's business is the sheriff's business," Pug retorted contentiously.

"Not mine!" Killane flared.

"Well—" Pug began. Just then Jessie and Dave came back, accompanied by Quincy Adams Beauchamp. Quincy Adams wandered into the office, a wail, his bleary eyes uncertain.

"There's your visitor, Mr. Killane," Dave announced. "Jessie convinced him that he was coming to see you."

"Very well," Killane said briefly and turning to Beauchamp: "Is there anything you want to take with you?"

Quincy Adams Beauchamp looked around the office, his gaze wavering. "No," he said hesitatingly, "no, I guess there's nothing. I guess—"

"Then we'll be going," Killane announced. "Come, Jessie."

"You behave yoreself," Dave warned Beauchamp. "You act right or I'll be out after you."

Quincy Adams Beauchamp did not answer but followed Jessie out of the office. In the corridor the girl turned and flashing a smile at the young sheriff, called back: "Thank you, Dave."

Dave nodded and walked back

into the office. "Wonder if she'll be thankin' me in a week," he commented to Pug.

"Not after he's drunk all Killane's good whiskey, she won't," Pug growled. "That ol' coot! Can't even talk civil to a man!"

On Thursday Pug hurt his hand. Attempting to nail up the bulletin board which was sagging, he came down hard with the hammer on his thumb. The thumb grew black within hours, swelled and throbbled. Pug, always even-tempered, became cross as a bear with a sore ear and as hard to live with.

"We're goin' to get that thumb fixed," Dave announced that night. "Come on, we'll go to Freeman's."

Pug demurred and Dave insisted. Presently Dave won. He accompanied his friend to the rambling, white-painted house at the edge of town.

DR. FREEMAN was in his office when the officers arrived, and he was properly sympathetic. While Freeman and Pug went into the surgery, Dave sat in the lamp-lit office admiring the doctor's gun rack which stood against the wall.

There were all sorts of weapons in the rack, three rifles, ranging from an old Sharps .45-90 through a twenty-two and on to a .30-30. All were polished and bright. There were shotguns, a muzzle loader, a ten-gauge and a twelve-gauge; a light, shot-barreled English gun that Dave picked up and tried against his shoulder. There was a horse pistol, a cap-and-ball Colt, a Colt Frontier model, heavy, short-barreled and ugly; a Smith & Wesson hammerless .32, a derringer, a knife, a slingshot, a quiver filled with arrows, and a short, heavy Comanche bow. Pug came out of the surgery

eying his bandaged thumb, Freeman behind him.

"I've been admirin' your guns, doc," Dave remarked. "You got quite a collection."

"It's a hobby of mine." Freeman smiled brilliantly. "I've been gathering them up for years. How's the hand now, Pug?"

"It feels a lot better already, doc," Pug answered. "How much do I owe you?"

"Two dollars," Freeman said, and Pug paid him. "What's going on in the county, Dave?" Freeman asked. "Have you found anything new concerning Lee Pryor's death?"

Dave shook his head. "Nothin'," he said briefly. "Doc, you get around a lot and you hear things. What's going to happen about this fencin'?"

The smile left Freeman's face. "I don't know", he answered. "I was talking with Ray Vincent. He's heard rumors that some of the smaller cowmen are holding a meeting at Vic McClellan's place. They're worried about their cattle. This drought has been bad, Dave. It's the middle of June now and no rain." "An' no snow last winter," Dave added. "The country's burned. They haven't even branded calves yet, account of it's so dry."

"And Vincent said that he had hired four new riders," Freeman continued. "I understand that Trevis and Trilling have hired more men. I don't like the looks of some of the strangers I see in town, Dave."

"Neither do I," Dave admitted. "Well, doc, if you hear anything I ought to know, you'll tell me, won't you?"

"Surely." Freeman was smiling again. "If this fencin' keeps on, I'll have to fence my own place, I guess."

"Your place?" Dave looked at the doctor in astonishment.

"I have the old Sena place up in the breaks," Freeman explained. "I bought it last year when Tio Eufracio died. They owed me quite a bill and wanted to pay it, so I took the place and gave them a little money to go ahead on."

Dave nodded. "I don't think anybody'll bother you in the breaks," he said. "That's mighty rough country. Well, Pug, let's get along. So long, doctor."

Freeman said "good-by" and the officers left the office.

IT was just after he and Pug had come back to the office Friday noon, that Dave Cloud gathered the fruits of the rumor that Pug had brought him. Buck Evans, at the Home Ranch Saloon, in warning Pug of the intended meeting of the big cowmen, had mentioned that Dave and Pug were to be considered in that meeting. Dave was at his desk going through the mail that he had brought up from the post office, when Ray Vincent, flanked by Barry Trevis and Frank Trilling, made their appearance at the office.

The three men came in and at Dave's invitation took chairs. Trilling was angry and took no pains to conceal the fact. Trevis' lean and tanned face showed no emotion, and Vincent had a little superior smile playing about his lips.

"We came to see you, Cloud," Vincent began without preamble. Apparently he had appointed himself spokesman for the three. "We got something on our minds."

"Such as?" Dave suggested.

"We held a meeting last night," Vincent announced. "All the big cowmen of the county."

"Yeab?" Dave slit an envelope and withdrew its contents.

"An' we decided that we wanted to do somethin' about havin' dep-

uties appointed in the county," Vincent continued. "We're goin' to have trouble here an' have it pretty soon. We want protection."

"Any complaints about the protection you're gettin'?" Dave demanded brusquely. "There's nothin' happened in the county that concerns you, Vincent. Lee Pryor was killed. We're workin' on that. There's been fence cut or broke in one or two places. We've looked into it. What's happened that makes you think you need protection?"

Vincent waved that aside. "We want you to appoint certain men deputy sheriffs," he stated. "You called in Trilling's commission an' Trevis' commission. We each want a deputy at our place."

"Who you got in mind?" Dave asked gravely.

Vincent hitched his chair forward and produced a paper. "Here's the list," he said.

Dave looked at the list and shook his head. "I'm sorry," he announced. "I don't know any of these fellows. I can't appoint them."

"Are you an' Wells goin' to try to handle the whole county without deputies?" Trilling asked sharply.

DAVE squared his chair around so that he could look at his questioner. He liked Frank Trilling, knew him to be a good, square man. "I'll tell you, Frank," he said, "I called in your commission an' all the rest, on one account: I couldn't have a man carrying a commission who would be on one side or the other. You an' I both know that this fencin' has stirred up a lot of hard feelings. I hope that it will stop with hard feelings an' nothin' else. But if it don't, I can't afford to have a deputy takin' sides. That's fair, ain't it?"

Reluctantly Trilling nodded.

Dave, leaning forward a little, went on. "I'm not going to try to get along without deputies. I couldn't do that. I've been thinkin' it over and I've got some men in mind. I'll show you the list." He picked up a piece of paper from his desk and passed it to Trilling. Trilling read down the list, laid it aside and looked at Dave.

"Every man on there is a Mexican," he declared brusquely.

"Every man's a native," Dave corrected. "There's Pablo Sena an' Abran Garcia an' Anastacio Sandoval an' some more, but just take those three: Would you ask for any better men?"

"These boys that are ridin' for me ain't goin' to take that kindly at all," Trilling said. "I've got some Texas boys an' some Oklahoma men an'—"

"It ain't going to make any difference whether they like it or not!" Dave said inflexibly. "The men I got on that list can get along without bein' liked. They can take care of things. Every one of them has been tried out at sometime or other an' when it was all over they were on top. Anyhow they're the men I'm goin' to appoint."

He turned from Trilling to look at Vincent. "An' there's no use of bringin' in a list of fancy imported gunmen an' askin' me to appoint them deputies," he concluded. "I won't do it!"

"Then whatever happens is your fault!" Vincent snapped. "We've come to you askin' for protection. We don't get it. When trouble breaks, don't come whinin' to us for help, Cloud. All the big cowmen—"

"I haven't asked for help an' I don't think I'll have to," Dave interrupted. "You talk about all the big cowmen. How about Killane? Was he at yore meetin'? I don't

see an Anchor man's name on yore list."

"Killane wouldn't come," Trilling answered, speaking before Vincent had opportunity. "We didn't know who he'd want appointed."

"Phil Killane don't ask favors from anybody," Dave stated. "He doesn't want a deputy out there. An' I've got somethin' else to tell you three: It looks to me like you are gettin' ready for a war. Some of these men you've hired are clear bad. I've no doubt that some of 'em are wanted. If they are an' I learn about it, they'll be arrested. If they get out of line, they'll go to jail. There's law in this county an' yo're lookin' at it. You can do just what you like; either behave yourselves an' keep yore men in line, or ante when it's called for. Now if you've got nothin' else on yore minds, I'd like to look at my mail."

The three men got up. "That's your last word?" Vincent demanded.

"My last word," Dave stated flatly.

Vincent and Trevis went out. Trilling lingered a moment. Dave, looking up from a letter he was reading, saw him at the door.

"I just want to say that yo're right, Dave," Trilling said apologetically. "I was mad when I came in an' it looked to me like you was throwin' in with the other side. Forget it, will you?"

Dave Cloud got up and came over to Trilling. "Frank," he said, "you're all right. You're a whole lot of man an' if you want yore commission back, I'll be glad to hand it to you."

Trilling shook his head. "No," he answered. "You can't have yore deputies on either side, Dave. Yo're right about it. I've got a couple of imported hands I'm goin' to let go

when I get home, I guess. Who's yore deputy out by me?"

"Anastacio," Dave answered.

A smile broke reluctantly across Trilling's face. "Anastacio's all right," he said. "I guess you picked some good ones, Dave." I remember when Anastacio was drivin' the mail back an' they tried to hold him up. He come in with two dead holdups *an'* the mail. So long, Dave."

TRILLING departed and Pug came over to Dave's desk. "Is that right about yore appointin' these fellers deputies?" he asked.

Dave nodded. "I want you to ride out an' talk to Anastacio about it this afternoon. I've got his commission all ready. I'm goin' to see Abraun an' Pablo if I have time to go out there," he said.

Pug looked at the list, scanning it thoughtfully. "As tough a bunch of jiggers as ever wore pants," he announced when he reached the end. "I punched cows with Bert Vigil, an' if of Juan Archuleta gives the word, all them Archuletas will come troopin' to town an' every one will have a gun."

"How about the Senas?" Dave asked quietly, his eyes twinkling. "What'd they do if Pablo spoke out?"

Pug chuckled. "An' they're runnin' little farms that have been fenced for years," he contributed, "or else they got sheep or goats in the breaks along the mesa. They ain't goin' to take sides. They don't like any of these high-handed cowmen, big ones or little ones, neither."

"You go on an' see Anastacio," Dave recommended. "Come on in as soon as you talk to him. I think he'll take the job."

"So do I." Pug chuckled to him-

CONFUCIUS, HE SAY

A PICTURE is worth 1,000 words"—

And just to illustrate the wisdom of the ancient Chinese philosopher we are presenting a new picture magazine entitled **DOC SAVAGE COMICS**.

We want to point out to the parents, teachers and children of America that in this magazine we are visualizing **TREASURE ISLAND**, by Robert Louis Stevenson, the greatest story ever written for children, presented in the most modern form.

All this in addition to nine other splendidly illustrated stories—tales that the adult and juvenile alike will want to picture read.

Place your order with your news dealer today for this new magazine will be sold out early.



**10 CENTS A COPY
ON SALE EVERYWHERE**

self. He clapped his hat on his head and went out.

Dave sat musing at his desk. Amador came in, took a turn about the office, hesitated, cleared his throat and then started toward the jail door again.

"What's on your mind, Amador?"

Dave asked.

"*Mi primo*, Fidel," Amador said, "he ees work for Dan Sawyer, Dave."

"Yeah?" Mentally Dave pricked up his ears. "An' what about yore *primo*?"

"He ees come to see me," Amador stated. "He ees esayceng that these men, she ees haveeng a *junta* out by McClellan's tonight. I theenk mebhe you should know about her."

"You bet, Amador," Dave said heartily. "Thanks."

Dan Sawyer was a small cowman who lived south of Marksham beyond Vincent's holdings, almost at the edge of the county. If Dan Sawyer was going to McClellan's for a meeting, then all the small owners would be there. That was a meeting Dave intended to attend.

"When Pug comes back tell him I've gone out to McClellan's," Dave instructed Amador, and got up from his chair.

From the office Dave went to the livery stable where both he and Pug were keeping two horses apiece, the other mounts running in Carl Sobran's little horse pasture. Dave took Maggie and started out of town. He would, he believed, have time to visit Pablo Sena, eat supper with him, and then go on to McClellan's. On the way out of town he encountered Abran Garcia.

Abran did Marksham's heavy hauling. He operated a dray and in addition had a couple of wagons with which he hauled freight. He was a big man with a paunch and

everything about him was deceptive from his mild brown eyes to the way his paunch quivered when he moved. He was hard as nails, had once, on a bet, lifted five hundred pounds straight up, and would no more stand for foolishness than would the muzzle of a loaded gun. Dave rode over to the dray.

It did not take him long to convince Abran that he should become a deputy sheriff. Indeed at Dave's first mention of the job Abran's eyes began to twinkle and his head to nod. When Dave finished, Abran said, "*Se*, Señor Dave," and held out his hand.

"There's folks that aren't goin' to like this, Abran," Dave cautioned as he placed badge and commission in Abran's broad hand. "You'll have to go easy an' stay out of trouble."

Abran placed his commission in his pocket and carefully pinned the badge to his vest. "I weel not have trouble," he assured Dave solemnly. "Mebhe somebody else haveeng trouble, but not me."

"Just go easy an' use yore head," Dave said again. "I'm countin' on you, Abran."

"*Seguro*," Abran agreed. Dave gathered up his reins and rode on.

IT was almost sundown when Dave reached Sena's rock house on Vinegar Creek. Some hours of daylight still remained because of the long summer light, but Pablo was in and the goats were corralled for the night. Dave and Pablo sat on a bench outside the house while Tia Placida worked in the kitchen and, sitting there, Dave explained what he wanted.

Pablo was a far different proposition than Abran. Abran walked into anything, wide open and swinging; Pablo always thought things over. Frankly Dave told Pablo why

he wanted him for a deputy, what he expected and what might come up. Pablo, black eyes inscrutable, thought for quite a while after Dave finished talking. Presently he nodded.

"I will do it," he said in Spanish. "Not because I want to, but because you are my friend. Now we will go in and see what *Mamacita* has prepared for us to eat." He held out his hand and Dave shook it.

When they went into the house, Tia Placida had lighted the lamp and had supper on the table. As they sat down, Dave noticed that the tiny woman's hand was bandaged, and asked her what had happened. For answer Tia Placida unwrapped the bandage, revealing a long ugly cut, the edges of which were red and inflamed.

"That is bad," Dave pronounced. "*Muy malo*. You should have the doctor take care of that."

Tia Placida shook her head. "No doctor," she said firmly. "Never again will I have that doctor. He has the evil eye. The devil has his soul. I think he—"

"*Mamacita!*" Pablo interposed sternly. "You have said enough!"

Dave looked from one to the other, puzzled. Pablo passed him the chili and Dave took a helping. Pablo immediately began to speak of other matters, and Dave, thoroughly wise in the ways of the native, knew that there was no use in asking questions. If he wished, and in his own good time, Pablo would tell what this was all about. Until then it was locked up within him. But before Dave left he again reverted to the subject.

"You sure ought to have somebody fix that hand for Tia Placida," he urged. "It's bad. It needs to be cleaned up and disinfected."

Pablo nodded agreement, but did not promise to take any action, and Dave rode off, wondering just what had happened that had turned Tia Placida and Pablo against Dr. Freeman.

Vincent had begun his northern fence and Dave had to open a gate to get through to McClellan's. Further along he came to another gate and, then riding toward the dark loom of McClellan's house, he realized that he was in a lane. Dusk had come but not full dark and he could see the fences lining on either side of him.

WHEN Dave rode into McClellan's he saw that there were a good many horses along the fence and tied to the corral. Magpie was added to these, and Dave walked toward the house where a lamp glowed in a window. As he strode along, he saw the bright red coals of five or six cigarettes, and before he reached the porch steps he could see men lounging, some sitting on the ground, some standing, others occupying a bench.

Dave paused near them. "Howdy," he greeted. "Mac here?"

"I'm here," a voice said. McClellan advanced out of the gloom. "What are you doin' out here, Cloud?" There was definite hostility in the man's voice.

"I heard that there was a meetin'," Dave said easily. "I come out to it."

"We don't need you, Cloud." Yancy Yarbrow spoke from the steps. "You can turn around an' go back to town."

"Presently," Dave answered. "I came out to say somethin'. I'll say it."

He could see that most of the small cowmen of the Curampaw were present. There were perhaps

fifteen men all told and they represented a force of three times that many. Some of them hired one rider, some two, and each had adherents. Sawyer was there, McClellan, Yarbrow, Wade Samis, Henry Duchin, Billy Farmer, Wood McBride; the small operators from near and far were gathered there in Vic McClellan's yard.

"I expect you boys have come together to talk about fencin'," Dave said, throwing the words out into the silence that followed his announcement. "You've got together to see what you can do about it. I've come to *tell* you what you can do."

"We don't need yore tellin', Cloud," Yarbrow snarled from one end of the steps. "Fork yore horse an' head back home. We don't need you here."

"Wait," Dan Sawyer spoke from the other end of the steps. "Go ahead, sheriff."

"I'll go ahead," Dave promised. "The men that own land are fencin' it. It's always been open range an' yo're sore. I don't blame you a bit for bein' sore. I—"

"That's the stuff," Farmer approved. "Mebbe we was wrong, boys. Mebbe the sheriff's with us."

"I'm not with you!" Dave said curtly. "I'm with nobody. What I came to tell you was this: You'll get nowhere by cuttin' fences. You'll break the law and you'll get nowhere. The thing for you to do is to buy your own land, fence it an' run yore cattle on it. The day is past when a man could run cattle where he pleased. You'll make money by doin' as I say."

To Dave's left a man laughed bitterly. "The good land has been grabbed," he snarled. "Those damned grass hogs have bought it all up. Tell me this, Cloud: Why

should a man that's run cattle out here on the flats be crowded off grass that he's always used, an' be pushed out of the country?"

"Yeah," another voice drawled, "tell us, that, Cloud."

"Would you men hang a cow thief?" Dave demanded. "Would you run down a man that was stealin' horses, an' get him?"

"I would," Farmer answered. "Any of us would."

"What's the difference between stealin' grass an' stealin' cattle?" Dave asked quietly. "Can you tell me that?"

There was no answer. On the steps a man moved and a cigarette, flipped away, made an arc of fire in the dusk. "I came out here to tell you where I stand," Dave announced, his voice controlled. "I stand for the law in Las Olas County. A man that cuts fence is a criminal an' I'll treat him so. You boys are goin' to do some talking. You will keep in mind what I've said."

"Hell!" Duchin said angrily. "My cattle are starvin'. We're out of grass. The country that's open ain't good country an' the grass is gone. You think I'm goin' to let my cows starve to death?"

"I didn't come out here to argue," Dave said quietly. "I came to tell you where things stand. It's tough and I know it's tough. I'll do anything I can to help you boys out, except break the law. I won't do that an' I won't let you do it."

Silence followed his words. Spoken forcefully, with all sincerity, his words had their effect. It was Yarbrow who spoke finally. "You'll help us!" he sneered. "Cloud, when you went into office you went to work for the big boys. There ain't anybody that can help us except ourselves."

Continued on page 122

BUILDERS TRADING GUIDES



4 Vols. \$6

AUDELS CARPENTERS AND BUILDERS GUIDES—4 VOLS. \$6

Inside Information for Carpenters, Builders, Joiners, Building Mechanics—all Woodworkers. 1680 pages; 3700 diagrams; flexible; pocket size. Short-cut instructions, new methods, ideas, solutions, plans, systems—money saving suggestions. An easy progressive course for the apprentice. A practical daily helper and Quick Reference for the master worker. A Helping Hand to Easier and Better Work and Better Pay. To get this aid for yourself, simply fill in and mail the FREE COUPON below.



How to use steel square; How to file and set saws; How to build furniture; How to use mitre box; How to use chalk line; How to use rules; How to make joints; Carpenters' arithmetic; Mensuration problems; Estimating

strength of timbers; How to set girders and sills; How to frame houses and roofs; How to estimate costs; How to build houses, barns, garages, bungalows, etc.; How to read and draw plans; Drawing up specifications; How

to excavate; How to use settings 12, 13 and 17 on the steel square; How to build boista and scafolds—skylights; How to build stairs; How to put on interior trim; How to hang doors; How to lay—lay floors; How to paint.

"Audels Guides worth four times their price handy too as I carry them in pocket" et fer. reference. W. J. Buesen, Knoxville, Pa.



4 Vols. \$6

AUDELS PLUMBERS AND STEAMFITTERS GUIDES—4 VOLS. \$6

A new edition—just out! A practical, illustrated, Reference Library and Study-Course for Master Plumbers, Journeymen and Apprentice Steamfitters, Gas Fitters and Helpers, Sheet Metal Workers, Draughtsmen, Master Builders, Engineers and all Building Trade Students. 1670 pages; pocket size. Guides explain all the principles, advances and short cuts of the Plumbing and Heating trade. Contains instructions on how to figure and estimate jobs. Use FREE COUPON below to examine, without obligation, this valuable work.



Air Conditioning. Soldering, tinning. Joint wiping, bending, beating. Pipe—iron—steel, threading. Mathematics, tables, physics. Materials—iron, steel, copper, brass, lead, tin, antimony. Sheet metal—galvanized—plate. Sanita-

tion, syphonage, tanks. Drainage, sewage, purification. Fixtures—bath—kitchen. Pipe fittings, soil pipe, tools. Laying out work. Roughing. Screwed fittings, flanges, joints. Pipe bending, examples. Elbowa. Heating, ven-

tilation, refrigeration. Water supply, mains, wells, tanks. Gas-fittings. Underwriters. Sheet metal work, problems, methods, Brazing, heating, lead burning. Welding, various welds, methods. Blacksmithing, forges, tools.

"Audels Guides are practical, easy to understand. Cover the field in plain language. W. F. Arnsinger, Annapolis, Md.



4 Vols. \$6

AUDELS MASONS AND BUILDERS GUIDES—4 VOLS. \$6

A complete, illustrated trade reference library, for Bricklayers, Cement Workers, Plasterers, Tile Setters and Stone Masons, including a practical outline of Steel Construction. 1100 pages; 2067 diagrams; flexible; pocket size. A practical Trade Assistant explaining modern methods of masonry construction. Easy to understand and apply. A reliable and authentic reference work and study-course for Master Journeymen and Young Mechanic. Use FREE COUPON below and find out for yourself, without obligation, whether this set will benefit you.



Bricklaying, tools, materials; Brick designs, patterns, bonds; Setting frames and foundations; Mortars, scaffolds, estimating; Mortars and mortar mixing; Tile setting, mosaic, hollow tile; Straight edge test, trow-

eling; How to figure brick work; Safe leads, piers, chimneys; Boiler settings, anchors, fire stops; Labor tables; Concrete, forms; How to figure concrete work; Stucco—on old and new buildings; Plastering—wood lath—metal;

Plasterers agreement; Plastering on various surfaces; Stone masonry; Cutting, finishing, estimating stone; Derricks, rigging; Steel construction; Fire proof; How to read blue prints.

"Audels Masons Guides are the best books on the subject. Have laid brick 12 years and am able to judge." H. A. Sonnett, Corliss, Pa.



PRACTICAL ELECTRICITY—1 VOL. \$4

Audels Handy Book of Practical Electricity is a simplified Ready Reference and Study Course in one pocket size volume—for Engineers, Professional Electricians and Students. 1040 pages; 2600 diagrams; flexible bound. A reliable authority and handy helper for every electrical worker. Contains important and valuable wiring diagrams, calculations, machine sketches, help on maintenance and repair. Use this FREE COUPON today and find out, without obligation, how this handy book will help you in your daily work.



INSIDE TRADE INFORMATION ON:

Electro-Therapeutics, X-Rays, Shocks, Welding, Brazing, Radio Hook-ups, Motion Pictures, Telephone, Telegraph, Cranes, Bells, Elevators, Pumps, Tools, Ship Drive, Railways, Vehicles, Automobile Electric Systems, Ignition, Generation, Lighting, Plant Management, Power Plans, Armature Winding, Repairing, A. C. Motors and Apparatus, D. C. Motors and Apparatus, Alternator Construction, Dynamos, Wiring, Diagrams, Sign Flashers, Cable Splicing, Power Wiring, Outside Wiring, Switches, Lightning, Rectifiers, Converters, Transformers, Fuses, Circuit Breakers, Rheostats, Electro Plating, Electrolysis, Storage Batteries, Magnetism, Electrical Energy, Conductors, Insulators, Static, Dynamic, Radio Electricity, Applications, Ready Reference and Index Covering the entire field of Modern Electricity.

Learn More and You Will Earn More!

Know your job and you'll never be without one. The skilled man is always in demand. Knowledge is power. Learn your trade thoroughly by easy reading. This coupon is your opportunity for advancement and better pay. You risk nothing in sending for Audels Guides for free examination. Send it NOW!

FREE EXAMINATION COUPON

THEO. AUDEL & CO.
49 W. 23 ST. NEW YORK CITY

Please mail me for free examination the books marked (x) below. If I find them satisfactory, I agree to mail \$1 in 7 days, on each set ordered, and to further mail \$1 monthly on each set until I have paid the purchase price.

4 CARPENTERS GUIDES \$6 4 PLUMBERS GUIDES \$6

4 MASONS GUIDES \$6 1 ELECTRICIANS HANDY BOOK \$4

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

OCCUPATION.....

REFERENCE..... JACK No. 14

Continued from page 120

Instantly a babble of voices arose, some angry, all tense. Dave knew that he had lost. As the voices quieted, he spoke once more. "I've told you," he said. "I hope you'll believe me because I meant just what I said. Now I'm goin' to pull out. You boys better do a lot of thinkin' before you do anything you'll wish you hadn't."

With no more than that he turned and strode toward the fence where Magpie was tied. Behind him the babble of voices broke out again, shrill, clipped, angry. Riding off into the night, Dave was sure that he had wasted a trip, that he had done no good, and perhaps harm. His heart was heavy as he sent the black-and-white horse along toward town. Trouble hung like an ominous cloud above the Curampaw.

CHAPTER IX

THE HELL OF BEING SHERIFF

DAVE CLOUD rode away from McClellan's with much foreboding. He was pondering a problem. He had left a group of men who were slowly gathering indignation, accumulating pressure that was bound, somehow, to be released. Dave knew the temper of that group, knew every man in it. He could forecast with some accuracy how each one would react to any given situation and he knew that presently he would have to deal directly with force, meet it with a stronger force.

Half a mile from Vic McClellan's Dave reined in Magpie and dismounted. The country here was rising toward the north and Dave was on the slope of the rise. Behind him, in the starlight, he could see the darkness shrouding McClellan's, could see the pin point of

light that was the lamp at McClellan's house. Below him the lane that he had come through, opened into Vincent's pasture. Dave sat down, rolled a cigarette and waited, Magpie standing behind him.

He sat there for a long time. Thoughts paraded in review through his mind, following in endless procession; conjecture and surmise, fact and fancy, each replaced the other. Dave rolled another cigarette and smoked it, grinding out the butt in the earth. Magpie lifted his head and peered intently through the darkness, and Dave, sensing rather than seeing the movement, arose and stood beside the horse, his hand on Magpie's muzzle. Below him, not fifty yards away, men passed by, talking quietly, their words magnified by the quiet of the night.

"I tell you," it was Farmer speaking, "Cloud's got the right of it. What we've got to do is buy or lease an' run our cattle under fence from now on."

Yancy Yarbrow's voice angrily refuted Farmer's words. "Not me! I run cattle in this country before some of these grass hogs come in here an' I'll run 'em when they're gone. I don't buy an' I don't lease. I'll take what's mine by rights."

"You an' me don't see things alike, Yarbrow," Farmer said. "I'm goin' to talk to Trevis tomorrow an' make some arrangements to lease."

The voices drifted away and the silence was broken only by the faint sound of moving horses. Dave Cloud heaved a sigh of relief and let go Magpie's muzzle. He had done some good then! He had at least set these men to thinking. He waited an hour longer, thinking perhaps there would be other riders, but none came. Dave mounted Magpie and rode on toward the north. He would not try to go on

to Marksham, he thought. It was too far and there was no necessity for riding in tonight. He would step at Pablo's and go on to town in the morning.

Magpie threaded his way along through the folded country, following a path of his own toward the north. When the horse stopped, Dave, looking down, could see the fence line that Vincent had built. He was west of the gate. He turned Magpie toward the east and rode down the fence. There was a solution to this whole problem, he thought. Farmer had struck upon it. If the big owners, Trevis, Trilling, Killane, and Vincent would lease small pastures to their neighbors, this whole problem could be solved. He would, Dave thought, talk to Trilling and to Trevis. They would perhaps be willing to help, be willing to co-operate and so not force the smaller men to desperation.

Suddenly Dave noticed that Magpie's ears were pricked forward, and he blew softly through his nostrils. Dave heeded that alarm. Magpie checked and stopped short, reined to a halt. Down below along the fence a man swore softly and another rasped: "Turn 'em an' make another try for the gate."

Men were handling cattle down below, trying to throw a bunch through the gate. Dave reached back and touched the butt of his gun, easing the weapon in its holster. Honest men don't handle cattle at night.

The man who had cursed, rasped: "The hell with the gate, we'll cut the fence." There was a creak of leather as he dismounted.

Up above on the rise Dave Cloud spoke into the darkness. "Hands up, you boys! Yo're under arrest!"

He could not see the men. The

cattle were a darkly moving mass with other dark spots about it. There were three men down there. Dave knew two of them had talked, but he could not place their voices. The third man had not spoken. Gun in his hand now, Magpie shifting nervously beneath him, Dave sent the horse forward. Flat silence had followed his command. In that silence a cow bawled and then there was quiet again.

"Get 'em up," Dave commanded, trying to make his voice sound sure, trying to convince those men down below he had them covered. "Get 'em high!"

THERE was an answer then. A shot lanced through the blackness; the report of the gun a flat thudding roar in the quiet. Immediately the black blotch resolved itself into units as the gathered cattle ran in all directions. The wire of the fence twanged as an animal struck it and recoiled. Flashes bloomed at the end of gun barrels.

A bullet smacked the air beside Dave Cloud and another, lower, struck a rock and whined away in a ricochet. Magpie grunted, checked his stride and stumbled. Dave tried to hold up the horse with the reins, but Magpie could not check his stumble. The horse was hit. He sprawled down and Dave, kicking free, hit the ground, his Colt bouncing his arm up as he fired.

Instantly he was answered. Lead searched about him, seeking him out. Dave dropped down behind Magpie, quiet now and only kicking a little, and fired again. Once more the three guns below volleyed into the night and a slug thudded into Magpie's body. Then horses pounded away, the roll of hoofs diminishing as distance widened.

Dave got up and walked around

his horse. He stood looking down along the fence, trying to pierce the darkness with his eyes. Magpie's hoofs gave one last convulsive kick and then were still. The horse was dead. Very slowly Dave squatted down on the ground near his dead horse and mechanically, his eyes still trying to pierce the gloom, reached for his makings.

"They ain't content," he murmured, the while his fingers went about their task without direction, "they ain't content with just a little trouble. They got to steal cattle, too."

A match flamed. Tobacco smoke scented the air. Dave Cloud placed a hand on the splash of white across Magpie's hips. Magpie had been a friend.

After a time Dave got up, bent and loosened the cinches and dragged the saddle from Magpie. Saddle and blanket he placed against the fence. Then walking slowly, he went down the fence line to the gate and struck out toward the northwest. There was a twelve-mile walk ahead of him. Twelve miles between Vincent's fence corner and Pablo Sena's house. The Anchor headquarters were closer, but Dave did not want to go to the Anchor. He did not want Phil Killane riding out, breathing threats and fire and brimstone on the trail of rustlers that could not be caught.

DAVE CLOUD got in to Marksham about three o'clock the following afternoon. He had spent a trying and wearisome day; he was tired, angry and disgruntled. Reaching Pablo Sena's in the early morning he had been greeted by dogs that would not be pacified, and presently by Pablo himself with a rifle. There, Dave had spent the remainder of the night. He told Pug about it

when that worthy plied him with questions.

"Pablo an' me," Dave said, "went over to Vincent's fence as soon as it was light enough to travel. Light comes awful early, too. I rode a horse bareback over there an' he like to split me in two. We skinned out Magpie an' rolled the skin up an' took it back to Pablo's place."

"What you do that for?" asked Pug.

"So that nobody'll recognize the horse," Dave answered. "If somebody makes a pop to you or me about me havin' a horse shot they'll have some information they shouldn't have an' we'll follow it up. Goin' back to Pablo's, we cut sign all across that country. We found plenty of horse tracks, but they didn't tell us a thing."

"So then you came in," Pug surmised.

Dave shook his head. "Tia Placida had a fever when we got back so I made Pablo hitch up a wagon an' we went over to the Anchor. Tia has got a bad hand an' I thought they'd have some stuff over there to fix it up. She won't go near Doc Freeman for some reason or other. Anyhow, we went over there an' Beauchamp fixed her hand. You'd be surprised at that old boy, Pug. He's cleaned up an' his hair an' beard's been cut an' he looks pretty near human. He did a good job on Tia Placida's hand, too. I borrowed a horse at the Anchor. Stalled 'em about my horse playin' out. Then we went back to Pablo's an' I come on home."

"An' you've got no idea of who was workin' with those cattle along Vincent's fence?" Pug said.

Dave shook his head. "There was three of 'em an' I heard two talk, but I don't know who they were," he

said. "You can see where this is takin' us, Pug?"

"Where?"

"This business of the fence," Dave said. "It's keepin' everybody stirred up an' whoever is stealin' cattle is takin' advantage of that."

"How about Yancy Yarbro?"

Pug squinted his eyes as he asked the question.

"I've thought of him," Dave admitted. "Yancy had connections an' he went to jail for rustlin' once. They never found out who he was sellin' cattle to either. Yancy's a possibility all right."

"What you goin' to do about it?"

Pug asked bluntly.

Dave swung his chair a trifle, his feet sliding on his desk top. "The hell of bein' a sheriff, Pug," he commented, "is that you got to wait. You know somethin's goin' to happen an' you try to stop it. You talk an' work an' try to fix things up. But you can't really *do* anything until after the damage has been done. Then you go out an' arrest a man an' send him to jail. I think, like you do, that Yancy might be in this business, but I can't prove it. There'll be some cattle stole and reported to us an' then we'll spend a lot of time tryin' to find out who done it when the chances are that we could throw Yancy in jail right now an' never have a single cow stolen."

Pug nodded morosely. Dave relaxed in his chair. "If it's all the same to you I'm goin' to sleep for a while," he drawled. "I spent the night in a mighty short while, out at Senas."

HE tipped the chair farther back, closed his eyes and relaxed. Pug watched for a moment, his eyes showing his fondness for his friend; then, grunting softly to himself, he went on out of the office. He had to ride out to Carl Sobran's pasture

TRAIN FOR ELECTRICITY BY ACTUAL WORK ON MOTORS, GENERATORS, ENGINES ETC. PAY TUITION AFTER GRADUATION



Mail coupon today for details of my "Pay after graduation Plan" and famous Coyne "Learn by Doing" method of practical shop training for your start towards a better job. Age or lack of money need not hold you back. . . Got training first; then take 10 months to pay most of your tuition in small monthly payments starting 5 Months after you begin training.

12 Weeks Shop Training

Coyne Training is practical, easy to grasp. . . you learn quickly by doing actual jobs on real electrical machinery—NOT from books or printed lessons. You don't need previous experience or a lot of book learning. Expert instructors guide you every step of the way.

4 Weeks Extra Radio Course Now Included

Big things ahead in Electricity mean more jobs and a better future in this fascinating "live" industry. Many opportunities. Rush this coupon TODAY for Big Free Book with many photos of the great Coyne Shops in Chicago, facts about Coyne Training. . . Free Employment Service. . . how many, earn while learning. . . additional instruction in RADIO, Diesel electricity, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning at NO EXTRA COST and amazing Pay-Tuition-After-Graduation-Plan.

Learn
by
Doing

COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL

H. C. LEWIS, President
500 S. Paulina St. Dept. 50-45, Chicago, Ill.

H. C. LEWIS, President, COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL
500 S. Paulina St., Dept. 50-45, Chicago, Illinois

Send me, without cost or obligation, your Big Free Book, details of Pay-Tuition-After-Graduation-Plan, and extra 4 weeks Radio Course now included.

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ STATE _____



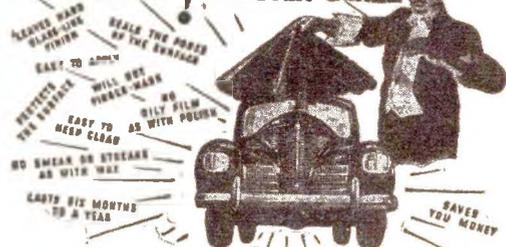
U. S. Government Jobs

START \$1260 TO \$2100 A YEAR!

MEN—WOMEN. Common Education usually sufficient. Write immediately for free 32-page book, with list of many positions and particulars telling how to qualify for them.

FRANKLIN INSTITUTE
Dept. D194 Rochester, N. Y.

PRESTO! ANYONE CAN MASTER GLAZE



Car Owners! Meet Master Glaze—the sensationally different luster for new and used cars! Not a wax—not an oil polish—not a paint!—nothing that "smears" over the surface.

MASTER GLAZE is a unique discovery—a creamy liquid

—quick and easy to apply! Gives a hard, glass-like surface. Even gasoline cannot dull it! Lasts six months to a year! Amazing luster—beautiful, sparkling clean and brilliant! Doesn't finger-mark—doesn't smear! A match box full glazes an entire car. Seals the pores—protects! NOTHING LIKE IT!

FREE Offer! Write now for FREE BOOK-FER. Just send your name and address. Write MASTER GLAZE CO., 7720-212W, Harwood Ave., Milwaukee, Wis.

AGENTS

An unusual opportunity! Quick, flashy demonstrator. Big profits. Good territory. Write today!

Wear the
VITO BELT
for 10 days
at our expense!

Appear
SLIMMER AT ONCE!

DON'T let your friends poke fun at your "bay window"! The successful man of today appears trim-waisted, ready for action... streamlined!

If the Vito Belt does not make that paunchy belt line appear inches slimmer at once... it will cost you nothing!

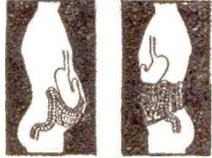
Take care of that ugly paunch the safe way... with a Vito Belt. Excessive exercise may strain your heart... dieting and drugs may be dangerous.

The Vito Belt is made of pure Para rubber, molded to give maximum support. Hundreds of tiny perforations allow air to penetrate. The special lace back permits you to adjust the belt to take care of any change in size. Illustrated folder and details of 10-day FREE trial offer will be sent in plain envelope on request!

HAMILTON BELT COMPANY, 365 Hill Street, New Haven, Conn.



Waistline fat often stretches abdominal muscles, allowing stomach and intestines to fall forward and downward. The Vito Belt brings welcome support to strained and sagging internal organs and helps prevent constipation and fatigue.



AGENTS WANTED!
CLERKS and WORKERS in FACTORIES, MILLS, C.C.C. CAMPS, OFFICES, NAVY, ARMY, MERCHANT MARINE, ETC. Rare Opportunity. Earn EXTRA MONEY. 50% commission selling our new Red, White and Blue Enamelled Metal Etched, Lifetime SOCIAL SECURITY and IDENTIFICATION PLATES in leather Billfolds. Money and Postage Refunded on demand. For Salesmen's Outfit, print clearly your name, address and S. S. Number and mail with 25c cash or stamps to the largest concern in this line. WM. MAMERT, 605 W. Lexington St., Baltimore, Md.



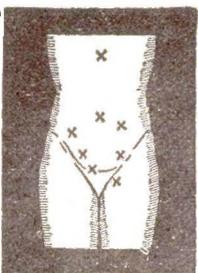
IF I Send YOU THIS FINE SUIT—

Will You Wear It and Show It to Friends? I need a reliable man in your town to wear a fine made-to-measure, all-wool DEMONSTRATING SUIT—advertise my famous Union clothing—and take orders. You can make up to \$12.00 in a day. My line contains over 150 quality wools, all sensational values, guaranteed. **CASH IN ON PARTIAL PAYMENT PLAN** You need no experience or money. Largely everything required FREE. Write me today for FREE details.

STONEFIELD, 1300 W. Harrison, Dept. E-952, Chicago

Is Your Rupture HERE?

Why continue to suffer with rupture? Stop your worries and fears. Send for the facts about my perfected truss invention—the Brooks Appliance for reducible rupture—with the automatic AIR-CUSHION support that gives Yancey a chance to close the opening. Thousands bought by doctors for themselves and patients.



Sent on Trial—Made-to-measure individual fitting for man, woman or child. Low-priced, sanitary, durable. No obnoxious springs or hard pads; no metal ferrule to rust. Safe and comfortable. Helps Nature get results. Not sold through stores—beware of imitations. Write today for full information sent free in plain sealed envelope.

BROOKS APPLIANCE CO. 408-F State St., Marshall, Mich.

and get Dave a horse to replace Magpie, and there was a little circulating around town that he wanted to do. Pug was a believer in direct action. Not as smart as Dave Cloud, not as quick a thinker, but with a tenacity that would have shamed a bulldog and a predilection for cutting across red tape and going directly to the desired objective, Pug Wells was mighty handy to have along.

From the office in the courthouse Pug went to the livery barn and got Blue. On Blue he rode out to Sobran's horse pasture. All the way out and all the way back, leading Sunday, a big sorrel gelding that weighed a thousand pounds and could run like a scared jackrabbit, Pug pondered ethics and occasions. Dave had said that a sheriff always had to wait for things to happen before he could take direct action. Pug grinned to himself. There were ways and means of making things happen and Pug had the idea that if Yancy Yarbrow was locked up, a very undesirable element would be in jail.

Pug put the horses back in the livery barn, spoke briefly to the hostler, explaining that Dave had decided to let Magpie off awhile, and then went on down the street. Yancy Yarbrow lived in Marksham. His layout, a house and barn and corrals, were at the edge of town, and he used the Elite as a place to hang out. Pug went to the Elite.

On the way to the saloon he passed Carl Sobran's office and saw Yancy inside, talking to Sobran. The two men were often together, were friends, and heretofore Pug had paid scant attention to the relationship. Now an idea came into his head, and when he reached the Elite, he nodded to Sid Crocker and went back to a table to do some more thinking. Carl Sobran dealt in cattle, bought them and sold them. Yancy Yarbrow had been ar-

rested and put in the pen for rustling. Pug got up from the table and strolled over to the bar where Crocker was polishing glasses.

"How's business, Sid?" he asked.

"Pretty good," the bartender answered. "How are things with you?"

"Real busy." Pug shoved his square-tipped finger along the polished surface of the bar. "Got as much business in the sheriff's office as we can handle."

"So?" Crocker was an inveterate gossip and pricked up his ears at Pug's announcement. "What's goin' on?"

"A little rustlin'." Pug leaned close across the bar. "Got any ideas, Sid?"

Sid also bent forward. "There's a man in town that was sent to jail for cattle stealin'," he said confidentially.

"Uh-huh," Pug nodded.

"Yarbro," Crocker amplified.

"Think he's up to his old tricks, do you?" Pug asked.

"He might be," Crocker said cautiously.

Pug appeared to consider that and then shook his head. "A burned kid don't fool with a hot iron," he commented sententiously. "Nope, I don't think so, Sid. Anyhow, how could he sell 'em around here?"

"I've always thought," Crocker kept his voice low, although there was no one in the saloon, "that maybe Yancy an' Carl Sobran were hooked up. I told Lee Pryor that when Yancy was arrested. Yancy never would tell who was gettin' the cattle he stole, but you knew he was pardoned out of the pen."

"What's that got to do with it?" Pug demanded.

"Just this: Carl Sobran is in politics up to his eyes. I think he got Yancy pardoned."

Pug narrowed his eyes. He was

striking information that came as a surprise to him, getting results far beyond his expectations. "Yuh don't say!" he ejaculated.

"I do say." Crocker looked furtively at the door and back again to Pug. "Of course this is strictly confidential between you and I, Pug, an' not to be repeated, but I think that's the way it is. An' if Yancy's stealin' cattle again, how could he sell 'em better than through Sobran? Carl's got connections every place."

Pug said, "Ummmm," thoughtfully, and then: "I'll take a glass of beer, Sid."

Crocker drew the beer. While Pug was drinking it, Gus Loren came in with another man. They kept Crocker busy and Pug had no further opportunity to talk with him.

AFTER a while Loren and his companion went out. Tom Forest came in with a traveling man. Tex Osborn drifted in, and Henry Duchin. Pug went back to his table and sat down. Ray Vincent came in, saw Osborn and joined the man. Joe Chase came through the door, found a place at the bar and, face moody, stood drinking beer. Then Carl Sobran and Yancy Yarbro entered.

The bar was fairly full and Sobran and Yarbro came down until they were not far from Pug. Sobran nodded, but Yarbro paid Pug no heed. Pug got up and sauntered over until he was beside Joe Chase, between Yarbro and the door.

"How's it goin', Joe?" he asked.

Chase shook his head. His eyes were dark with the anger that was in him. "No good," Chase said briefly.

For an instant Pug forgot his plan. He had meant to talk to Chase and in that talk throw out barbed stings until Yarbro resented

them. Then Pug intended to force the quarrel and eventually arouse Yarbrow until he got out of line. After that it depended on what happened. Pug was perfectly willing to abide by consequences. If Yarbrow just got salty, then Pug would put him either in jail or bed. If Yarbrow wanted to go further than that, well, that would be all right with Pug.

"What's the matter?" Pug asked Joe Chase.

Chase, it was apparent, needed to talk to someone. "I went over to Trevis' yesterday," he said resentfully. "I wanted to lease some of the land he's bought. He wouldn't lease it to me. I'll tell you, Pug, Trevis an' them want to force us little fellows out. They want to starve us out. I talked to Bill Farmer an' Trevis had handled him the same way. He's got more country than he needs, but he won't lease a foot of it."

Instantly Pug realized the importance of Chase's statement. This was something that Dave had to know about. It was fuel for an already hot fire, this fact that the big land holders were refusing to lease pasture to smaller outfits.

"Try somebody else," Pug suggested to Chase. "How about the Mesa Cattle Co.? They're up yore way, an' Frank Trilling might have some country you could get."

Chase shook his head. "The company's bringin' in a big bunch of cattle," he announced dejectedly. "Anyhow they won't let go of anything they've got. I ain't talked to Trilling, but Henry did. What did Trilling have to say, Henry?"

Every eye in the saloon was centered now on Chase. Henry Duchin pushed back his empty glass and answered Chase's question. "Trilling said he needed all his pasture. He's short on grass, the way it is."

"There you are, Pug." Chase turned to Pug Wells. "You can see how it is."

"An' a damned good thing, too!" Ray Vincent pushed himself away from the bar and confronted Chase. "A lot of you little grass thieves are goin' to get crowded out. Maybe this will be a good country for a white man after a while."

No one noticed that the doorway had darkened nor did they see the man, followed by another, who, opening the screen door, stepped into the barroom. All the attention in the room was centered on Joe Chase and Ray Vincent. Here was a definite break forming, a thing that might result in a killing.

"Meanin' that yo're a white man an' I'm not?" Chase snapped, staring at Vincent.

"You can take it any way you like," Vincent said unpleasantly. "You ain't got yore shotgun now. An' I'm watchin' you. You won't murder me when I ain't lookin', Chase."

UNDER that accusation, unjust and unfair as well as untrue, Joe Chase wilted. The dark color flooded his face and he stepped back. A good many things were piling up on young Joe Chase's shoulders and among them, and perhaps the heaviest, was the fact that he believed he had killed Andy Blare. Chase shrank from Vincent's fierce attack. He did not know how to meet it or how to reply to it. The necessity for that was taken from him. Inside the door Dave Cloud spoke, smooth and unhurried.

"Yo're free with yore lip, Vincent," he stated. "You give up head awful easy, that's my opinion. Joe didn't murder Andy Blare an' you know it. You said enough now."

Vincent whirled to meet this surprise attack. At Vincent's side Tex Osborn stepped away from the bar so that he was clear and facing Dave Cloud.

Dave paid no further heed to Vincent. Awakening from his nap some small time after Pug's departure, Dave had attacked the mail accumulated on his desk. Among the usual collections of circulars, letters and notices, he had found one that struck home to him. The sheriff at Amarillo was interested, to the extent of five hundred dollars, in the apprehension of one Tex Osburn, alias Tex Burnett, alias Texas Slim. The description given was terse and pointed and clear. Dave Cloud had seen a man that answered that description in every detail, a man that walked boldly down Marksham's streets beside Ray Vincent.

Dave had read the circular through, folded it, and tucked it in his hip pocket, and gone out to look for Pug. Failing in that search, he had picked up Abran Garcia. Abran had seen Vincent and his satellite go into the Elite. Now, facing Dave, was the man described in the circular. Dave could feel the muscles tighten all along his back and arms.

"Tex," he said slowly, "you never could get away from that Texas brand, could you?"

Tex Osburn knew what was coming. He had faced this thing before,

Will You Let Me PROVE I Can Make YOU a New Man?

—CHARLES ATLAS

Do you want a powerful body of might and muscle—deep, husky chest—biceps like iron—arms and legs that never tire?

7-DAY TRIAL OFFER

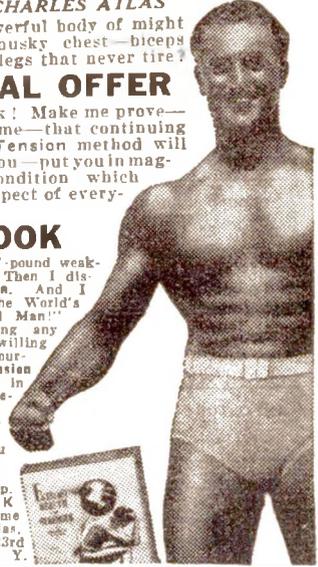
Just give me a week! Make me prove—in even that short time—that continuing with my Dynamic Tension method will make a New Man of you—put you in magnificent physical condition which wins the envy and respect of everyone.

FREE BOOK

I myself was once a 97-pound weakling—sickly, half alive. Then I discovered Dynamic Tension. And I twice won the title, "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man!"

But I am not making any claims which I am not willing to have you prove for yourself. If Dynamic Tension can't show enough results in a 7-day trial period—results you can see, feel, measure with a tape—then don't go ahead with it—and it won't cost you one cent!

Make me PROVE it! Gamble a postage stamp. Send for my FREE BOOK AT ONCE! Address me personally: Charles Atlas, Dept. 385, 115 East 23rd Street, New York, N. Y.



HOW TO Write Stories that SELL

Mrs. Grace Blanchard had an IDEA for a story. We criticized her story, gave it a new title and told her WHERE TO SEND IT. She got a substantial check THE FIRST TIME OUT. That is a THRILL many of our graduates have each month. Let 22 years of experience guide YOU. Endorsed by Jack London. "THE ART OF STORY WRITING" with explanation of our personal criticism and manuscript sales service. No obligations. Write: HOOSIER INSTITUTE, Room 126, Hoosier Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

FREE BOOKLET OF STORY WRITING

MAKE MORE MONEY

Take Orders For The NIMROD Line

Earn more every day in the year representing old established firm with a complete line of fast selling necessities: Shirts of all kinds, Ties, Underwear, Hosiery, Raincoats, Sweaters, Pants, Belts, Brasieres, Shoes, Coveralls, Shop Coats, Uniforms, Summer Suits, etc. Every item guaranteed. Experience unnecessary.

Write quick for FREE SALES EQUIPMENT

NIMROD COMPANY,

4922-BN Lincoln Ave., Chicago, Ill.



ANNOUNCING to people who need a practical knowledge of bookkeeping

A SHORT, PRACTICAL COURSE

MODERN BOOKKEEPING

New, up-to-the-minute plan of training—the Job Method: You learn by doing. Interesting—simple—easy.

Planned for spare time of busy people. No previous knowledge or experience necessary. We train from ground up. Complete, yet no waste motion.

Specially designed for owners, managers, secretaries, office workers, etc. A half hour a day study at home enables you to clearly understand business records or to keep complete set of books.

Cost is low and convenient terms can be arranged. For full information—free—write Dept. 565-H

LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY A CORRESPONDENCE INSTITUTION Chicago, Ill.

Classified Advertising

Photo Finishing—Developing

AT LAST! ALL YOUR SNAPSHOTS IN NATURAL COLORS. Roll developed, 8 Natural Color Prints, only 25c. Reprints, 3c. Amazingly beautiful. Natural Color Photo, Janesville, Wisconsin.

ROLLS DEVELOPED 25c coin. Two 5x7 Double Weight Professional Enlargements, 8 glossy prints. Club Photo Service, Dept. 17, La Crosse, Wis.

ROLL DEVELOPED, 16 Velox prints 25c. Dividend Coupon, 16 reprints 25c. Willard Studios, Box 3535E, Cleveland, Ohio.

Patents Secured

INVENTORS—Don't delay. Protect your idea with a Patent. Get Free Patent Guide. Write Clarence A. O'Brien, Registered Patent Attorney, 6751 Adams Building, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS Reasonable terms. Book and advice free. L. F. Randolph, Dept. 513, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS SECURED. Two valuable booklets sent free. Write immediately: Victor J. Evans & Co., 563 G Vector Building, Washington, D. C.

Detectives—Instructions

DETECTIVES EARN BIG MONEY. WORK HOME. TRAVEL. DETECTIVE particulars free. Experience unnecessary. Write GEORGE WAGONER, 2649 A Broadway, New York.

Old Gold & Money Wanted

GOLD \$25 OUNCE. Ship old gold teeth, crowns, jewelry, watches receive cash by return mail. Satisfaction Guaranteed. Free information. Paramount Gold Refining Co., 1509 G Hennepin, Minneapolis, Minn.

Antiques, Relics, etc.

SWORDS, DAGGERS, rapiers, pistols, armor, curios, Catalog 10c. Robert Abels, M 869 Lexington Avenue, New York.

Music

HAWAIIAN GUITAR: Like Notices play. Learn at home. Write for Free, illustrated booklet. Oahu School of Music, 2506 Fifth Blk., Cleveland, Ohio.

Correspondence Courses

CORRESPONDENCE COURSES and educational books, slightly used. Sold, Rented, Exchanged. All subjects. Satisfaction guaranteed. Cash paid for used courses. Complete details and bargain catalog Free. Send name. Nelson Company, P-215 Manhattan Building, Chicago.

faced it and beaten it. He would beat it now. A small smile hovered at the corners of his lips, mirthless and satirical.

"It's a good name," he drawled. "I come from Texas."

"They want you back there," Dave stated. "Osburn, you're under arrest. You—"

Behind Tex Osburn, Duchin jumped toward the wall. Sig Crocker dropped behind the bar, only his eyes showing above the walnut. Joe Chase stood transfixed. Sobran and Yarbrow, out of line but still too close for comfort, tried to make themselves small against the bar. Pug, almost beside Vincent, knew what was coming and reached for the gun in his trousers. Abran Garcia had stepped away from the door and he, too, reached for his weapon.

They were too late. Not six feet interposed between Dave Cloud and Tex Osburn. The room was electric with tension and into that taut atmosphere Osburn threw his voice, interrupting Dave.

"So you think that you—"

He did not complete his sentence. A gesture, smooth, polished with long practice, broke the words. Tex Osburn's right hand went up across his body, reaching for the gun in its holster beneath his left arm. The gun came out, cocked, dropped level, the long hand that held it, steady. But Dave Cloud had matched that gesture. In the Elite Saloon two guns blared their hate, and between Dave Cloud and Tex Osburn, across that six feet of space, smoke mushroomed out.

Will Dave go down before the guns of the first man he has attempted to arrest? Will the information Pug uncovered help smash a rustling ring? If the small ranchers find themselves unable to lease land, what will their next move be? Another dramatic installment of this absorbing country serial appears in next week's issue.

Is BALDNESS Necessary ? ? ? ?

“NO” in many cases, is the opinion of many leading scalp specialists and dermatologists. More surprising still is the ease with which aid can be obtained and baldness often can be prevented. All you have to do is practice elementary health rules which include cleanliness and exercise. Just as improper exercise will do more harm than good for other parts of your body, so will improper massage fail to sufficiently benefit hair growing on the scalp.

The Vitex Hair Institute, Inc. has now made it possible for anyone, regardless of where they live, to massage their hair and scalp in a professional manner . . . a registered physician and dermatologist has supervised the charts and written explanations; all specially created for you who want to escape baldness. These easy-to-understand charts are now ready for public distribution. These charts show you how three simple steps, that require just five minutes a day, morning and night, stimulates hair growth by inducing a freshening rush of blood to the scalp . . . this nourishes the tissues that have to do with the growth of the hair, helps to reawaken dormant but live hair roots. This is virtually a picture method which guides you to hair success and is yours to have and use permanently . . . is given to you without extra cost when you order VIDEX'S TRIPLE ACTION HAIR TREATMENT.

VIDEX TRIPLE ACTION HAIR TREATMENT includes the same products used with much success here at the Institute. The cleansing, stimulating and healthful effect of these preparations when used along with the scalp manipulations effect the greatest benefits.

STOP BALDNESS At Danger Areas . . .

Remove foreign substances that clog the pores and choke the hair roots. When there is no crusty, scaly coating to interfere with circulation, hair has a chance to grow. Check up your own hair condition. Is your scalp itchy? Are you troubled with excessive dandruff? Is your hair dull, lifeless and brittle? Is your hair getting thin? Is your hair coming out excessively? These are generally healthy hair trouble makers. Use VIDEX'S Hair Treatment to help create and maintain a healthy scalp condition that will encourage healthy hair growth.

THERE IS HOPE FOR YOU

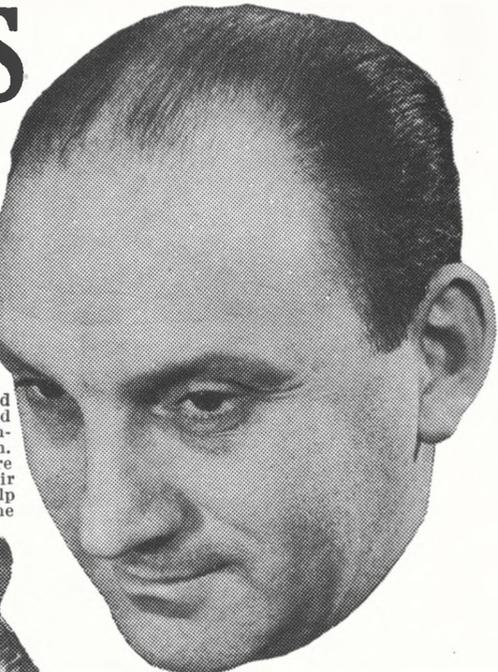
Don't despair because of excessive loss of hair . . . don't resign yourself to baldness, because there is hope for you. If your condition is caused by excessive dandruff or some other local disorder, VIDEX Treatment will pave the way to keep your hair growing. Hundreds of unsolicited and enthusiastic letters received from users proves that VIDEX is good . . . order today and start to correct your hair troubles right away.

● MONEY BACK GUARANTEE ●

You do not risk a cent using VIDEX. You must be satisfied or your money will be refunded in full after ten days trial. Order TODAY . . . it does so much and costs so little.

● IMPORTANT NOTICE ●

If you live in New York, or expect to visit here, you are invited to visit our Fifth Avenue Salon. See convincing proof of the results achieved, giving personal scalp and hair treatments.



JUST 10 MINUTES A DAY TO HELP KEEP BALDNESS AWAY

Order today and we will include without extra cost the VITEX HAIR INSTITUTE, Inc. "Three Easy Steps." This method, instructions and advice alone is invaluable. Shows you our expert, correct way to manipulate areas that effect hair growing centers. Written and pictured in easy-to-understand, simplified form so that you can practice the system in privacy, in spare time.

RUSH COUPON FOR SPECIAL OFFER

Order now and get without extra cost our valuable, profusely illustrated, booklet explaining THE VITEX SYSTEM. . . . "Our simplified method for scientific hair improvement at home." It explains . . . Your Head Can Be Done! . . . How Does Hair Grow? . . . The Sebaceous Glands . . . Why Hair Falls and contains other valuable advice. Send today for an eight treatment bottle of VIDEX'S Triple Action Treatment for only \$1.00 . . . Save money . . . order this special \$3 combination. A 16 oz. size of VIDEX'S Triple Action Treatment (4 times quantity) is regularly \$3. Order this and we include a one dollar 1 oz. size of VIDEX'S CORRECTIVE POMADE, saving you \$2. You really should have Pomade because it is used daily and helps speed up results. RUSH COUPON TODAY!

VIDEX'S Treatment Helps Three Important Benefits

1. Stimulates growth areas: After applying VIDEX you will note a pleasant tingling or "drawing" sensation. Evidence of how effectively your scalp is being stimulated in the areas where blood must nourish the hair roots.
2. Helps dispel excessive dandruff, stops itching. Effective in dissolving accumulated waste matter that strangles the hair and causes irritation by clogging up the follicle "funnels."
3. Purifies as it cleanses. After you have allowed VIDEX to "work" it saponifies easily with water and rinses completely clear, leaving the scalp healthfully clean and the hair naturally brilliant.

Also included
FREE!



**VITEX HAIR
INSTITUTE, Inc.**
Dept. 605
521-5th Ave., N. Y.

- Send me instructions, charts and other information showing me how to lift my scalp. Also send \$1.00 8-treatment size of Vitex Hair and Scalp Triple Action Treatment postpaid.
- I enclose \$3. Send large economy size of VIDEX postpaid and include FREE 1 oz. jar of daily Corrective Pomade. Also include the special instructions and scalp lifting charts.
- Ship order checked above C.O.D. I will pay postage.

Name

Address

NOTE: Canadian and foreign orders must be accompanied by cash

**THIS MAN DIDN'T BELIEVE HE
COULD LEARN MUSIC BY MAIL**



**THIS MAN DECIDED TO TRY THIS
EASY, SHORT-CUT METHOD!
(P.S. You should hear him play now!)**



Do *You* Smile at the Idea of Learning Music by Mail?

Here Are Some Facts That May Surprise You!

YOU have undoubtedly heard of the U. S. School method of teaching music by mail. This remarkable system of instruction has been in operation for over forty years and more than 700,000 people in all parts of the world have enrolled for it. Men, women and children of all ages and from all walks of life have taken up their favorite musical instruments this convenient, money-saving way. They have studied the piano, violin, guitar, accordion and, in short, every kind of popular instrument.

No Special Talent Required

Many of these pupils did not know one musical note from another when they enrolled. Many had previously tried other methods of instruction without success. And not a few were frankly skeptical. They doubted whether it was possible to learn music by mail, just as you may doubt it.

To some of these "Doubting Thomases" it came as the surprise of their lives when they actually heard themselves playing. Simple, popular melodies at first, then more and more advanced pieces, all the way to Grand Opera.

One after another, pupils testify to the amazing ease with which they learned, and the fascination and pleasure they found in the lessons. They say it was "easy as A-B-C"—"so simple that a child could understand"—that "with all the wonderful photographs and diagrams to guide you, you simply cannot go wrong"—that "it's really fun to learn music this easy, fascinating way."

Will You Accept This Challenge?

The experience of thousands upon thousands of people should be proof positive that you, too, can learn to play your favorite instrument by the famous print-and-picture method of the U. S. School of Music. Is it not a pity, then, to deny yourself all the enjoyment, the good times and popularity that music offers? Do you not owe it to yourself, at least, to examine all the facts, and to decide, once and for all, whether you can afford to pass by this opportunity to enrich your life with music?

If you really want to play a musical instrument—if you are willing to devote just a few minutes a day to learning, not through tedious, old-fashioned practice, but by actually playing real tunes—then you should mail the coupon at once. It will bring you an interesting illustrated booklet and free Print and Picture Sample that tells all about this wonderful way to learn music at home—without any special talent—without any previous knowledge of music at amazingly little cost. Read it carefully and earnestly and act upon it. If interested, tear out the coupon now, before you turn the page. (Instruments supplied when needed, cash or credit.) Address: U. S. School of Music, 3595 Brunswick Building, New York, N. Y.
(Established 1898)

INSTRUMENTS

As a special accommodation to our students we can supply instruments at a special discount. Liberal terms extended. For particulars, inquire Instrument Dept.

**U. S. SCHOOL OF MUSIC, 3595 Brunswick Bldg.,
New York, N. Y.**

I am interested in music study, particularly in the instrument checked below. Please send me your free illustrated booklet, "How to Learn Music at Home" and free Print and Picture Sample.

Piano	Saxophone	Mandolin	Clarinet	Ukulele
Violin	Cello	Trombone	Flute	Organ
Guitar	Hawaiian	Cornet	Piccolo	Modern Elemen-
Piano Accordion	Guitar	Trumpet	Drums and	tary Harmony
Plain Accordion	Banjo	Harp	Traps	Voice Culture

Name

Address

Town..... State.....

Check here for Booklet "A" if under 16 years of age.